

**Analyzing Identity Crisis through Homosexuality in Nemat
Sadat's *The Carpet Weaver***

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by

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Declaration

I declare that the work presented in the dissertation entitled “Analyzing Identity Crisis through Homosexuality in Nemat Sadat’s *The Carpet Weaver*” being submitted to the Department of English, School of Language, Doon University, Dehradun for the award of B.A (Honours) in English is my original research work.

The dissertation embodies the results of investigations, observations, and experiments carried out by me. I have neither plagiarized any part of the dissertation nor have submitted same work for the award of any other degree/diploma anywhere.

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Certificate

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled “Analyzing Identity Crisis through Homosexuality in Nemat Sadat’s *The Carpet Weaver*” submitted by Mr. Anurag Tamoli has been done under my supervision. It is also certified that the work in this Dissertation embodies original research and hard work of the candidate.

The assistance and support received during the course of investigation and all the sources of literature have been fully acknowledged.

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Acknowledgement

“The great secret of true success, of true happiness, is the: the man or woman who ask for no return, the perfectly unselfish person, is the most successful.”

- Swami Vivekananda

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Abstract

This research work deals with the study of Identity Crisis through Homosexuality in Nemat Sadat's work, *The Carpet Weaver*. The novel covers the journey of the protagonist, named Kanishka, constantly finding and finally accepting his own identity while dealing with homophobia. His journey starts in Afghanistan and ends in America via Pakistan. The novel is also inspired by the writer's real-life experiences. This research, by focusing on various characters like Kanishka, Maihan, and Rustam, also brings into light how and why identity crisis takes place and how it affects the characters through the lens of theorists like Michel Foucault and Mary Mackintosh, and how society and its ethos play an important role in it. It also highlights the role of language, as it is used as an effective tool by Sadat to represent homophobia, like the use of the term 'kuni'.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Nemat Sadat is an American novelist, journalist, and LGBTQ+ rights campaigner. He was born in Afghanistan and migrated to the United States with his family when the Soviet–Afghan War (1979–1989) broke out in 1979, but he never truly let go of his homeland. Despite having grown up in the United States, he never felt fully integrated. It became even more difficult to live there after 9/11 happened. He came out as a gay man in 2013 at the age of 23, but his family didn't find out until seven years later. It wasn't easy for him, to say the least. "It wasn't until he hit his early thirties that he gathered the courage to come out to his parents, who told him to confine his sexuality and engage with women" (Jain 9).

Because of this revelation, he was abandoned by his own family, He was disowned by his siblings, and his father also alienated him. While his sister accepts his sexuality, she has previously expressed concern about the potential for their family to be harmed as a result of his advocacy. On the loneliest of days, his mother has been his sole companion. The author biography mentions that he's also "the first native from Afghanistan to have publicly come out as gay and campaign for LGBTQIA rights in Muslim communities worldwide" (Jain 6).

In 2012, he returned to Kabul and was in the news for initiating an underground queer rights movement in Afghanistan with the help of social media. His activism grew even after severe persecution he faced when he was working as an assistant professor in political science at the American University of Afghanistan. In 2013, the Afghan government allegedly declared his activism and public outreach a threat to national security and a subversion of religion (Islam), forcing

him to flee the country and settle in New York City. In one of his recent interviews with *The New Indian Express*, Sadat very categorically stated: "I want to live in my country and not be stoned for loving a man"(Tripathi 3).

In an interview with *'The Quint'*, he says:

King Amanullah Khan, if his trajectory had continued, Afghanistan would have continued to pursue secularization and modernization. If we had had the absence of war these past 40 years, I think the evolution would have been the decriminalization of homosexuality, gay rights, and gay marriage. (Sadat 1)

In the same interview, when he was asked about his experiences with people of the same community, he says:

They were saying that the situation right now, at the time I was in Kabul in 2013, was not much better than under the Taliban. For example, since I came out as gay, I've had Afghans tell me that the Afghan National Director of Security has a kill and dump policy. And this is something Americans and westerners are paying for the US & Allied Occupation. The Afghan government is quietly tapping into LGBT groups and trying to break them up by luring them into honey traps. The Afghan government has a double face, while one face is for western governments, the other is secretly and quietly persecuting LGBT people. (Sadat 1)

The Carpet Weaver was his debut novel since then he hasn't published any other work. He started writing this novel on June 4, 2008, after being inspired by America's former president,

Barack Obama, winning the Democratic nomination. He wrote this work in the hope of creating the change he wished to see in the world. The novel was published in the year 2019. Despite being his first novel, he received a lot of praise and fame.

Anees Salim, author of *The Blind Lady's Descendants* and *The Small-town Sea* while praising the writer and the work says:

Nothing like this has ever come out of Afghanistan. And nobody from this region has ever written a more compelling narrative about love and redemption than Nemat Sadat. Through, *The Carpet Weaver*, Sadat has achieved what any debutant would love to be credited with. An unputdownable book. (Salim 4)

Research Methodology

The current dissertation seeks to explore the idea of 'Identity and Identity Crisis Through Homosexuality' in Nemat Sadat's novel *The Carpet Weaver* which highlights the condition of homosexuals and the atrocities they face. It brings to the light various minor elements which otherwise would have been ignored under larger issues.

The current work is looked through the lens of theorists like Michel Foucault and Mary Mackintosh. Many detail analyses of why and how it impacts the characters are discussed in it, via characters and language of the novel.

Homosexuality

Karoly Maria Benkert, an Austrian-born Hungarian psychologist, coined the term 'homosexuality' in the late nineteenth century. It basically refers to the sexual attraction and interest in oneself.

Female homosexuality is usually referred to as lesbianism, while the word gay is sometimes used as a synonym for homosexual, and is mainly used for male homosexuality. In other words, if a "person primarily emotionally, physically, and sexually is attracted to members of the same sex" is considered homosexual. ("LGBTQI Glossary 1") It is by many considered the binary opposite to heterosexuality, i.e., a male and a female's sexual, physical, and emotional attraction towards each other, i.e., the opposite sex.

Homophobia, is the unjustified fear or hate for homosexuals, homosexuality, or any actions or beliefs that do not fit into predetermined sex roles. This anxiety is what reinforces heterosexism and also gives rise to heterosexual privilege, which are the advantages that heterosexuals naturally receive but gays and bisexuals do not. The advantages that gays and bisexuals gain by professing heterosexual identity or downplaying their sexual orientation are many. (LGBTQI Glossary 1)

In today's scenario, LGTBQIA+ has become an umbrella term for most of the nonheterosexual orientations. It is basically an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual. Where + and – represent the individuals or groups who either fit into one or more of these categories. It is represented by either the 'Rainbow' or the 'gay pride flag or LGBT pride flag or Rainbow flag', which was designed by 'Gilbert Baker'. It is a multi-color stripe flag but mainly contains eight colors, and each colour represents something: Hot pink symbolizes sex, red symbolizes life, orange symbolizes healing, yellow symbolizes sunlight, green symbolizes nature, turquoise symbolizes art, indigo symbolizes harmony, and violet symbolises spirit. The flag also represents the diversity of this community and the diversity of human sexuality

The entire month of June is also celebrated as "LGBTQ Pride month" in memory of the Stonewall riots, which took in honor of the Stonewall riots, which happened in June of 1969 in New York City.

Homosexuality in Literature and Arts

Homosexuality has echoed in Arts and Literature and can be traced in the works of the same. Images of lady erotically hugging other women and males showing off their genitalia to one another can be found in Khajuraho's temples. This has often been interpreted by academics as an admission that gay activities were performed by individuals.

In literature, homosexuality is not a new concept. It means something different for each writer, which in turn gets reflected in their works. D.H. Lawrence' in his poem *December Night*.

“Take off your cloak and your hat; And
 your shoes, and draw up at my hearth
 Where never woman sat.
 I have made the fire up bright;
 Let us leave the rest in the dark
 And sit by firelight.
 The wine is warm in the hearth; The
 flickers come and go.
 I will warm your feet with kisses
 Until they glow.” (Lawrence 73)

The poem showcases a very sensual and erotic image of two males making love to each other. The line where Lawrence says, "Where never a woman sat." confirms the sexual interest of these males in other men and not in women, hence, homosexuals.

Khalid Hosseini a famous American-Afghan writer, in his novel *The Kite Runner*, which has its setting in Afghanistan, gives a very dark and negative characterization of homosexuality. The character of Assef in the novel is portrayed as a psychopath who reveres Adolf Hitler. He was the local bully who raped Hassan as a youngster. He now enjoys killing people as a Taliban official in his adult life. Sohrab holds Sohrab as a sex slave until Amir arrives to save him. Assef loses an eye to Sohrab's slingshot after almost killing Amir. "Assef said "I'm letting you keep this kite, Hazara. I'll let you keep it so it will always remind you of what I'm about to do" (Hosseini 64).

Assef knelt behind Hassan, put the hand on Hassan's hips and lifted his bare buttocks. He kept one hand on Hassan's back and undid his own belt's buckle with his free hand. He unzipped his jeans, dropped his underwear. He positioned himself behind Hassan. Hassan didn't struggle, Didn't even whimper. He moved his head slightly and I caught a glimpse of his face. Saw the resignation in it. It was a look I had seen before. It was the look of the lamb. (Hosseini 66)

Though the concept of homosexuality was never alien to many actual monarchs, such as Mahmud of Ghazni and the Mughal Emperor Babur, who spent the majority of their lives in Afghanistan, are known to have taken young men as lovers and had little interest in women other than to advance their dynasties. The only occasion Babur seems to have been smitten with someone

in his own memoirs was when he fell deeply in love with a boy named "Baburi" he spotted in the market (Pillalamaripage 5).

During those peaceful days, I became aware of a peculiar urge inside myself... Because of a boy in the camp-bazar, whose very name, Baburi, fits in, I am enraged and distressed myself. I hadn't had any feelings of love or desire for anyone up until that point, either via experience or hearsay. I also hadn't talked or listened to anyone. Baburi would occasionally visit me, but because of my humility and shyness, I could never look directly at him. How could I then engage in discussion (ikhtildt) or recitation (hikdyat) with him? In my excitement and anger, I was unable to express my gratitude for his arrival; how could I then criticise him for leaving? What authority did I have to order the required service to myself?

When I unexpectedly came face to face with him one day while travelling with friends down a path during that period of intense need and passion, I was so bewildered that I almost fell off the road. It was hard to speak to him directly or to look at him directly. I continued through a hundred agonies and humiliations. -
(Babur 120)

Persian poetry is well-known not just in Iran but also in Afghanistan. One of the main features of these poems is constant use of homosexuality. Nearly all Persian love poetry until the 20th century was exclusively addressed to a man by another man. Persian poetry frequently addresses a "lover," who is generally a boy, which can be seen by the use of the term "pesar", پس. (Pillalamaripage 8).

Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī", a well-known Persian Sufi poet, he dedicated most of his works to "Shams-i Tabrīzī" and vice versa, who is also considered his muse and companion in love. It is said that the poetry in his "Divan-i Shams-i Tabrizi" ("The Works of Shams of Tabriz") represents the relationship between Rumi and Sham in the form of their conversation.

This is love: to fly toward a secret sky, to cause a hundred veils to fall each moment...-Tabriz (Pillalamari 10)

Despite having such a big influence on literature, which is considered to be the mirror of society, the status of homosexuals in today's world is mostly stained with a lot of hate, intolerance, and non-acceptance from heterosexuals.

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Chapter 2

Identity and Identity Crisis Through Homosexuality

Identity and Identity Crisis

Identity has always been an important part of human life as people are acknowledged by whatever identity is attached to them. Identity can be understood simply as the difference in personality or character of a person, which makes that individual unique. This may include physical appearance, beliefs, qualities, sexuality and familial and social background. The memories, experiences, connections, and values that shape one's sense of self are all included in identity. Even when new characteristics are produced and assimilated into one's identity, this amalgamation develops a consistent sense of who one is through time. The strings of identity are strongly interwoven with a person's self-esteem and self-image (Identity 1).

Identity crisis is a developmental phenomenon when a person starts to doubt who they are or where they fit in the world. This concept was given by Erik Erikson, who believed that one of the most significant conflicts people deal with is the development of their identity.

Erikson defined an identity crisis as “a period of intense investigation of looking at oneself through various ways” (Erikson 4). Though the creation and growth of identity are not limited to adolescence, Erikson highlighted that creating a sense of identity is crucial throughout the teenage years. Instead, as people take on new tasks and navigate diverse experiences, identity evolves and changes with time. So, anyone at any age can have an identity crisis.

The role of society in the existential crisis is significant. In a patriarchal society, gender roles and stereotypes are assigned to an individual at the time of birth itself, which is conventionally and

socially acceptable. The social standard set for men can be understood as being well built in physical and social stature, does not show his vulnerabilities, doesn't express his emotions, does not cry or express pain, and has control over the females in his life. He should be financially independent and look after his family. Anything outside of these conventional norms is unacceptable by society. One example of this is homosexuality. Only heterosexuality is acceptable in a society that adheres to its orthodoxy, whereas homosexuality is not, and marginalized, and is considered un-natural. As a result, for homosexuals under social pressure, which also includes peer and familial pressure, it becomes extremely difficult to express themselves, their sexual orientation, and their desires. Hence, they are bound to live in closets. The primary reason for this is a fear of not being accepted and being thrown out of society, and in some cases, even being punished for it.

Michel Foucault in his book, *History of Sexuality*, theorized sexuality as rooted within the structures and discourses of power. He was able to do this by making the case that some types of sexuality were created to be seen as unnatural and wicked, and its practitioners were then subjected to surveillance, offering for the first time a specific solution to the so-called natural marginalization of gay sexuality. By focusing on the sexualized and sexual body as a site of power play, where various forces like law or medicine map and categorize the body in certain ways before acting upon it, Foucault was able to better understand sexuality. As a result, Foucault changed the focus of sexuality from the pure body to discourses and society (Nayar 185).

Synopsis: *The Carpet Weaver*

Nemat Sadat's novel is divided into three parts, namely Kabul (August 1977-April 1978), Kabul and Pakistan (May 1979-August 1982), and America (September 1983-1984), respectively. It is a coming-of-age story of a young Afghan boy named Kanishka Nurzada who not only has to deal with

the struggles of being gay in an orthodox society but also has to face war, starvation, and various losses while doing so.

At the beginning of Kanishka Nurzada's story, "The one thing I know is that Allah never forgives sodomy," (Sadat 3) was self-righteously said by his godfather, Zaki Jaan, at the former's sixteenth birthday party, which was lavishly planned by his parents. This statement sets the tone for his first-person narrative. There is no room for same-sex love in a culture where male chauvinism and intense religiosity reign with an iron fist. Gay males are addressed as "kuni" and face everything from life in prison to intense scorn and even terrible, inhumane deeds. Males allure a hormonally charged Kanishka, who finally falls in love with his closest friend, the golden boy, Maihan Melatyar, who reciprocates hesitantly and covertly. They are required by tradition to pursue females in order to "preserve the integrity of Afghanistan". The protagonist, who is on the verge of becoming a man, finds the idea repulsive.

In 1977, Kabul is only a few months away from the Saur Revolution, which came before the Soviet era in the history of the country racked by civil war. The idyllic days are a lyrical blend of going to the Lycée Esteqlal and hanging around in the bustling market where Kanishka's Baba sells the fascinating Marco Polo Rugs. The events of crazy cross-dressing by the three friends, Kanishka, Maihan, and Faiz, which ends in a terrible fashion, and carefree times in chaikhans and parks, and a few boyish pranks that characterise life. The holiday days, as well as Kanishka's mother's warmhearted concoctions and conviviality, are described in delectable detail.

The steam-filled hammams became the secret place of meeting for his Baba and his other maoist comrades, including Rustam, toward whom Kanishka was sexually attracted, and he also reciprocated the same homoerotic vibe. The nation soon experiences political upheaval. In due

course, Kanishka and Maihan share some imitated moments together and also get themselves clicked while kissing on each other's cheeks. Things changed drastically after the Saur Revolution, and it became difficult to live in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, in school, Maihan and Kanishka start receiving treats, first in the form of letters, later followed by bullying and physical, emotional, and sexual harassment by classmates, Irfan and Osman.

As situation worsens in Kabul, Maihan told Kanishka that his family men are working for America as agents, and soon they will receive their green cards and settle in America. Maihan suggests Kanishka should work for America too, so then they can be together in America. Soon, Baba gets arrested and later executed for being a maoist. Finally, Kanishka, along with her mother and younger sister, decides to move to America too. They sold their home and shop to the man who was taking them to Pakistan. After they reached Pakistan, they found themselves in a US refugee camp where they were mere slave workers, working as carpet weavers for a man named Tor Gul, to whom Kanishka shows his carpet design sketches and by whom the latter was raped time and again.

Rustam, who was one of Baba's comrade friends, was not working here in this camp disguised as a security guard. Kanishka recognizes him somehow. Since Rustam also came there after running away from Afghanistan and wanted to move to Canada now, he and Kanishka, along with some others, made plan to kill security personnel and run away from there, which they succeeded in. On their way to somewhere where they can seek help to go to their desired places, Rustam confesses to Kanishka about him being in love with a man named Ashkan, but after being so harassed, Ashkan leaves him.

In the last part of the novel, Kanishka and his family are granted political asylum in America and are reunited with Faiz and Zaki Jaan. Kanishka gets admission in an education institution, at the

same time, he started working in an Afghan goods and carpet shop, where one day he saw Maihan with his cousin Lamba, but somehow wasn't able to meet him, but soon at a friend's party they met and Maihan told him about his engagement to Lamba. He gets heartbroken at first, then he realises he doesn't need Maihan anymore as he feels Maihan is unworthy of his love. At the climax of the novel, Kanishka confronts his mother about him being gay and moves on with his life, no longer chasing the boy he was so madly in love with. Instead of giving us an epic love tale ending where the two star-crossed lovers ultimately reunite and start a life together, Sadat gave the novel a more realistic ending.

Characters

The characters in the novel make the reader well aware of the stigma around homosexuality in a society that is very orthodox and intolerant in its approach towards matters like homosexuality. Characters are either the cause or victims of homophobia, and how the latter, while dealing with this, begins to question their own identity and conceal it.

Kanishka

“A look of mutiny settled all over Zaki Jaan’s face, and then he looked at me. I shrank a little, trying to conceal how petrified I was. Could he see into my heart? Could he know that I, in fact, was a kuni?” (Sadat 4).

Kanishka is the protagonist of the novel and goes through the process of transformation from an individual who’s petrified of revealing his true sexual identity to the world and is in a dilemma of either being a socially acceptable ‘real man’ or simply being himself to a man who accepts himself without caring about the world. From the beginning till almost the end, he remained very afraid of

what would happen if his identity got revealed and people like Tor Gul, Irfan, and Osman used this fear of his against him and abused him physically, sexually, and mentally.

They took us by the collar, by the throat, by the wrists and by the elbows, pulling us out. The outrage in their blank, copper eyes fledged in the forbidding lights of the hallway. We were in real danger now. They hauled us out in spun around like spindles, each rotating accompanied by punches, slaps and kicks, each boy grabbing and violating a different part of our bodies, all the wild laughing hysterically like that'd all gone mad. (Sadat 148)

He develops romantic feelings for Maihan, but due to social and familial pressure, he tries very hard to be a 'real man' for which he puts a lot of effort into developing some interest in females. As a result, he ends up spending an evening with Lamba, who tries to get physically intimate with him, which he finds awfully suffocating, but when he gets intimate with Maihan, he feels liberated.

His sexual drives and feeling of being accepted for he is make him turn a blind eye towards his tormentor Tor Gul and his atrocities, and even after being raped, he forgives him and even starts to like and miss him. "I felt violated and used, but somehow, at the same time, it felt natural; it felt joyous; it felt right..." (Sadat 213).

From the very start of the novel, he wanted to be accepted for what he was by his loved ones, but always feared the results of it. But as soon as he came out to Madar and Benafsha, all his fears vanished and he was ecstatic.

Maihan

Maihan was introduced as a very good looking and modern boy who has lived in New Delhi, India for a couple of years. Initially, he did not express a clear interest in males and is frequently shown talking about females and about his sexual relations with them. He also wishes to have a beautiful wife. But as the story progresses, he starts to explore himself and show his interest in things that were not conventionally acceptable in the Afghan community, for a man, like wearing women's clothing and applying makeup. "Maihan and I began trying on the clothes we'd found in the dowry chest" (Sadat 32).

He soon became attracted to Kanishka, to whom he even confessed his feelings. At this point in time, his identity as a bisexual individual comes out to the readers. Kanishka even called him the 'sultan of my heart'. "I've dreamt about you. Only about you." He held his gaze then and studied my face. "I think you have the most beautiful almond-shaped eyes in all of Asia" (Sadat 46).

Despite the fact that he was in love with Kanishka and even had a sexual and romantic affair with her, he was always conscious of his image and identity. He even tells Kanishka that they can't be seen together or else they will be killed, which to some extent comes true when they are beaten and abused verbally and sexually by their classmates. Because of this fear, he never accepted his true identity, even after settling in America. At the end, he even advises Kanishka that if they both marry women, then they can be together forever, which Kanishka denies. As he never accumulated the courage to accept himself, he marries Lamba. He represents the people who even after knowing their true identity and doesn't come out because the fear of unacceptance and hostility from society.

Rustam

He was one of Baba's Maoist comrades, who was once deeply in love with a man named Ashkan, because of whom he became a Maoist. Ashkan left him after being extremely tortured and raped for loving a man and devoted his life to religion.

“His name was Ashkan,” “after he was raped and tortured, he refused to see me. I wanted to kill the perpetrators, but he wouldn’t tell me who they were. He wanted to protect me. He disappeared one day. I later heard from his family that he became a Hajji pilgrim and devoted his life to Islam” (Sadat 236).

But initially, he was shown as someone who is something else but is pretending to be something else. He tries to sexually woo Kanishka in the shower by removing all his clothes in front of him. Nonetheless, despite having an interest in males, he joked about them and even made demeaning comments about them:

“Don’t all look at once, but that little animal over there-”, “is a famous kuni. He’s married and has kids, but continuously bends over for men. He’s been beaten and threatened, but he can’t live without dick. One night as I was leaving the hammam, he solicited me.” (Sadat 22)

Rutam can be viewed as a result of his painful past interactions with society and its relationship with homosexuality. He chose to not be open about his identity and desires after losing his lover and to follow the rules of society. He represents the part of homosexual community who out of their past bad experiences doesn’t accept themselves and out this frustration even ridicule and demean other who do so.

Zaki Jaan

Zaki Jaan is Faiz's father, who is also Kanishka's godfather. The novel begins with his homophobic remarks: "It's immoral, impure, unpardonable and wretched," then he continued. 'And if we let them get their way, then others will find the courage to continue down their path. We can't let any one of our boys become a...' he paused and uttered in a hushed tone, 'kuni'" (Sadat 3).

Throughout his time in Afghanistan, he was extremely hostile towards homosexuality and was a hard-core follower of gender stereotypes. During their trip to Istalif, when he finds his son wearing his wife's clothes and makeup, he gets furious and hits him three times with his belt, and even asks Kanishka and Maihan to keep their mouths shut about what happened, as he was very conscious of his position and image. Even though after moving to America, things changed drastically, he now has an inter-religion girlfriend and doesn't seem to be much concerned about homosexuality.

Irfan and Osman

They were Kanishka and Maihan's classmates, and once they discovered their connection, they began to bully and harass them in various ways. They represent the intolerant, hostile society at large and how it makes the lives of homosexual's hell.

Irfan and Osman had ratcheted up their mission to torment me and Maihan. They liked to laugh at us and try to trip us up. They liked to shout things like 'kuni' as they passed by. 'Go sell yourselves for the pimps of Shor Bazaar!' they would say. The pimps they referred to were those who scouted in lust for beardless boys. (Sadat 123)

Tor Gul

He was a very ruthless owner of the refugees from Afghanistan. He made them live in very unhygienic and unsafe conditions. When he finds out Kanishka is gay, he uses it to rape him time and again. He made Kanishka his sex slave to fulfil his prohibited desires. He represents the harassing section of society, which does not belong to the community but misuses and harasses them in every way possible for their own pleasure. “‘Did you hear me? You are mine now,’ he said again with a lewd sparkle in his eyes” (Sadat 213).

Role of Language

Sadat used language as an effective tool to highlight various concepts, such as the society's homophobic mindset, the homosexuality that existed in Afghan culture and literature, and one's constant tussle with oneself and society for their identity.

The term 'kuni' appears frequently in the novel by the novel's intolerable heterosexual characters. It is a derogatory term for gays, which in Pashto refers to someone who takes pleasure in anal sex or a gay. In Persian too, it can be translated as a gay. It's used in the novel as an abusive remark on homosexuals by various characters, including Zaki Jaan, Irfan, Osman, Baba, and others, and how it showcases the status of homosexuals in society. It is shown that it is sinful and wrong to be gay. It shows that it is sinful and wrong to be gay in the eyes of these people and that it is alright to harass them sexually and physically and to mock them for the same. “‘One of the boys bellowed, ‘Izaks, izaks, izaks,’ insisting Maihan and I were hermaphrodites” (Sadat 148).

A very sexually objectified view of gays can be seen in the way most of the heterosexual characters in the novel perceive them and how they associate homosexuality with sex work and

those who deserve to be sexually exploited. “‘This is what you were longing for my dick!’ said Irfan” (Sadat 148).

Incidents like these leave deep scars in the minds of homosexual characters like Maihan and Kanishka. Out of fear and anxiety, Maihan refuses to be attracted to men and even tries to prove his inclination towards women. Whereas Kanishka starts to see himself as a sinner and even develop suicidal tendencies. “If being a kuni was hell on earth, then taking my life would surely secure my final resting spot in hell where I was doomed to spend eternity” (Sadat 143).

Most of the jokes cracked by the characters in the novel are merely sexist and homophobic and are demeaning and offensive to those at whom they are targeted. These jokes mainly included two characters from Kandahar and Wardak, and were about a male's lust for another man and the silly acts of a clever man under the spell of a woman. Ironically, characters like Rustam also make these jokes, perhaps out of a fear of not being caught or to conceal their identity.

‘All right,’ Rustam said. ‘Once upon a time, a Kandhari man married a narrowwaisted woman. On their wedding night, the man was enchanted by his first sighting of his new bride’s legs and said, “My God, what great legs you have.” The bride blushes and said that at home she used to walk barefoot around the house, and may be that had something to do with it. The man replied “It would have been nice if you had also walked around bare-assed.” (Sadat 22)

The terms like 'ladylike' and 'womanly things' show how society has made certain gender stereotypes and how badly they want to fit everyone into that box and how certain things like

'makeup' are made to be associated with women by these societies, and if a man does it, then it is unnatural and strange.

Lastly, some major Persian literary figures and characters are mentioned, like Rumi and Layla-Majnu, which shows the intolerance towards love and homosexuality. The use of Rumi poems and quotes dedicated to Shams demonstrates the existence of love between the two men. This relationship between Rumi and Shams is also well depicted by the famous Turkish writer 'Elif Shafak' in her work *The Forty Rules of Love*.

“I constructed a pigeon house for the pigeons of the soul. Oh! bird of my soul, fly away now. For I possess a hundred fortified towers” (Sadat 170).

Society

The renowned essay "The Homosexual Role" by Mary Mackintosh is an early attempt to examine social construct of sexuality. According to Mackintosh, society created the illusion of purity and safety by designating some people as "deviants" and "criminals." As a result, the term served as a tool of societal control that pretended certain people were naturally evil (Nayar 188).

Additionally, such labelling made a boundary between permissible behaviour and impermissible behaviour. Those who engage in the latter would undoubtedly face legal action. Criminal activity and homosexuality were punished equally by society.

(Nayar 188)

According to Mackintosh, the stereotype of homosexuals, Black people, and Criminals contributed to the polarisation of these groups. The homosexual must be understood as a social role performer rather than as suffering from a disease. Then, the homosexual must exhibit mostly gay

behaviours, attitudes, and emotions. He is expected to be effeminate by people. Therefore, even the gay person's perception of themselves will be impacted by these social expectations (Nayar 189).

Sexuality is seen by modern sociologists and cultural studies theorists as a social construct. According to current theories on identity, no object possesses identity inherently; rather, identity is created via discourses. In other words, naming, family, religion, locality, law, medicine, psychology, and other discourses all have an impact on a person's identity. No one identity exists. Religion, ethnicity, class, gender, caste, and sexual orientation are some of the axes along which identities are situated (Nayar 189).

The novel employs the misuse of religion as a weapon used by the society that emerges as the actual villain. Although the Quran itself makes no mention of punishment for homosexual behaviour, the body of Sharia typically imposes the death sentence for sodomy in accordance with Muhammad's hadiths and the testimonies of his sahaba (companions). All gay behaviour in Islamic civilizations is prohibited by the fact that Islam as a whole does not consider any sexual act other than marriage to be permissible (Pillalamari 4).

In other religions such as Hinduism, *Manusmriti* law code prescribes penalties for gay men and women. According to *Manusmriti*, a girl who engages in sexual activity with another girl is subject to a fine of 200 coins and 10 whippings. However, if a mature woman engages in lesbian intercourse with a minor, she should be punished by having her head shaved or by having two of her fingers amputated. Additionally, a donkey should be forced to carry the woman. Male homosexuals, according to *Manusmriti*, experience caste loss as a result of sexual unions between two men. According to it, a man is subject to punishment if he engages in anal or oral intercourse with women,

sex with non-human females, sex with another man, or sex with another woman (10 Instances of Homosexuality among LGBT in Ancient India 4).

The political book *Arthashastra* of Kautilya makes a reference to homosexuality. However, the text demands that the monarch act against the "social evil" and punish individuals who practise homosexuality (10 Instances of Homosexuality among LGBT in Ancient India 3).

In this novel itself, the reference to misuse of religion is made at various occasions and how people were manipulated by it and it is also used to generate fear in the minds of people.

He says the greatest moral decay is the Tribe of Lut. Citing an ayat from the Quran, he says, when a man mounts another man, the throne of God shakes, so to purify the sin you have to kill both. (Sadat 55)

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Chapter 3

Conclusion

‘The Carpet Weaver is brave, fresh, engaging and brings with it a different Afghanistan...It is a story of forbidden love, one that might have never been written or heard’ (Week 6).

Despite being Nemat Sadat's first novel, *The Carpet Weaver* made a great mark in the literary world. The Carpet Weaver follows the story of a young homosexual boy as he battles prejudice and persecution to find love.

In 1977, Afghanistan, the son of a well-known carpet merchant, Kanishka Nurzada, develops feelings for Maihan, a buddy with whom he first kissed when he was sixteen. In a country where anyone thought to be kuni, are subject to the death penalty, their relationship must be kept a secret.

Additionally, the two lovers will face even more difficulties and risk when war breaks out in Afghanistan. Kanishka's difficult journey ultimately brings him to the USA in the search for a place to call home-and the intense dream of reconnecting with Maihan, from Kabul to the horrors of refugee camp in Pakistan. But it appears that fate has other plans for him.

The novel gives an insight into the belongingness, identity crisis, prejudices, and various other atrocities faced by homosexuals in a society. And how, despite knowing their true identity and desires, people don't come out and accept themselves because of the fear of not being accepted and punished by society, which considers it wrong.

The novel highlights the viscous cycle of constantly fighting and struggling for one's own identity in a world that doesn't accept, but rather hates, everything that doesn't fit into its box and match its

standards and thus unfolds the current status of homosexuals in most of the places. According to research by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, the majority of attempted suicides (61%) among LGBTQIA+ individuals happened within five years of understanding their sexual minority identification (UCLA 7).

It makes the reader think and question themselves about what kind of world they are living in and if they want to live in an intolerant and full of hate world or an accepting and peaceful one, by making them see the whole scenario from the point of view of the marginalized section, homosexuals.

This dissertation also opens the door to discussion on some other topics highlighted in the novel, such as how homophobia affects heterosexuals too and how war impacts mental health and its aftereffects. While the research primarily deals with the identity crisis in homosexuality.

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