



Journey of Femininity: Exploring Immigration and Cultural Absorption in Manju Kapur's Novel the Immigrant

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ABSTRACT

The immigration and cultural absorption are the primary issues of this study. It also shows how ideas about femininity are evolving. This study delves deeper into several facets associated with women, including feminism. This essay examines Nina's journey from India to Canada as an immigrant. Nina's immigration from India to Canada explores her struggles and challenges with the traditional traditions she brings with her. This essay emphasizes the conflict between questioning conventional notions of femininity and embracing the changing cultural context. It looks at the difficulties an immigrant faces in reintegrating their native cultural values into their new environment. It emphasizes close bonds and the place of women in families.

KEY WORDS: Femininity, Cultural Environment, Immigrant, Familiar Relationships and Traditional norms.

INTRODUCTION

Her fourth Novel '**The Immigrant**' was released in 2008. Manju Kapur's work is all about feministic concerns is marriage of protagonist, which is her most important effort. Nina is the protagonist of the novel and is thirty years old and is anticipating her marriage as every body part of her reminds her of marriage. Her parents want her get married as according to them marriage is the ultimate for a young girl and they can achieve salvation of soul. And for this purpose she went to an Astrologer and within a short period of time a proposal came from NRI, Ananda who is resides in Canada. This proposal for Nina makes her mother happy and she believes that all the dreams of Nina will get fulfilled in Canada and are not possible in India. For Nina's mother, the husband can only safeguard her wife from sins and vicissitudes. Simply "To see her well settled was her only wish" (61).

The Trans Migrants are uncertain of the place called home, as they always move from one culture to another culture. They are always in a quandary, caught between two worlds. The novel attempts to trace and clear the dilemma of Indian Women in Canada.

"The Immigrant" is a world renowned famous novel throughout the world. The novel revolves around Nina, an English teacher at Miranda House, New Delhi. Nina along with her widowed mother lives in Delhi. Her mother is very cruel and considers her a burden, in turn making her life burdensome. This woman is keen to marry off her daughter very early. The male ruled patriarchal society has made the life of females harsh and also devoid of burdensome. Her mother visits an astrologer only to take make surety that her daughter may also get married soon, within no time a proposal came from NRI, settled in Canada. The NRI is dentist by profession. Nina had a doubt that why Indian born person who is settled in Canada for 7 years was "Looking to India for a wife" (57) and after much discussion Nina finally succumbed to the picture presented to her by Ananda., "Then Ananda promised her such a future, laced with choices, edged to beautiful snowflakes that flitted through the distance, promising at the very minimum change, novelty, excitement" (78). She also agreed the unseen story of Ananda, which he presented to her. In 20th C, a new trend was made that a Immigrant man who marries a women, would serve him with same traditions and customs as that of homeland, and her return gifts were all the comforts provided to him in west, but on the similar hand, she was not allowed to come out of home without the consent of husband i.e., She lacked freedom of her own. The marriage ceremony of "Ananda and Nina" took place with great wealth. His Canadian friend along with his wife Sue came and his Maternal uncle with his Canadian wife were also invited. They were placed into five star hotels and later after marriage "Ananda and Nina" moved to five star hotel (Oberoi) for honeymoon. Nina was very concerned about the expenses, but at the same time she knew that "Ananda" is a wealthy and NRIs stay in such expensive hotels.

After spending few days in Oberoi hotel, Ananda left for Canada. Nina was waiting for Visa, and after three months her visa came and she too left for Canada. Once she reached Toronto Airport, she faced difficulty and inequality being an Immigrant. As she was kept aside for her color. This means inequality prevailed between whites and black. Nina's all the immigrant papers and passports were checked properly. She feels all alone there without the support of anybody as if she had made a serious crime and they are going to put her behind the bars for lifetime punishment. This is a nation where people are judged on the basis of their skin tone and not on the basis of their humanity. But Canada's wealth, prosperity, and richness made her humiliation gone forever. Once she reaches her home that is tiny but neat and clean with all the things arranged in systematic order.

Life in Canada is totally opposite to India. She was alone and had no access to her mother, maid, or any family members. She is home prisoned. She can never express her emotions. The first sight of Canada was very dear to her but it changed after years, once she felt all alone and realized the freedom she had at homeland. She started feeling homesickness and also boredom. With every passing day, she feels more and more depressed. Her husband hardly pays interest towards her condition. In order to overcome loneliness, she plans to conceive. She visits a doctor for her Gynea consultation without the consent of husband, as he is hardly bothered about the child. Anada is happy about the surrogacy but Nina is not happy and context with this decision.

Ananda visits Canada secretly and gets involved with white women, knowing that his wife would never come to know about his relation with white women especially "Sue". Nina decides to take Library course; co-counseling helped her to take a firm decision. She felt happy and content by being into the company of other student in university. She used to leave early and came back home late but Anada never showed anger or lost his temper. As Ananda was secretly and sexually involved with his secretary. Nina on the other side was happy by pursuing the Library Science course and being into the company of others as it was for the first time in Canada she had freedom of her own, not being oppressed. Everyone was her friend especially Anton who was more dear to her.

"A trip to the National Archives helped Nina and Anton to come close to each other and take sexual pleasures out of it. Nina allowed him to take her arms around his waist and fit their chest to one another firmly. And, also she got a chance to take drinks and cigarettes easily without any fear and oppression. She thought she is above the world, being in the "company of Anton" she can enjoy the sex as in North America everyone has the inalienable right to sex, and, it was her good time too. She also broke one more important tradition she started eating flesh. Once she agreed to eat fish which Ananda had prepared. This act of Nina made her realize that she will never regret with the decision to hang on – vegetables only, and will make her life easier from now. Then after some time she started eating every kind of flesh like Red Meat, Cow etc. Ananda on the other side was also Non-Vegetarian, he had already broken all the social taboos, "when in Rome do as they do", so eat as they eat. Taking alcohol was also another example of breaking taboos which he never did in India.

Nina initially did not change herself for Canada, but once exposed to the outer world she changed her dressing style, religion and enjoyed sex with Anton and could have not done living in India. She broke all the libertarians and social taboos of India.

Both Ananda and Nina had extra-marital affairs with Mandy and Anton respectively. They never revealed the truth of their affairs to one another. They were happy and contend, otherwise their relationship was not pure, rather it was a "Meeting of Bodies". Anton who helped and guided Nina throughout her studies so it is good time for her to sleep with him. Ananda on the other side had no regret, as he hides a secret of extra marital affairs. Both were happy and content, being an Immigrant they can do as the people of Canada do in order to make their life smooth, not miserable.

Manju Kapur's remarks: "Certain Indians become Immigrants. Slowly..... These Immigrants are always in 2 muds. Outwardly they adjust well. Educated and English speaking, they allow misleading assumptions about a heart that is --. In the new country they work lengthy hours to aim entrance into society, into establishing a healthy bank account. As per citizenship is concerned, a divided heart means that the immigrant dings to his states Feeling that to give up his passport to find – break in the weakened chain that binds him to his motherland.

That day does come however....

- Infact the years it took to qualify for Gtiuinshupare needed to adopt bit by bit, day by day. To stop funding little things that are strange and confusing, laughable and inappropriate.
- Wear the shoe on the other foot, sister, brother. They think the same of U.get rid of the schism, become enough like them to be comfortable, meager and mingle...
- Forget the smells, sights, sounds, u were used to, forget, then or you will not survive.
- There is new stuff around, make it you own, you have to (121)".

Nina, also adopted things, she welcomed and accepted all the social taboos of the west aking her life free of misery and pain. She realized one has to be one's own owner. There is nobody who can judge you and show you the light of living. We have to live on our own without assistance from anyone.

Once Nina found "White hair" made her recognize that everything is temporary, nothing is ever lasting. She no longer found love in Anton neither did she considered Ananda her husband' Nina thought Anton was a selfish person who used her for his own pleasure. She closed the chapter of extra-marital affairs and all kinds of association attached to him and moved on. She got employment in Halifax and left her partner and harsh memories attached to him. She stops thinking about Ananda and Anton at all. She only thought of persons who were attached to her and cooperating with them had made them very easier.

Nina also understood that Immigrant feeling is actually temporary, nothing everlasting. Also, things once attached to you will remain same throughout the whole life but we have to create different means to make them fixed. You can overcome loneliness miseries in life. For a foreigner there are no other options but to accept the harsh realities and different circumstances in the western country.

Immigration, calls of the mind to assimilate, accept the foreign way of living without abandoning one's own culture. Anada and Nina who lose their own self being an Immigrant. The Immigrant always remains in dilemma for his traditions, customs and culture interact with his adopted land's traditions and customs and it brings a void change in his inherited traditions and culture. This change in inherited traditions ultimately pays way for breaking of social taboos and also native boundaries. Migration to any other alien never means the death of a particular person but it only means rebirth of a person who

accepts new traditions, customs, and culture. They never shed the inherited traditions and culture. They also remain within but he/ she only experiences the contemporary alien way of living only to overcome his loneliness by being away from home land.

SUMMARY

The novel "The Immigrant" revolves around the main character Nina, who is an immigrant to Canada. The novel explores conflict between conventional gender norms and chances for women in contemporary western culture. Nina, as an immigrant, suffers a lot, with the liberal expectations of new society and her own Indian background. Her whole journey is a best example of how globalized society changes the responsibilities of women. Nina battles a lot with her own identity of Indian background with the surroundings in Canada. While maintaining cultural heritage, she must overcome difficulties into a new culture in Canada. Her expectations of native country with those of her new home, extends her notion of gender. This novel examines the concept of marriage, how Independence of women has changed over a period of time. The difficulties of Nina after marriage are clear by her placed marriage and subsequent experience. As she becomes Independent her concept of femininity changes, and challenges the views of women's independence on male power.

The protagonist of the novel, conflicts between wanting to be a mother and having her own career without any support from men. Nina suffers in the same way like many other modern women do, for professional, personal career and responsibility as a mother. The overall change in the body of Nina represents a change in environment, also investigates about her own needs and desires. Manju Kapur through this novel portrays various facts of femininity within immigrant experience. The novel also highlights how femininity may change with times and adapt in the society, where women deal with new issues of identity, tradition, culture and personal choice. In the end Manju Kapur study offers a stimulating examination of the evolving paradigms of femininity in a worldwide society.

LITERATIVE REVIEW

Manju Kapur got fame with "The Immigrant" 2008. Her novels have a feminist approach, the present collection comprises of scholarly research paper and articles presenting to help eradicate the problems of inequality, set back to the women folk, to stand without completions, obsessions and dependence, insight education, recognition, self-identity, freedom and peace, to live life at its best. In Maitra, Nivedita and Dimple Dubey (2014) make an effort to follow the struggles faced by the Indian immigrant woman in Canada in Manju Kapur's novel "The Immigrant". Transmigrants are unsure of what they will call home as they travel across many cultures and regions. They are disoriented by their centrifugal motherland and trapped between physical and psychic level. One must reinvent themselves in order to escape the dreadful feeling of being "in-between," along with the accompanying confusion and bewilderments. Migration is now a frequent occurrence. Ghosh Tamal. (2021). People regularly cross international boundaries these days thanks to contemporary technology and a faster transportation system. They get adjusted into a new nation and attempt to fit in with the formerly foreign habits and conventions observed by the people there. They exchange what to include and what to reject from the just left homeland and the freshly acquired hostland as part of this deal of belonging. They put their native identity at danger by becoming more Canadian and western in their appearance and behavior during this process of unhomeing the country. However, occasionally they join the line of a lost generation and declare their ardent wish to return to India. They make a concerted effort to feel at home in the host country by joining the Indian Club there and celebrating Diwali and Holi alongside Christmas. Due to this, there is mistrust regarding their psychological connection, regardless of their nationality—Are they Indian or American, or both?

Jadhav. Ashok (2021), Manju Kapur has made remarkable contributions to postcolonial Indian English literature. She looks into the situation of women who are socially and culturally excluded. She works to expose the issues faced by Indian women trying to forge their own identities in a patriarchal society limited by tradition. In the postcolonial era, it was rally tough for Indians to maintain their uniqueness both domestically and internationally. "The Immigrant" by Manju Kapur explores the postcolonial issues of cultural alienation, displacement, immigration, solitude, and nostalgia suffered by the Indian lady in a distant country.

Indians who moved to Canada voluntarily changed their names. The majority of Indians eagerly changed their names to be good enough in Canadian society. After a while, Ananda changes into Andy, Nina's name was altered by Anton to Neen. The group of females, which Nina joined, is called Gayatri Gulati Go-Go. They have a new identity, also thanks to their discoveries, names and appearance in their new cultural context. Immigrants' psychology "shows the interaction of traditional culture within the culture of an adopted alien land and brings about a transformation in the inherited tradition and culture of the immigrant" Ashok Kumar (2010). Saba Parveen (2022), examines Nina as a subordinate female character who is looking for her identity in a foreign nation. It also demonstrates how Nina makes an effort to keep peace at home, but when she feels betrayed and smothered, she doesn't hesitate to leave the male-dominated environment. A subaltern is someone who holds a low position in a social, political, or other hierarchy, and a subaltern research examines the psychology of people who have long been marginalized and subjugated. Manju Kapur, addresses a variety of issues in her works, including diaspora, feminism, cross-cultural encounters, identity crisis, lesbianism, etc. Despite her dislike of the label "feminist author," her novels are rife with feminist issues.

CONCLUSION:

The novel's conclusion offers a last look into the various obstacles and struggles immigrants encounter when adjusting to new cultural and societal norms that are very different from those of their home country. It also adds to the conversation of gender feminine in the context of multiculturalism and immigration.

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