

Multiculturalism and hybridity in ayub khan din's drama 'east is east'

[Literature](#), [Drama](#)



Multiculturalism and Hybridity are prominent topics in today's society, as the world has become more metropolitan and diverse. Those identifications are represented in Ayub Khan Dins drama, ' East is East' published in 1995, as well. The culture clash between half Pakistani and half British families living in England is explored throughout the novel. Each character in the drama is unique and, thus, all-together they showcase a wide spectrum of cultural beliefs. George Khan is a Pakistani, living in England together with his white, British wife and seven children. In the drama, he is portrayed as a very strict Muslim, wanting his children and wife to be submissive to his ideals. George Khan strictly follows the norms of his culture, which include marrying his sons to other daughters without having their permission, such as seeing the classical picture of a housewife in his wife. He oppresses his family to his benefits, using his religion as pretext for it. ' East is East' represents the Muslim culture as very tough and harsh, representing all the stereotypes of the Islam, highlighting it negatively, however his religion is only acted out as negative by George as an individual. Although living in England, George Khan does not accept that his children (at least some) believe themselves as Anglo Pakistani. The drama represents the beginning of a multi-ethnic society while dealing with cultural diversity and hybridity such as questioning the identity of the individuals.

In the drama George takes up many or nearly all of the stereotypes that the Muslim culture has and therefore his religion is barely represented as very positive. George's religion is easily to be misunderstood and misinterpreted, because stereotyping is generalizing or having an oversimplified image of the type or religion they belong too. He becomes violent, due to his wife and

children not being submissive or even for the others taking up the side of those who go against him. His sons are very rebellious in his eyes, because they live a more modern/metropolitan, open minded lifestyle in comparison to him. He limits himself a lot, which seems like religion acting as an obstacle to him. Examples such as abandoning his son, because he didn't marry the wife George wanted him to, show that he is influenced a lot by his religion, even putting the norms of the Islam over his family. Ayub Khan Din wanted a contrast in the Khan family, by making George an exaggerated version of a Muslim and his children and wife the other extreme, modern and open minded, rejecting the radical way of living the Pakistani culture. " My characters do not necessarily behave as ' good' Muslims; they are not ideals or role models. They are flawed and complex", this could be the same ideal, which Ayub Khan Din has followed to form Georges character. The flaws he has should stress the negative image of a Muslim to make the reader think about the prejudices he has. George has a lot of flaws and is not a perfect " good" Muslim, but neither should he be, because the fact that he is Muslim should not make him act differently to others. Muslims can be radical, such as people from different culture, with different religions can be too.

The Muslim culture is very different to the western culture. Many people don't know a lot about it and only have a ' preformed image' of Muslims in their mind, with all the stereotypes that come with their religion. However, each individual gets used to what he grew up with and automatically puts his culture or religion first and believes it best. Therefore the readers of ' East is East', are shocked by the completely different and in their point of view '

radical lifestyle', which the Khan family lives. If one opens their mind and gets rid of those preformed images that are made by society, it is possible to see a better religion/culture in the one that George has. There is no reason to regard a different culture as rude, especially not Georges.

The following source " Islam And The West: From Discord To Understanding" written by Sharif Shuja, proves that " In the course of the 21st century a quarter of the human race will probably be Muslim. The new demographic presence of Islam within the Western world is indicative that Islamisation is now a major globalizing force." Hence this example, it is visible that the Islam has a very great importance in society, therefore the real facts about the Islam have to be passed on to the members of society, to prevent stereotyping and accusations. As the source " Good Muslim, bad Muslim" by Tariq Ramadan states, that the Islam is the most argued about and misunderstood religion, it is important to know why. " In western societies where the practice and day-to-day visibility of religion are close to zero (even in the United States, where religion as a cultural and moral reference point is relatively strong), to speak of daily prayers, fasting, of religiously grounded moral obligations, prohibitions and dress codes is often seen automatically as verging on excess." Of course, the things that George does are too extreme at many points, but in a way his culture is represented in the drama. Therefore it is sometimes not easy to distinguish between the real parts of his culture and what society thinks his culture is like. One could say that George's culture portrayed in the drama, is a mixture of true events and negative prejudices made by society.

Identity is shaped by many different situations and places, be it work, at home or at school, etc. George Khan acts differently depending on where he is and how he feels. At home he plays the role of the person of authority, having the control, and one could also say a bit of power, over his family. What George says has to be done. If he wants some tea or watches the news, it has to be done and prepared for him. He wants to be a good Muslim and be a part of the local Muslim community. Therefore he practices his belief strictest at home. George however, goes too far at some point as to use violence as an instrument for obedience, “ George: Why you never baster listen! George grabs Ella and pushes her to the floor, he starts to hit her”. Those actions form negative impressions and blame George’s religion for what he does. Aggression is not part of a religion and that is what the reader forgets while reading the novel. When George becomes aggressive, it is him who does it and not his culture or religion that forces him too. In other situations George also breaks some stereotypes of a traditional Muslim, such as getting married to a white, British woman and having his children raised in England which results as them behaving more western than a stereotypical Muslim living in Pakistan might would. It all depends on how George sees the necessity of really practicing his culture honestly and strict according to the situation in which he finds himself. Such as in Hasan Saeed Majed’s, “ Islam and Muslim Identities in Aboulela’s Minaret”, published in 2018, “ While her Muslim characters have flaws, this is because they are human beings and not simply because they are Muslims. As human beings, Muslims might be influenced by their own cultures and traditions; they might fail to follow Islamic ordinances in their entirety. However, Islam is not to

blame” it is the same for George in ‘ East is East’. A religion could trigger certain actions but can never be totally blamed for what an individual does.

Conclusively it is obvious that ‘ East is East’ cannot reflect a realistic image of a Muslim. The stereotypes, that are put together, represent the culture very negative and only transmit a wrong image of the Islam. The way George lives at home is completely different to the western way of life and therefore seems rude, but should this really be seen as negative? People live differently at different places and it is all about adapting and getting used to other cultures and beliefs. Ayub Khan Din ties the stereotypes of a Muslim into a modern western world, which provokes clashes between the different cultures. George is not a bad father nor man, what he wants is to maintain his culture, because he cannot live in his country anymore. He lives the way he has been taught by his parents and they have been taught by theirs. Culture and religion are guidelines and essential pieces of life for many people. Georges Muslim stereotypes represent an ironical image of him. He might be an exaggerated version of a Muslim, but what is important when reading the drama, is to distinguish between the acts of George as an individual and the religious ones to be able to form a real and fair image of his culture. The Islam is easily to be misinterpreted after having read the drama and it is not well defined nor seriously represented either. Ayub Khan Din satirizes or tries to showcase the way that the western cultures imagines or sees the Islam, demonstrating that this view about the Islam is amiss. “ While her Muslim characters have flaws, this is because they are human beings and not simply because they are Muslims. As human beings, Muslims

might be influenced by their own cultures and traditions; they might fail to follow Islamic ordinances in their entirety. However, Islam is not to blame”, the same applies to George, he is the one to be blamed and not his culture. The negative impressions are only made by George’s mistakes and actions, and this can easily irritate the reader and transmits a bad image of his culture, because through this, the negative prejudices society has, are confirmed.