

Utopia and Dystopia in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the themes of utopia and dystopia as depicted by Nadeem Aslam in his novel, *Maps for Lost Lovers* which centers on the Pakistani immigrant community in a small English town.. The town serves as a critical element, a utopia for some characters and a dystopia for others. The perception of the place depends on their adaptability or adherence to their original culture. The protagonist, Kaukab, represents the older generation, perceiving England as a Dystopia while nostalgically praising Pakistan. Despite this, her family, led by Shamas and their three children, rejects her wistful views. Instead, they view England as their utopia, embracing its freedom and distancing themselves from Pakistani traditions. Aslam's narrative underscores the idea that individuals choose their utopian or dystopian world, shaped by their traditions and minds. This article delves into the nuanced depiction of utopia and dystopia in *Maps for Lost Lovers*, shedding light on the complexities of cultural identity, assimilation, and the immigrant experience in the novel. While existing research focuses on the novel's themes of migration, cultural conflict, and nostalgia, this study examines how utopia and dystopia are not just external places but deeply personal and psychological experiences.

Keywords: Utopia; Dystopia; Nadeem Aslam; diaspora; immigrants

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the concept of an ideal society has fascinated many. The term utopia was first coined by English writer and humanist Thomas More in 1516. It describes an ideal community or imaginary nation far removed from reality. The term, translated from Greek, means "a place that does not exist" (More, 1516, p. 86), symbolizing a flawless yet nonexistent world. Despite this, utopian thinking has been present in early writings, indicating its long-standing relevance. One of Plato's most influential works is *The Republic*, in which he articulated his political and philosophical theories concerning an ideal state, known as the Republic of Plato. A utopian world

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is an ideal that humanity aspires to attain, providing a framework to guide society and a platform for equitable leadership.

The concept of dystopia emerged in opposition to the idealized portrayals of society found in utopian literature. In dystopian societies, the environment is often degraded, technology is pervasive, and government regimes are oppressive. The term anti-utopia was first introduced by the English philosopher John Stuart Mill in the 19th century to refer to societies or environments that are far from ideal. Gulliver's Travels, published in 1726, is one of the earliest examples of a dystopian narrative. Despite containing elements of both utopia and dystopia, the latter becomes increasingly evident by the end of the book. In writing a dystopian novel, Swift established the foundations for dystopian literature by illustrating a world that appears to embrace modern trends while highlighting its inherent deficiencies.

Drawing from the works of Plato, More, and Swift, the concepts of utopia and dystopia present two contrasting perspectives on how one's worldview affects decision-making. First, utopian literature identifies aspects of reality that require improvement and then creates worlds that achieve these improvements. In sharp contrast, dystopian literature calls upon readers to critically reassess political and social systems, scrutinizing their potentially harmful impacts on humanity. In essence, dystopian narratives oppose the notion of an attainable ideal human society. Second, utopian narratives tend to embody optimism, emphasizing the potential for societal improvement. Often, they inspire hope and provide a framework for what societies can strive for, thus serving as catalysts for change and development. Alternatively, dystopian narratives provide social commentary, highlighting the dangers posed by certain political ideologies, technological advancements, or societal practices. By inviting the reader to consider the possible consequences of continuing on our current path, they demonstrate the necessity for change and caution.

In literature, this dichotomy facilitates an in-depth exploration of society's values, potentials, and pitfalls. The utopian narrative is often interpreted as a blueprint for the ideal world that we long for and the greatest potential that human society can offer. Similarly, More's utopian vision of communal resources can be interpreted as a call for social justice and harmony (More, 1516). The dystopian narratives, on the other hand, serve as warnings against the destructive consequences of unlimited power (Orwell, 2017), alerting readers to these dangers. In both genres, a constant conflict exists between hope and despair in the collective imaginations of individuals.

Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* provides an opportunity to expand the discussion of utopian and dystopian literature by examining dystopian elements within a diasporic British setting, rather than a futuristic or explicitly authoritarian state, which is the common focus of dystopian fiction. While recent scholarship has explored the novel's themes of honor crimes, migration, and religious extremism, little attention has been given to how Aslam constructs a dystopian space within the seemingly ordinary backdrop of an immigrant community. In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, oppression is not enforced by a totalitarian regime but by deeply ingrained cultural norms and societal expectations, creating an atmosphere of isolation, control, and conflict that mirrors traditional dystopian narratives.

Current research on utopian and dystopian literature centers on Western traditions, frequently illustrating dystopia through political authoritarianism, technological domination, or ecological degradation. Although certain scholars have explored postcolonial dystopian narratives, their analyses predominantly focus on state oppression rather than community-imposed restrictions. However, in Aslam's novel, dystopia emerges from cultural entrapment, social alienation, and generational conflicts within a migrant community. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining how Aslam reconfigures utopian and dystopian elements, portraying England

as a contested space where utopia and dystopia coexist depending on individual experiences, cultural values, and ideological beliefs.

This study aims to examine how *Maps for Lost Lovers* challenges conventional utopian/dystopian binaries by portraying a setting that is both a site of suffering and resistance. Unlike traditional dystopian fiction, which presents oppression as absolute, Aslam's novel introduces themes of love, nostalgia, and artistic expression as subtle acts of defiance against the dystopian realities of cultural entrapment and systemic violence. By analyzing Aslam's use of setting, power dynamics, and social constraints, this research offers a new perspective on how contemporary South Asian literature reconfigures utopian and dystopian tropes to reflect the struggles of diaspora, identity, and belonging. This research examines his utilization of setting as a domain of both control and resistance, offering insights into the influence of memory, migration, and political power on individual and collective experiences.

The sharp divide between utopia and dystopia is foregrounded in Nadeem Aslam's novels. He provides insight into the wider societal issue of human rights and society's role, making him a significant contributor to British literature. *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993) garnered great acclaim and was nominated for the Whitbread First Novel Award and the Mail on Sunday/John Llewellyn Rhys Prize for his debut novel. Furthermore, the book won both the Betty Trask Award and the Authors' Club's First Novel Award. For 11 years, he devoted himself to the development and writing of *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), which won the 2005 Kiriyama Pacific Rim Book Prize and the 2005 Encore Award for his masterfully crafted novel. Continuing to contribute to the literary world, Aslam published *The Wasted Vigil* in 2008, *The Blind Man's Garden* in 2013, *The Wasted Vigil* in 2015, and *The Golden Legend* in 2018. According to the British Council's 2021 report, Aslam's narratives provide a fresh lens to examine the societal and cultural issues faced by Pakistanis in their homeland and the British Isles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aslam, a British-Pakistani novelist, has received significant recognition for his works that explore the human condition deeply. As a bicultural and bilingual author, Aslam focuses on the intertwined histories and identities of South Asian Muslims in his works. His narratives are characterized by the notion of place, both geographically and metaphorically. The locations in his novels become as alive and essential as the characters themselves; Aslam uses them to weave and accentuate the narratives he constructs. Despite the critical acclaim for his work, there remains a lack of comprehensive analysis addressing how these settings contribute to the broader themes of utopia and dystopia.

Moore (2009) situates *Maps for Lost Lovers* within the context of the war on terror discourse since 9/11. The novel illustrates the futility of multiculturalism for a working-class and insecure underclass whose methods of belonging are alien to the country where they reside (Yaqin, 2012). Through a process of reverse naming, Aslam reveals "a complex history of intercultural exchanges between East and West" (Champers, 2011). Kamila Shamsie (2004), in her review of *Maps for Lost Lovers*, argues that Aslam does not judge Kaukab for her beliefs; instead, he allows them to shape her personality in a relatable and tragic manner. Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* further explores radicalism, memory, and trauma among South Asian immigrants, illustrating his interest in perceiving traumatic histories as deeply connected to global processes, rather than as isolated narratives (Ivanchikova, 2016). Set in Dasht-e-Tanhaii, a town in England

largely populated by Pakistani migrants, *Maps for Lost Lovers* offers an intimate view of the myriad challenges they face (Salma & Asma, 2015; Monaco, 2021). Previous studies have examined the socio-political context of the novel, they often overlook the nuanced depiction of community dynamics that contribute to its dystopian elements.

While Waterman's (2015) analysis highlights the importance of understanding how the migration of Pakistanis affects their identity, memory, and relationships, Lemke (2008) points out that racism reinforces the idea of multiple forms of identity in a pluralistic society. However, there is insufficient exploration of how these identities intersect with notions of utopia and dystopia within the diasporic experience. *Maps for Lost Lovers* has inspired academic discussion, albeit limited. The dialogue primarily focuses on diversity, addressing topics such as gender discrimination, religious rigidity, and identity conflicts within the Pakistani diaspora. These issues are examined from various perspectives. The novel has been recognized for its original and complex narrative structure, as well as its commitment to exploring the nuances of Pakistani culture. It offers a unique and meaningful perspective on the human condition and its capacity to adapt and survive despite difficult circumstances. As Sarfraz (2013) argues, *Maps for Lost Lovers* weakens Islam while inadvertently reinforcing stereotypes of fundamentalism. Through artfully engaging prose and introspective tones, Aslam reveals psychology in constant conflict with itself (Mishra, 2005). He maintains the margins of classes in accordance with linguistic and cultural distinctions. Furthermore, *Maps for Lost Lovers* celebrates the traditions and customs brought to England by the Pakistani community (Antoniak, 2018). McCulloch (2012) identifies the danger of in-betweenness and the inability to accept identity fluidity in a globalized world as prominent themes explored in the novel. Despite this rich tapestry of themes, the discourse lacks a focused analysis of how these narratives contribute to the understanding of utopia and dystopia in contemporary literature.

Scholars have analyzed the novel concerning female discrimination and the injustices inflicted upon women due to religious and cultural restrictions (Ali, 2022). In "Treatment of Women in Nadeem Aslam's Novels," Rind and Larik (2016) acknowledge Aslam's authentic depiction of women's struggles in patriarchal societies. In his analysis of *Kaukab* in *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Amer (2012) claims that *Kaukab*, an isolated, middle-aged homemaker, symbolizes Spivak's subaltern, facing marginalization. Critics often portray female characters as helpless victims. However, others criticize the novel's mindset. Bengtsson (2008) suggests that characters, particularly *Kaukab*, construct their identities against the backdrop of a morally inferior white Other. While Bengtsson (2008) and Lemke (2008) provide a perspective on Pakistani individuals in Britain, Butt (2008) points out that a clash between religious orthodoxy and modernity leads to their cultural isolation. To bridge the gap between religious values and societal expectations, Butt proposes revising religious values. This would enable Pakistani individuals to interact with modernity without feeling that their religious values are being compromised, subsequently reducing their cultural isolation in Britain. Yet, this body of work often neglects the broader implications of these struggles within the framework of utopian and dystopian narratives.

Maps for Lost Lovers has been the subject of extensive research, yet most of it centers on gender discrimination, religious orthodoxy, identity crises, and diasporic cultural dynamics, with characters oscillating between visions of home and rootlessness. Pivoting our critical engagement with the novel, this paper explores the characters' contrasting views of England and Pakistan through the lens of Utopia and Dystopia, thereby addressing a critical gap in the existing literature.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Utopia is a concept that extends far beyond literary classifications. Basically, it is seen as something ideal but doesn't exist. This is the basis for utopia. According to contemporary utopian theory, it represents a deep yearning for a superior world, as well as a symbol of hope (Ashcroft et al., 2007). Sargent (1994) characterises it as a concept expressing a desire for a more fulfilling existence. Levitas (2010) sees it as a desire for a better standard of living, and Sargisson (2003) views it as a period of transition or transformation. Together, they depict utopia as a complicated, evolving, and inclusive vision of what is possible in the future instead of one static ideal. Bloch (1988) regards utopianism as a process resulting from unresolved concerns compared to an ideal approach, expanding its definition beyond literature to encompass any vision of a better world. From a feminist standpoint, Pourgharib et al. (2022) consider that the concept of the Pakistani women's utopia is closely entwined with the national identity, which profoundly influences both individual and social identities.

Unlike utopia, dystopia emerged much later in literature. Dystopian settings are usually depicted as being bleak, dark, and oppressive because of the widespread loss of hope for an improved future, which led to their development. Despite the specific temporal and spatial contexts which are directly reflected in utopian and dystopian writings, the social and political contexts in which they arise cannot be completely isolated. There is no doubt that this is a general statement that applies to literature in general, but it is particularly pertinent to writers who write utopian and dystopian fiction. In these genres, the author's intention may be closely tied to constructing a connection with society at large. However, there are compelling reasons for this characterization of these two genres being oversimplified, despite the frequent juxtapositions, attributing a sort of opposition between them. There are many similarities between utopia and dystopia, so categorizing them as absolute opposites would be misleading. Even though they utilize distinct literary strategies (Moylan & Baccolini, 2003), they both exemplify what Sargent (2010) has described as social dreaming. According to Peterson and Jacobsen (2012), dystopian societies are not just opposed to utopias, but they are also logically complementary in many ways. As a result of the introduction of new ideas, a utopian world describes and liberates a society, whereas a dystopia threatens freedom and frightens people.

Fredric Jameson's concept of utopian interpretation, as outlined in *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005), provides a lens through which we can examine utopian elements within Aslam's narratives. Jameson contends that utopias are not mere representations but operations that reveal the limits of our future imagination. They reflect collective desires for a better world, while also revealing the boundaries beyond which we struggle to imagine change in our own societies. By applying Jameson's utopian hermeneutics to Aslam's work, we will analyze how the characters' hopes and aspirations reflect the yearning for a better future, even as they navigate immigrant life. Jameson's utopian interpretation is supplemented by Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopias (dystopias) in *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias* (1986). Foucault contends that heterotopias are actual places - places that exist and are formed as part of society's founding, and are something like counter-sites, an effectively enacted utopia in which real places within the culture are simultaneously represented, challenged, and inverted. Heterotopia's disturbing aspects are its implicit subversion of language in a secret way, the inability to distinguish among things, the shattered or tangled names, and the initiation of proactive destruction of "syntax" (Foucault xviii). It is observed that Aslam appropriates the notion of place in his work to explore, critique, and invert immigrant reality, contributing to utopian/dystopian dichotomies. This paper uses these

two theoretical lenses to uncover the nuanced layers of Aslam's narratives and provide an in-depth examination of the intricate depiction of the immigrant experience that he offers.

The distinction between "Utopian form" and "Utopian wish" is emphasized by Jameson, who notes that there are significant distinctions between genres and written texts as well as the utopian impulse that can be discerned by applying specialized interpretive methods to everyday life and its practices (Jameson, 2005, p.1). As political movements often stem from individual fantasies, it becomes increasingly difficult to separate utopian thinking from real-world politics in our age. Several political practices have been rebranded as utopian (Jameson, 2016). As a result of these insights, utopianism today may not just advocate for an alternative social system but also provide a more intricate vision of that system. According to Jameson, the subsequent discourse will attempt to do just that, but with one caveat. These propositions represent mere thought experiments, which are open to a variety of possible societal configurations. The elements of contemporary politics or social thought must be embraced, assimilated, and adapted (Jameson, 2016). Jameson's perspective on utopia remains relevant while its dynamic, evolving nature reinforces its relevance to today's realities. As a result, Jameson's utopian theories can be used to inform and inspire the development of a better future. It also encourages the exploration of different possibilities and encourages people to think outside the box. Ultimately, Jameson's utopia is a way to imagine a world with improved social conditions.

The concept of heterotopia (dystopia) was introduced by Foucault as a disruptive space that disrupts the usual flow of life. They are "other" spaces, distinct from what is considered normal, and have the potential to influence society in significant ways. To better understand heterotopias, we might ask the following questions: What is a 'normal' space? What does a 'different' space mean? What potential does this 'other' space hold? Is this space utopian or dystopian? Aside from clarifying heterotopia, these questions invite us to examine the social role of constructed forms and open spaces in relation to one another (Sudradjat, 2012). As defined by Foucault, heterotopia is no less than the concrete outcome of a society. It is the place where social order is formed, and societal rules are established. To illustrate the duality, contradiction, and unreality of utopia and heterotopia, Foucault uses the metaphor of a mirror. Symbolizing utopia, mirrors represent both real and unreal reality. However, they also represent heterotopia because the mirror represents a real entity that influences how we perceive our image, thus representing heterotopia. Additionally, Foucault presents six principles to categorize various spatial kinds of heterotopias under his heterotopology. They are characterized by their global presence across cultures, their evolution over time, their capacity to contain several conflicting sites within a single real place, their connection to heterochronies, or periods of time, as well as their pattern of isolation and penetration.

This article provides a complex analysis of Aslam's narratives by combining Jameson's utopian hermeneutics and Foucault's heterotopia. This dual approach will delve into the characters' utopian aspirations as they endeavor for a better future. In addition, we will emphasize the dissonance and difficulties of immigrant existence. In addition, we will investigate how Aslam's narratives generate heterotopic spaces that offer alternative perspectives and subvert dominant societal norms. By employing these complementary theories, we hope to deconstruct the complex strata of the immigrant experience depicted in *Maps for Lost Lovers* by Aslam.

The methodology of this paper on Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* consists of a comprehensive comparison of traditional and nontraditional values and behaviors among the characters. Shamas, Jugnu, and Chanda espouse nontraditional values, whereas Kaukab and Chanda's siblings represent traditionalist values. To better comprehend what distinguishes these

characters as traditional or non-traditional, a comprehensive analysis of their actions, dialogues, decisions, and transformations will be conducted. By examining these dichotomous paradigms, we can obtain a deeper understanding of how they affect the experiences of the novel's immigrants.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

TRADITIONALISTS

Maps for Lost Lovers is set in a small English town named "Dasht-e-Tanhaii, or the Desert of Loneliness" (Aslam, 2004, p. 29), where a Pakistani immigrant community strives to cross the boundaries between two worlds. In the opening scene, Shamas stands at the open door watching the snowfall. In this scene, Shamas describes the earth as a magnet for snowflakes falling from the sky towards it. This scene sets the tone for the novel, serving as a metaphor for his longing for belonging. This longing can be interpreted through Jameson's concept of utopian interpretation, as Shamas's yearning reflects a collective desire for a better world amidst the harsh realities of immigrant life. Observing the snow, Shamas recognizes the sense of displacement and longing he feels as an immigrant living in England. Snowflakes disappear into the ground, introducing the idea of disappearance. This motif is echoed throughout the novel, as Chanda and Jugnu disappear from Dasht-e-Tanhaii, haunting those who remain there. This disappearance is a reminder of the loss of home, culture, and identity that immigrants experience. It also symbolizes the cycle of life, as the snow eventually melts away.

This literary landscape is far more than a mere backdrop; it serves as a pivotal framework for exploring profound themes of cultural identity, assimilation, and the complex dilemmas faced by immigrants amidst the juxtaposition of two markedly distinct cultures. In line with Foucault's notion of heterotopia, Dasht-e-Tanhaii operates as a counter-site that represents the conflicts and contradictions inherent in immigrant experiences. It provides contrasting notions of a dreamlike ideal and an often harsh reality. The small English town, with its evocative nickname, "the Desert of Loneliness," (Aslam, 2004, p. 29) acts as a microcosm of the Pakistani immigrant experience. As the story unfolds in this landscape, readers are exposed to the profound struggles of individuals striving to find their place in a society far removed from their homeland. The portrayal of Dasht-e-Tanhaii as a desert accentuates the feelings of isolation and displacement felt by the characters, drawing a stark contrast between the new land they now inhabit and the familiar cultural milieu they are left behind.

The novel centers around Kaukab, the protagonist who reflects the attitude of some immigrants in the West. Her husband and children also demonstrate a different side of this mindset. The strong resentment Kaukab harbors toward England is reflected in the belief that "England, this loathsome country that has stolen her daughter from her" (Aslam, 2004, p. 45), which represents the clash between traditional Pakistani values and the liberal Western lifestyle prevalent in England. This conflict exemplifies the internalized dystopia that Kaukab experiences, as her rigid adherence to traditional values compounds her sense of alienation in a society that demands adaptation. It is alleged that Kaukab blames England for her daughter's disobedience, as the daughter refuses to visit Pakistan due to the practice of gender segregation. The conflict of cultural norms underscores the characters' perception that England threatens to destroy their sense of cultural identity and values. Kaukab's fear of England's cultural influence on her daughter further exacerbates the tension between them. Her daughter's refusal to visit Pakistan is seen as a betrayal

of Kaukab's cultural values and norms. This further divides the two and reinforces the idea that England is to blame for her daughter's disobedience.

Kaukab's defense of Pakistan and its cultural values while criticizing the West further illustrates the dichotomy between the two societies. She sees the West as corrupt and decadent, abandoning piety and restraint. In contrast, Pakistan represents a place where individuals lead their lives according to religious principles. Kaukab's views reflect the growing divide between East and West. While the West is seen as a place of excess and immorality, Pakistan is perceived as a bastion of traditional values and morality. This distinction is likely to become more pronounced in the coming years. "The decadent and corrupt West had made them forget piety and restraint, but the countless examples in Pakistan had brought home to them the importance and beauty of a life decorously lived according to his rules and injunctions" (Aslam, 2004, p. 63). This juxtaposition reinforces the idea that England is considered morally inferior and dystopian, particularly for those who hold traditional cultural values dear. For Kaukab, England is the real dystopia and Pakistan is her imaginary utopia. Aslam presents a stark contrast between England and Pakistan, demonstrating her desire to return to the traditional values of her homeland. This reinforces the notion that her adherence to traditional values becomes a source of psychological confinement, further illustrating Foucault's concept of heterotopia as a space that disrupts the norms of identity and belonging.

In Kaukab's view of England, it appears as a dystopia, a place profoundly discordant with the standards of cleanliness and purity she has grown up with as a religious and cultural individual. In England, she encounters societal behaviors that conflict with the deeply rooted cultural norms of her Pakistani heritage. These behaviors include uncleanliness, lack of modesty, and unacceptably modern clothing. Kaukab is taken aback by the difference in England from the life she is used to. This creates internal conflict for her as she struggles to reconcile the two different worlds. She sarcastically describes England as a "dirty country" full of "filthy" practices (Aslam, 2004, p. 267). Her criticisms reach beyond the physical cleanliness of its residents to the moral and spiritual cleanliness of society, making her critique metaphorical. Her experiences within England, from "the decay of Western culture" she faces in her daily ventures (Aslam, 2004, p. 269) to the overwhelming pain and distress the country symbolizes for her due to its stark contrast with her traditional values (Aslam, 2004, p. 101), shape her negative perception of the country. To cope with these perceived impurities, she maintains a set of exclusive clothing for outdoor use, then discards these clothing items upon returning home to maintain her personal space (Aslam, 2004, p. 267). This act of discarding clothing serves as a ritualistic reinforcement of her cultural identity, echoing Jameson's idea that utopian impulses manifest in everyday practices. She is reinforcing her cultural and religious practices within her home through this act, which represents her efforts to protect her domestic sphere from external contamination. In spite of the unfamiliarity of the surrounding environment, she is able to maintain her connection to her identity and culture through these practices. As a reminder of her culture and beliefs in a place that is perceived as foreign to her, her garments act as a boundary between her private space and the outside world.

Despite her negative attitude, Kaukab also perceives England as a space with ambivalence. Even though she is dissatisfied with the country's immoral culture (Aslam, 2004, p. 324), she recognizes it as her children's home, anchoring her to it despite her dissatisfaction. This complex emotional landscape exemplifies the duality within the immigrant experience as described by Foucault's heterotopia, where spaces are laden with contradictory meanings. As the host country incites both positive and negative emotions in immigrants, this ambivalence illustrates the complexities of the immigrant experience. A dystopia emerges within Kaukab's deserted house,

simultaneously reflecting her disrupted family dynamics. The absence of her children, who chose independent lives, intensifies her sense of loneliness and family breakdown. By describing Kaukab as "the most dangerous animal she will ever have to confront" (Aslam, 2004, p. 111), her daughter reinforces the sense of dystopian oppression within the household.

Kaukab's journey in *Dasht-e-Tanhaii* leads through many stages of her relationships with her husband, her children, and Jugnu and his many affairs. The novel ends with Kaukab in a pure dystopia, where she is deprived of her children who prefer to remain away from her to escape the religious and cultural values that she attempts to impose on them in a society that is different and liberated from Pakistani society. Kaukab intends to preserve her family's Indigenous culture and not lose it under the influence of Western culture. Additionally, Kaukab loses her husband Shamas after discovering he and Suraya have a relationship and leaves home to live alone. The fact that Kaukab, the old and frustrated woman, remains alone confirms that England is her diasporic dystopia of choice. She is ultimately unable to find a place to belong in her new home and never fully adapts to Western culture. This highlights a critical gap in existing studies, as Kaukab's narrative suggests that the dystopian experience is not solely a result of external forces but also an internalized struggle stemming from rigid adherence to traditional values. Kaukab's story thus suggests that England is not a place of solace and comfort, but rather a place of alienation and loneliness. This study offers a new perspective by illustrating how *Maps for Lost Lovers* redefines dystopia not as a state imposed by external forces but as an internalized psychological and cultural struggle, where characters like Kaukab construct their own dystopian realities through rigid adherence to traditional values in a space that demands adaptation.

NON-TRADITIONALISTS

Shamas, on the other hand, is connected to Pakistan's memories as he reminisces about the "colours of the three rooms in the olive-green house in Sohni Dharti" (Aslam, 2004, p. 5), suggesting a yearning for his native culture and traditions. This paints a vivid image of Pakistan's beauty and the nostalgia he feels about it. Even in new cultural environments, Shamas's fond recollections underline identity and resilience. His character embodies the complexity of immigrant identity, navigating between nostalgia for his homeland and the realities of his life in England. Shamas is a controversial character. Despite belonging to his native country, he drinks alcohol, has sexual relations with other women, and plays a very neutral role in the raising of his children according to Pakistani social and traditional norms. This duality in Shamas's character illustrates the tension many immigrants face when attempting to reconcile their cultural heritage with the freedoms they encounter in a new society.

Shamas, like so many immigrants, is deeply disturbed by loss. His perception of England is largely based on what it does not offer, rather than what it lacks compared to Pakistan. Aslam encapsulates this sentiment in a poetic and profound statement: "Among the innumerable other losses, to come to England was to lose a season, because, in the part of Pakistan that he is from, there are five seasons in a year, not four" (Aslam, 2004, p. 5). This loss of a season symbolizes Shamas's displacement as an immigrant. He longs for the familiarity of the five seasons he left behind in Pakistan. This longing can be framed through Jameson's concept of utopian interpretation, as it reflects Shamas's desires for a more fulfilling existence rooted in his cultural context. This longing for home serves as a constant reminder of the difficulty of adapting to an unfamiliar culture. Although he left Pakistan to escape the military regime, Pakistan is not a dystopia for him, and he still misses it a great deal. In comparing England's four seasons with his home country's five seasons, Shamas demonstrates his lingering attachment to Pakistan. The

season lost by moving to England goes far beyond climatic conditions. It symbolizes the intangible elements of 'home'—belonging, familiarity, comfort, and a sense of identity rooted in his native cultural context. There is a sense of displacement and longing for a piece of Shamas's identity that cannot be replaced or replicated in England. The 'lost season' symbolizes the missing elements in Shamas's life which England can't compensate for because of its different cultures and customs. Despite the inherent tension and internal conflict faced by many immigrants, Shamas's perspective reflects these issues.

Although they recognize the necessity of adaptation and integration into a new society based on pragmatic considerations, they also deeply long for their homeland in terms of cultural comfort and emotional solace. This highlights the complexity of immigrant experiences where both utopian aspirations and dystopian realities coexist. Shamas's loss represents a permanent and irreplaceable void, making his immigrant experience a constant struggle between acceptance of the new environment and a yearning for the old. Furthermore, Shamas's comparison of England and Pakistan via the lens of seasons demonstrates how humans are prone to use familiar benchmarks to understand new and unfamiliar situations. In addition to deepening the cultural gap between the immigrant and the host society, this longing for the familiar fuels a feeling of alienation, further enhancing a sense of disconnection. Shamas views England as a place of refuge and safety away from the military regime, yet he does not see it as a place of utopia. His experience underscores the idea that utopian notions are often tied to cultural familiarity, making it challenging for immigrants to fully embrace their new environment. This longing for the familiar creates a sense of disconnection and disenfranchisement, fueling a feeling of not belonging. This is especially true for immigrants, who often find it difficult to adjust to their new environment and culture and struggle to find a sense of belonging.

Aslam reveals that many immigrants continue to consider their homelands their utopia, while England remains foreign to them and their dystopia. This is a testament to the strength of their heritage and a reminder that no matter how far away they may be, their roots remain firmly planted in the soil of their home country. This notion aligns with Foucault's concept of heterotopia, where the immigrant experience encompasses both a longing for an idealized past and a confrontation with the realities of their present. There is nothing more powerful than a feeling of belonging that cannot be taken away from a person. It is their desire that the next generation's identity will be protected, and they do not wish to blend into the Western culture they oppose. They even find it confusing when their "children refer to Bangladesh as 'abroad' because Bangladesh is not abroad; England is abroad; Bangladesh is home" (Aslam, 2004, p. 46). This demonstrates the difficulty many immigrants face in reconciling their longing for their home country with a desire to become part of their new society. Immigrants often feel that they will never truly belong in their new country. This ambivalence reflects the fluidity of identity and belonging that Aslam explores through his characters, illustrating that migration does not erase cultural ties but complicates them. As a result, they remain outsiders in both their homeland and host country.

Aslam depicts cultural collision and mutual alienation. He illustrates how white and immigrant communities view the same place from starkly different perspectives. In terms of racial and cultural integration, segregation, and mutual perceptions, the quotes provide profound insight. The novel subtly but effectively reveals how deep-rooted prejudices and misunderstandings can prevent people from understanding and empathizing with each other. Such barriers can prevent individuals from living in a diverse and tolerant society. Whites perceive Asian areas as dystopic environments characterized by anxiety and discomfort. The statement even identifies Asians as

"smelly" (Aslam, 2004, p. 4), which illustrates the ingrained stereotype that portrays the Asian community as inferior. This reinforces the idea that cultural perceptions can create a sense of dystopia for immigrant communities, as they navigate a society that marginalizes their existence. The 'smell' serves as a metaphor representing the distinctive cultural characteristics of immigrant communities that whites find difficult to embrace or unsettling. The Asian immigrant community initially perceives these neighborhoods as a refuge where they can maintain their cultural practices without fear of judgment. These same neighborhoods, however, also become a place of alienation for them. Whites "leave behind Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and a few Indians" (Aslam, 2004, p. 46), and because of the creation of these micro-communities within the broader society, the immigrant population is further divided from the white majority.

Interestingly, the narrative reveals that this sense of alienation and desire for segregation is not solely a sentiment of the white population. It is also shared by educated Asian immigrants. Aslam points out that Pakistani "Doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers—all have moved out of the neighborhoods and gone to the suburbs by now" (Aslam, 2004, p. 46). Despite their ethnic backgrounds, these individuals are striving for the sense of tranquility, status, and respectability that is associated with predominantly white neighborhoods, regardless of their cultural heritage. This illustrates the internalized pressures to conform to societal expectations that can perpetuate feelings of alienation and disconnection from one's cultural identity. It is because of this desire for upward social mobility that they associate it with closer relationships with whites and farther away from their cultural heritage. As each group seeks its own version of utopia, they are often met with resistance and misunderstanding from the other. The white majority, for example, perceives immigrant communities as foreign and strange. Conversely, the immigrant population seeks the status and respectability associated with predominantly white neighborhoods, which they equate with upward social mobility. As a result, each group is creating its own version of utopia, but ultimately, these visions are incompatible.

Aslam portrays Jugnu and Chanda as immigrants who seek comfort and freedom in England, a place they perceive as their utopia. In a riveting manner, they can live free from traditional oppressive systems back home. This desire for liberation can be understood through the lens of utopian theory, where the hope for a better future drives their actions and aspirations. It is often the promise of freedom, liberation from social judgments, and the freedom to live one's life without social expectations that attracts those from conservative and traditional backgrounds. This is the power of England in Aslam's narrative. It offers Jugnu and Chanda hope and the promise of a better life, without the need to conform to the oppressive systems they left behind. Aslam shows that England can be a place of refuge and liberation for many people. Clearly, the difference between how the Other is perceived and how they are treated can be seen in the following sentence: "Someone had once asked him if the prostitute was Indian or Pakistani. She is white: had she been Indian or Pakistani, she would have been assaulted and driven out of the area within days of moving in for bringing shame on her people" (Aslam, 2004, p. 34). Because of this stark contrast, it becomes apparent that despite living abroad, one cannot easily escape the stipulations of their culture and community expectations, even in a foreign place. While a white prostitute is tolerated in the community, an Indian or Pakistani woman would suffer serious repercussions for similar conduct, illustrating the strong cultural bias present in the community.

Jugnu and Chanda's story illustrates the tragic illusion of this perceived utopia. Although they were physically separated from their homeland, cultural chains and expectations remained. Jugnu and Chanda's relationship, by all accounts, was "living in sin" (Aslam, 2004, p. 15). The bond they shared, which they had hoped the West would understand or at least ignore, ended up

becoming their greatest weakness. Their relationship underscores the idea that even in a new environment, deeply ingrained cultural values exert influence over personal choices and relationships. As a result of their relationship, they were forced to confront the very traditions they wished to escape. Rather than living in a utopia and escaping traditional norms, they were forced into a dystopia and death as their fate. This tragic fate is expressed by the news that "police have arrested both of Chanda's brothers, charging them with the double murder of their sister and Jugnu" (Aslam, 2004, p. 19). The novel illustrates that old-fashioned traditions result in two innocent deaths. The murder is motivated by a perceived insult to the family's honor, as indicated by the chilling threat "We'll make you lick our injuries" (Aslam, 2004, p. 20). The tragic end of their journey illustrates the ironic twist of their journey—their quest for utopia in England only led them to a dystopia they had created for themselves. Their very freedom proved to be their undoing, as they were victims of honor-based violence originating from the same traditional values that they sought to eradicate. This highlights the paradox of seeking liberation from oppressive norms while remaining tethered to those very values within a new context. Despite the bright beginnings of a person's life, the shadows of their past can stretch far and wide. Physical migration does not necessarily lead to escape from deeply ingrained cultural norms and values.

Shammas, whose relationship with Suraya is discovered, is driven from the house, leaving his wife and children behind. His utopia is a dystopia. Although he has been treated with racism, inferiority, and indignity in British society, he has attempted to maintain a sense of Western culture through drinking, socializing with others, and romantic relationships with women, but this has not given him the place in which he feels he is the refuge everyone dreams of. It becomes apparent that he is unhappy, alone, far from his wife, and isolated from society, which blames him and punishes him for his relationship with Suraya. Shammas's narrative further illustrates the complexities of immigrant identity, revealing how the pursuit of integration can lead to disillusionment when cultural values clash. Shammas later discovers that she had exploited his relationship to marry her so she could return to her husband again. Jugnu and Chanda, on the other hand, choose to live according to their own desires away from the strong cultural and social influences that surrounded them. In her search for an imagined utopia, Chanda seeks freedom after two traditional marriages ended in failure. Their fate is the most horrific in *Dasht-e-Tanhaii*, for they are brutally murdered by Chanda's brothers, who prefer not to live in shame. Through their love for each other and living together, Jugnu and Chanda believe they have reached their utopia. However, the imagined utopia turns out to be a tragic dystopia. This study presents a new viewpoint by illustrating how *Maps for Lost Lovers* depicts utopia and dystopia as fluid constructs rather than fixed states, influenced by cultural displacement, individual agency, and entrenched social expectations, indicating that migrants remain connected to the traditions they aimed to abandon, even in a new environment.

CONCLUSION

By juxtaposing these disparate landscapes, *Maps for Lost Lovers* encourages us to reflect on cultural identity and assimilation. The Pakistani community attempts to assimilate into English culture while maintaining its traditions and customs. Through the characters' experiences, Aslam illustrates the complexities of this dual struggle, revealing how their desires to create a harmonious blend of utopian ideals often clash with the realities they face. By combining their Pakistani heritage with the opportunities and freedoms promised by the West, the characters' aspirations

become clear. They frequently encounter a reality that falls short of this ideal, causing them to develop a dystopian worldview marked by disillusionment, alienation, and the difficulty of negotiating cultural boundaries. Throughout the landscape of Dasht-e-Tanhaii, the characters encounter prejudices, ethnic stereotypes, and cultural conflicts. In addition to spotlighting the challenges of cultural assimilation, the juxtaposition of the immigrant Pakistani community against the English backdrop illuminates the tension between these individuals' utopian ideals and dystopian realities.

The novel provides a comprehensive understanding of migrants' desires and viewpoints. It can also be argued that the inhabitants of Dasht-e-Tanhaii represent a clash of Eastern and Western cultures, exemplifying the 'third space' concept where integration can both succeed and fail. This small town symbolizes a place where residents can identify themselves, either considering it their utopia or feeling lost and alienated, thus viewing it as their dystopia in every sense. Kaukab, in particular, determines her cultural life in which she is forced to live in a foreign culture to maintain her identity; she demonstrates her fluid identity at the edge of cultures. Her ultimate utopia is England, and she does not accept anything that would bring her or her family close to this culture. Their children are part of the generation that bridges Pakistan and England, and their identity is no longer divided, as they have found their utopia in their independent lives, breaking free from the cultural norms their mother sought to impose upon them.

Focusing on Aslam's depictions of utopia and dystopia reveals conflicts and contrasts between various ideologies. Aslam depicts traditionalists who view England as their dystopia through the characters of Kaukab and Chanda's brothers. Because of their steadfast adherence to religious and cultural ideologies, they believe that this land is fraught with danger and moral corruption. Thus, they do not feel they can fit in due to their unwavering commitment to these ideologies. Non-traditionalists such as Shamas, Jugnu, and Chanda, on the other hand, regard England as their utopia. For these individuals, England represents liberation and provides an opportunity to live a life free from the restrictions they would have faced if they had stayed in their own country. This contrast between traditional and non-traditional perspectives underscores the complexity of immigrant identity, illustrating how generational and ideological divides shape their experiences. In the cultural milieu of England, they feel perfectly at home and embrace the Western way of life with ease. It is evident that these stark perception differences do not merely indicate a generational conflict; the ideological conflict cannot be strictly delineated by age. Despite being older than his children, Shamas is more aligned with their cosmopolitan outlook, whereas Chanda's brothers reflect Kaukab's traditionalist viewpoints, despite their relatively young age.

A crucial insight from this analysis is that dystopia is not an external force imposed upon Aslam's characters but an internalized state of mind. Kaukab, for example, is trapped in a self-imposed dystopia, shaped by rigid traditions that alienate her from her children and surroundings. Her inability to adapt to her new environment reinforces her cultural isolation, emphasizing the psychological dimensions of displacement. Her view of England as a land of moral corruption prevents her from adapting, reinforcing her cultural isolation. On the other hand, characters like Shamas and Jugnu redefine their identities by embracing Western freedoms, showing readers that utopia and dystopia are relative and deeply personal experiences.

Despite the fact that Nadeem Aslam has deeply rooted the work in realist traditions, he subtly weaves elements that resonate with the dystopian genre, making it a surprising twist. There is a bleak portrait of cultural alienation and the painful dissonance between ideals and lived realities depicted in the novel, as well as an in-depth look at the intricacies of an immigrant

community in England. Aslam's socio-cultural dystopia echoes classic dystopian literature, where societal and emotional fragmentation are often mirrored. It is a world in which characters are trapped in a perpetual cycle of displacement due to stifling norms. The sense of loss looming over them and the tension between individual desires and community expectations create a complex landscape of identity struggles. The characters struggle to find a balance between their own needs and the needs of the group. They are forced to make decisions that are often at odds with their own values, creating a conflict of identity and belonging. Nadeem Aslam's writing can be classified as a new genre of dystopian writing, in which he explores the idea of displacement caused by oppressive social norms. His characters are often in conflict between their own desires and the expectations of the group, leading to a sense of loss and alienation.

In our analysis of this novel, we conclude that Nadeem Aslam intended to demonstrate the reasons why Pakistani immigrants struggle to integrate into Western societies by presenting both traditional and non-traditional characters. Aslam shows that the non-traditional characters' views of freedom often fall into patterns of alcohol consumption, sexual relations, or infidelity, as exemplified by Shammās, which is something rejected and denounced in Western culture. This critique highlights the complexities of immigrant identity, where the pursuit of freedom can lead to behaviors that conflict with the values of both their heritage and their new society. Western societies themselves place these practices into negative contexts that harm society and are rejected as a whole. Additionally, the failure of traditional characters, such as Kaukab, to integrate or even accept change is also considered one of the main reasons for their isolation in closed societies. There is a dystopic mentality present in Aslam's characters; whether traditional or non-traditional, they will find this place to be their own dystopia no matter where they live.

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