

## Experiences of Expatriation in the alienated land: A Study of Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant*

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### ABSTRACT

*Manju Kapur is one the prominent contemporary Indian English woman novelist. In her novels her protagonist depicts the reality and natural perspectives of Indian woman. In the novel "The Immigrant" the novelist attempts to bring the immigrant psyche which struggles to differentiate the traditional culture from the culture of alienated land. When a woman migrate to a foreign country she strive hard to accompany herself to the socio- economic factors that changes the destiny of her life. That transformation brings an alienated feelings and there is a drastic change in her inherited tradition and culture. The transmigrated woman was considered as an object and not a human being who undergoes many hurdles in the multicultural society. She loses her identity in the alienated land and becomes featureless faces in front of the world. This leads woman to shift from one culture to another without any fulfillment. Nina the thirty years Indian woman faces the same circumstance which leads her ill- fated and defeated at the end.*

**Keywords:** Manju Kapur, immigrant psyche, socio- economic factors, transmigrate, alienated land.

The experience of expatriation of an immigrant gradually disconnects them from their homeland but does not dislocate completely. The shift between the places becomes problem of dislocation and relocation in an individual life. Migration that leads to a separation from own country may be seen as revival of new place, new people new customs and habits. Kapur states that in India modern liberated women have started to self-determine their own lives and to decide for themselves, whether they want to be homemakers or more.

Women in order to achieve their freedom seek marriage as an alternative to the bondage created by the parental family. But that alternative becomes the main reason for their failures. Manju Kapur in her novel *The Immigrant* presents the problem of immigrant experience through the character of Nina. In the novel, the protagonist, Nina, is a daring woman. Her father died leaving the family with nothing beholden to his people. The displeasures of their lives gets comfort only when Nina finished school. After that Nina leaves her grandmother's home. She takes her mother to Delhi and she goes to Miranda House. She loves Miranda House in Delhi, because it has given degree and a job. But her mother still harbors dreams of marrying off her daughter back into their rightful place in society. She lives in a single room with her mother and she teaches English literature to lazy and disobedient students.

The novel begins on her thirtieth birthday with a grim realization of Nina diminishing prospects of marriage. Her friends criticize her for wasting her youth. Nina's mother talks about her daughter's womb, her worries, her uterus and the unfertilized eggs that do not contribute to her womanhood. In such an atmosphere the question of being a female automatically rises in her mind. Kapur has also probed into the psyche of Nina. As a spinster, Nina is feeling lonely and she is worried about her future life too. She is an English teacher at MirandaHouse, New Delhi. She is from middle class society who has more responsibility towards her career and her widowed mother. So her life is fully tacked with the responsibilities of her mother. She lived for her mother. The only hope and scope is her mother. The place of a husband or a son has been fulfilled by Nina. Although she post ponds her marriage, she too has the intention to move into a family life. Her expectation is not only a good life partner for her but a good son for her mother. Nina's mother searched groom for her and she was worried about her daughter's age. On Nina's birthday her colleagues remarks about her age and life. She lost her father early in life. After a prolonged period Nina's mother got a proposal for her from an NRI, a dentists settled in Canada. After the marriage Ananda left her in India and he went to Canada. Nina had waited for three months to get her visa. Assimilation and acculturation is the only solution which brings the immigrants to adopt quickly the alien culture. The bitter experience of being an immigrant arrives when she reaches Toronto, she faced the problem of racial discrimination. She was forced to answer the questions not related to the issue but about her identity and

color complexion. The immigration woman officer ask her for unraveling questions. She dishonors Nina for her color. She talks ill about her. Though she called Nina as 'madam' there is no respect or humanity in her words. The first experience in an alienated land brings her introvert thinking in her mind about the country. She feels like an 'illegal alien'.

Life in Halifax was completely contrast to Indian way of living. Though the small apartment was spacious and Nina feels humiliated. Ananda, NRI husband- even though he belongs to orthodox Indian family, considers Indian inferior to the westerners. He adopts the Canadian culture, their habit, behavior, culture. Even he changes his name to 'Andy'. She learns that Ananda had pre-marital affairs and he didn't reveal this to her. Because of his sexual inadequacy Nina believes that her very existence is thrown into question. The death of her mother shatters her dream entirely. Her loneliness, isolated feelings, jobless and childless life filled her with an immense unhappiness. Nina felt that her displacement made her to lose her own self. The protagonist of Manju Kapur struggles against the Eastern rigid social setup. The immigrant experience, the challenge of exile in acculturated society, the loneliness which is the result of her marriage, the constant sense of alienation far from her mother land, the knowledge of and longing for the lost world which refer to her mother are quite explicit and distressing in her life. She feels disgusted when she thinks about Ananda.

A few months later she got her admission in library science. This brought great excitement in Nina's life. She made everybody friend and Anton became her close friend. She adopts all the trends of westernized culture and exploits herself in the gleams of alienated world. A happy marriage demands total surrender and slavery of a woman. It is she who waits anxiously for the arrival of her husband with tears in her eyes. It is she who has to prove her chastity again and again. But now the spirit of a modern emancipated woman has changed a lot. When Nina came to know about Ananda's impotency she feels disgusted and it is true she wants to encounter Ananda with the evidence of his infidelity. But that would mean her infidelity too. Nina never finds an answer why they have betrayed each other. Nina craves for true love. She wants to be a person of importance to someone. Ananda continues to sympathize with her mother's loss and comforts her saying that things would change with a job. But she continues to be moody and stubborn, like a deprived immigrant. He tries his best to change her ways, but Nina continues to be his opposite even when he says life is what that one should accept it. To overcome her frustration and failure she indulges herself to extra marital affairs.

Nina's expectation about her married life is not satisfied. Marriage has betrayed her. It has not provided all the glittering things she has imagined. Her own body seems curiously alien to her. Nina thinks that marriage would bring her love and freedom, but the passion and fulfillment elude her once she is married. Ananda fails Nina on all grounds like mental, emotional and physical. Nina feels that her imagination and expectation about marriage would become magically lucid on her wedding day. At Canada, the first shock for Nina is that he is no more vegetarian. When she asks him, he simply replies that it won't be convenient to be a vegetarian in the Western countries. Nina faces different life style in Canada. Kapur clearly pictures the life of immigrants through Nina and Ananda. She deals with the complications that come from being thrown between two worlds. Even in Canada, Nina has reminiscences of Indian life style and meals. Immigrant's psyche has a very deep effect on Nina as a wife because she cries and feels homesick, when she is alone. She spends her time reading books. In India, she considered her relatives as peripheral and insignificant. In Canada, within a month, her perception changes and she wants to be close to them. She desires to live her life in Canada with flying colors but in Canada Ananda is busy in his job, but for Nina it is very difficult to pass her time. Although she was a teacher in Delhi University, she does not get a job in Canada, because she is not fully qualified to work in a foreign country. Kapur clearly presents the condition of a migrated wife. Nina becomes bored by listening to music, advertisements and reading books. The immigrant's terrifying condition can be seen abruptly in many situations in her life. Nina persuades her husband to come home early so that they can be happy.

Kapur and her contemporary writers infuse fine details about the migrated young wives and their emotional struggle of love and how they are battling in new worlds. To reduce her depression, Nina remembers her mother, who always consoles her in her hard times. By understanding the philosophy of perfect marriage Nina tries to be a patient woman. To lessen her loneliness, Nina tries to indulge her with many things. She goes out for shopping with the neighbors. The only diversion Nina looks forward is to visit the Halifax Regional Library, so that she can break her loneliness by seeking security between the pages she reads. Day by day, the issue of childlessness makes a void between Nina and Ananda. After the death of her father, she and her mother spent long bitter years reconciling themselves to the emptiness in their lives. Similarly Ananda also plunges into a similar predicament after losing his parents in a road accident. Both the protagonists thus have to come up with their problem of isolation to build mutual intimacy. As Nina's mind

is fully engaged on her infertility, she fails to search for the solution. Nina's mind is preoccupied with gathering information about sexual fulfillment. She reads a lot of articles with fascination and interest. Nina feels imprisoned by the stress. There is a yearning for home whenever she thinks of life in India.

Kapur makes a soul searching comment on a woman in mental agony. Her feeling of guilt is derived from social strictures and her escape to masturbation is perhaps the unfulfilled sexual life. Her failed pre-marital relationship must also be taken into consideration. The author delves deep into the psychological trauma Nina undergoes at the time of masturbation. Nina's condition becomes sympathetic, as life in an alien land becomes worse than her life in India. In addition to masturbation, she gets herself addicted to watching TV in the middle of the night. The TV shows stimulates her desires.

The novelist vividly portrays the characters quest for identity, disillusioned dreams, feelings of dislocation and isolated life, which is experienced with frustration, embarrassment, humiliation, intergenerational conflict and marital disappointment. Through the character of Nina, Manju Kapur proves how the individual identity transforms itself in the expatriate condition. Manju Kapur through this novel raised the question about the psyche of the immigrant in the alienated land. Through the characters of Nina and Ananda she investigate whether to integrate with the tradition and culture of alienated country or to preserve their own tradition and culture of motherland. Perhaps that was the ultimate immigrant experience. Thus Manju Kapur clearly explores the challenges and problems of immigrants and reflect their feelings in a very clear and subtle way. Through Nina's decision, Kapur explores the space and reveals the abundance of issues that are deep-rooted within the family, such as the revolt against the age-old tradition, the search for selfhood, women rights and the politics of marriage. Kapur has completed the novel with Nina's statement stating that her experience in Canada was an ultimate experience. For an immigrant there was no going back situation, he or she must reinvent himself by finding new home, new friends and new family.

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