

## THE AMBIGUITY OF IDENTITY, "IN OTHER ROOMS, OTHER WONDERS" BY DANIYAL MUEENUDDIN

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### ABSTRACT

In Daniyal Mueenuddin's "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders," an elaborate system of interconnected stories. It explores the complexities of one's self within Pakistan's ancient system. The book explores the lives of people from various walks of life. He emphasizes the dynamic relationship between social standing, political strength, and private destiny. Mueenuddin's story provides an engaging picture of Pakistani culture and obligations to family and society. Mueenuddin raises major questions about the definition of being one itself. Whether it is a fundamental concept. Through his in-depth portrayal of common challenges and successes, he reveals a natural characteristic or an outcome of external forces. He highlights how skillfully the writer conveys the multifaceted nature of human feeling. The complicated nature of relationships built and broken in the background of greater societal demands. "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" encourages readers to think about the common problems of life. Such as love, sorrow, and the search for identity in the complexity of humanity. Providing insight into Pakistani culture.

### INTRODUCTION

Daniyal Mueenuddin, the son of an American mother and a Pakistani father, was brought up in Wisconsin and Pakistan. He studied at Yale and Dartmouth College. Later, I worked as a lawyer for a business in New York. W. W. Norton & Company published the first book in 2009, "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders," by Pakistani American novelist "Daniyal Mueenuddin." There is a collection of colourful stories called "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders." Daniyal Mueen Uddin builds an entire universe focused on the both heroic and widespread activities of Pakistani people in the 1970s and 1980s. He illustrates the unstable state of Pakistan's vibrant transitional culture. His stories show the difficult realities of everyday urban and rural life. It links with conflicts over identity, power, and materialism, as well as the strong social caste system that occurs there. It illustrates a fascinating loop or sequence of interconnected tales. Over the background of typical rural Pakistan, primarily Punjab.

The mystery landowner, K. K. Harouni, acts as the main focus of this collection of short stories. It analyzes the lives of the people in town. There are eight skillfully connected stories. Mueenuddin

expertly examines the complex web of ties among Harouni's labourers, servants, and acquaintances. The book delivers an insight into Pakistan's complex social and political environment. Looking at the daily lives of several people from different categories of society. The analysis of the book discusses the author's approach to language, figurative language, and storyline. Engaging and provocative work of fiction, diving deep into the book's themes and ideas. These stories give an in-depth study of the lasting impact of the monarchy on modern culture. All set in a feudal society.

Mueenuddin brings readers into a world where tradition and modernity are mixed. It addresses topics of class difference, dynamics of power, affection, and desire with a beautiful style and insightful vision. These kinds of stories highlight how power is expressed through money. The leads take advantage of it to pursue their agendas. As a memorial to Mueenuddin's writing talent, "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" exposes readers to a compelling look. The complicated workings of Pakistani culture and human existence altogether. "In Other Rooms and Other Wonders" is ultimately a

reflection on the common issues of desire, ambition, and seeking happiness. The characters created by Mueenuddin fight with their ambitions and restrictions. Understanding the complexities of affection and sorrow in a society. Increasingly changing but strongly traditional culture.

**Background:**

Following its publication in 2009, reviewers have commended the book. It's an accurate depiction of a labourer and privileged Pakistani life. The stories that take place in Lahore, Pakistan's intellectual centre, address class, affection, authority, and injustice. Mueenuddin's vivid visions highlight his prose style. He can convey the specifics of interpersonal interactions. Various translations and honours have been given to the publication. It includes the 2009 Commonwealth Writers' Award for Exemplary Novel. In New York, British-Indian novelist Salman Rushdie became so captivated. He chose to publish them in *The Best American Short Pieces*, 2009. Several observers have pointed him out. However, Pakistani writers often concentrate on social changes. All of the stories have changed as a recurring theme since Pakistan is evolving. The growing popularity and power of youthful entrepreneurs. They conflict with the elderly landed noble families. Decreasing wealth and power as a consequence of their land sales for economic advantage. The social elite of today use English. Others even take pride in not understanding Punjabi. The nation's local language, Urdu, is Pakistan's official language.

**Feudalism and colonization in little evaluation:**

Despite the legacy of slavery persisting strongly in society, it also defined the beginning of a period of change. Although the British quit colonizing the nation years earlier, their rule over it had a lasting effect on Pakistani society. Even when the country achieved independence, separating the Indian subcontinent. Establishing Pakistan after more than a century of colonialism. For civilization to survive, Western norms and values were important. The privileged classes gave agricultural land and security to the lower classes. As payment for their labor and protection under the feudal economic system. As an essential aspect of British culture, it still has cultural roots. The feudal system is an ongoing concept in Daniyal Mueenuddin's stories. Focusing on the

prosperous hereditary bureaucrat K.K. Harouni, his workers, and acquaintances.

Colonialism certainly had an impact on the stories in "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders." These stories are set in Pakistan, a country that the British controlled for over 200 years. Mueenuddin's stories reflect the truth. The nation's political, economic, and social structures remain affected by colonialism. The characters in these works of fiction. It disrupts the complex dynamics of a culture. They are caught between their goals and those of those around them. Demand between tradition and innovation, past times and today. These stories also highlight inequities and inequalities. It remains in historical cultures, especially among the poor. The colonial system's contribution in "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" is an important indicator. The struggle for equality and fairness in society continues to go on today, as does its legacy.

**Analytical evaluation:**

"In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" in this discussion analyzes the complicated nature of identity. Following is a critical analysis and set of stimulating insights. It explains the different aspects of one's self in the book. The focus is on the value of identity. When analyzing the characters, their interactions, and their wider social and cultural background, one can gain deeper insights into the dynamics of the narrative.

**1. The Social Concept of Identity:**

The key concept of Mueenuddin's novel is identity as something that is deeply rooted in the system of hierarchy in Pakistani society. Standards and values influence the roles the characters play in the novel. Society places them based on factors like gender, colour, and class. While Husna in "Saleema" battles with identification, characters like Nawabdin in "Nawabdin Electrician" navigate their identity as women in a society where men rule.

**2. Identity and Social Factors:**

"In Other Rooms, Other Wonders," conflicts of power are crucial in creating identity. Mueenuddin shows how people misuse their position of power. Impose dominance and control over others, often at the price of their dignity. The traits of individuals are intimately related to their positions of privilege and power. Jaglani abusing his workers or K.K. Harouni exploiting his staff members both highlight the

pervasive issue of misuse of power in hierarchical relationships.

### **3: Transition is a time:**

Mueenuddin discusses one's identity as a dynamic concept. It is likely to change in response to evolving situations throughout the collection. Individuals such as Saleema and Nawabdin navigate several socioeconomic circumstances. Each encounter leaves an eternal mark on their perception of themselves. Husna is an ideal illustration of this flexibility. She goes through a major transformation that tests prejudices about her.

### **4. Discovering Who We Are Through Different Cultures:**

Mueenuddin depicts an illustration of a society in change. The new and old identities merge to form an interconnected web of cultural blending. Characters such as Lily in "Lily" are caught. Between the modern and traditional periods, managing opposing viewpoints about them. They move between rural areas and city life. Mueenuddin explores the obstacles to maintaining various cultural identities through these characters.

### **5: Identity and Socioeconomic Conflict:**

In "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders," one's identity is under consideration against a strong background of wealth disparity. Despite poverty, wealth, and abuse, characters from all economic roots struggle with the complexities of their personas. Economic challenges significantly affect a character's sense of self. Whether it's the landowners losing their old power or the servants trying to gain respect and recognition, Mueenuddin's characters deal with changing identities and social roles.

### **6: The Concept of Authenticity:**

Mueenuddin's analysis of identity indicates the search for genuineness as a recurring subject matter. In the face of demands and expectations from the outside world, characters like Zainab in "Our Lady of Paris" strive to protect their identities. Mueenuddin urges readers to consider the authenticity of identity in a society where appearances frequently influence judgment via the difficulties they face.

"In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" by Daniyal Mueenuddin skillfully illustrates the complicated nature of one's self within Pakistani society through

its complex web of tales. By utilizing the different points of view of several people and their diverse stories, Mueenuddin provides readers with a multifaceted understanding of the complexities of identity and society. Mueenuddin urges readers to consider how cultural, societal, and economic factors shape the subtle aspects of identity. Working as a writer and debater for ten years, I found Mueenuddin's representation of identity to be informative and controversial, promoting critical thought on the complex issues of living in an ever-evolving environment.

### **Overview of the characters:**

The author wrote the book "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" while living on the family farm he manages. This farm inspired the fictional property of K. K. Harouni in the book. The story takes place in the Punjab region of Pakistan. The book contains eight interconnected stories. All stories come from regular people from different backgrounds in Pakistan. The main character is K.K. Harouni. A retired government servant and a wealthy member of the Pakistani nobility. He is a central figure who connects with his family, servants, and acquaintances.

### **1. Nawabdin Electrician:**

The main character of the story is "Nawabdin Electrician." A friendly mechanic and handyman who takes care of his family. He has a wife and thirteen children. Nawabdin loves his family and often surprises them with small gifts. Besides his regular job, he also runs some small businesses. He maintains the tube wells on his employer's farms. Help his clients save money on electricity bills. Nawabdin spends most of his life working for his employer, K.K. Harouni.

In the society described in the story, there's a clear peak between the rich and the poor. The wealthy live comfortably, while the poor struggle for a better life. Nawabdin wants to ask K.K. Harouni for a motorcycle to make his life easier, but he fears losing his job. Rather, he laterally asks to leave his job due to his frazzle. His plan works, but the motorcycle brings him a mischance. Nawabdin cannot feel sorry for the person who faces him in the end.

## **2: Husna**

Husna was the main character in the story. She belonged to K.K. Harouni's family. When his family was heartbreaking. K. K. Harouni was wealthy but lived alone, away from his family. Husna was different; she struggled to make ends meet. K. K. Harouni hired her as a servant, and she moved into his house. When Husna asked for a job, she explained that some people succeed while others struggle. She felt she was on the struggling side and needed help. In this society, money and possessions give people power. The story shows a shift from a society where everyone shared to one where money was very important. Husna, though ambitious, was not considered talented or beautiful. She came from the less fortunate side of K. K. Harouni's family. She was ambitious and willing to do anything to improve her life. She joined K. K.'s household, hoping to gain wealth and status. She even sacrificed her morals to get what she wanted.

Husna saw K. K.'s home as her ticket to a better life. She convinced K. K. to let her stay, and she became part of his family. She started accumulating jewellery and clothes, feeling secure in her possessions. But when K. K. died, everything changed. Despite her efforts, she received nothing as a reward—no social status, respect, or dignity. Husna's story ended with disappointment. She hoped for a world void of social status, dignity, or respect.

Capitalism has changed society a lot. It creates a new middle class, making money more important. People started working harder to move up socially. People cared more about money and less about other things. Society used to care about community and sharing, but now it's all about money. This change made people focus less on being kind and more on getting rich. Families started having more problems, and everyone seemed to care only about money. People stopped caring about being good or following rules. Once capitalism became dominant, humanity seemed to disappear.

## **3. Chaudhary Jaglani:**

Over many years, Jaglani has exploited his boss, K. K. Harouni, to accumulate wealth for himself. Deceit marks his life. When he finally experiences love, his past wrongdoings trouble him. Despite Zainab's willingness to be intimate with him, he struggles to comprehend why she withholds her affection. Jaglani's primary desires revolve around power and prestige. Particularly for his eldest son, even as he

nears death. He holds Zainab responsible for never reciprocating his love. Refuse to acknowledge that influence and authority fade away after death.

## **4. Saleema:**

In the story of "Saleema," a 14-year-old girl runs away from her poor town with the help of a man from Lahore. Saleema becomes a servant at Harouni's mansion in Lahore. Ten years later, she is still married to the man, who is now dependent on drugs. Rafik, a respected servant of Harouni, falls in love with Saleema, despite being forty years older than her and always faithful to his marriage. Their close relationship makes us understand the line between need, desire, and love. We feel compassion for their situation and the conflicting feelings they experience.

Saleema, who comes from poverty, marries a man like her drug-addicted father. She also resembles her mother in seeking money and favours. She craves attention, too. Mueenuddin's representation of Saleema and other characters with humanity gives them dignity. Even when they make mistakes or give in to societal pressures. The only first-person narrative in the collection is "About a Burning Girl," sandwiched between two other stories. It contrasts with the more detailed. There are varied characterizations in the other stories, sometimes feeling like parodies. The narrator, a session judge at Lahore High Court, admits to his corruption almost excessively, which initially seems unrealistic. However, as the story progresses, Mueenuddin intends to portray this character flaw. Show how he's trapped in a system of power, favours, and corruption beyond his control. The judge's confessions highlight the helplessness within a corrupt system where improvement seems impossible.

The judge's fear of losing his home reflects his vulnerability within the unfair system. By the end, we grasp the severe consequences of his statement, "In Pakistan, everything can be arranged." We see the devastating effects of corruption on a personal level.

## **Exploring the Characters:**

Daniyal Mueenuddin's book "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" is a collection of stories about different people in Pakistan. Each story shows how they connect, follow traditions, and deal with problems. The book has many characters, from rich landowners to poor workers. Daniyal's writing makes it easy for

readers to understand what each character wants and feels. Through these stories, Daniyal shows the complexities of Pakistani society. The difficulties people there go through.

### **Comparison of Social Structure between Pakistan and America:**

The stories in Daniyal Mueenuddin's collection prompt American readers to reflect on the differences in social structures between Pakistan and the United States. Particularly concerning upward mobility. The notion of the American Dream, the belief that anyone can achieve success in the U.S., is subtly present throughout the narratives. It's not explicitly endorsed or criticized but serves as a thought-provoking concept.

In one story, a character expresses a desire to have been born in America despite coming from a privileged background in Pakistan. He admires the perceived freedom that Americans enjoy. Feel unburdened by familial and historical weights. This sentiment resonates with the reader. Representation of the limitations on social mobility within Pakistani society in earlier stories.

However, another character challenges this view. Arguing that freedom is not exclusive to Americans. She suggests that individuals from any background carry their struggles, wherever they go, regardless of geographic location. Through the diverse cast of characters, Mueenuddin vividly illustrates the complexities and contradictions inherent in human existence.

Rather than offering simple solutions, invite readers to struggle with these complexities. Explore their perceptions of societal structures and aspirations. Mueenuddin's detailed depiction encourages a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics of life. The pursuit of happiness across different cultural contexts.

### **The sharpest weapon of female characters is Sex:**

In these stories, women frequently utilize sex as a means of exerting control over men within a patriarchal society. Regardless of their social status, women employ sexual relationships with varying degrees of care or resentment, recognizing them as their most potent weapon in navigating this hierarchical system. While women from privileged backgrounds leverage their feminine influence to propel their husbands into higher echelons of power, their counterparts from lower classes may use

intimacy as a means of upward mobility, only to be subsequently discarded.

For instance, **Lily**, hailing from a respectable Punjabi family, initially strives to elevate herself morally by marrying a compassionate man from her social stratum. However, her efforts are ultimately undermined as she relapses into her previous lifestyle. These narratives depict a society where moral and social progression is limited to lateral movements rather than vertical ascension.

Moreover, the pervasive theme of manipulation runs as consistently through these stories as the Indus River flows through the region of Punjab. Characters engage in a complex dance of deceit, where false flattery and strategic favours are exchanged to exploit one another's vulnerabilities. This pattern of manipulation, however, is unfamiliar to the two American characters, whose innocence inadvertently causes distress for themselves and those around them. Thus, the stories highlight the intricate dynamics of power, deception, and societal expectations that shape the lives of the characters within this complex cultural landscape.

### **Unravelling the book "In Other Rooms and Other Wonders" through a Marxist Lens:**

In Daniyal Mueenuddin's "In Other Rooms and Other Wonders," the book shows how Pakistani society is divided into different classes. Looking at things from a perspective that focuses on social classes. The story demonstrates people's positions in society. The operation of capitalism shapes their identities.

Mueenuddin tells the stories of characters from various social classes. Each is trying to figure out who they are in a society where wealth and power play a big role. Whether they're rich landowners or poor servants, everyone's identity is tied to their job and where they stand in society.

The book shows how capitalism creates inequality and unfairness. People's identities are more about money than who they are. It also shows how this system keeps people stuck in their social classes. Making it hard for them to break free and be themselves.

Overall, "In Other Rooms and Other Wonders" explores the complexities of identity from multiple perspectives. Show how people try to understand who they are. Deal with the struggles of class differences and exploitation.

### **The Role of the Class System in the Stories:**

Daniyal Mueenudin's book "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" is a collection of stories about different people in Pakistan. The way people's lives and relationships are affected by their social class is a big theme in these stories. It shows how being rich or poor can change what opportunities you have and how you see yourself.

For example, in one story called "Our Lady of Paris," there's a maid named Saleema who works for rich people. Even though she works hard, they treat her badly because she's not as rich as them. Another story, "Provide, Provide," shows a rich man named K.K. Harouni who takes advantage of his poor workers, making their lives hard while he lives in luxury.

Overall, the book shows how social class can give some people power and privilege, while others suffer because they're not as rich. It prompts us to consider how our place in society affects our own lives.

### **Gender Roles and role of women in the stories:**

Gender roles and the role of women are significant themes in the book "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders." The stories explore how societal expectations shape the lives of upper-class Pakistanis, particularly concerning gender. Women are expected to conform to traditional roles as obedient wives and homemakers throughout the stories.

For instance, in "Our Lady of Paris," Saleema is forced into a loveless marriage and must fulfil her duties as a wife and mother despite her wishes. Similarly, in "Provide, Provide," Husna is pressured to marry for financial security rather than love.

Men, on the other hand, are expected to provide for their families. Nawabdin, the protagonist of "A Spoiled Man," struggles to support his family as a humble servant, feeling shame for not meeting societal expectations of masculinity.

Overall, Mueenudin's stories illustrate how gender norms can limit individual freedom and cause inner conflict for both men and women.

### **The Use of Language and Narrative Style:**

Mueenudin's way of telling the story in "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" is really special. He uses beautiful language that's like poetry, making the story feel rich and captivating. But it's not just pretty words—there's also a sense of tension that keeps you hooked.

One thing that makes his storytelling interesting is that it doesn't follow a straight path. Instead of telling the story in order, it jumps around in time and between different characters. This might seem confusing, but it adds depth to the story by showing how everything is connected.

Overall, Mueenudin's writing style and storytelling techniques make "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" a vivid and engaging read. You feel like you're right there with the characters, experiencing their lives alongside them.

### **The Themes of Love and Relationships:**

Mueenudin explores love and relationships deeply in his book "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders." He looks closely at how love works in a society where social status matters a lot.

One main storyline is about K.K. Harouni, a rich landowner, and Saleema, his mistress. They have an arrangement where K.K. pays Saleema for her company, but their relationship is more than just business. Saleema also becomes K.K.'s friend and someone he trusts.

Another relationship in the book is between Zainab, a young servant, and Nawabdin, her boss. Even though they come from different social backgrounds, they form a close bond based on respect and understanding. Their relationship stands out because it's not based on power or exploitation, like many others in the book.

Overall, Mueenudin demonstrates how cultural expectations shape love and relationships. Through his characters, he reveals how these expectations can affect the way we love and who we love.

### **The Influence of Pakistani Culture and Society:**

In "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" by Daniyal Mueenudin, Pakistani culture and society play a big role. The author looks closely at how things like gender roles, tradition, and religion shape people's lives. He also talks about the differences in class within Pakistani society.

The cultural and social norms of Pakistan deeply influence the characters in the book. These norms affect the choices they make and how they behave. Mueenudin also talks about how things like political unrest and corruption impact the lives of ordinary Pakistanis.

Through his writing, Mueenudin shows the challenges that people in Pakistan face every day. But he also celebrates the country's rich cultural

heritage. Overall, the book sheds light on the influence of Pakistani culture and society, making it more interesting and thought-provoking.

### Religion and Spirituality in “In Other Rooms, Other Wonders”:

Religion and spirituality are important aspects of the characters' lives in "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders." The stories take place in Pakistan, where religion is a big part of people's everyday lives and culture.

Through the characters in the book, the author explores how faith and spirituality are complicated. Some characters, like K.K. Harouni, use religion to show their power over others. He claims to be a devout Muslim but treats his workers badly and has affairs.

But for characters like Nawabdin and Saleema, religion brings comfort. Nawabdin, despite his struggles, finds peace in his daily prayers, believing they're a test from God. Saleema turns to Sufism, a mystical form of Islam, for solace when society rejects her because of her job.

Mueenuddin shows how religion can shape people's lives and identities in different ways. He also raises questions about how religion can be used to justify unfair treatment. Overall, religion and spirituality add depth and complexity to the themes of the book.

### The role of family and tradition in the stories:

The importance of family and tradition is a key theme in "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders." The characters in the book are deeply rooted in their cultural customs and family values, which shape their identities and actions.

These values strongly influence Pakistani society, as depicted by Mueenuddin. Characters who uphold their customs and family values tend to be happier and more fulfilled, while those who stray from them often face loneliness and unhappiness.

The stories in the book explore the challenges people face when they try to break away from their cultural norms. Mueenuddin emphasizes the role of family and tradition in giving people a sense of belonging and identity and how they contribute to the cohesion of a community.

### Sum up:

In "In Other Rooms and Other Wonders," Daniyal Mueenuddin examines identity within Pakistan's complex society. He shows how things like social class, gender, and power affect who people are, using characters like Husna and the Harouni family. The book portrays a society where people struggle with traditions versus modern life, rural versus urban living, and personal dreams versus societal expectations. Overall, Mueenuddin suggests that identity is flexible and influenced by many factors, rather than being set in stone.

### Citation:

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**About Author:**

*Recently I have done my literature in philosophy where I learned esteemed Pakistani culture & construct ideas to new intervention. I really inspired by the Pakistani Culture, Pakistan is state eventually facing cultural Challenges, similarly approaching English development whereas basis relay with the compliment of Islam writes who wrote about Pakistani culture and about its history. I have read many writers and explore about Pakistani women how they were treated and face many issues. Moreover, cultural philosophy in Pakistan Characterized by diversity and contestation With an Intensive of reasoned Islamic and national identity. The country’s cultural identity has been shaped by its history, geography, and political context in intervening liberalism. Most researchers say that Pakistani culture anthosiative till 1 Unit if look that adopted culture is depends on Islamization fundamentals where All Muslim Society avail to remark.*

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