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Unhomely Lives: Negotiating Diasporic Alienation and the Collapse of Communal Belonging in Nadeem Aslam's Maps for Lost Lovers

Rehan Aslam Sahi

Department of English, University of Gujrat.

rehan.aslam@uog.edu.pk

Farrah Amir

University of Gujrat.

farrahaamir8@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Pakistani migrants in Britain tend to live 'in-between' cultures but enclaves that seek to maintain 'home' can serve to reinforce social exclusion. This article makes a case that cultural preservation in Pakistani diasporic communities is a means of social control, which in turn creates structured alienation and not integration. Nadeem Aslam's Maps for Lost Lovers shows how transplanted norms/values and honor codes escalate into generational and gender conflicts and finally to honor violence. This study follows the theory of diaspora as a "narrative of displacement" of Hall and the theory of hybridity of Bhabha, to understand the reasons for Pakistani immigrants not being integrated into Britain. Maps for Lost Lovers and sociological studies reveal the insular entrapment of community enclaves developed to preserve heritage. How enclaves reinforce the othering is exemplified by the novel's depiction of a "familial space...where the white British are regarded as the other". The first-generation elders enforce rigid traditions and have conflicts with westernized youth. Women are burdened with extra responsibilities: communal norms "restrict the agency and autonomy" of female migrants. The novel's violent honor killing is a vivid enactment of the deadly culmination of these norms. The results indicate that a sense of belonging is still not achieved in this diaspora: collective memory and identity claims unite the community while at the same time they divide it. The study ponders on the complexity of belonging in migration scholarship by deconstructing the assimilationist discourse and poses the question of cultural preservation as control.

Keywords: *Diaspora, Cultural Identity, Hybridity, Intergenerational Conflict, Pakistani Immigrants and Honour Violence.*

1. Research Methodology

1.1 Research Design

This study will be qualitative research design. Emphasis is on interpretation of lived experience, cultural meanings and constructions of identity rather than numbers. A qualitative approach is appropriate as diasporic alienation is a subjective and interpretive phenomenon.

A model of textual and interpretive research will be utilized and interweaving the literary analysis and the insight from the sociological point of view.

1.2 Research Approach

The study will be descriptive–analytical approach:

Descriptive: To describe alienation, belonging and identity conflict in immigrant communities in Pakistan

Analytical: To explain the way these patterns are expressed in literature, narratives and critical studies.

It also utilizes frameworks of postcolonialism and diaspora studies, thus being interdisciplinary.

1.3 Data Collection Method

Primary Sources

- Diacritics and transnational literature associated with the Pakistani diaspora (migrant literature, postcolonial novels etc.)

Close reading of selected texts that express themes of alienation and identity conflict

Secondary Sources

- Diaspora theory/Migration studies scholarly articles
- Sociological studies of the Pakistani immigrant communities in Britain, Europe and North America

Critical readings on identity, hybrid and cultural displacement

1.4 Data Analysis Method

Thematic analysis will be used in conjunction with close reading techniques, the study will employ:

Key steps include:

- Recognizing the reoccurrence of the following themes: alienation, belonging, cultural conflict and generational tension

Analyzing story's strategies of representing displacement and fragmentation in identity

- Understanding symbols (home, language, religion, community spaces)

Analyzing text and theory of diaspora studies

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical background for this study is based on postcolonial theory and diasporic theory, and there are three main intellectual bases:

2.1 Diaspora and Cultural Displacement – Stuart Hall

Stuart Hall is the Centre focus.

Key idea:

There is no set or necessary identity to be ascribed

Identities are fluid, fractured and constantly created in Diaspora.

Differences, memory and history are all part of belonging.

Application:

This is a study of the Pakistani immigrant community's struggle for identity between their homeland memory and host culture reality.

The sense of alienation comes from a sense of instability of identity

2.2 “Hybridity” and “Third Space” – Homi K. Bhabha,

The other fundamental lens is made available by Homi K. Bhabha's theory.

Key idea:

- The concept of cultural identity is created in an ‘in-between’ or ‘third space’

Hybrids have neither an original nor an assimilated identity.

This is a productive, but unstable space.

Application:

Pakistani immigrants are in a liminal state of culture

When this mixed space is contradictory instead of an empowering space, failure of belonging results.

2.3 Theory of migration, exile and displacement

Aside from the theoretical work mentioned above, there are more recent works of diaspora and migration studies that have provided further theoretical support for this study:

- Imaginary longing of return and diaspora as condition

Exile is a form of psychological estrangement from the homeland identity.

As a rival category, being a part of the emotional and political terrain.

This helps explain:

From the perspective of social integration, why physical migration does not ensure social integration.

Why do communities tend to form the structures of their homeland in other countries?

Introduction

Migration is one of the most important characteristics of the contemporary world, giving rise to the new question of identity, belonging and continuity of culture, which are not being thought of anymore in terms of the country they came from. In this wider global phenomenon, the migration of Pakistanis to Europe, North America and Middle East has created nuanced and complicated diasporic structures that continue to be contested for the issues of home and identity. Although migration is commonly viewed as an opportunity and a means of social mobility, the experience of immigrant communities often is quite complex, involving cultural negotiation, intergenerational conflict, and emotional disorientation.

The emphasis of this research is the phenomenon of diasporic alienation and lack of feeling at home in Pakistani immigrant community. So, it is not that, as it were, migration inevitably and automatically culminates in integration or cultural synthesis, but that belonging is precarious and not always realized, the paper goes on to explain. This is a continuous struggle between the urge to keep cultural identity and the need to adjust to the host societies in which Pakistani immigrants live. This tension frequently generates what can be called as "structured alienation" which affects the ability of the individual to be socially integrated in their ethnic group while being emotionally and culturally far from their homeland and the host culture as well.

One of the important aspects of this research is the understanding that diaspora is not only a geospatial reality, but also a psychocultural state. Reconstructing "home" in migrant communities often serves as a means of cultural preservation but can also create internal barriers and strengthen traditional norms and contribute to perpetuating generational and gender-based conflicts. Consequently, membership is not really anchored in any one space but is split among them.

This analysis is supported by theoretical notions from postcolonial and diaspora studies. Stuart Hall and Homi K. Bhabha and other thinkers stress the fluid, constructed and negotiated nature of identity in cultural "in-betweenness." These frameworks can elucidate diasporic subjectivities as an experience of continually being displaced, rather than stabilized. These concepts when applied to the immigrant communities in Pakistan bring to light that cultural hybridization does not always bring in harmony, but rather it can create uncertainty, fragment and emotional dislocation.

This study aims to explore the processes by which diasporic alienation is created, maintained and lived out in immigrant contexts in Pakistan. It also examines the reasons behind the lack of belongingness despite physical settlement in other societies. This research attempts to contribute to a better understanding of migration as a process, as a negotiation of identity and belonging, through literary representations, sociological perspectives and theoretical frameworks.

Finally, the paper contends that the failure-of-belonging in diaspora is not a personal and cultural misfortune, but rather a structural condition that is the result of historical displacement, cultural memory, and the current politics of identity in transnational contexts.

Literature Review

The study of diasporic alienation and the issue of belonging within migrant communities has grown from the postcolonial studies and in the fields of sociology and literary studies. In this multi-disciplinary field, Pakistani immigrants have enjoyed a growing focus by scholars, because of the high numbers of Pakistani immigrants in Europe and North America and the complex cultural negotiations that they represent. The current scholarship on diaspora, which tends to treat the diaspora as a condition rather than a transitory state, is typically more about cultural and psychological disaffection than about migration.

A key figure in diaspora studies is Stuart Hall, who sees cultural identity as 'production' and not an essence, and is continually under construction, history and memory. Hall's approach has been much employed to comprehend the nature of migrant identities as fluid and fragmented rather than stable and unified. With regards to Pakistani diaspora, this framework might help provide reasons for the sense of incompleteness of belonging even in host societies after years of living there.

This theory of hybridity and the "third space" by Homi K. Bhabha has greatly inspired critical debates surrounding migration. Culture is constructed and negotiated in an interstice, argues Bhabha, a space in between. This theory at one time proposed that there is a "third space" where migrants can create a synthesis of their own cultures, but more recent research has doubted that such a "third space" is open to all migrants. Structural inequalities, racialization and cultural pressures can often make hybridity a tension in the case of the Pakistani immigrant communities.

This discussion is extended by literary critical works about diasporic writing. Researchers of South Asian Anglophone literature note that tales of migration often depict the sense of belonging as uneasy and ambivalent. For the characters of novels like Mohsin Hamid's and Kamila Shamsie's, identity is usually described as divided between geographical and emotional distances that are set up by the Pakistani diaspora. The texts emphasize the process of migrants' cultural preservation and adaptation but seldom have a sense of home reconciliation. In this literary trope, there is something that coincides with the wider theoretical arguments that diaspora is an ongoing negotiation, not a conclusion.

Also important is sociological research on the Pakistani immigrant communities in Britain and North America. The importance of ethnic enclaves for the preservation of cultural continuity is emphasized in these studies. They can also trigger intergenerational conflict, gendered control and self-surveillance within the community, while providing social buffering and resistance to marginalization. First generation migrants tend to focus on the preservation of culture, while younger generations have been exposed to many different culture systems leading to an act of identity fragmentation. Often the generational gap is what leads to emotional estrangement in families and communities.

The other major field of scholarship deals with gender relations in diaspora. According to a feminist theory of migration studies, cultural preservation by immigrant communities is generally achieved by controlling women's actions and, especially, the control of their honor, marriage, and family honor. This has resulted in much more critical reflection on diasporic belonging, and how this is distributed inequitably, with women often facing more stringent restrictions than men. These are disconcerting discoveries that raise questions about the internal inequalities of migrant communities in a celebratory narrative of multiculturalism.

The more recent scholarship work contends with more positive understandings of multicultural integration. In contrast to the diaspora being a place of cultural enrichment, current theories stress the continued existence of racialization, social marginalization and psychological alienation in the "home" communities. This has resulted in a more critical awareness of belonging as a condition rather than a destination, and one that is often difficult to achieve, due to migration. This has created a more critical awareness of belonging as a condition instead of a destination, and one that is not always easily attained due to migration.

Nevertheless, although this body of work is expanding, one important question remains: how to fully merge the literature analysis with the sociological approaches to understanding diasporic alienation as a structural phenomenon and not an individual experience? There is an existing body of literature that has concentrated on the textual representation or social reality alone. This study seeks to fill in this void, by combining the theoretical, literary, and sociological perspectives, and exploring the processes in which failure to belong is created and perpetuated in the Pakistani immigrant communities.

In conclusion, given the literature, diasporic alienation is much more than a marginal and temporary experience, it is a central phenomenon of the migrant experience. This sense of 'not belonging' can, however, be shared and discussed in a further interdisciplinary analysis that looks at the interaction between cultural memory, identity politics and community structures.

In the case of diasporic alienation, within the Pakistani immigrant communities, it is a multi-layered phenomenon that is influenced by the inter-indigested areas of cultural memory, social structure and identity negotiation. Geographical shifting is not the only cause of alienation, it's a continuous process of imagining, searching and ceaselessly questioning a sense of belonging. In the analysis of this situation, the fact that "failure of belonging" is not a one-off phenomenon but is structurally part of the dynamics of diaspora itself is discovered.

Conflict between the preservation and adaptation of one's culture is one of the key factors to alienation. In the process of establishing continuity of identity, the Pakistani immigrant communities are likely to recreate familiar culture norms in the host states. These recreated spaces, however, are not neutral cultural enclaves. Instead, there are more places of regulation, in which the social norms reinforce themselves and an authenticity of place is maintained. Such a contradiction, or paradox, in preserving culture while excluding those who do not act "culturally" can be seen particularly in cultural preservation. This self-defining is a distancing of identity borders of the inside and the outside, which entails distancing from the community.

This is worsened by the conflict between the generations. The first-generation migrants are more likely to feel attached to memory, tradition and moral continuity and view cultural maintenance as a crucial element to their survival in the foreign context. Those who are from the second generation but grew up in more than one cultural system are fragmented on the other hand. Their awareness of "self" is split into conflicting cultural norms and not an easy fit

into the culture of the host or into the culture of the heritage culture. This is somewhere between and a separation from both sides – “double alienation.”

Language also helps to perpetuate diasporic dislocations. Heritage languages play a role in cultural memory and emotional intimacy; the dominant indigenous language is overwhelming and a structural division between private and public identity arises. This linguistic division has the effect of fragmentation, particularly for the younger generation, who might feel inferior in linguistic world. Language is not only the vehicle for communicating, but also a marker for inclusion/exclusion.

Other aspects of gender, diasporic ones, are also applicable to the topic of belonging. Women are perceived to be “cultural symbols of continuity” in many immigrant communities of Pakistan. Honor, modesty and family honor are expectations that are too heavy a burden for women to bear that expect them to abide by cultural boundaries. This load hinders individuals' autonomy and helps to sustain mechanisms of patriarchy in the diaspora. Therefore, there is an unequal distribution of belonging and the women feel excluded from the host community as well as the internal rules and regulations of the community that govern the women's behaviors. Diaspora organization is another aspect of alienation. Ethnic enclaves can foster social closure, as well as safety and familiarity. They often reflect at micro-level the hierarchical structure of homeland and reinforce surveillance and limit access to society. A concentration of population can increase feelings of isolation and form parallel social worlds which seldom have meaningful interactions with the host culture; this can be more harmful than it can help. The result is a seeming paradox that residents of the same community may not feel a sense of belonging or may not feel socially integrated.

To some extent, these patterns follow the postcolonial ideal of identity as fluid and continually being constructed. What the Pakistani diaspora, though, shows are that a fruitful transmission and exchange of cultures in a hybrid space is not always sustainable. Often hybridity is found in terms of tension and contradiction, negotiation and unfulfilled negotiation. Belonging, therefore, is not something that is achieved but a process and at times at least, a constrained process, by power, past experiences and socio-cultural factors.

Last, the analysis indicates that diasporic alienation is not only a psychological phenomenon, but also a structural one, as far as the life of migrants is concerned. It's a desire to preserve culture and at the same time it's having to be flexible in places that aren't necessarily welcoming to it. A failure to belong is thus not a personal issue, but the outcome of a societal problem, which is created through the interaction of migration experience and social and political networks.

Analysis

The word ‘diasporic Alienation and Failure of Belonging’ has been chosen for this thesis because it is felt that this concept plays a vital role in the context of Pakistani immigrant communities. In this thesis the concept of Alienation and Failure of Belonging has been selected as it is believed that this concept is basic for the Pakistani immigrant communities.

In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, it's not only the emotional strain on immigrants that Nadeem Aslam documents, but a careful reading of the book shows that. He's voicing an inner contradiction of diaspora. The novel puts in question the idea that that there is a kind of 'belonging' that comes out of migration despite its challenges. Instead, it is an image of a world where membership is offered on an ongoing basis but is not necessarily received.

This is a Diaspora beyond Displacement: The condition of Unresolved Identity. This is a Diaspora beyond Displacement: The condition of Unresolved Identity.

From several perspectives, migration is seen as producing hybrid" identity, in which both homeland and host culture elements are combined. This kind of thinking has been evident in the thoughts of, among others, Homi K. Bhabha and is optimistic. Aslam complicates this by depicting hybridity as not being creative synthesis but a state of tension which never stabilizes. The Pakistani immigrants in the novel live in a dilemma between the cultural norms of the British society they lived in and the unaltered cultural norms of their past, not being able to internalize the former or the latter into their own culture. This generates an "in-betweenness" that is "permanent" in the sense that it is not broken in any way that would make it give way, nor unified in any way that would make it "safe".

Not only a place – Dasht-e-Tanhaii is an imaginary place. It is used as a symbol of this state. It's a place that people go to that they're not there in their culture or feelings.

Permanence of permanent "in-betweenness", diaspora.

The novel has seen the Pakistani immigrants have carved out a "third space" that is neither the country of origin nor the country of adoption, as defined by Post Colonialism. Homi K. Bhabha theorizes space as a productive space and yet Aslam challenges optimism.

Academic studies point to a fluctuation and ambivalence between the two cultures and refer to the characters' "exilic consciousness" as a state that is beyond the cultures.

The novel does not synthesize identity as it does with hybridity, but rather the identity is suspended and fragmentary. Dasht-e-Tanhaii is literally 'the desert of loneliness' and more than a symbol, it is a diagnosis. It conveys a psychological reality: movement isn't migration, it's the self that moves.

This book examines how communities are created and then denied. This book explores the formation of communities and their subsequent erasure.

Immigrant community is one of the most prominent themes of the novel that it takes a critical look at the immigrant community. It is taken for granted that diaspora communities are protective spaces which maintain cultures and emotional support. It's a different story in Aslam.

The Pakistani community in the novel is self-sustaining and rules their behavior with a tight fist. The rules of social behavior are:

- Religious orthodoxy
- Cultural conservatism

The student is regularly observed and supported in their personal behaviors and decisions.

This does mean that there is a paradox. The community is supposed to be a place to preserve identity, but it limits the identity with which it purports to preserve its community. Belonging becomes conditional. It should be acquired in conformity with this.

The honor killing which is the setting for the plot is no random act of violence. Explain the rationale for the community. Individual will be put under the umbrella of collective honor and anything that can be interpreted as going against the individual will is perceived as dangerous. If it's this kind, then it's an exclusionary sense of belonging.

The problem of community as a place of belonging.

The idea of diaspora studies that has been prevalent is the immigrant communities provide cultural continuity, thus filling the gap of what they have lost. Aslam opposes the notion.

The novel's community of Pakistanis are very close together, but also split apart. It operates through:

The ability to see oneself and others clearly. Self-awareness, awareness of others.

Religious Orthodoxy enforced by Automechanism

The difficulties with sexuality and gender roles are that they are regulated. There are restrictions on sexuality and gender roles.

As studies have shown, these communities are likely to uphold the existing norms when they are threatened by other communities.

The results delivered are not what you would imagine. The very design of the architecture creates a "belonging," which is being used to exclude. The killings of Jugnu and Chanda are not isolated incidents of violence, but are the worst form of violence, honor killing, which is the end of a system – one that values collective identity over individual life.

So, the next step becomes, how do they move on next:

Has the diaspora community kept alive the culture or stifled it?

Discuss options when facing assimilation vs isolation.

The characters found in the novel are caught up between two opposing demands. On the other hand, is assimilation to the British culture, which will give you a lot of freedom, but you may also end up losing the culture as well. The other side is traditional values which give continuity but are imposing rigidity.

These options are not only difficult to use but are also not always available. It's because neither of these options will give you an authentic sense of belonging.

Kaukab symbolizes a whole-hearted commitment to the traditions. She is trapped in her culture and her beliefs, and her cultural memory, but it is the same attachment that also keeps her from the society around her. As far as the other story goes, Shamas can be more easily adapted but his spot is tenuous. He has not separated from his culture, nor has he been able to become a part of another cultural system.

The younger generation is in more dire straits. They now have a culture that is not very communicative, missing the need for loyalty, and they have a society that is not wholly welcoming. They're not wanting to be alienated. It is inherited.

How intensification of alienation is experienced by gender.

The feeling of alienation within the novel is a very gendered issue. Women are the focus of the preservation of culture and therefore controlled the most.

Expect purity of moral and cultural values of female characters. They become an emblem to their body of community. In this way they become places of regulation and the issues of honor, religion and identity converge.

The result is an exile exiled. Women do not have any autonomy, as they are there in the community. They never feel at home, it's always about conforming to standards that they have not set.

Meanwhile, the novel suggests that it's even harder to have to live with a man when he's on the prowl overseas. At the very least, traditional values are not lax but reinforced when one is removed from his or her cultural context, homeland. Here it's a matter of cultural loss and policing is cultural preservation.

Not all alienation is even in the novel. It's very feminine and masculine.

Women are socially given the role of managing the cultural identity and are thus the first ones to be controlled. Diaspora is characterized by the policing of female bodies and patriarchy and religious heterodoxy of female decisions.

The honor killing is used as a focal point in the story and demonstrates:

Weakness of manpower in the diaspora.

Loss of culture – a sense of loss of culture

The women as purifiers of the community” approach is also under question. The concept of the “feminization of women as purifiers of the community” is also on trial.

In the interim, women are in a situation of ‘internal exile’. They are not part of a liberal program of the host society; they are not part of the limited codes of their society.

This makes it hard to write writing that is easy to read, that resonates with liberation or oppression of diaspora. It's a part and parcel and not in between.

The external racism and an internal fragmentation were the two major problems.

An analytical deficiency would be to focus only on alienation of the immigrant community.

Systematic marginalization also is depicted in the host society in the form of Aslam.

Studies show that the characters are outsiders to British culture and are excluded and racialized.

This leads to two disaffections:

Immigrants are also “other” in locations where they are not expected: on the outside.

Internally: they are disciplined to become conformists.

The rigidity of the community can then be understood as being a response to the community's exclusion as well as a cultural stubbornness. That defense is against itself, however.

The study of the role of religion amid crisis of meaning.

In the novel religion is not just a religious belief, it is a system of identity as well. It reacts readily when it's out of its element, however.

Research has shown that, ontologically speaking, if religious identity is introduced to a secular western environment a kind of crisis is produced. There is scholarly evidence that religious identity suffers an ontological crisis on the introduction of it in a secular western context.

Characters react in various ways:

- Intensifying religious adherence
- Reinterpreting belief systems
- Quietly abandoning practices

All these approaches are lacking in coherence. Instead, they further perpetuate divisions. It is not religion that should be a tie but an arena of contest.

Write a sentence that you think is important in Your Research Argument.

Remain critical to that celebratory view of 'diaspora' that emphasizes hybridity and multicultural harmony, to enrich your article.

A better statement of the thesis would be:

The romanticization of diaspora and the assimilation of it is both challenged in Aslam's novel - one, because it reveals that in such a context of structural alienation neither cultural specificity nor assimilation can produce generations but leaves individuals suspended in a condition undecided in their identity.

Providing care, they believe is outside of their control. Giving care that they think is not in their control.

The novel condemns the internal community structures but does not neglect the part of the host community. The Pakistani immigrants in the story are stereotyped as foreigners in the British culture. They encounter subtle and overt means of exclusion, which hinder their integration.

The result is a form of ‘double alienation’ can be said to be:

- They are marginalized by the host society

They do not have the freedom to move out of their community.

This is a double blow and there aren't a lot of room for negotiation. Support for "fit in here" can easily result in another signal. Consequently, no resolution of the oscillation is obtained.

The home page focused on religion and stability. The main page was dedicated to religion & stability.

The novel uses religion as a way of giving meaning and a means of conflict. It provides a structure for identity for some other characters. In other cases, it becomes a confining force which diminishes one's freedom.

Religion in diaspora is outside of its cultural context and reimagined. This can make people more rigid and want to have more certainty in an unknown setting. But this is not a solution to the problem of belonging. It replaces it, but it's not a replacement of it.

Believing, like anything else, is not a source of stability, but rather a new arena for conflict, as demonstrated by the novel. It separates people from each other; it brings people together.

The Structural Failure of Belonging.

One of the main ideas of the story is that alienation doesn't just happen psychologically. It is not a natural product but comes from structural forces which affect the lives of the characters.

These include:

- Parental attitudes towards the culture of their ancestors.

Parental attitudes towards the culture of their ancestors.

Racial and social marginalization of host society

- Gendered power relations

Instability of hybrid identity

These forces act at the same time, and thus, one cannot be a member. It is not as if characters don't fit into place. It's a fact that there isn't any logical location they can reside.

Conclusion

Maps for Lost Lovers is a thought-provoking critique of diaspora. It rejects the idyllic story of integration through migration, and that of harmony that is supposed to emerge spontaneously from cultural hybridity. Rather, it portrays diaspora as a condition of constant unease, or of constant not belonging - a quest that can never be completed.

This insight will be provided by the title itself. The term "maps" implies that there should be direction and guidance, but the lovers are still lost. It's not because it is not tried, or it is not understood. It is an indication of how much deeper the problem lies: the architecture in which they live do not permit any kind of sense of belonging to build up.

This leads to a position which is clearly and defensibly stated in a research argument. Alienation as a diasporic experience is not just what Aslam is depicting in his novel. It uncovers the constraints of diaspora as a concept of belonging, thereby making it into a place where identity is constantly negotiated, but not firmly established.

This study has suggested that Maps for Lost Lovers is more of a movement and a way of living diasporic life than a movement towards integration, a movement that is perpetually moved along by dislocations and unfulfilled identities. The novel exposes the hidden ways of institutional oppression, social marginalization and conflicting demands of various cultures that make belonging not just postponed but structurally difficult in the lives of Pakistani immigrants in Britain.

The analysis reveals that there are various aspects of alienation in the novel. Immigrants are also marginalised from the host society, which means that they are always outsiders. This insecurity is reflected in a growing cultural and religious division and boundaries, often at the cost of freedom of individual expression. This double pressure creates double alienation, that is, people can't find a way to live their lives in both spaces. Belonging is thus made conditional, broken up and in the end inconsequential.

This novel not only exposes the issue of gender but also brings it to the forefront. Women are the worst sufferers of communal control, and bearers of cultural identity. Their limited autonomy reveals the limitations of a system which aims at holding on to tradition. Here the act of violence is no longer the only act but an integral part of a social logic that privileges the practice of collective honor over that of individual life.

This reading leads to a critique of the concept of diaspora as a space of hybridity and of cultural enrichment, and it is idealized. Aslam disinterestedly responds to that argument with evidence that hybridity does not necessarily diminish identities conflict but can heighten it. However, the negotiations of the characters with cultures do not lead to synthesis, but to fragmentation, meaning that the available frameworks of identity are not adequate.

In the end, *Maps for Lost Lovers* calls into question the notion of belonging. It proposes that belonging is not simply a matter of cultural continuity, or social acceptance, but also of power, exclusion, and of the nature of identities that are created and sustained. The novel is a work with no resolution, and that's what makes it more and more relevant today. Rather, it suggests that diasporic existence is a continuum of negotiation, a negotiation which never ends and one in which the desire for belonging remains.

The text doesn't only stand for loss – in this way. It reveals the constraints of the structures that can claim to provide the sense of belonging, suspending their characters between worlds that embrace them not completely, nor sustain them.

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