

E-ISSN : 2962 - 8199

P-ISSN : 2961 - 7502



MUSLIM ENGLISH LITERATURE

Vol 2, Number 2

2023

Published by English Literature Department
Faculty of Adab and Humanities
Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta
Indonesia



Jl. Tarumanegara, Pisangan, Ciputat, Tangerang Selatan, Banten 15419



<https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/mel/index>



journal.mel@uinjkt.ac.id



Muslim English Literature

Vol 2, Number 2, 2023

E-ISSN : 2962 - 8199

P-ISSN : 2961 - 7502

EDITORIAL TEAM OF MUSLIM ENGLISH LITERATURE

Vol 2, Number 2, 2023

Editor-in-Chief

Hasnul Insani Djohar

Managing Editor

Fauziyyah Imma R.

Editors

Tuty Handayani

Elve Oktafiyani

Febriyanti Lestari

Winda Setia Sari

Alfi Syahriyani

Nina Farlina

Akhmad Zakky

Sari Fitria

International Editorial Board

Peter Morey

Danielle Haque

Doaa Omran

Önder Çakırtaş

Carimo Mohamed

Design Graphic and Layouter

Agung Mubarak

Nafisanda Reno Naufal

Muslim English Literature is a double-blind peer-reviewed open access journal published by the English Literature Department, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. It specializes in Muslim World Literature including US-Muslim, British-Muslim, Asian-Muslim, and other Muslim cultures and literature; and is intended to communicate original research and current issues on the subject. This journal warmly welcomes contributions from scholars of related disciplines, including Linguistics and Cultural Studies related to the Muslim world.

Editorial Office:

Muslim English Literature, English Literature Department,
Faculty of Adab and Humanities, Syarif Hidayatullah State
Islamic University of Jakarta. Jl. Tarumanegara, Pisangan,
Ciputat, Tangerang Selatan, Banten 15419.

E-mail: journal.mel@uinjkt.ac.id

Website: <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/mel/index>

MUSLIM ENGLISH LITERATURE

VOL. 2, Number 2, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

77 Craving Homes in Ila Arab Mehta's Fence
Metty Joby

88 Muslimah Hybrid Identity in Amulya Malladi's The Sound of Language
Bandaru.S.S.S.S.K.Seshu.

105 To Veil or not to Veil: Tracing the Hijab in Contemporary Muslimah's Writings
Neda Parvin Shaikh

119 Inspecting Zara's Advertisement Campaign amidst Gaza Conflict and Its Global Backlash
Khoirotul Attiba, Hasnul Insani Djohar, Putri Savira, Yasmina Shafa Salsabila

133 Existentialist Feminism in Etaf Rum's A Woman is No Man
Dania Dedi, Nina Farlina

149 The Badshah Begums: Interrogating Identity and Power in Mughal Fiction
Suman Kumari



Muslim English Literature



Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora
UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta
Jl. Tarumanegara, Pisangan, Kec. Ciputat Timur,
Kota Tangerang Selatan, Banten 15419, Indonesia

Craving Homes in Ila Arab Mehta's *Fence*

Metty Joby

University of Calicut, India

Email: mettyjoby@gmail.com

Abstract

Owning a home has always been a dream for every individual, and one's life savings are invested in possessing a home, especially in the Indian context. Indian novelists have portrayed how their characters strive to build a 'home' for themselves, thereby asserting their identity. The present study explores the protagonist Fateema's dire desire to own a house of her own in a mixed ghetto wherein people from different religions live together in peace and harmony. This elusive utopian thought is depicted poignantly in Ila Arab Mehta's novel *Fence*. The cultural constructs in the Gujarati society described in the novel and the hegemonic influence portrayed in the novel are explored through the experiences of various characters. The food, clothing, language, and mannerisms of the Muslim society, as compared to the majority community in Gujarat of the late twentieth century, are portrayed in the novel as only cultural constructs leading to the subjugation of the Muslim community. Hence, an attempt is being made to study the novel *Fence* from the perspective of cultural studies and calls for a broader outlook in encapsulating everyone within a multicultural framework, strengthening the social fabric.

Keywords: *Culture, Food, Hegemony, Home, Mannerisms, Subjugation*

Introduction

Society in India is constituted of a fabric of religions, castes, subcastes, languages and the coinciding cultures. The culture of various religions determines the way of life, governing the different communities. India is a secular nation according to the Indian Constitution, but there has been a prejudice that prevails against the minority communities. The present paper attempts to study the novel *Fence* which is the English translation of the Gujarati novel *Vaad* (2011) written by Ila Arab Mehta and translated into English by Rita Kothari as *Fence* in 2015. Ila Arab Mehta has been a prolific writer in Gujarati. Her novels include *Trikonni Tran Rekha* (1966), *Ek Hata Diwan Bahadur* (1976), *Varasdar* (1978), *Batris Putalini Vedana* (1982), *Dariyano Manas* (1985), *Vasant Chhlake* (1987), *Nag Pariksha*, *Panch Pagala Prithvi Par* (1995), *Zili Me Kumpal Hathelima* (2007). She has been awarded by Gujarat Sahitya Academy, Maharashtra Gujarati Sahitya Academy, and Gujarati Sahitya Parishad for her exemplary writing. Rita Kothari is a writer and translator in Gujarati and English languages. Kothari has written several books on partition and its effects on people. She has written *Translating India: The Cultural Politics of English* (2003), *The Burden of Refuge: The Sindhi Hindus of Gujarat* (2007), *Unbordered Memories: Partition Stories from Sindh* (2009), and *Memories and Movements* (2016). She has also translated *Modern Gujarati Poetry* and *Coral Island: The Poetry of Niranjan Bhagat*. She co-edited *Decentring Translation Studies: India and Beyond* (2009) with Judy

Wakabayashi and *Chutnefying English: The Phenomenon of Hinglish* (2011) with S. Rupert Snell. She is the editor and translator of *Speech and Silence: Literary Journeys by Gujarati Women*. She has also translated Joseph Macwan's Gujarati novel *Angaliyat* as *The Stepchild* in the year 2004.

According to John Rex, Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick all of us have to recognize that the minorities have their rights "to their own language in family and community contexts, ...to practise their own religion, ... to organize domestic and family relations in their own way, and ... to maintain communal customs." (91) Even if the members of the majority community say that the minority community members can follow their own culture without any inhibitions, they are hardly ready to shed the discrimination against them and far from ready to coexist. The prejudice against the culture of minority community is carried a step forward when the members of the majority community are reluctant to reside amongst the minority community people. The builders of villas and flats deliberately isolate residential facilities of minority communities so as to gain acceptance from the majority community. As Foucault opines,

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. (24)

The language, food, way of dressing and mannerisms of the majority community influence and are considered to be superior to that of minority communities. As Pugh and Johnson quote Raymond Williams in their book,

It is evidently possible both for members of other classes to contribute to the common stock, and for such contributions to be unaffected by or in opposition to the ideas and values of the dominant class. (232)

Thus, there tends to be a conflict between the majority and minority communities with regards to different aspects of culture. There are constructions that are built across communities which are culturally motivated, moulded by the culture that surrounds the communities instead of facts and real-life situations. Such cultural constructs are a means by which the majority community has a hegemonic influence on the minority community. "...society and culture are irreparably marked by divisions of class, gender and race that are repressed by unitary conceptions of culture, even if these are ethnically multicultural." (Milner 143) The culture of such minority communities is considered to be inferior, uncouth, uncivilized and sub-standard by the majority community thus creating a negative image of the minority community. The members of this community get subjugated by that of the majority so much so that they start considering themselves to be inferior to the others in every respect. There is a stark discrimination against the members of the minority community as well as their lifestyles. They are not allowed to mingle with the others earmarking the area that they reside in so that there is no interaction whatsoever. The members of the minority



communities too, make their contributions towards the enrichment of the culture which includes the language, arts, music, food and clothing but are never considered fit enough to be emulated by the others in the society. There is always an apprehension that once the members of the minority communities are allowed room to establish themselves, the majority community members may not be able to overpower them. As Lefebvre puts it, "space is a social product...it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power." (26)

Method

The present study makes use of a qualitative method of research to analyze the novel *Fence* from the perspective of cultural studies. Qualitative method is used to conduct research when understanding people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour, and interactions becomes pivotal. "Human experiences and thoughts are the primary focus of qualitative studies." (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Cultural Studies examines how a particular phenomenon relates to matters of ideology, nationality, ethnicity, social class and gender. "...social experience is always happening, unending, and fluid. Perspectives on experience can change from person to person, yet it is perspective that influences social cognition and social behavior. Perspective influences relationships and interaction patterns." A number of cultures abound in India due to her policy of allowing freedom to practice any religion, caste or speak any language and move freely to any part of the nation. Thus, a multi-cultural community reflects throughout the country. People belonging to different religions, castes, sub-castes, speaking different languages, practising different life-styles and having different food habits, coexist alongside. This cultural diversity is ideally the epitome of secular India. But due to selfish interests of a handful of people or due to the values passed on from one generation to the other, there has been a strong prejudice cultivated over the years against the minority communities.

Results and Discussions

Home is a place where one feels secure and wants to return to after a day of work and toil. It is a place where one belongs and is one's own self without any pretensions or façade. It's a place where all the family members get together sharing experiences both happy and sad. Fateema Lokhandwala's home in a non-descript village is such a place where her resilience, "the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances," (Masten et al 429) becomes manifested. Baapu is the father who makes sure his four children go to school as he feels education is the only means of coming out of the fence of poverty. He collects iron scrap after roaming around in the village and the neighbouring villages which is later sold thus earning his wages—the only means of livelihood. Ba is the mother who is an illiterate but a strong woman. In spite of being an illiterate, she is the one who puts up a brave front which inspires her daughter to try to cross the fences of illiteracy, backwardness and poverty. She toils throughout the day after waking up early in the morning and is unwilling to disturb her daughter with her studies. She is a proud mother whose two older children excel in studies and are unmatched at school. Kareem is the eldest brother, an inhabitant of the beautiful home his parents have



built. A strong competitor as well as a support to his younger sister Fateema, Kareem was a very strong pillar of his house. The innocent tussles between the brother and sister for the scrap national geographic magazines and other books, the pulling of braid, the teasing of each other, together with the chasing of the moonbeams by the younger siblings, Jamaal and Saira, bring home a happy picture of a family.

Behind this happy togetherness, Mehta brings to the fore the poverty-stricken life led by the family. The home made of mud which needs to be repaired with cowdung regularly as cracks appear, holds the happy family together.

Living in the corner of a village in a fragile mud-baked house that could fall any moment, Fateema, her siblings and parents knew this truth. This was no profound revelation, but the stuff of everyday life. Their home was not much more than mud walls topped with a tiled roof. It had two rooms, one without a window. A small-cooking space, a narrow verandah or *osri* in the front and then a small open courtyard, or *faliyu*. The *faliyu* was an all-purpose place for the children—this is where they slept, played, chased cockerels, studied. In fact that's all they had. (7)

This house where the six members shared their dreams and apprehensions later on finds only Ba as its sole inhabitant with Baapu passing away, Jamaal fleeing in search of greener pastures, Kareem joining the extremists on the pretext of studying, Saira having passed away due to high fever and Fateema studying in the city to make her father's dream come true. The house receives a new look with Kareem getting the house renovated. He gets it later plastered with cement and also gets it painted in green. He proudly states, "their lane now goes by the name of Maajidbhaivada." (95)

The school in the village lends itself to be the second home to the Lokhandwala children as they learnt the ways of life from their school. The teachers and the other students constituted their family at school. The Navprabhat school from Grade 1 to 10 ensured free education for all the children of the village irrespective of caste or religion. Fateema realizes that there is some difference between the high-class Hindus, Muslims and Dalits at school. Fateema's questions were answered by her father who said, "Our religion is different, that's the way it is...Not everyone is alike. Are all trees the same? Some are tall, some are not. These are Allah's miraculous ways." (11) Fateema was the most unkempt girl in her class and the other students believed it is because she is a Muslim that she is so shabby. Such cultural constructs abound in the novel. The students do not realize it's due to her family's impoverished condition that she cannot afford clean and neat clothes and oil for her hair. It is in the school that Fateema learns her lessons of hygiene from her teacher Smitaben, who believed even if she is a Muslim she should come to school in a presentable way. In fact, it is Smitaben who insisted the management to provide free uniforms and books to the needy students. Fateema and Kareem won several competitions, excelled in their studies and also earned scholarships. The teachers came to trust the children in bringing laurels to the school. There was a sense of belongingness even years after Fateema left for higher studies. Thus, values like obedience, respect, correct usage of language, patriotism and confidence were instilled at the home called school.

When catastrophe strikes everyone at a home becomes united without any distinction. The heavy rains and the following floods in the village led the region to a precarious situation. There was havoc in this non-descript village in Saurashtra. The



mud-baked homes of the poor were worsely affected. When it started raining, they were not wary of any exigencies but as it rained incessantly the situation became grave so much so that the poor feared their homes would be completely destroyed. Fateema and her family tried hard to stay back at their home but after days of continuous rains even their roof started showing cracks and water seeping in. "Soundlessly the walls collapsed. Ba shrieked. Baapu sat up. They fled from home." (61) Most of the poor people's houses were submerged in water. There were no differences now. Regardless of caste or class there were many people who had sought refuge in the temple which had a raised platform than some of the houses. Everyone stayed in this makeshift home with camaraderie consuming food with each other, sharing their woes and sorrows and adjusting with whatever meagre facilities provided. There were no complaints about belonging to different castes and religions rather everybody became one at the time of difficulty. Thus, the cultural construct of not sharing food from other caste people melts away proving this to be only an age-old way to subjugate a set of people. Jani Sir the representative of this kind of distinction once admonishes Chandan and Fateema.

You girls there! What do you think you are doing?" You shouldn't be eating each other's jootha food like this...And as for you, Fateema! You are putting a hand in her box? ...Chandan, check caste and culture first before you...This Fateema is...never mind. Just be careful from now on." (17)

Further they drank the same water the other caste or religion people drank which would have created a ruckus earlier or in another situation. Earlier when Fateema had helped Vijaya, Jani Sir's daughter-in-law, in carrying the water pot, she said, "You'd better go. My mother-in-law will say the water is polluted if she sees you carrying it." (18) At the temple Fateema observes that not everyone had taken shelter there. Little Saira was curious to know whether their house fell down or not. When Baapu says that the rich people's houses were strong she was sad that their home cannot stand up to the slaughter of the rains. Thus, the temple becomes their home for a few days till the rains stop and water begins to recede. The affluent of the village were at the temple distributing food and clothes. Although the Lokhandwala family returned to their cracked home, Saira was suffering from high fever and succumbed to it. It was an irreparable loss experienced by Fateema who longed to have the whole family together under one roof. Although the temple gave them refuge, the return home was not soothing.

Following her studies at Navprabhat school where she excelled in everything, equipped with a recommendation letter, Fateema set off to the city to further her dream. She reached the Matoshree Taramati Gandhi Hostel with Kareem who did not want her to continue studying. Although Manorama the warden informed there was no vacancy, Fateema persisted on her efforts and eventually Manuben gives in. The room provided was only a storeroom with no air circulation but Fateema made it her own. Manuben had her apprehensions giving room to a Muslim girl. The rules to be followed were told to Fateema asking her to adhere to them. At first there was nobody to share the room—the 'home' Fateema was getting used to-- but later came Komal with her vibrant share of Hindi movie romantic songs. Komal brought in the fun, relaxation along with the feelings of care and protection. Fateema had these earnest longings to



protect Komal who was as though let loose from the shackles of home. The hostel room became a home for Fateema for five long years. It was in this home that she learnt how to become independent, dependable, strong and confident. The mother figure Manoramaben taught her how to sit straight and look into people's eyes and speak what comes to her. Fateema also protected Komal from getting waylaid when she was eloping with Mazhar. By doing so she saved the reputation of Manorama as a warden along with dissuading Komal which would have put her family's reputation at stake.

After her postgraduation, Fateema found a room in another hostel as she could not continue at the Matoshree Hostel. By that time Fateema had started teaching and later pursued her Doctorate. The warden as the previous hostel warden was also reluctant to give a room to the Muslim woman but then later gave her a room lying unused.

After Ba and Baapu's home, the hostel room became a second home for her, although that was also a thing of the past now. Her current home, the home she was being offered—what was it, she wondered? There wasn't a single window to bring in the universe. Instead, she saw a prison cell with iron bars. She often felt she was being sucked into an abyss. (30)

But Fateema was not ready to go back on her aim. She courageously kept on waging a war against the constructs existing in society. Language is one such cultural construct. People of other cultures feel Muslims have a different, uneducated way of speaking and the warden at the hostel was surprised when she finds that Fateema is a Muslim. She says, "By the way you speak, I wouldn't have guessed you were..."(31) She stops herself from finishing the sentence but Fateema understood how language was also pulling her community backwards. As a little girl Fateema used to correct her mother who would pronounce Gujarati words in the rustic way. At the village her mother would not allow her to do the household chores rather gives her freedom to learn English and also tutor Chandan and two other boys at school. Fateema overhears her mother talking to a neighbouring woman who asks her why she should toil like that when she has two girls at home, the mother replies, "I don't need the girls' labour. They will not be taking the cattle to graze. In fact, Fateema is learning English now!" (16) But Kulsoomchachi only thought to herself that once the Kazi issues orders for the girl's marriage she would not continue to learn English rather would be grazing cattle at her in-law's place. In spite of the forceful attitude of the religious leader and her own community around, Fateema's mother believed that learning of English would help not only Fateema but the whole family to dream of a beautiful life. The common notion among the higher class in the village was that Muslims do not get educated. They get their daughters married off early. This notion is seconded by what Kulsoomchachi tells Fateema's mother too. But Fateema proves everyone wrong by completing her MA in history. Her love for poetry, history and mythology cannot be compared to anything. Even the villagers were surprised by the way she recited from Hindu legends and mythology. Fateema would carry two trunks with her to the homes that she would reside in. One of the trunks were full of books she had read and taught from. It was at



this stage that she embarks on her journey of teaching the underprivileged in her community—the 'Muslim Mohalla' which was not so repulsive now.

Earlier Fateema had stayed in Kareem's home to nurse him back to health after a severe bout of malaria. The situation around that house was repulsive with sights and sounds which were at once familiar yet strange and unconnectable. When Kareem was leaving for the city to continue studying as a science student, he had promised to buy a house there and take everybody to the city. That utterance had moved his little sister Fateema. But such a moment never came. Although Fateema did go to stay at his place in the 'Muslim Mohalla' when he was ill and had plans to continue staying there if no alternative arrangements were made, she did not like that place "full of squalor, noisy quarrels and mosquitoes." (89) Fateema tried to keep Kareem's house spick and span but he asked her not to touch his things. Fateema was a true Muslim knowing what the Koran says and also the diktats of Islam. But she found Kareem's forceful ways, against her beliefs. Fateema reminds him, "Kareem, calm down please. Don't be such a radical. I have not forgotten the namaaz we did with Baapu and Ba and the Urs we visited. That is my religion. But I will not shut the doors of my consciousness as you want me to do, that's not possible. Please." (122) She wanted to make that house her home, to stay with her brother. The women in the vicinity were later on encouraged by Fateema to get trained in embroidery, tailoring and culinary skills in order to empower them. Fateema thought it was her responsibility to redeem her community out of the images constructed against them as Maajidbhai's children had proven in the village as the teacher whispers to another colleague, "These people are different. They live like us, amongst us in the village. But otherwise, Muslims are not like us at all." (56) Fateema recollected the "pucca house" (68) they were put up in when her family had visited Rajab Ali's town for the Urs festivities. Jamaal was too excited while Baapu sat on a cane chair and felt all the exhaustion of his body going away. They were provided with delicious food and arrangements for staying. The house was just as the dream house with "a verandah, strong walls, otla to sit on, two rooms, a kitchen and a balcony." (68) It is only later that Fateema realized the trap laid by Rajab Ali who wanted his nephew to be married to Fateema. Although Baapu and Jamaal wanted the marriage to take place but Fateema and her mother were against it. Eventually Fateema had to resort to the school teachers and her mother to rescue her from Rajab Ali's house which Jamal and Baapu so much wanted to own, on account of Fateema's marriage. Baapu was forlorn but his daughter had decided in her mind that she would own a house one day and take her family along to the city.

Fateema was forced into extremist activities by detaining her in a guest house by Ammi, Anwar and Kareem. But she proved that the physical curtailment of her freedom will definitely not lead to mental detention. She spoke eloquently about the need and importance of education and only education can save the community from deterioration.

Without an education, English and technology, how was our quam to do better? How much would these women earn with their embroidery? Will my poor Muslim sisters spend their lives like this? (149)



Finally, the conspiracy hatched at the guest house comes to light when news about communal riots is shown on television. Fateema wanted to shed the image of Muslims being violent people by preaching the goodness of a harmonious and peaceful way of life. Fateema gets arrested in the melee because other occupants of the guest house were absconding. She was questioned continuously using different means. The jail warden pulls her thick braid and tells her not to cry as this was her home now. This sent jitters down her body and she thought looking up to Allah, "So this prison is now my home?...This is my home now on." (183-184) When the warden felt Fateema is innocent, she tells her that even she was a prisoner but was later retained as a warden because of her good behaviour and that now the jail was her home. The prison was Fateema's home now. The clothes given to her were loose so as to fit in two more people in. There was hardly any ventilation in the cell and the sight from the small window showed her that the whole world outside was bent. She was also offered tobacco that was smuggled into the prison. Besides the police used invectives to investigate and get answers from Fateema. But she reproached the police by reminding him that he was a Brahmin and not to pollute his tongue using such words. She was left alone when all the evidences at the guest house proved her innocent. Later she was released by good-minded friends from her old school. Thus, the home called 'prison' did not last long and Fateema was again free to hunt for her dream home.

Fateema's daily routine in the city began on her scooter, riding through the traffic of the city and fondly looking at the buildings under construction. The room with a small window at the working women's hostel was still not her home. She thought, "Home was where she and Ba would live." (194) Now there is no one else remaining. First Saira passed away followed by Jamaal leaving home to join Rajab Ali in another town, then Baapu passed away and lastly Kareem absconding. When Fateema started working as a teacher and working on her PhD, she could no longer continue staying in the hostel and so rented a place in the Mohalla but, "she was desperate to quit the Mohalla where she rented a room—the filth, the noise, the fights between husbands and wives and the daily struggle at the public tap." (223) But she had to stay on till she got a permanent home. She had a close bond too with the people as she taught them various skills to earn their livelihood. When she visited a colleague's home for her daughter's birthday, she was impressed and thought, "Two bedrooms and a little living room, a lovely balcony with a swing and some plants. That's enough for one or two people." (123) The very same friend suggested Fateema to enquire in a certain building of apartments coming up. When Fateema went there, she found a few workers taking a break in the noon to say their namaz and children around doing odd jobs. Therefore, when Fateema stood long looking at them, the supervisor was not very happy. He thought she might report whatever is going on there to the government official. They did not give her a proper answer to her enquiry about flats. They told her the flat were not ready for sale. Similarly, Fateema had to face negativity because firstly, it was a single woman coming for the flat and secondly, she was a Muslim.

Eventually luck struck when Tusharbhai who was instrumental in getting her released from jail, met her. He was Jani Sir's son and a builder by profession. He told Fateema that he had read his deceased father's diary which had a lot of praise for Fateema. Tushar's brother had bought Aalamchacha's house in the village and also



wanted to buy Fateema's for more space as he wanted to construct flats there. Fateema asked a favour from him in the form of a flat in return in the city. Tushar was a little reluctant too but Fateema was desperate and so she added that she would pay whatever the extra amount would be. Tushar tells her how indebted he was to her mother who took care of his sister suffering from cancer yet, "you belong to another religion. If we sell you a house, we won't be able to sell the rest." (327) He tried to explain how different the culture of the people following these religions were. Tushar could not deny a flat to Fateema but he advised her not to tell others about getting a flat in his building—Sunrise Complex. Fateema's happiness knew no bounds and she had a spring in her feet as she left for her home in the Muslim Mohalla.

Conclusion

Mehta in her novel *Fence* explores the interaction between the people in a multicultural society. The demeaning way in which the teacher belonging to the majority community shuns Fathima from digging into her friend's food, warning her from such further actions and also asking her to watch her caste; further, on the day of festivities at Chandan's house when she had to dress-up like a girl belonging to their community in order to go unseen, speaks volumes about the subjugation of the Muslim community. The children may not have any ill feelings about their friends belonging to another community but it is the evil that has been instilled in them that later on becomes the character of the people belonging to the majority community. All this gets reflected in the utterance of Jani Sir's son, the builder, when he says that he had no qualms in giving Fathima a house in his apartment, but once he gives a house to a Muslim, no other person belonging to the majority community would buy a flat there. All the interaction implies that the relationship between the communities may never find a harmonious way. They would only run parallel lines unless and until people become broad minded, discard the traditionally, culturally motivated attitudes and are ready to accept other communities.

Thus, throughout the novel *Fence* Fateema tries to come to terms with different kinds of homes where she could find her peace and reside near people belonging to different religions and castes. She found no respite in school where her teachers kept their distance from her and also asked her classmates to stay away from her. In the city there were designated areas where the Muslim community people could reside and so there also Fateema is left yearning for a home in a mixed area. The only time that people belonging to different religions resided together was when there was heavy downpour and resultant floods which forced people to take shelter in the temple which was on a raised platform. Fateema had dreamt of a home along with her family in the city. But the members of her family were no more with her. She longed to live especially with her mother in a home in the city but her mother breathed her last in the village. She always wanted to live among people belonging to different religions. Like young children who do not demarcate among themselves, she wanted to mingle with different kinds of people irrespective of caste, creed, religion or language. "Surely, on this wide and beautiful earth that Allah had made, there must be a small piece of land for me? Surely it exists." (32) But her effort to reach this utopian world was short-lived when a young man, one of the students, whom Fateema had spoken along with



Kareem and Anwar, told her that the builder was going to construct a wall between the two buildings—one for the Muslims and the other for Hindus. Although Fateema was taken aback, a sad realization dawned on her. She could understand that these young men too wanted good homes to live. Fateema had to accept that there can be no place where all religions can reside unitedly. There will be a fence that demarcates the physical existence as well as the minds of people belonging to different religions. On being asked whether all these rituals might seem strange to her by a Gujarati woman at Chandan's wedding, confidence exuded from Fateema as she answered that the rituals were different but interesting and also that, "ultimately, we must all prepare to live in a more multiracial and multi-religious society." (90) Ostracization continued and there was no way all the communities could reside next to each other. Thus, celebrating the diversity of cultures and living in a home in a mixed ghetto remained elusive for Fateema in spite of her strenuous efforts.

Works Cited

- Bennett, Tony. Cultural Studies and the Culture Concept. *Cultural Studies*. 29, 2015, pp. 546-568. 10.1080/09502386.2014.1000605.
- Desai, S. D. Who is that across the fence? <https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/books>. 2015.
- Foucault, Michel. "Des Espaces Autres", March 1967, trans from the French by JayMiskowiec, *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuite*, (October 1984) "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" *Diacritics* 16, 1986, pp. 22-27.
- Frow, John. (2008). On Literature in Cultural Studies. 10.1002/9780470774182.ch2.
- Jackson, Ronald & Drummond, Darlene & Camara, Sakilé. What Is Qualitative Research?. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*. 8, 2007, pp. 21-28. 10.1080/17459430701617879.
- Jeannotte, M.. The Social Effects of Culture - A Literature Review. 2017. 10.13140/RG.2.2.15680.84482.
- Kothari, Rita. Translation, Mediation and Borders: English and Other Worlds www.guftugu.in. 2017.
- Kothari, Rita. www.ashokauniversity.academia.edu/RitaKothari
- Lefebvre, Henri. The Production of Space. Malden, MA: Blackwell, Original work published in 1974, 1991. pp. 26.
- Lincoln, Y.S., and Egon G. Guba. "But Is It Rigorous? Trustworthiness and Authenticity in Naturalistic Evaluation." *Naturalistic Evaluation: New Directions for Program Evaluation*, edited by David D. Williams, vol. 30, Jossey-Bass, 1986.
- Manimurasu, Kannadhasan & Peruvalluthi. Changing Paradigms in Cultural Context of Literature. 2019.
- Masten, Ann S., Karin M. Best & Norman Garmezy. "Resilience and Development: Contributions from the Study of Children Who Overcame Adversity." *Development and Psychopathology*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1990, pp. 429.
- Mehta, Ila Arab. *Fence*. Translated by Rita Kothari, Zubaan, New Delhi, 2015.
- Mehta, Ila Arab. www.sahityaakademi.gov.in/library/meettheauthor/ila_arab_mehta.pdf



Rex, J. "The Cultural Politics of Difference". *Contemporary Cultural Theory: An Introduction*. 3rd Edition Andrew Milner and Jeff Browitt. Routledge, 2002.

Tison Pugh and Margaret E. Johnson. *Literary Studies: A Practical Guide*. Routledge, London and New York. 2014.

Turner, Graeme. *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction*. 3rd Edition. Routledge, 2003.

