

# IMPACT OF MIGRATION AND MODERNITY, AS SOCIAL CHANGE, ON INDIVIDUALS IN MANJU KAPUR'S HOME

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**ABSTRACT:** *Human civilization has undergone many phases of evolution. Different social, economical, political and cultural entities play pivotal role in promoting the change in the set pattern of human life. Due to the advent of modern modes of transportation, technology and urbanization, there is augmentation in the rate of migration, a phenomenon that is responsible for altering trends in society. Similarly, Modernity is also a child of the technological revolution and urbanization. Modernity results due to the intersection of different societies with one another. It affects members of society to such an extent that the entire society undergoes a transformative stage. this Transformation in both the cases is a significant phenomenon to note. The present research work accentuates Impact of Migration and Modernity, as Social Change, on Individuals in Manju Kapur's Home. It observes how individuals in the select fiction get tempted to embrace modernity and migration and the conflict they enter into with self and the society in the process of change.*

**Key Words:** *Social Change, Migration, Modernity, Manju Kapur's Home, Impact*

## Introduction

Writing is an imaginative imitation of the human life. It watches and shows human life, society, culture and each feature of human presence. The impression of people and the general public through writing arouses round in achieving another dimension of comprehension. This epic understanding prompts change or change in individual and the general public at some point or another. Despite the fact that Various hypothetical schools pressure unique idea of transformation, there is an accord relating the idea of change. for example the change can be either benevolent or dangerous in nature. The former change transforms society positively while the last one torments the general public. The accentuation of these transformations in human civilization can be observed in almost all the genres of literature but fiction enjoys utmost ease in representing human life. The forerunners of Indian English Fiction like Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, R K Narayan, Rohinton Mistry and many more have very skillfully elucidated the Indian socio-cultural setting in their creative offspring. Manju Kapur is one such contemporary Indian English Novelist who has written five critically acclaimed and successful novels viz. *Difficult Daughters*(1998), *A married Woman*(2003), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant*(2008), and *Custody*(2011) wherein she has very beautifully captured Indian socio-cultural milieu while discussing various sensitive societal issues and thereby she fortifies the voice of sufferers to curtail the social evils.

*Home* (2006) is Manju Kapur's enthralling family saga accentuating the socio-cultural backdrop very effectively. She has pictured the thick and thin of an ordinary middle class family through the story of Banwari Lal and his three generations. *Home* presents post partition socio-cultural practices in India experienced by once a prosperous joint family of Lahore and later migrated to Karol Baag of Delhi as a middle class business family trying to adjust and sustain the business and family status. The stream of the fiction acquaints us with the socio-cultural practices and its impact on the life of the characters. In this light, the present article examines migration and modernity as socio-cultural change agents and their impact on individual and the family as a whole.

According to Jones "*Social Change is a term used to describe variations in, or modifications of any aspect of social process, social patterns, social interaction or social organization*". Further, David Dressler and Donald identify Cultural change as "*the modification or discontinuation of existing tried and tested procedures transmitted to us from the culture of the past as well as introduction of the new procedures*". Hence, socio-cultural change is any alteration in the set cultural dogmas as well as social composition. This change influences the individuals, social institutions, social behavior and cultural perceptions. The influence of the change controls the lives of humans and then starts constant race to adjust with the changing pattern of society and culture which leads the individual to struggle at physical as well as mental level. It is very interesting to observe the way socio-cultural changes occur and influence the individuals and the ways attempted to cope up with the change in *Home*(2006). *Home*(2006) brings forth varied socio-cultural facades

like migration, transition to modernity, marriage, cultural customs and perceptions, religious beliefs, crave for individual identity and their impact on human life. Struggle starts when the individuals fail to fulfill their own desire and demand of the society concomitantly which results into either a conflict or sheer discontent.

### **Migration and its impact:**

Migration or relocation is a phenomenon that changes the social, economic and cultural status of an individual. The adjustment with a new place, creating new identity and confirming ones safety and progress becomes a challenge for those who migrate or relocate. In his *Migration Literature and Hybridity(2010)*, Moslund explains the occurrence of migration stating, "It seems that we are witnessing a massive international and transnational defeat of gravity, an immense uprooting of origin and belonging, an immense displacement of borders, with all the clashes, meetings,... reshaping the cultural landscapes of the world's countries and cities". Migration affects the social construct to a considerable extent that it not only alters several customs or rituals but it has power to uproot major part of established socio-cultural system.

Banwari Lal, a prosperous businessman of Lahore becomes the victim of partition. Having ensured the safety of life and his family, he migrates to Karolbaag of Delhi, leaving all his fame and property behind in Lahore. Unfavorable circumstance spurred Banwari Lal's migration. In *"Immigration, Migration and Culture(2018)* Victoria M Esses classifies migration in two clear divisions based on the stimulus "...Migration may be relatively voluntary(e.g. for employment opportunities) or involuntary(e.g. due to armed conflict, persecution, or natural disasters)..." Hence, the migration that Bawarilal undergoes can be put in latter category of an involuntary or a compelled migration. This migration adds tension and struggle in his life which he successfully overcomes and establishes himself as a successful readymade garment businessman. But the status that he enjoyed in Lahore always left him with sense of discontent and disappointment. He regretted his excel in business at Karolbaag whenever he tried to compare his present and past status.

*"In Lala Banwari Lal's mind, the business was still struggling to reach the heights of the Lahore days,...." (Home, 6)*

The luxury and the fame that Lala Banwari Lal had enjoyed at Lahore could never be attained back by him in India. Migration causes inflicting pain in the soul of Lala Banwarilal and the mental trauma routes him to lament for losing the golden past. Besides, he becomes nostalgic at times which stimulates longings to regain the self and past.

Financial crisis and economic restrictions leave major impact on Lala Banwari Lal. Banwarilal along with his entire family have to fight back the economic restrictions. After reaching Karolbaag he not only had to sell his wife's ornaments to start a new life but to sustain the new business. He along with his family underwent many social and economic sacrifices which is perceptible in:

*"Which was a good thing because Banwari Lal was not about to waste money on even a cycle in early days. All his profits were poured back into the shop. The family never took holidays. Their main entertainments were eating and an occasional trip to the local cinema. The clothes they wore had everything to do with shop leftovers and wholesale prices." (Home, 4)*

Lala Banwari Lal finds solace to his grief and sufferings in the memory of glorious past which reveals his inner longings for his high status and opulence. He considers the migration responsible for all the financial and economic downturn in his life.

Even at the time of his daughter Sunita's probable suicide, Lala Banwari Lal feels that the migration is the reason behind all his pains and his daughter's unexpected death. Lamenting on her death he ponders, *"Had he remained in Lahore, this never would have happened. She would have married into a family of equal status." (Home,21)*

Lala Banwari Lal's regret and feeling of nostalgia is evident in the above extract. He considers himself responsible for the death of his daughter Sunita and believes that taking the responsibility of Vicky, the son of Sunita, is the only way to repentance. Thus, relocation takes place in life of a small boy. Vicky, being a small child, was unable to understand the unfortunate happening in his life. With all his innocence, he accepts his maternal home which he could never have a right to consider his own. Vicky's relocation is due to his ill fate. His mother's demise forced him to relocate. The relocation took away his childhood from Vicky. Despite of living in Banwari Lal's home, Vicky could never derive the love, care and concern from the other members of the family except his grandfather. A biased treatment towards Vicky gets elucidation when Vicky becomes a father of a male child. Patriarch society celebrates the birth of male child but in Vicky's case neither significant naming ceremony was carried out nor were many gifts given to them by the family members. The anger and agony of both Vicky and his wife Asha are visible in,

*"Would they behave the same if one of those other sons produced a (male) grandchild?" (Home,103)*

Vicky was an outsider having no rights but only responsibilities. He struggles for his identity and oscillates

between home and shop with future in question. Vicky's wish to take up tuitions in school was unheard. Even Vicky's proposal to seek finance for starting his own business was rejected by Pyarelal and Yashpal, sons of Banwari Lal. That moment Vicky could realize him,

*"...as a poor relative, with no weight to move things his way. If his grandfather was like this, what would happen to him when the old man was no longer there?" (Home,109)*

Vicky struggles and fights for his identity. He objects and seeks equal rights, space in home and recognition in business but having no hope ultimately he surrenders to uncontrollable and unfavorable circumstances and leaves home by taking the compromising amount. Hence, Vicky could secure recognition neither at his paternal home nor at his maternal home. This reveals the state of quandary migrants normally experience in their life.

The third relocation takes place when Nisha, the daughter of Sona and Yashpal, gets sexually abused by Vicky who was in his adolescents. Vicky threatened her and out of panic she avoids food and weeps. Sona discusses the strange change of behavior in Nisha with her sister Rupa. Rupa suggests her to send Nisha to stay at her home to which Sona and her husband Yashpal agree. Nisha's relocation to her maternal Aunt Rupa's home was a transition that brings happiness and comfort in her life. Rupa and her husband, Premnath nurture Nisha with lot of care and concern. They instill in her the virtues of education and independence. Nisha turns out to be a bright student and enjoy her aunt Rupa and Uncle Premanth's company. After ten years of stay at her aunts home Nisha, the young and beautiful girl, had to return her home. Nisha finds herself uncomfortable in her own home with was quite conventional and feel most comfortable at her aunt's home. Nisha's mother criticizes her upbringing when it is unveiled that she doesn't know cooking and fails to perform her duties as girl in a family. She contemplates about the roles expected from her and learns adjusting.

Here, the relocation of Vicky, unlike Lala Banwari Lal and Nisha, is an unconscious one which creates quandary and leaves him with the questions of identity, uncertain future and anxiety. Migration leads him to economic dependence, identity crisis, and makes him victim of exploitation and physical and mental conflict. Nisha's relocation, unlike Lala Banwari Lal and Vicky, is self sought and turns into a favourable experience. Migration has adverse effect on Nisha. She faces rejection, alienation and mental Stress which eventually deteriorates her health and beauty. She has to Compromise with her longings. Lala Banwari Lal's relocation, unlike Vicky and Nisha, was a matter of survival which exposes him to struggle majorly at mental level. Migration makes Lalabanwarilal's discontent and nostalgic. He struggles and Learns adjusting to the new milieu.

#### **Transition to Modernity and its impact:**

Transition towards modernity is an entity that attracts and influences individual and society to a considerable extent. Desire to do new and to experience the thrill of undergoing the change lures the individuals to accept the modernity. According to English Oxford Living Dictionaries modernity is *"A modern way of thinking, working, etc."* A more comprehensive definition of the term modernity is found in the extract, *"The 'classical' theories of modernization from the 1950s identified the core characteristics of modern society as the decomposition of older 'closed' institutional frameworks and the development of new structural, institutional and cultural features and formations, and the growing potential for social mobilization"* (Deutsch, 1961)

The aspiration for modernity has both positive as well as negative consequences. Leaving the worn out traditions and perceptions which suffocate humans and degrade society results into progressive modernity whereas acceptance of values and trends which pollute the society leads to the detrimental outcomes of modernity. Acceptance of modernity is exhibited at different levels in Home and it is interesting area to examine the influence of modernity on different characters in Home. The present discourse evaluates influence of modernity on three grounds namely business, family institution and concept of modern house.

Firstly, the conventional style of carrying out the business of Lala Banwari Lal was resented by his sons when they express their wish to modernize their shop to excel in their business. This aspiration to embrace modernity creates cold altercation between father and sons. The third generation of Lala Banwari Lal gets attracted to the fancy outlook of the shops in the changing market.

*"Look at the shops around, fountains, glasses, doors, soft lighting, murals, fancy show windows with such competitions we will soon be left behind."*(Home, 161)

It was panic that the traditional way of leading business would fail to attract customers and their business would fail to survive in the cut throat competition of the market. This created a division at mental level which extracts the generation gap between the father and sons. Ajay and Vijay could succeed in modernizing their shop only after the death of Lala Banwari Lal which shows that it is not easy to shake the age long conventions.

The other significant change that occurs after the death of Lala Banwari Lal is the clear separation of the joint family into two different divisions. And the desire to acquire more space for comfortable leaving instills a thought of demolishing the old home and its values to construct a modern home with all together different values. There is a shift from value based system to a materialistic system.

*"Pull down this house and build a modern one, a modern house that would remove the angan and give them all more floor space with that had attached bathrooms." (Home, 168)*

Irony is that even though the builder ensures more space and comfortable leaving, modern flats have no place to accommodate Vicky, his wife Asha and son Virat. Unlike Lala Banwari Lal, Yashpal and Pyarelal lack the affection and attachment for Vicky. Emotional bonding are assassinated at the hand of advancement and comforts. Vicky faces mental turmoil in search of his identity in home and shop. Home is the place where an individual finds shelter, comfort, safety and security. He was not fortunate enough to enjoy such privileges. Neither paternal nor maternal relatives allow Vicky to claim his membership. Eventually he has to enter into a conflict to prove his membership and gain the rights as a member of the family which results into a hatred and exclusion from the family and later alienation.

Nisha, the central character of the novel suffers the adverse consequences of her modern aspirations. Her sufferings are psychological, physiological, social and economical. Nisha is in love with Suresh. She challenges the age old tradition of arrange marriage institution by expressing her wish to marry a boy from other caste with different social and economical background than that of her. As a result of which she faces a strong resentment from her family members. She is deprived of affection and respect as a member of family. She was kept under house arrest. She experiences mental stress for a long span and her health deteriorates and suffers from a skin disease named eczema and later loses her beauty. The regret by her mother Sona reveals it,

*"She did have a skin like a lotus,..." (Home,233)*

And further she reaches the extremes pain for deteriorating health of her daughter.

*"Even when she was a teenager, not a pimple, not a spot. Other girls got, but Nisha – never. And now see. It is the evil eye – my daughter was too, too beautiful." (Home, 233)*

Declining health and beauty become barriers in her quest of suitable alliance. Education empowers the humans but the education that she received does not come to her rescue. Having seen no hope for attaining anything of her choice, she compromises with her dreams. But this compromise also fails to soothe her wounds and alleviate her pain and sufferings. By the end of the novel, we can see that Nisha meets success in developing a business owned and run by herself with the help of her father. Her idea of starting her own business, a profession of her own choice, is the pure sign of women empowerment and independence that she achieved but it was evanescent because soon after her marriage to Arvind, her future becomes uncertain. It becomes intricate for her to sustain the freedom and the economic independence that she attained with a lot of sweat and toil. The novel ends with a hope as Arvind promises Nisha to arrange a place where she can resume her business.

## Conclusion

Thus, migration, desire for modernity are major socio-cultural changes which leave their impact on the individuals. Characters experiencing migration and aspiring migration face mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and financial impediments. youngsters fail to adjust with the change caused by migration and modernity while the older generation react to the change in dignified way and manage their comfortable coexistence with modernity and migration.

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