

Negotiating Multiculturalism and Cosmopolitanism: Intergenerational Dialogue in Fatima Farheen Mirza's *A Place for Us*

Maryam Naseem¹, Professor Dr. Muhammad Asif Khan^{2(*)}

Abstract

This article discusses Fatima Farheen Mirza's A Place for Us (2018) in the context of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism by focusing on Bhikhu Parekh's theory of intercultural dialogue. It poses the question of how, and also how not, micro-interactions between immigrants and their U.S.-raised children become possible, facilitate or hinder cultural negotiations and recognition of each other and seek participation or non-participation in a shared life together. Through qualitative close reading of the novel, which tells a four-part story, the study examines issues of religion, language, gendered expectations, family decisions and retrospective narration. It separates a concept of multiculturalism (the negotiation of cultural plurality and continuity) from a concept of cosmopolitanism (the ethical openness to ideas that call into question one's own). The analysis reveals that the opposition is not between Indian Muslim tradition and American liberalism but that the family's conflicts are not simply binary in nature. Hadia plays between points of view and Layla's dialogue with Amar reveals the limitations of inherited certainties. The late acquaintance with Rafiq's son's singularity transforms command to an option of reciprocity disembarassed from the necessity of betraying his faith. But his change really comes after Amar is gone; the dialogue suggests he could reunite but doesn't actually tell us that he has. The article proposes that the immigrant home is a space of equality that is, yet not without, the potential to change and transform cultural belonging – reached through critical self-reflection, accommodation and the acknowledgment of the unsolvable difference.



Keywords: multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, intercultural dialogue, intergenerational relations, immigrant narratives, *A Place for Us*

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¹ Lecturer, Department of English Literature, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, maryam.naseem@iub.edu.pk

² Department of English Literature, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, drasifkhan39@gmail.com (*Corresponding Author)



1. INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism and Cosmopolitanism are often used to refer to the social and ethical implications of transcultural living. But the two concepts do not refer to experiences of the same kind. Multiculturalism has to do with the negotiation, recognition and co-existence of culturally differentiated ways of life, whereas cosmopolitanism, as described in one influential definition, is about an ethical willingness to interact with those whose commitments and practices do not align completely with one's own (Appiah, 2006; Parekh, 2006). These questions often are presented as a drama in an immigrant story, not as a formal discussion about citizenship, but as common encounters—with language, prayer, friendship, school, marriage, and parental expectations. Perceptions of what it means to keep culture, have autonomy, and belong as a family in a family home may differ.

A Place for Us (2018), starring Fatima Farheen Mirza, investigates the dynamics in the lives of Indian Muslim immigrants Layla and Rafiq, who are raising 3 children – Hadia, Huda and Amar – in the United States. It alternates between scenes that set up Hadia's marriage, memories of the children's childhood and an ending in which Rafiq tells the story. In all of these time scales the family's cultic and cultural life remains significant and valuable, although the meanings of these are challenged. Yet time and time again, Rafiq insists that such as obeying and uniform in moral expression is good parenting, and the children develop complex relations to religious authority, social distinction, romantic attachment and the life of the American people. However, their experiences are not culturally homogeneous and cannot be considered as uniformly resistant to the other. Hadia's aspirations for educational and marital freedom are vastly different from Amar's more painful conflicts with his father, and from Huda's responses to both. Thus, the novel problematizes the well-known dichotomy of traditional parents and modern children.

This complexity can be understood well through Bhikhu Parekh's understanding of intercultural dialogue. For Parekh (2006) culture is what forms human understanding and yet it is internally plural and it can be subject to criticism. Dialogue is not the interchange of conflicting claims: dialogue helps the players consider where their assumptions break down because they hold the meeting with someone who thinks differently. While Parekh

basically describes the concept in the context of culturally diverse societies/communities, the present article takes it to the context of relationships within an immigrant household. You will need to take care of the extension. Mirza believes that the cultures in his novel may not be separate worlds, generations. They have histories and religious vocabularies, family memories, and attachments. However, the cultural contexts from which they draw these common resources are different and so create intercultural tension in what is supposed to be a common tradition.

The article also engages Parekh with cosmopolitan thought. Appiah (2006) talks of cosmopolitanism that is 'without losing touch of one's specific identities,' while Delanty (2009) relates cosmopolitanism to 'critical self-transformation in the encounter with difference. These perspectives can help differentiate the presence of diversity from openness to be impacted by difference in one's judgments. This is particularly notable in Rafiq's last rethinking of fatherhood, where he does not renounce faith but begins to look at ways of practicing it that no longer require Amar to be in keeping with the father. But the movement has an ethical aspect to it, which is important because Amar is never there, and it is unclear whether there will be reciprocal reconciliation with him.

The central research question will be: How does this dialogue between the generations operate between multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism in *A Place for Us* and how does it change the parameters between the conception of belonging which the parents inherited and the conception their children attributed to them? First, the question that guides the analysis is what encounters are the novel's if it's not merely a re-presentation of hierarchy, and second, the question that is asked is what is the difference between dialogic transformation and a final reconciliation? The inquiry points to the movement of this novel towards a common and negotiated pathway as the one missing from the unilaterally offered transmission via culture. This difference between multicultural negotiation and cosmopolitan openness is crucial in order to come to terms with both its promise and its limits.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Any idea of the culture as a monolithic, homogeneous whole has been subject to challenges, and the concept of multicultural theory has developed through the years. However, cultural embeddedness does not bar critical



thinking, and cultural diversity can foster a larger range of ideas to critique the inherited ideas, according to Parekh (2006). Benhabib (2002) also challenges any sense of fixed boundaries of cultures and emphasises contestation of meanings within cultures. Bhabha's (1994) description of ambivalent space of cultural identification would be helpful in dealing with diaspora without having to opt for preservation or assimilation. These views imply that immigrant families do not pass on an unaltered homeland culture but are rather one of the places where a culture is in constant negotiation.

More recently Mahajan (2025) builds upon Parekh's emphasis that there is no tension between cultural rootedness and openness. Acknowledging differences also allows the opportunity to question oneself instead of leaving behind belongingness as no tradition is exhausted in its possibilities of human life. Levey (2025), however, stresses that intercultural dialogue that is worth having is of an open-ended nature, as it does not promise an outcome favourable to the other party. The lessons here are applicable to a novel in which reconsideration might not happen until damage to the interpersonal sphere has been irreparable. They additionally warn against mistaking any peaceful response to equal the ethical transformation itself.

Cosmopolitanism expands this conversation in the foreground of the ethics of the familiar and the unfamiliar. In this sense, Appiah (2006) challenges the notion that an interest in those outside of a local community necessitates a rejection of beliefs and values associated with that community. Delanty (2009) focusses more on critical imagination that can shift the interpretive horizons of the self in the encounter with the difference. Within the realm of literary research, these methods are especially beneficial in the sense that openness can be seen as a moving attitude (not a fixed identity or the result of mobility in space). A multicultural society does not mean a cosmopolitan character engagement: an ordinary family encounter can require a big recognition of difference.

The questions that have been raised about *A Place for Us* overlap but are not the same. Islamophobia, intergenerational conflicts, and the identity of Muslim immigrants are dealt with by Yasmin and Ahmad (2024) in the novel who pays attention to the pressures of the social environment. Fatma and Perveen (2025) are more concerned with identity crisis and nostalgia; they connect Amar's struggle and the parents' clinging on to the inherited culture to the commonplace experience of migration. These

readings create the relevance of belonging and religious identity and generational tension. However, their stated emphasis suggests that a tighter differentiation of the account of intercultural dialogue can be made, since it is not just the practice that is transmitted that is changed, but also the person who has to do with the practice: the interpreter of tradition.

This study is thus a threefold contribution. First, it doesn't consider the family as a site of intercultural encounter to be misleadingly described as a representative model of two homogeneous national cultures of parents and children. Second, it separates out the negotiation of multicultural difference from cosmopolitan ethical responsiveness. Third, it provides a focus for dialogue that fails, that is interrupted, and that looks forward. Communication does not just solve any problems of generation but raises the question of how conditions of communication are produced and how the production of communication conditions does not just eradicate any legacy of exclusion. Such an analytical point is important since the ambivalences of the novel's end are not a dilemma that can only be solved optimistically but are an essential element of the argument.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Parekh's Intercultural Dialogue and Internal Cultural Plurality

Parekh's (2006) is based on the related claims that people are culturally situated, that there is cultural difference within a culture which changes over time and that encountering difference can make one feel the limitations of own cultural inheritance. Such a dialogue cannot be reduced to politeness, consensus or to speech. It takes some openness towards considering another worldview intelligible, even if it is unfamiliar, informative, and can challenge previously formed opinions. This orientation is referred to as the possibility of being rooted, and yet open to what another cultural position reveals," writes Mahajan (2025). Levy (2025) makes the important caveat that it is not always necessary for good-faith dialogue to result in consensus or a specific result the way one party wants.

In this article, we use four interpersonal indicators to distinguish a dialogic encounter from ordinary disagreement. One is recognition of a view that is not adequately represented by one's existing categories. The



second is reflexivity: a character challenges assume complete explanations or practices bequeathed to his or her character. The third is that of reciprocity through which the younger or less powerful participant becomes a source of interpretation not simply the object of authority. The fourth is accommodation without erasure, in which ongoing difference is recognized without imposing the requirement of sameness of convictions on family membership. They are not analytic criteria developed by Parekh per se; they are elements of his broader argument.

The cultural diversity of the immigrant family is used as a rationale for moving theory from the interaction between two communities to the theory of relationships within families; however, its boundaries are also explored. Pidgin is used as a language within the family but not one shared with others in the community. It is the parent's choice and discipline as to what resources he or she has or does not have available and what is acceptable speech. The children are also differentiated based on gender, age and perceived conformity. The family puts under question the power dynamics underlying reciprocity, which is sought by intercultural idealism. Don't re-code a command which follows silence just because other values are around, but whether the command itself is now available for reconsideration.

3.2 Multiculturalism and Cosmopolitanism as Distinct Analytical Dimensions

This study draws on the concept of multiculturalism to attempt to describe the continuity between family of origin based Muslim commitments, differential experiences of Americans in American society and contested practices that enable an American family to sustain cultural life. It is not a concept that takes 'traditional' and/or 'liberal' meaning of certain practice for granted but one in which issues of cultural plurality, recognition, continuity and negotiation are at stake. The contestatory aspects of cultures are specially mentioned (internally contestatory character of cultures – Benhabib, 2002). Like prayer and the hijab and marriage, the images do not have a single meaning and cannot easily be considered a matter of 'culture'.

There is a more restricted conception of cosmopolitanism as an attitude to difference, to be able to listen to claims not legitimated simply by inherited group-membership, and to recognise the moral status of people living differently. This need not involve being uprooted, or hostile to tradition, as Appiah (2006) has pointed out. It also

involves, as Delanty (2009) proposes, a critical rethinking of the categories with which the self-attempts to make sense of the other. This sense of cosmopolitanism cannot simply be equated with being American, secular, educated, mobile or counter to one's parents. Nevertheless, Amar's nonconformity does not imply he is cosmopolitan, nor does Rafiq's religiosity imply that he is not open, or that his open-mindedness is not religious.

These dimensions are connected to each other through dialogue. Multicultural negotiation can in this way be the place where incompatible and differently weighted commitments are manifested; cosmopolitan openness can be the time and place where an incompatible or differently weighted commitment is disclosed and becomes a call for humility and for moral enquiry. The point of the bridge doesn't mean that everybody must agree, it's being able to stay in relationship despite cultural differences. This distinction provides some useful perspective for the main thrust of this novel, which is neither about romanticized assimilation, nor about "empowered" identity in the case of the family separation.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative and interpretive (with close textual reading). The complete four-part story, rather than moments of familial conflict throughout its main film, *A Place for Us* (2018), are the focus of analysis. Special focus is given to passages that offer conflicting conceptions of duty, faith, belonging, or autonomy, and to later passages that rework and rehear the definition of those passages. At the centre of the textual units are conversations, remembered conversations, gestures of invitation/exclusion and passages of narrated self-interrogation. The focus is not on measuring frequencies or making generalizable claims about immigrants' families; it is on explanatory interpretation.

There were three interpretive movements in the reading. Firstly, Rafiq's, Layla's, Hadia's, Huda's and Amar's exchanges were analyzed to examine the cultural assumptions coming into play: language maintenance, religious observance, gendered behavior, friendship, marriage and the extent of parental authority. Second, the exchanges were classified by which type of relationality was predominant: unilateral teaching, resistance without recognition, mediated communication, reciprocated reconsideration, or retrospective ethical questioning. Third, these forms are interpreted as culturally separate concepts



of multicultural negotiation, and cosmopolitan openness. What was presented in the novel as a non-chronological structure was reconstructed to demonstrate how the impact of events changes over time for the family, and for the narrator.

When doing close reading, one necessarily makes interpretive judgments. Therefore, the issue of whether or not speech happens is not a measure of dialogue, and nor is Rafiq's final monologue an indicator of private reconciliation. Moreover, it is not a view of the children of the family as a homogeneous cosmopolitan type or the parents as homogenous traditional bloc. Such protections are necessary because the text constantly undermines just those oppositions. The four-part structure in the novel provides another check: previous conflicts can be compared with the subsequent meanings given to them instead of being read through the ending.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 *The Immigrant Household as a Multicultural Space*

Initially, the family household seems like a place where religious practices, the Urdu language, the likes and dislikes of food and rights of the family members were passed on. However, little by little it gradually becomes apparent in the novel that the practices coexist with social practices which makes it impossible to discern Indian tradition from American modernity. In America, Rafiq and Layla don't get deported—they go to work, do participate in community life and try to do their best to educate the kids and advance their educational status, even if they form a family. But Hadia and Huda don't just throw overboard the subpoenas of their parents. Their friendships, schooling and their aspirations which differ from their parents' aspirations can be linked to their use of religious language, of the mosque and to their participation and engagement in activities and practices at home (Mirza, 2018).

It reveals a very representative way of involvement in a fireworks show for the family at an early stage. It is indeed one of the things Rafiq wouldn't do voluntarily, and the kids convince him to do it and, in the end, Rafiq is as excited as the children are by the event. This scene doesn't presuppose "cosmopolitanism" in the family. But its meaning isn't as grand: an immigrant family's previous ties do not supplant an American civic experience, but it shares it. The children call their father to participate in a world with which he is

not necessarily concerned, and, for a while, a strict division between the private cultural home and the public environment is suspended (Mirza, 2018, pp. 24–25).

The field of language, on the other hand, is a place where accommodation is far more challenging. Layla fears that the switch to English may indicate that Urdu is being lost and, along with it, other intangible parts of the children's heritages. Her fear is not only linguistic, but that of the familial authority of the language bound to its memory, respect, and intimacy. Later, Ammar's respectful practise of Urdu language to address a senior family acquaintance surprise and moves her. That moment reveals the falsehoods of assuming that less day-to-day competency equals a complete lack of cultural affinity. Layla has a son who could be less observant in one place and more aware of others' language and age (Mirza, 2018, p. 211).

These episodes can be understood with the help of Benhabib's (2002) description of internally contested cultural meaning. Cultural continuity can be identified by the continuity of the changed repetition of all inherited practices. In the novel, language can be fragmented without being lost and going to a national celebration does not exclude belonging to a religion. The home is thus multicultural in de facto fashion, but members of the home are not necessarily interpretively open to admitting this. Part of the conflict in the novel is between a more complex actual life and a political framework of cultural loyalty.

5.2 *Gender, Marriage, and the Uneven Distribution of Choice*

The development of Hadia puts into question the common belief that second-generation identity is an identity without tradition. On her day of marriage, she puts on her clothes, which are adorned with family and religious traditions, engages in known rituals and feels her mother's actions as comforting. Meanwhile, she knows that her decision to marry Tariq has been her own. Not every aspect of the wedding is the same as Layla's experience or is it a denial of family affiliation. It is a negotiated event in which the inherited signs co-operate with another setting up which allows the other configuration of a person acting in the events. 15–17).

It is important it is juxtaposed against Layla's marital status pre-marriage. Retrospectively, Layla associate's marriage more with her parents' recommendations and that



she will get herself a better future. A longer schooling, a more self-chosen relationship are the key factors determining Hadia's trajectory. But none of Layla's choices is taken for granted, neither is a lack of modernity in Hadia's experience an automatic triumph. Compares the two histories and reveals the role of being a good virgin in the family's reaching into other worlds. What "results" is a generational renegotiation that is in a process of utilization of values, rather than an opposing clash between cultural allegiance and freedom (Mirza, 2018, pp. 164-165). 330–331). The first time the word hijab comes up it's about a choice and the choice of Hadia wearing hijab is subject to authority too. Hadratwiya is an obligation, her parents tell her, but it's up to her to decide, and she's all too aware of the consequences of her refusal of her father's respect. This episode highlights that formal choice in the situation is constrained and the power dynamics involved are one that is inequitable and in which moral expectations are present. No language of autonomy can be the basis for multicultural dialogue. But when the child experiences the risk of rejection, regarding parental recognition, then the conditions of reciprocity of judgment are still in the disadvantaged situation (Mirza, 2018, pp. 72–79).

Hadia's subsequent schooling achievements and marriage decision demonstrate that cultural continuity can be substantially reinterpreted without losing out on all continuity. This has consequences for the cosmopolitan aspect of the novel: the idea of openness does not involve choosing one option, supposedly the more "Western" one, but rather the realisation that there can be several ways to participate in a meaningful family tradition. However, the Hadia experience challenges the idea that the second generation is emancipated from religion through distance from it. Her autonomy is asserted in relationships that still count.

5.3 Amar's Questions and the Limits of Inherited Certainty

The potential of dialogue is being increasingly called to attention in Amar's childhood questioning of Layla within the novel. So, with the knowledge of how prayer works, Amar asks, what is the boundary of what God will give her? How do you know? was his succinct reply. But (Mirza, 2018, p. 18) disrupts an inherited certainty which Layla has not been motivated to justify before. The story shows that she does not have the answer that she has suggested she has (Mirza, 2018, pp. 18–19). It is no accident that this scene

emerges in the middle, not because Amar expounds a mature alternative theology in it, but because he introduces an alien need for justification to the process of transmitting a familiar belief.

In Parekh's (2006) approach, the relevance of the encounter is reflexive, in that it exerts pressure. Layla lays the foundation for religious learning, but in the process, the child shows her how much she didn't know. The power of the interpreter of faith starts to go in more than one direction, albeit briefly. This is a small but significant example of the substitution of cultural transmission by repetition. Layla is not asked to give up her religion, and the novel doesn't say that doubt can cancel out belief. Rather the experience is a source of faith, a vision of what can be, not a stash of pre-made answers resistant to interrogation.

As time passes, Layla becomes more and more uneasy about her separation between outward appearance and moral value with regard to Amar. He consistently does not conform to the typical standards of obedience, schooling and ritual, but he can be tender and attentive to others. In addition to the invalidation of tradition, the change is that he constantly recognizes the excellence of things tradition failed to recognize as religious excellence. Even if she can't express a coherent alternative frame, her son becomes an interpreter of moral life. This is an example of what Parekh (2006) considers an important aspect of dialogue: values of a tradition can be revised and challenged from within the tradition itself, and in the relationships within it.

However, there's an important difference. Layla's opening is uneven and does not stop her from making decisions that impact on Amar's loss. Later though, when Amar discovers, her relationship with him and Amira results in a confrontation. Amar doesn't just overlook her when she admits that she was wrong. His anger elucidates that such an acknowledgment may have an ethical significance and not negate what has occurred as a result of betrayal (Mirza, 2018, pp. 244–245). This then makes dialogue a harder win, oftentimes slower process, and not merely a quick fix way to 'restore' trust.

5.4 The Post-9/11 Hijab Dispute: Multicultural Difference Under External Pressure

A very telling episode comes after the 9/11 attacks. Rafiq is concerned that their daughters might get a rough deal if they did attend school wearing their hijabs and he



asks them to not attend school in their head coverings. What he answers is the product of a protective motivation but also sets up countervailing family religious norms and fears, activated by the American public sphere, to initiate linkages. “Mirza 2018, p. 109, Hadia's reply is “I refuse”, she demands that she may be identified without having to conform to the instructions of the father.” It is evident that the scene depicts the unscathed transmission of identity is not genetic. Rafiq is one of the reasons why religious practice is passed on to his daughters, but he cannot simply presume knowing how it is understood and how they have taken up the practice.

Again, in this episode, there is no opposition between coercive tradition and liberating modernity. Partly his demand to lift the hijab is because of the vulnerability of the surrounding society and not new liberal attitude of Rafiq. On the contrary, Hadia's opposition to the prohibition of the Hijab is an act of agency (religious devotion). The outcome is a turnaround in the roles of tradition and freedom, with the father calling for a change, the daughter calling for a practice she has adopted as her own. On a multicultural reading, racism and Islamophobia should then be recognized as a factor on which (rather than simply being played out in the private conflict in) family negotiation depends. Yasmin and Ahmad (2024) also consider the hostility towards Muslims an important context to the family's experience.

However, some years later, Amar "edits" his father's earlier statement as a critique of the inflexibility of the father. Amar questions why his father asked Rafiq to change out the outward manifestation of his religion; why can't he do the same for his daughters? Rafiq, however, is not up to the challenge, and retorts with a “Watch your tone” (Mirza, 2018, p. 312). Not a conversation that is successful in the initial exchange: the father is involved in a hierarchy that forbids him to contemplate his own precedent by the end of a question he instigates. However, it is not effaced from their memories when Rafiq recounts the story of his life later. The episode is illustrative of how a lack of communication can have a subsequent effect of second guessing, even though both parties may not even feel a communication happened successfully at the time.

So, the implications for cosmopolitanism are ones that are qualified. Amar's task is to manage to convince Rafiq to do so something that won't be endorsed by the past disciplinary structure of the father. It helps him to realise that to be morally responsible he must change his

children—and his own ways. Cosmopolitan ONLY in the ethical sense: Invitation to make their claim understandable and worthy of independent consideration. First Rafiq rejects him, which goes for great lengths of inhabiting difference and embracing it.

5.5 Hadia as Mediator and the Possibility of Reciprocal Interpretation

Hadia sits at a pivotal point between Rafiq's own paternalistic and stifling control and Amar's strained ties with the family. She can communicate in the language of the mother, the language of the son, and can give expression on things they feel which would be difficult for them both to express and to understand. However, her mediation does not have to happen to her being "on the outside of culture". She is very much a part of the team of her parents' expectations, indeed, sometimes conforming and achieving to please her dad. Differentiated participation in the same family life, not exemption from family life is her effectiveness.

Amar and Hadia's relationship is introduced on a micro level in the episode in which Amar goes to school to look for Hadia. She feels frustrated when he can't remain in class and isn't able to communicate with the teacher, and she is the first to reach out to him, rather than his parents. They communicate in Urdu and create a private realm of sameness and commonality within which they can express their emotions despite other differences. Though the scene is not yet a Parekhian dialogue between parent and child, it sets up Hadia's very special understanding of Amar's needs in relational terms not just disciplinary ones (Mirza, 2018, pp. 29–35).

Separated from the family, Hadia makes it possible for Amar to reach out to the family. Her invitation to her wedding would become the catalyst for his return, although it is an uneasy reunion and father and son will not come together. She also takes matter into her own hands during the wedding ceremony and does not behave like her brother is forever banished from the family. In this way, the novel can be read as a combination of cultural mediation and translation that is enacted by a translator who refuses to abide by the premise that mediation of attachment necessitates the silencing of difference. Hadia provides opportunities for relationships to be possible despite the conflict.



As Rafiq's story unfolds, Hadia ceases to be just Rafiq's dutiful daughter and is transformed into a character for him to pass judgment on. He increasingly recognizes that her experience has imparted her with practical and moral knowledge. Their thoughts about Amar's leaving cannot be distilled into the one story of the child's being that is exclusive to the father or mother's behavior. The significance of this co-interpretive movement is to break the monopoly on family history interpretation held by the father. It also shows that reciprocity is not a quality that one generation has in advance but is realized in an unequal fashion through a transformation of who and who is allowed to talk and who and who comes to be believed (Mirza, 2018, Part Four).

5.6 From "One Way" to "Another Way": The Reconsideration of Parental Authority

In the discussion with Rafiq and Amar about the interpretation of religious teaching, it is possible to observe that plural possibility is best expressed in the novel. Amar asks, they were supposed to dig into the story or not, Rafiq says that they differed in interpreting the story. And he doesn't even flinch at the idea, but he begins to admit the one size fits all answers. "Rafiq acknowledges, 'We taught you one way but there are more ways' (p.261, Mirza, 2018). But like any recognition it does not necessarily mean completeness of the interpretation of the parent, as commitment to the religious does not necessarily mean completeness of meaning.

It is one of the most pertinent periods for the concept of intercultural dialogue that has been proposed by Parekh (2006). The younger does not present a completely new worldview which has to conquer the worldview of the elderly. Instead, he wants the counsel of the older man to go back, reconsider the meaning in a common religious tradition. The other, the encounter, produces the culture-criticism through the difference in the interpretation. More the business of provisional cosmopolitan openness, too, the father conveys a demand that originates from a subjectivity he's considered a dearth. The encounter does not heal their enmity, but at least for a time, the other is the only precondition for a relationship, namely obedience.

This is further underlined by Rafiq's look back. He realizes that the approaches he used to lead Hadia and Huda were not necessarily what Amar needed to hear. The findings challenge the idea that success of parental authority can be repeated, without considering the

uniqueness of the child. He envisions the potential for engaging Amar where he is and collaborating with him to find a solution (Mirza, 2018, p. 304). This shift does not necessarily just mean an apology for being too rough, but rather it raises the question about whether the parent does, in fact, have the entire solution. Culture is not only transmitted, but interpreted, as well.

The moral transformation is not easy or continuous. Rafiq has the opportunity to reconnect with Amar's distress on several occasions, only to have to admit that he often ignored it due to his desire to maintain his own family's reputation and follow the rules of Islam. He also learns the hard way that it isn't easy to distinguish the intentions that motivated his actions from the injury those actions did. This creates thus a late-telling voice of the novel which is, not exactly self-exonerating as in the previous novel, but rather self-engaging. In a different context, Levey (2025) argues that dialogue needs to be open-ended: it should not be judged only by whether or not it achieves the desired outcome. Rafiq's new story of fatherhood is not just important, but so too its inability to fix the relationship.

5.7 Accommodation Without Assimilation: Religion, Recognition, and Belonging

The dialogue test that hurts most is when Amar says that he does not consider himself Muslim. In Rafiq's world, where religious belonging is always in tandem with family identity, this claim is beyond the categories in which he knows his son well. With anger and exclusion, he responds. Later, however, he comes to realize that he can accept Amar without a shared belief. As per the Islamic principle of non-compulsion, he wonders whether he should explain to his son that even if he is not Muslim, their bond as a father and son is not affected (Mirza, 2018, pp. 327–328).

It is precisely this reversion from assimilation to the condition of a price of recognition which makes it important. Rafiq is not secular, nor does he say that religion is no longer important, nor does he agree with Amar. Instead, he starts to differentiate his own beliefs from what he believes are the rights to withdraw love. The formulation of cosmopolitan attachment, as used by Appiah (2006) is helpful here: ethical concern for a person with different commitments need not involve the abandonment of one's own. In a similar way, Mahajan (2025) reads Parekh to accommodate a non-transnational subject who nevertheless is receptive to disagreement.



This is an ethically serious possibility, since Rafiq sees a way to change within the religious tradition which he had previously drawn upon to police belonging. Instead of letting the story be dominated by a traditional clash between Islam and liberal individualism, Mirza illustrates a father who is coming to a better understanding of what it means to him to be a good Muslim. This distinction becomes clear in his subsequent insight into prophetic mercy, and the need to avoid imposing sameness (Mirza, 2018, pp. 340–341). The dialogic encounter is not so much an effort to replace tradition with a foreign norm as rather to transform the interpretation of tradition.

The only restriction is time! Amar is missing when Rafiq discovers somewhere he belongs. The reader is given a desired response and not a confirmed exchange. This distinction is relevant in the arguments of the article. Rafiq's cosmopolitan openness is emergent and narratively persuasive, but the text fails to produce evidence needed to designate it as accomplished reconciliations. His willingness to accept difference is not an indication that Amar has or has decided to come back, but rather a new ethical possibility.

5.8 The Third Generation and the Shift from Command to Invitation

One other transformation is seen in Rafiq's interactions with his grandson Abbas, Hadia's kid. As soon as time for prayer comes, Rafiq asks the boy, “Do you want to pray with me?” (Mirza, 2018, p. 336). Then he realizes that he had seldom asked Amar rather than instructed: parental authority had generally instructed. Prayer as a tradition continues. The only thing that has changed is the introduction of the younger person by the elderly into practice, namely the way of calling the other person: form of address. This discrepancy between the two embodies the possibility of cultural continuity without pressure. The scene must not be idealized. Rafiq has not changed the way he acts altogether – that an adult invites a child to a party is still a party of power. However, due to this passage, the repercussion of his actions is staring him in the face. Now, he has begun to (re-)place another powerlessness in the transposition of culture. This is a low-level level of reciprocity, and it suggests that the character forming consequences of failed parenthood may have an impact on how the next generation receives religious inheritance.

The message Rafiq plans to send to Amar elaborates on the same logic. He passes the invitation on to Abbas, “There

is another way. Come back, and we will make another path” (Mirza, 2018, p. 338). He admits he was wrong in what he said and did and offers to wait until Amar is ready. This change in the instructional strategy from dictating a route towards proposing a route that can be made together is a good example to show the difference between multicultural accommodation and mere tolerance. Tolerance may retain the hierarchy - the powerful allows the difference to exist but holds onto exclusive power of what it means to belong. To negotiate, the other person must be involved in the decision of the terms of negotiation.

The message also provides a relational, local, and not globally wide-spread perspective on cosmopolitanism. Rafiq's willingness to wait recognizes that there are bounds to his authority over Amar's life. What the father does not know is not an exotic remote culture, but the life that the man who thought he knew best lived on the inside. Mirza's tale thus gives an insight of a moral nature usually talked about between national frontiers or among social classes in the subjective atmosphere of family life. The cosmopolitan attitude starts to characterize openness when proximity is no longer an excuse to assume that one knows the other person inside out.

5.9 The Narrative Form of Belated Dialogue and the Unresolved Ending

This novel's structure is crucial to its presentation of dialogue. In the book, there are several scenes of conflict which are interpreted differently depending on the mind-set and experiences of the family members. An extended discussion between Rafiq and Amar, a son whom Rafiq can't reach to prove a point, starts out Part Four. Not only is it the victory of the mutual exchange of ideas and dynamic relationships. It wouldn't be quite accurate to label it a 'second thinking' but rather a re-question that is done after thought, after memory. Amar is making claims on Rafiq, even if it was he that said it.

He agrees he's been mulling over a religious story; Rafiq asks him if a story should be investigated. This challenge is resuscitated; in this form it has an afterlife. Regardless of its original appeal, its ability to affect the father at some later time in the moral imagination. It's that to which “conversations that develop over time” won't improve to look at as a novel's dialogue. Misrecognition, silence and distance do not become affected by the retrospective understanding, but are the conditions out of which it emerges spontaneously.



Toward the end of the novel Rafiq dreams of seeing Amar again – “We will walk together, as equals” (Mirza, 2018, p. 341). It's a kind of a flip on the previous father/son combination, which has a hierarchy of reversal. No, Rafiq doesn't see his son following the right way behind him, he sees that they move together. But it's not a happy meeting that is hoped for. The possibilities of ethics and the loss. But now Rafiq knows equality, and he may never know if he'll get to do it again.

So, it's a progression from one inherited way to the recognition of another way; to the possibility of a joint way. The first determinates of multicultural differences are the paternal enactments of authority; the second, difference engenders critical reflection on the self; the third, cosmopolitan openness is figured as a desire to negotiate belonging, but not to the extent of their conformity as the cost of love. The change is intermittent and is mostly retro. It is important because it shows what cultural embeddedness can be more generous, and it is tragic, because an ethically transformed parent does not necessarily can mend the fruits of previous exclusion.

6. CONCLUSION

A Place for Us shows how multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism can be understood as separate yet interrelated aspects of immigrant family life. Multiculturalism is experienced in the interaction of religious, linguistic, gendered and social attachments in a household where there are different experiences of inheritance. Cosmopolitanism is present when those members go beyond mere living side by side to recognition of the moral and interpretive values of opinions that they do not fully share. Bhikhu Parekh's theory of intercultural dialogue can be used to better understand why the key moments in the novel are not necessarily when characters speak, argue and defy each other, but when an existing understanding opens itself up to a critical reconsideration of itself.

These possibilities are revealed to be unevenly distributed throughout the close reading. Partly this is because Layla's responses to Amar's questions and her ethical intuition show that the concepts that she has used to think about good religious work are insufficient. But Hadia creates relational opportunities where there is none and yet remains in the world of religious and cultural family. This is even more important as far as the eventual transformation of Rafiq is concerned because he has learned that

preserving a tradition need not mean that he should impose a single and unchanging interpretation of that tradition on others who have received it from him. His new attitude of "enforcement" of culture to "reciprocal regard" is an attitude that stems out of his reconsideration of Amar's religious difference and his new mode of invitation towards Abbas.

Meanwhile, Mirza refuses to endorse the idea that dialogue is a necessary gesture of the gap between generations. Some conversations resolve in coercion; others are comprehended by years down the road. Rafiq's last picturing of himself as equal to Amar is ethically important because it does not imply that anything is accomplished. Assimilation is thus not the solution to difference, and tradition is not necessarily the haven in the novel. It contributes to an account of belonging as a relationship that can be reconceptualized because of challenging experiences of the other, including the otherness of one's own child. In this way, the immigrant family isn't only the arena where multicultural and cosmopolitan values clash; it's the place in which the parameters, failures, and unfinished potentialities created by immigrants in the negotiation of the values becomes visible.

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