

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review

<http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about>

Volume 3, Issue 6(2025)

Ideological Racism, Cultural Conflict, and Diasporic Identity in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*

¹Dr.Haniya Munir, ²Rimsha Maqbool, ³Kanwal Irum Khan

Article Details

ABSTRACT

Keywords: Ideological racism, cultural conflict, This research explains *Maps for Lost Lovers* by Nadeem Aslam, a novel that diasporic identity, postcolonial literature, paints a deeply emotional and disturbing picture of life within a British Pakistani immigrant experience, honor, violence and immigrant community. At its heart, the novel shows how racism isn't just marginalization something that comes from the outside world—it also grows from within, through

Dr. Haniya Munir

Lecturer, Department of English, The Women University Multan

munirjahangir786@gmail.com

Rimsha Maqbool

MPhil Scholar, Department of English, The Women University Multan

Kanwal Irum Khan

MPhil Scholar, Department of English, The Women University Multan

inherited cultural norms, rigid traditions, and deeply rooted belief systems. Using Pierre-André Taguieff's theory of the "force of prejudice" and its doubles—exclusion and stigmatization—this study explores how characters are pushed to the margins, both by the white majority society and by their own community's internal divisions. Taguieff's framework helps reveal how racism operates not only through policies and stereotypes but also through everyday interactions, religious expectations, and family structures. Particularly striking is the way women in the novel resist this layered oppression, often silently but powerfully, trying to claim space for their identity and voice. Aslam's storytelling becomes more than fiction—it becomes a lens through which we can better understand how racism, tradition, and the longing to belong collide in the lives of those living between cultures. This study argues that *Maps for Lost Lovers* is not just a story of love and loss—it's a critical reflection on how prejudice, when left unchallenged, can shape entire lives.

INTRODUCTION

Since Colonialism ended, the postcolonial era began, but colonialism's remnants persisted in society and kept control over the minds and lives of those residing in developing nations like Pakistan, India, Africa, the West Indies, and others. Due to their shared subject matter, post-colonial and diaspora literature belong in the same category. The topics covered by diaspora and post-colonial literature are nearly identical since they both focus on the experiences of those who suffer greatly from racism, racial subjugation, inferiority complexes, hybridity, and dual personalities. Rebuilding post-colonial theory and reflecting the process of resistance are two aspects of post-colonialism that deal with the main concerns of racial, social, and cultural discrimination; migration; hegemonic relationships; displacement; and marginalization. They often imitate the customs and culture of the superior west in an attempt to become recognized by them as well. However, they lose their true identity and become hybrids rather than becoming superiors. Hatred and the creation of hybrid identities are primarily the result of racist attitudes. Through his writing, British-Pakistani author Nadeem Aslam addresses issues of identity, political unrest, social disorders, and minorities living in their own country. Aslam(2004) has depicted the experiences of immigrants in developed nations, and their fervent aspirations to rise to prominence in that region. Stereotypical identities and hegemonic relationships between migrants and locals are major themes in his works. White people, whether they are colonizers' descendants or residents of developed nations think of themselves as superior beings to the rest of the world. Due to the process of colonization, there is a common belief that white people are superior to other races and have all authority because of this. To make Easterners who are Black and Brown feel inferior in their presence, they take on a racist demeanor.

Before the events of September, 11 Aslam's writing was mostly pro-west. He is often critical of Islam and patriarchal and cultural practices done under the guise of Islam. His first critically acclaimed novel, *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), written over the span of 11 years, is a heavy critique of the diaspora Muslim community in England and their struggle with maintaining a link to their Pakistani heritage. Marred by the brutality of honor killing, rape, and murderous superstitions, Aslam openly criticizes and condemns the cultural traditions that endanger the lives of people and promote a sense of grotesque suffering.

'*Maps for Lost Lovers*' is a Pakistani expatriate novel set in an unnamed town in England, where many Pakistani families live as immigrants. The story revolves around the disappearances of

two lovers, Chanda and Jugnu, who break Islamic law by living together before their marriage. The police suspect and arrest the Chanda brothers for murdering and disposing of the lovers' dead bodies, but there is no strong evidence for their conviction. The community believes Jugnu and Chanda are hiding themselves to protect themselves from conviction. The narrator, Shamas, is a cultured man in his sixties who confronts his wife, Kaukab due to the disappearance of the lost lovers. Kaukab is a strict lady who never approves of their relationship, and the story unfolds through the perspective of the narrator's background and the narrator's relationship with his wife. The novel explores the complex relationships and societal issues faced by Pakistani families in England. The novel also highlights the challenges faced by the Dasht-e-Tanhaii residents. The immigrants from Pakistan also establish their own community and declare their identity as a distinct social and cultural group in the diaspora as a result of the English people's hostile views toward them. Racism always finds a way to harm newcomers. An immigrant bus driver is insulted by a white passenger who says to him, "The driver returns to his seat without another word, is paid, and the man gets out ostentatiously after saying, "Show us some respect. This is our country, not yours." (P.290)

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The intersection of ideology, racism, and diaspora engenders a unique and intricate field of study. The experience of diaspora is often characterized by a tension between cultural heritage and integration into host societies, making it a fertile ground for the manifestation of ideological racism. The novel of Nadeem Aslam, a British-Pakistani writer known for his insightful exploration of intricate cultural dynamics, provide an exceptional lens through which to examine the phenomenon of ideological racism within diaspora.

By investigating the ways in which Aslam's narrative engages with issues of race, identity, and belonging, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of individuals negotiating the complexities of diaspora existence. This study will gain significance in all three perspectives; personal, pedagogical and societal as the results might shed more light on the fact that the western people must rethink about their racist attitudes and moreover this study will also open new avenues for upcoming researchers to do work on ideological racism and on the other dimensions of racism as well. This study will go a long way in proving the racist ideologies of the west wrong and self- made and this study will also be beneficial for looking into the things through the broader lens of 'ideological racism' in diaspora literature as Aslam describes the socio-political conflicts in the novel *'Maps for Lost*

Lovers' (2004).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To explain the Concept of Ideological Racism within diaspora
- To contextualize Diaspora in Nadeem Aslam's selected Novel
- To identify the effect of Ideological Racism on Characters in Nadeem Aslam's Novel
- To evaluate the impact of prejudice on Ideological Racism within diaspora

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does *Maps for Lost Lovers* portray ideological racism through exclusion and stigmatization, as explained by Taguieff's theory of prejudice?
2. How do cultural, religious, and gendered forces within the diaspora shape identity and resistance in the novel?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Diaspora literature has gained significant attention in recent years as scholars have recognized its potential to illuminate the experiences of displaced communities. Works by critics such as Stuart Hall (2023) and Rushdie (2000) emphasize the fluid and dynamic nature of diaspora identity. Hall's concept of the "diaspora moment" becomes particularly relevant in understanding how Aslam's novels navigate the intricate spaces between homeland and host land, exploring the impact of ideological racism on the diaspora psyche. The study of ideological racism has evolved to encompass not only overt acts of discrimination but also subtler forms embedded within societal structures and cultural narratives. (Das & Rai, 2023). Works such as Bonilla-Silva's "Racism without Racists" (2010) and Goldberg's "Racist Culture" (2016) provide critical insights into the ways racism permeates various facets of society. This literature is foundational for understanding the theoretical underpinnings of Aslam's exploration of ideological racism in diaspora and its manifestations in the selected novels. Diaspora literature, characterized by narratives of displacement, hybridity, and negotiation of identities, offers a compelling platform for examining the convergence of racism and diaspora experiences. Scholars like Stuart Hall and Homi K. Bhabha have emphasized the complexity of identity formation within diaspora, highlighting the interplay between cultural heritage and the pressures of assimilation. This body of work underscores the significance of literature in capturing the myriad ways in which individuals navigate identity negotiations, particularly in the face of racism and discrimination.

Hall(1989) gives the influential notion of the concept of diaspora in the sense that there is a need to reform or reconstruct the history of the western people by using the work or literature of third world people who resist as ‘contested zones’ between different cultures and histories. He refuses the concept of a black subject rather he asks to focus on the concept of difference and sameness between the connectivity of different cultures. On the other hand, Hall (1989) also points out to have a balanced approach of ‘both similar and different’ to identify a hybrid nation. Hall (1989) says that the older definition of diaspora as the migration process is no longer in use now. He, moreover, gives the list of seven criteria for using the term ‘diaspora’ for a group and by a group.

One can easily find these seven elements of diasporic culture in Aslam’s novels where each and every character talks about the dispersal of third world nation in the western world and each character and each situation presents a clear picture of collective trauma which leads to the flowering of culture among nations. In Aslam’s novels, one can surely trace the elements of troubled relationship among Muslims. The character of Kaukab in *Maps for lost lovers* and the character of Tara in ‘*The Blind Man’s Garden*’ are the best examples of these elements. So, we can say that Aslam is undoubtedly, a diasporic writer.

The history of racism is basically the history of manipulation of colored people. If the selected novels of Nadeem Aslam are analyzed from the same perspective; the racial impositions of the colonized on the other can be seen clearly. So for this purpose a new term ‘Ideological Racism’ has been derived to focus on the implications of one’s own cultural and ethnical traditions. (Carr,1997). Moreover, ‘Ideological Racism’ has explored different aspects of the life, work, identity and Diasporas in the light of post colonialism and racism. (Crenshaw, 1997). In this study, discussions have been made to analyze the factors from which people go through ideological racism.

Nadeem Aslam's novel, *Maps for Lost Lovers* with their transnational themes and global resonance, have attracted attention from scholars across the world. Recent research has taken a global perspective, exploring how Aslam's works are received and interpreted in various cultural, political, and literary contexts. Comparative analyses with other diaspora or postcolonial literature contribute to a broader understanding of Aslam's place within the global literary landscape. Recent scholarship has placed a significant emphasis on exploring ideological racism within Nadeem Aslam's novels. Hooks (2014) examines how Aslam's narratives critically engage with issues of racism, discrimination, and systemic inequities.

Hooks (ibid) suggests that the interplay between individual experiences and broader socio-political structures in Aslam's works contributes to larger conversations about social justice, human rights, and the profound impact of ideological racism on marginalized communities (2014, p. 112). An emerging trend in recent research involves an intersectional analysis of the gender dynamics in Nadeem Aslam's novels. Patel (2022) investigates how issues of gender intersect with race, religion, and class in the portrayal of characters. Patel's work offers nuanced insights into the challenges faced by individuals at the intersection of multiple identities, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex power structures within Aslam's narratives (2022, p. 96).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses a qualitative, textual analysis approach, focusing on close reading of the novel's characters, dialogues, themes, and narrative structure. Rather than counting data or statistics, this method looks deeply into how meaning is created in the story—how words, silences, and symbolism all reveal deeper truths about racism, identity, and belonging. Specific attention is given to how the characters experience and respond to exclusion and stigma, especially through their cultural and gendered roles. The analysis is also supported by secondary scholarly sources on diaspora, postcolonial literature, and gender studies to contextualize the novel within broader academic conversations. In this way, the methodology aims not only to interpret the text, but to connect it meaningfully to real-world experiences of discrimination and resistance in immigrant lives.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is grounded in Pierre-André Taguieff's theory of the "Force of Prejudice on Racism and its Doubles", which offers a powerful lens to understand how racism operates not only on the surface but deep within social and cultural systems. Taguieff argues that racism today is not always violent or overt—it often hides behind ideology, expressed through subtle forms of exclusion (being pushed out of spaces, opportunities, or conversations) and stigmatization (being labeled or judged based on one's identity). In the world of *Maps for Lost Lovers*, these forces are deeply felt. Characters experience prejudice from the wider white British society, but also from within their own tight-knit community—through traditions, expectations, and religious control. This framework helps to explore how racism is not just an outside threat but also something that grows silently inside communities and belief systems, affecting how people live, love, and relate to one another.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, we delve into Nadeem Aslam's critically acclaimed novel, *"Maps for Lost Lovers"* (2004) to explore how it serves as a mirror reflecting the complexities of ideological racism within the diaspora. Our analysis will employ Taguieff's (2001) force of prejudice framework, which seeks to unravel the underlying dynamics and multifaceted dimensions of racism, as well as its doubles, within the narrative. Through a close reading of key passages and character interactions, we aim to unveil how Aslam's novel intricately weaves together themes of prejudice, cultural clashes, and the perpetuation of stereotypes, thereby shedding light on the broader issues of ideological racism prevalent in the diaspora. Nadeem Aslam's novel is set in the Pakistani diaspora in Britain and revolves around the mysterious disappearance and murder of two lovers, Chanda and Jugnu. It explores the lives of Pakistani immigrants living in the West and highlights the ideological racism they face. The character of Shamas, Chanda's brother, who has embraced Western values and converted to Christianity, becomes a focal point of ideological racism within the community. His decision to marry a British woman and his apostasy cause outrage, reflecting deeply ingrained prejudice within the diaspora Pakistani community.

One of the central themes of the novel is the clash between traditional values and the influence of Western culture. This cultural tension exposes the fissures within the community, where individuals like Shamas, who embrace Western values, face ostracization and discrimination from their own families and community members. This mirrors the ideological racism prevalent within diaspora communities, where individuals who deviate from cultural norms become targets of prejudice. "They lived their lives beneath clouds formed by the clash of two worlds." Aslam's descriptive language emphasizes the cultural conflict experienced by the characters. The clash of "two worlds" signifies how the diaspora setting becomes a breeding ground for ideological racism, where individuals struggle to reconcile their cultural heritage with the Western society they now inhabit.

Through Shamas's experiences, we witness the force of prejudice in action. His family's rejection, the community's ostracization, and the constant threat to his life illustrate how ideological racism operates within diaspora communities. Aslam's story softens the image of racism by demonstrating that it is not just an outside force but also something that is supported by the community. This reflects the nuanced dynamics at work, which aim to make the migrants wary of the British and inspire them to resist the host culture as a group by

holding onto their native subjectivity. The characters of *Maps for Lost Lovers* often talk about their cultural background, their experiences of exile, and religious differences, mostly about fear of interaction with the whites. Actually, these characters are unaware of the tactics through which they learned from the stranger. Kaukab is the character who explains her fears :

As in Lahore, a road is named after Goethe. There is a Park Street in Calcutta, a Malabar Hill as in Bombay, and a Naag Tolla Hill as in Dhaka. As difficult to pronounce the English names, the men who arrived in this town in the 1950s had re-christened everything they saw before them..(p.29)

Through these lines, Aslam wants to explain that the immigrants hate the English town and want to detach it from the rest of the colony, and basically, this process is the reversal of imperialist colonization and appropriation of social space. As Hooks (ibid) once said, ‘the process of multiple renaming according to the immigrant’s various cultural backgrounds transforms the neighbor into an ‘enormous palimpsest’. Actually, this process of renaming indicated the development of many countries on the subcontinent, leading to the partition of India.

Kaukab knows her dissatisfaction with England—as the stone carving on Islamabad airport reminds and reassures the heartbroken people who are having to leave Pakistan—but she cannot contain her homesickness and constantly asks for courage to face this lonely ordeal that He has chosen for her in His wisdom.(p.31)

The sense of homelessness and the fear of being stuck in an alien land fill the immigrant community with feelings of loss and horror. The next lines explain the trauma of being an alien in a stranger’s land. Tagueiff (2001) opines that homelessness is the only feeling that places a person into a traumatic labyrinth from which the person is not supposed to get an escape. And this stance seems to be right in the case of this study, where all the characters, of the selected novels show their diaspora feelings while living in a stranger land.

Kaukab, a picture of loneliness, waiting for Shamas to come home, remembers how the Tannoy announcement at the bus station always makes her think she’s in Pakistan and the other women tell her that it’s happened to them too”(p.45)

From the above lines, it is clear that Aslam is depicting the actions of the immigrants who are trying to bring the color of their parental land back to their lives by renaming the streets to make them familiar in the Diaspora land to avoid the feeling of loneliness. The immigrants of Dasht e Tanhai are going through a constant trial of loss and solitude. Nadeem Aslam also named the chapter of his novel after the name of farm season in England, explaining the personal loss of the characters as he once said that ‘a life of exile moves according to a different calendar, and this seems less seasonal than home life.

The novel ‘Maps For Lost Lovers’ time and again focuses on the theme of Diaspora in the sense how immigrant show deep connection with the roots of Pakistan and how they are tightly connected with the culture and tradition of Pakistan. Kaukab in the novel has also an idealized version of Pakistan and she thinks that Jugnu and Chanda have reformed themselves when they get inspired by the image of their homeland. This idealization shows how other characters like Kaukab are enriched with the love of their community and they don’t want to leave the culture and tradition of their community at any cost. Tagueiff in 2001 opines in his book that the native people often move to other countries in search of the idealized form of their own country but while living in a strange land, they find themselves caught between the whirlpool of multiple and hybrid identities. In this situation, they have no way except showing hatred towards the ideological racism of other countries and moreover, racial attitudes towards the other countries.

In the next pages of the novel, we can see that many characters who established their own isolated identity would suffer in the end.

“The cleric at the mosque had collapsed of a suspected heart attack. The barber, fishing in his pocket for the key to the front door, was shaken by the news. During Jugnu and Chanda’s stay in Pakistan the cleric had had a most-holy dream, a dream that had had an electrifying effect on the Muslims of the neighborhood; and it had also been mentioned in letters and telephone calls to Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, where too it had proved sensational.”(P329)

The Muslim Clerics are not striving for new spaces rather they are molding the old ones. No allowances are given to them in foreign countries like Norway and Australia. Actually these immigrants are not carving for new identities rather they are making isolated pockets of

Pakistan spread like an island across the world. Moreover, in the novel, the other characters Bara and Chota: brothers of Chanda and others show their love for their culture and traditions. Brothers of Chanda kill Chanda and her lover Jugnu and start bragging in Pakistan but remain silent in England.

They would never understand your reasons. The West is full of hypocrites, who kill our people with impunity and say it's all a matter of principle and justice, but when we do the same thing they say our definition of 'principle' and 'justice' is flawed.(P.341)

The novel also reveals the double standards and hypocrisy prevalent within the diasporic community. While immigrants may experience racism and discrimination in the West, they can also perpetuate these same prejudices against other minority groups, such as the Roma community. This dual experience of victimization and perpetration reflects the complex and contradictory nature of ideological racism within diaspora settings. The novel also explores the intersection of gender and ideological racism. Chanda's character, who is a victim of honor-based violence, highlights how patriarchal norms within the diaspora community can be a form of ideological racism, oppressing women who challenge traditional roles and expectations.

In essence, "Maps for Lost Lovers" draws upon the strengths of various literary traditions. It combines the narrative complexity of Rushdie, the cultural exploration of Adichie, the character depth of Roy, the social realism of Mystery, and the symbolism of Marquez. Yet, it remains a unique work that stands on its own, offering readers a profound and multi-layered exploration of the human condition within the context of a specific cultural milieu.

Hence 'Maps for Lost Lovers' skillfully employs textual elements to mirror the presence of ideological racism within the diaspora context. Through vivid descriptions, character development, symbolic motifs, and dialogues, the novel offers readers a profound insight into the complexities of prejudice, cultural clashes, and the struggle for identity in diasporic communities. It serves as a poignant literary work that challenges readers to confront the realities of ideological racism in all its forms. The novel also warns against the current trend of viewing Muslim immigrants as extremists and a danger to Western societies, pointing out that this kind of generalization is dangerously simplistic because immigrants work hard to negotiate their identities in their new nation. In the book, the Muslim immigrants' use of religion as a means of denouncing and punishing interfaith and extramarital relationships can be seen as a group effort to challenge the secular, Western definition of love and sex and to claim their

identity as a distinct cultural group.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Maps for Lost Lovers is far more than a tragic love story—it is a mirror held up to the hidden wounds of diasporic life. Through the lens of Pierre-André Taguieff's theory of the "force of prejudice," this study has shown how ideological racism operates quietly but powerfully, shapes the way people live, think, and belong. The novel reveals that racism is not always loud or obvious; it often lives in silences, in cultural expectations, in the way people are excluded from love, freedom, or even community itself. What makes this story especially heartbreaking—and powerful—is how it shows that prejudice can come not only from the outside world but also from within families, traditions, and religious norms.

Yet within all this pain, there is also resistance—especially from women—who, even when they cannot raise their voices, still find ways to challenge the rules that bind them. Aslam's novel doesn't offer easy answers, but it forces us to see the emotional cost of living between cultures, and the quiet courage it takes to survive in such a space. By examining this novel through both literary insight and Taguieff's framework, this study has highlighted how fiction can uncover the emotional truth behind racism—showing not just systems of exclusion, but the human hearts affected by them.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has focused on *Maps for Lost Lovers* as a lens to explore ideological racism, diasporic identity, and gendered resistance, but there is still much more to be said. Future researchers may benefit from examining comparative studies—for instance, exploring how similar themes are portrayed in other South Asian diaspora novels such as of Monica Ali's or Hanif Kureishi's. Such comparisons could deepen our understanding of how racism and cultural conflict take shape across different immigrant experiences.

Lastly, there is space to explore readers' emotional responses to novels like Aslam's. How do such narratives affect our empathy, awareness, and understanding of real-world discrimination? Literature not only reflects society—it also helps shape it. Future work might explore how these stories can be used in education, activism, or community-building to foster more inclusive, compassionate dialogue.

REFERENCES

Aslam, N. (2004). *Maps for lost lovers*. Vintage.

- Aslam, N. (2008). *The wasted vigil*. Anchor, Canada.
- Aslam, N. (2013). *The blind man's garden*. Random House: India.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2010). Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and racial inequality in contemporary America. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 40(3)
- Carr, L.G. (1997). *"Color-Blind" Racism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Crenshaw, C. (1997). Resisting whiteness' rhetorical silence. *Western Journal of Communication*, 61(3), 253–278. doi:10.1080/10570319709374577
- Das, A., & Rai, S. K. (2023). Problematizing the Contested Notion of Nation in Afghanistan: A Reflection on the Afghan Conundrum in Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*. *SARE: Southeast Asian Review of English*, 60(1).
- Goldberg, D. T. (2016). *Racial subjects: Writing on race in America*. Routledge.
- Hall, S. (1997). The Work of Representation. In S. Hall (Ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (pp. 13-52). London. Thousand Oaks & New Delhi: Sage Publication.
- Hall, S. (2023). When was 'the post-colonial'? Thinking at the limit. In *Postcolonialism* (pp. 237-258). Routledge.
- Hooks, B. (2014). *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*. Routledge.
- Patel, S. (2022). Colonialism and its knowledges. In *The Palgrave Handbook of the History of Human Sciences* (pp. 1-24). Singapore: Springer Singapore.
- Rushdie, S. (2000). *Conversations with Salman Rushdie*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.
- Taguieff, P. A. (2001). *The force of prejudice: On racism and its doubles* (Vol. 13). U of Minnesota Press.