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Mapping Spatialities of Home: A Study of The Immigrant by Manju Kapur

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Abstract
Focusing on theories from Post colonialism, the study analyses the complexities and contradictions inherent in the notion of home, particularly for migrants and diasporic communities. This paper explores the concept of home through the lens of diaspora studies and spatial theories. This paper examines how Manju Kapur's novel is analysed to illustrate the multifaceted experiences of immigrants, including feelings of alienation, loss, and the struggle to forge new identities. It explores how Nina, the protagonist, confronts the challenges of adapting to a new life in Canada, highlighting the emotional and social complexities of the immigrant experience. This paper serves as a poignant exploration of the transformative potential of migration. By depicting Nina's journey of self-discovery, Kapur underscores the multifaceted nature of home and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of displacement. The paper argues that Nina's sense of home transcends a fixed location, instead of being constructed through relationships, experiences, and a continuous process of negotiation. The paper examines how Nina, the protagonist, grapples with her dual identity as an Indian woman in Canada. The abstract argues that home cannot be understood as a singular, static entity. Rather, it is a dynamic process constructed through relationships, memories, and the negotiation of space. Diasporic experiences disrupt traditional notions of home, prompting a focus on the "third space" – a liminal space of transformation and possibility. The analysis highlights how Nina attempts to create a new sense of home through her relationships, education, and personal growth. The conclusion suggests that Nina's journey is one of continuous transformation, where home becomes less about a physical location and more about a sense of self-discovery and agency within a globalized world.
Keywords: Post colonialism, home, identity, immigrant experiences, transformation
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The notion of home has been conceptualized and debated rigorously in academic circles, yet the ambivalence and slippage in the very idea demand incessant inquiry. The idea of home was always tied to a place; an assumed origin, a fixed coordinate that could not be imagined in an alternate reality. It has also been universally conceptualized as a place of comfort and security. However, postmodern, postcolonial, and feminist thinkers have challenged the 'innocuous' construction of the home by unravelling the entrenched unequal power relation hidden in it. Home is conventionally perceived as a material place of belonging to a particular region in a particular nation/country and also belonging to a particular community within that space/region. In this conventional conception, the notion of home evokes a sense of place intimately tied to a sense of self. The idea of home also connotes a complex set of conceptual formulations; experiences that are normatively shaped and influenced; notions of security, feelings of 'homeliness', and a structural control over this spatial entity. Blunt and Varley in their article "Geographies of Home" remark that 'home is a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear' (3) which means it is invested with the meanings, memories, emotions, experiences, and relationships of everyday life,". It is a site that can be affirmative and negative, a place of violence, exploitation, loss, and dispossession.

Home is a site that enacts particular connections and/or relationships with the environment in which it exists, characterized by dependence, interdependence, and exploitation, among others. Home can also produce emotions and experiences of loss, alienation, and exclusion, particularly in terms of gender, class, age, sexuality, 'race', and ethnicity. 'Home' which is normally perceived as a place of 'safety' and 'security', does not hold the same meanings for everyone. This is because the social and political structures of 'home/homeland' may not signify equality for all the categories of people living there, as power structures result in the dominance of one group

over the other. It is this domination that pushes people to margins based on the categories of gender, class, race, ethnicity, etc.

Place and space remain the centre of discussion at home in the postmodern assertion of geography. Postmodern geography is underlined by a radical deconstruction of the contestation of cemented spatial structures. The notion of place as a source of both individual attachment and identity was theoretically expressed by humanistic geographers under different terms such as sense of place, topophilia, inside-ness, and rootedness'. All of these terms testify to the efforts of humanistic geographers to describe the unique relationship between individuals and places. Humanistic geographers explore the complexity of human involvement in geographic environments and propose that human action and awareness impact various geographic phenomena such as space, place, home, mobility, landscape, region, nature, and human-made environments. However, soon in the early 1980s, this intellectual endeavour came under criticism mainly for its blindness towards the materiality of social life (Gregory1981). The new 'critical humanist geography' that emerged out of this critique and, more generally, as part of the 'cultural turn' in geography, has since opened to new theoretical contributions - cultural materialism, feminism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, and post-colonial theory (Pile 1993; Adams et al. 2001). Currently, major attention has been paid to a place conceptualized and analysed as a terrain of contestation, oppression, resistance, empowerment, or collective identification, resonating with various forms of identity politics (Keith and Pile 1993; Creswell 1996). With the increasing study of diasporic conditions, the notion of a fixed and sedentary home is losing ground. Thus, in recent years, scholars have begun to problematize the 'sedentarist analytic bias (Chu 2006, 397) which sees home as a fixed, bounded, and enclosed site, as the analytical focus shifts to the threshold-crossing capacity of home to extend and connect people and places across time and space (Brettell 2006; Datta 2010; Nowicka 2006). This is especially the case in research on migrants' homes because the very act of moving throws into question the ability to locate people in specific places, and homes (Staeheli and Nagel 2006).

Sean Carter in his book Geopolitics of Diaspora, remarks that "Space is invoked but often left un-interrogated" (55) in diaspora studies. Carter tries to invoke the amount of scope that the diaspora offers to the study of space as an important factor in diaspora experiences. Diaspora not only challenges and unravels the fissures and limitations in the monolithic and homogenous notions of home but addresses the complexities and flux that have come to define it. Home, instead of being seen as a unified whole, is scattered over a network of spatial relations. It is not bound to a particular location but manifests in myriad spatialities. Diasporas represent heterogeneous groups, bringing with them a sense of place they have left behind. Immigrant experiences must not be limited to the conventional 'loss of home' studies but rather the relationship between home and the diaspora is quite complex and must be put to critical scrutiny. The text selected for this study points to the numerous ways in which immigrant experiences are not only seen from the point of loss and dislocation but also as potential sites for alternative manifestations of home. Edward Said in his book Culture and Imperialism explores the disruptive changes in the last sixty years, especially after the end of the Empire and the rise of many nation-states which created further confrontations between nations and their sub-nations. It is one of the unhappiest characteristics of the age to have produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than ever before in history, most of them as accompaniment to and, ironically enough, as afterthoughts of great post-colonial and imperial conflicts. As the struggle for independence produced new states and boundaries, it also produced homeless wanderers, nomads, and vagrants, who were unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power, and rejected by the established order. And in so far as these people exist between the old and the new, between the old empire and the new state, their condition articulates the tensions, irresolutions, and contradictions in the overlapping territories shown on the cultural map of imperialism. (4) Avtar Brah's idea of diaspora space encapsulates the enigma of home in a very fitting manner by locating it in the homing desire rather than a desire for the 'homeland'. In Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities, Brah also remarks that "the question of home … is intrinsically linked with how processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances" (192). Thus home, far from a monolithic experience, encompasses the myriad subjective experiences of people across different categories of identities. Such dynamics and multi-layered meanings of home make it imperative to problematize and highlight as many facets of home as possible.

In postcolonial theory, home is also viewed through a critical prism that problematizes the 'exclusionary' narrative building of home on nationalism. It has two aspects: one is the exclusionary nation-building project and the other is the recent hate-filled narrative against immigrants. These narratives promote a hegemonic and exclusionary narrative rooted in essentializing and tribal theories of home.

Travel and movement have opened the debate about whether homelessness should be celebrated or whether there is more to the apparent 'emancipatory' postmodern assertions of home. Travel and movement in the age of

globalization and information technology are no doubt global phenomena but they do not hold the same value for all kinds of travellers. Involuntary migration remains a thorny issue worldwide. Those who are forced to leave their homes cannot attach the same value to the new 'homelessness' of the world as the ones who relocate voluntarily. Doreen Massey makes an important observation about this phenomenon and believes that the movement is not necessarily progressive and emancipatory for all those who take it up. She uses the term 'power geometry' of time-space compression (61) to highlight the more problematic and complex issues underlying migrations. Massey is pointed to the diversity within groups that travel and many fall low in the hierarchy of power dynamics in these groups.

Review of Literature

Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory (1989) by Edward Soja remains a pioneering work that has turned the attention of scholars to spatiality. Space has emerged as an equal partner alongside temporality in the construction of meaning. Soja traces how space was relegated to the backburner and time was seen as the cause of everything. Space was seen as a category of no consequence, but Soja contended that it was as important as time in the construction of social reality. Soja believes that, if space is also applied as an analytical tool alongside historicity, we can gain more insights into social realities. Soja argues that space was put in the backseat for a reason, and thus hides many reasons that give rise to unequal spatiality. Soja does not suggest the abandonment of the historical approach but rather wants both space and historical approaches to run parallel to unearth hidden meanings.

Homi K Bhabha's seminal book Location of Culture (1994) tries to capture the unique experience of people who do not identify with one culture but locate themselves and their experiences in a third space, which is an ongoing process and negotiation. Bhabha calls these spaces 'interstitial spaces' which do not prescribe a single or monolithic worldview of identities and cultures. For Bhabha, cultures are not unique phenomena but syncretic mixtures of differences and similarities.

Elif Toprak Sakiz in her article "Narrative and the mapping of Diaspora Space: Liminalities and subjectivities in the 'Happy Multicultural Land' of Zadie Smith's White Teeth" places the idea of home within the diaspora space and problematizes the assumption of a stable home based on rootedness. The author even analyses the subjectivities of different characters concerning the dynamics of diaspora space and demonstrates how their subjectivities evolve and change over time. Space emerges as a dominant factor not only in shaping diaspora subjectivities but also in the overall narrative of the novel.

Lucinda Newns in her article "Homelessness and the refugee: de-valorising displacement in Abdulrazak Gurnah's By the Sea" questions the popular narrative of migration being liberating and emancipatory for all. She argues that not all journeys must be examined through the postmodern prism of freedom and disruption. While movement and migration have been blessings for certain groups, such experiences are limited to certain groups only. For instance, those who are forcefully pushed out of their homelands, cannot fit into the postmodern idea of movement as emancipatory. Such subjects often end at the margins and peripheries of a new spatial milieu.

Aparajita Nanda in her article "Of cityscapes, affect and migrant subjectivities in Kiran Desai's Inheritance of Loss" traces the journeys of two characters Jemubhai and Biju whose identities and homes are shaped by the spatial journeys they undergo. Aparajita analyses the city of New York as a spatial metaphor coded and structured in such a way that it forces and rather bends aliens and immigrants to as per its code of acceptance. The key to assimilation lies in disconnecting from the roots and submitting to a new spatial milieu which is dominated by white racial codes.

Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose's edited book Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies (1994) addresses the spatial construction of women's experiences in a collection of scholarly essays. The authors argue that spatial dynamics remain central women’s experiences. Gendered identities were carefully crafted through gendered space. They highlight the division of space into domestic and public spaces which has shaped power hierarchy. This book also discusses how women participate in the construction of gendered spaces. The authors highlight that spatial discourse remained a driving force behind the colonial project and hence any postcolonial investigation must address spatial issues to provide a comprehensive picture of colonial discourse.

Doreen Massey's book Space, Place, and Gender (1995) addresses the complex relationship between place and human life. She questions and challenges the absolute constructs of space and asserts its more dynamic and fluid nature. Massey is critical of exclusivist claims of space based on the nation, religion, or race. Massey places special focus on the gendered aspect of space and demonstrates how space is divided into gendered lines.

Massey argues that space and gender are not fixed entities and rather both these entities produce each other through a very subtle process. She believes that —"geography matters to the construction of gender, and the fact of geographical variation in gender relations, for instance, is a significant element in the production and reproduction of both imaginative geographies and uneven development" (2). For Massey, space, place, and gender were cultural ideas and constructs.

Geographer Edward Soja in his book Third Space: Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real- and Imagined Places (1996) offers a stimulating concept of 'third space' to understand the urban space. Soja proposed a 'third space' as a transformative realm that encompasses physical, mental, and social categories of space. Soja discusses Henri Lefebvre's contributions to the field of space and rejects the binary conceptualization of space. Soja imagines the 'third space' as an open-ended and liberating space, full of possibilities to reimagine conventional fixed notions and labels. Edward Soja emphasizes that readers "think differently about the meaning and significance of space and those related concepts that compose and comprise inherent spatiality of human life: place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory and geography" (8). Soja wants space to be recognized as a category of equal significance alongside historicity and sociality.

Alison Blunt in her book Domicile and Diaspora: Anglo-Indian Women and the Spatial Politics of Home (2005) has delineated a very important aspect of home by concerning her study with the Anglo-Indian women who have been unable to process the idea of home and belonging for them. Alison addresses the intersection of gender, space, and race by drawing upon postcolonial feminism, critical geography, and postmodern theories to build her arguments. Alison Blunt has made a remarkable effort by trying to show how Anglo-Indian women negotiate their multiple identities in colonial and postcolonial contexts. She also analyses the Anglo-Indian community's dual heritage of England as a fatherland and India as a motherland and subsequent conflicting and contesting aspects of such a heritage.

Lucinda Newns in her article "Homelessness and the Refugee: De-valorising Displacement in Abdul Razak Gurnah's By the Sea" traces the evolution of the idea of home and how various theories have tried to address the complexity in the very notion of home. Lucinda in a very critical language, questions Gurnah's ideas on refugees and the figure of refugees as emancipated from the shackles of boundedness. Gurnah, according to Lucinda has somehow assumed that whatever refugees go through, is the destiny of all.

Research Methodology

This study critically analyses the selected novel within the theoretical framework of diaspora and spatial studies. This study will employ concepts and insights from postmodern geographers, diaspora thinkers, and postcolonial and feminist thinkers. The third Space concepts given by (Homi Bhabha) and Edward Soja are used to understand and analyze the diaspora experiences of the characters. Additionally, the study followed a close textual reading of the selected text.

The Immigrant by Manju Kapur

"The Immigrant" by Manju Kapur portrays the story of a young woman who marries a dental practitioner living in Canada, was uprooted from her motherland and was placed in the peculiar environment of Canada. The plot spins around their conjugal inconveniences in addition to the typical experiences of an immigrant. The title of the novel depicts the subject of this narrative. In her novel, Manju Kapur portrays a feeling of estrangement through the protagonist Nina, as well as through her mother and spouse.

At the age of 30, Nina feels progressively unappealing. But abruptly a marriage proposal, in any case, comes as a shock. Ananda hones Dentistry in Halifax, Canada. After wedding, she takes off to Canada to begin a new life with him. The couple struggles to adapt to the new relationship in a new cultural environment, especially away from their home. She realizes that romance is not the only perspective on marriage. Nina's glittery life in Canada begins to fade as she learns sexual and passionate truths about her life partner. The story is extremely engrossing as it exposes the quintessential predicaments confronted by an immigrant who had an arranged marriage.

The plot sheds light on immigrant encounters living overseas. It is a fact that a few individuals might adapt to it, and a few might not. Most migrants who have firm ties to their families will find it challenging to adjust to life in the new country and will instead wait for the proper opportunity to go home. In this novel, Nina can be considered an ideal personality that experiences a similar condition. The writer analyses the immigrant phenomenon, that the immigrant's association with the home, with all of its ambiguities, desires, and nostalgia,

which coexist with the conviction that the choice to live overseas is reasonable and judicious. One can comprehend the nuances and sensitivity of middle-class family life depicted by the novelist.

One recurrent and dominant strand of migrants' lives is that they relate home to a fixed, bounded and discrete place. Bachelard (1958); Casey (1993); and Heidegger (1972) conceptualize that the sense of home plays an important role in grounding people in a particular place, a place like no other.

This grounding strategy can help immigrants discover how to navigate their comfort zones through absorption and acculturation. Thus, it is evident that the majority of immigrants perpetually attempt to fit into a new culture. However, the racial or gender prejudice they encounter makes their time abroad miserable and forces them to perceive that their homeland would have been better for them to live in. After marrying Ananda, Nina sailed to Halifax. Her initial encounter at Toronto airport—where she had to undergo a gruelling procedure of comprehensive examination by the immigration authorities —was pretty unpleasant. The woman in immigration had asked her several questions, which she considered inappropriate. Nina had an unfavourable initial perception of this strange unfamiliar land. Being a teacher, she garnered respect in the past, but people now evaluate her based on an entirely different standard. She is ashamed. Kapur paints a vivid picture of Nina's state of mind. She states,

> "She is filled with rage." Why did individuals in the West keep quiet about the humiliation they endured? Nina taught at a university, but this woman, who was most likely a school graduate, had the authority to frighten, reprove, and detail her in a place that looked like a prison cell. Despite being called ma'am, there is no sign of deference (108). She is treated unfairly despite having every legal document required simply because she is Indian, even though "they would not treat a European or American like that" (111).

The cross-examination Nina experiences at the airport agonized her and she resented the injustice of her treatment. She is treated like a criminal simply because she is of the 'wrong colour' and comes from 'the wrong place'. In a state of exasperation, she voices her resentment by writing a note to her husband:

> "This is not your country. You are deceived and you have deceived me. You made it out to be a liberal haven where everybody loved you. This woman is looking for a reason to get rid of me. I am the wrong colour; I come from the wrong place. See me in this airport, of all the passengers the only one not allowed to sail through immigration, made to feel like an illegal alien."(108)

Similar to Nina, Ananda encounters the same terrible ordeal. When he travels to Halifax to live with his maternal uncle. He realises that when in Rome, act like a Roman. He tastes meat and drink. He tries to appear as Canadian. Undoubtedly, he experienced periods of extreme isolation and solitude. "Weekends were the worst, and he had much time in which to relive his parents' deaths. His isolation pressed upon him and numbed his capacity to break his solitude." (35) Ananda remembers that during his stay in India, "he was always surrounded by people, whether at home or in the hostel, his life open to inspection, comment and group participation" (35).

According to Urry (2000), the transnational paradigm in migration studies often provides a theoretical framework for analysing the location-spanning social, economic, and political ties that the migrants sustain across borders and emphasises the 'bifocality' (Rouse 1991), the 'dual frame of reference' (Guarnizo 1997) or 'bi-nationality' (Kyle 2000) that migrants create and maintain. Eventually, Ananda learns how to cure his solitary existence, much like his uncle. Like Andy, the immigrants attempt to migrate from east to west and to mix and mingle. Slowly but surely, they attempt to forget what they have left behind and adjust. According to them, " forget the smells, sights, and sounds you were used to, forget them or you will not survive. There is new stuff around, make it your own, you have to" (123). They are unable to recall what they have left behind due to the long hours at work. They find themselves in a difficult situation. They manage to adapt successfully, but their hearts don't change. They put a lot of effort into opening a bank account and assimilating into the alien society. They undoubtedly go on to realise their aspirations for a better life, but they are unable to sever the enchantment that unites them with their nation. When individuals experience discrimination because of their ethnic background or place of origin, their assimilation process often encounters obstacles. Nina experiences identical sensations when she thinks, "What assimilation when your body, stamped you an outside" (157). Eventually, though, these immigrants figure out how to blend in. Observe the novelist's meticulous and analytical portrayal of the immigrant mind in "'Work is an easy way to integrate. Work engages the mind and prevents it from brooding over the respective merits of what has been lost and gained. Colleagues are potential friends" (124).

Nowicka analyses the house as a site of mobile nevertheless attached traditions and belongings. According to her, home is created through an evolving method of contextualising certain relationships that aren't always

dependent on a location's fundamental elements. In simpler terms, creating a home is a process that involves the people we live with as well as the actual belongings we own. After her wedding, Nina leaves her teaching career and moves to Canada. The double process of adaptation, to her husband and Canada, is long and painful, and she begins her life as an immigrant and a wife in Canada where she has difficulty in adopting the alien culture which leads her to the position of ambivalence. In Canada, she has much more trouble adjusting than Ananda had had; and Ananda is insensitive "never understood a word she was saying" (296), and is unhelpful. Nina soon learns that her identity as a woman from India is exoticized by others in Canada while subdued by her husband. Her lonely, jobless, isolated, sexually frustrated, and childless life is filled with great sadness. Her teaching degree is not so much useful in Canada, but she gets a part-time job in the local library. Her part-time job leads her to have an affair with one of the students. Within the year she learns about her husband's problem of premature ejaculation. She also learns that she is unable to conceive. Her romantic notions of the arranged marriage eventually dissolve and a gradual gap is born between the couple. Arguments, guilt, blame, indifference, and ultimately infidelity all ensue to create an unpleasant atmosphere between the couple. But Nina ventures to lead her life by creating her relationship with people and the place.

Although the novel is divided into three parts, Nina's life thematically divides the story. The first half where she holds on to her Indian Identity, values, and customs; and the second half where Nina returns to school for postgraduate studies at the local University and in doing so "after much finding of feet" (121) gradually finds her independence and identity in Canada.

End of the story:

The story of The Immigrant ends with Ananda's finding a solution to his sexual issues and Nina's heading out for a job interview at the University of New Brunswick, uncertain if she will return to her Halifax life or not. It feels, though, as if she is now ready to take control of her destiny - "heading towards fresh territories, a different set of circumstances . . . when one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home" (330). Nina is becoming Canadian or Western by ceasing to be Indian. Thus, The Immigrant can be read as an exploration of an initial phase of the constitution of the globalized, hybrid, and ambivalent identity of the characters.

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