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**Deconstructing the Illusions of Migration in Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant***

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**Abstract:**

Migration is often framed as a transformative journey toward economic prosperity, personal freedom, and self-fulfillment. However, Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant* dismantles these idealized notions by exposing the disillusionment that accompanies relocation. This paper critically examines how the novel portrays migration as a complex negotiation between expectation and reality, where the myths of Western modernity and success clash with the alienation, cultural dislocation, and personal struggles faced by immigrants. Through the experiences of Nina and Ananda, the novel reveals how nostalgia for the homeland and the illusion of an idealized West shape diasporic identity, only to be shattered by the realities of assimilation, marital dissatisfaction, and existential crisis. Using the lens of diasporic studies and postcolonial theory, this paper explores how *The Immigrant* critiques migration as both a physical and psychological journey—one that is as much about loss and displacement as it is about reinvention and survival. By deconstructing the myths surrounding migration, Kapur offers a nuanced perspective on the immigrant experience, ultimately questioning whether true belonging is ever attainable.

**Keywords:** Migration, Disillusions, Nostalgia, Myth, Displacement.**Introduction:**

Manju Kapur, is the most prominent and popular contemporary novelist of Indian English Literature. She teaches English literature at Miranda House, Delhi University. She has five novels and an anthology to her credit to date. Manju Kapur deals with various themes such as Feminism, Diaspora, Social and Economic Forces, Gender relationships, and lesbianism. Her first novel *Difficult Daughters* was published in 1998 and awarded the prestigious Commonwealth Award for Best First Novel, Eurasia region. Her second novel, *A Married Woman* was published in 2002 and shortlisted for the Encore Award, her third novel, *Home* in 2006 was shortlisted for Hutch-Crossword Prize, and her fourth novel, *The Immigrant* 2008 was shortlisted for the India Plaza Golden Quill Award, and the DSC Prize of South Asian Literature in 2010. Her fifth novel *Custody* published in 2011 has been bought by Balaji Telef

“For migrant women, home is not just a physical location but a site of memory, longing, and contestation.”

— *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (1996)

Diaspora is a complex and evolving phenomenon that encompasses the dispersion of people from their homeland, often driven by historical, economic, political, or cultural forces. It is not merely a movement across geographical boundaries but also a deeply emotional and psychological experience that shapes identities, memories, and senses of belonging. Diasporic communities navigate a dual existence—anchored in nostalgia for their homeland while simultaneously adapting to new cultural landscapes. As Stuart Hall notes, “Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation.” This transformation is particularly evident in the experiences of Indian women in the diaspora, who often carry the weight of tradition while negotiating new gender roles and expectations in unfamiliar environments. Avtar Brah describes diaspora as a “multi-locationality within and across territorial, cultural, and psychic boundaries,” emphasizing that for many, “home” is an imagined or contested space rather than a fixed location. The diasporic experience is thus shaped by hybridity, displacement, nostalgia, and the continuous process of cultural reinvention.

The migration experience is often marked by a tension between nostalgia for the homeland and the necessity of assimilation into new cultural landscapes. This duality is particularly evident among Indian women immigrants, who are often expected to uphold traditional values while navigating new gender roles and societal expectations. Despite challenges of racial discrimination, cultural adaptation, and legal struggles, the Indian diaspora has flourished globally, influencing economies, politics, and cultural identities while maintaining deep connections to their roots.

Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant* explores the immigration to and ethnic Indian experience in Canada. Nina, a 30 year old independent unmarried woman who got married to Anand, a Canadian NRI, a new immigrant who slowly adopted the new life in Canada. The moment Nina leaves her homeland she alienates and becomes the victim of double consciousness. “The immigration woman examines each page of her passport suspiciously. Nina’s claim that she has married a citizen needs to be scrutinized despite the paperwork. The color of her skin shouts volumes in that small room. She feels edgy; she is alone with a woman who makes no eye contact, for whom she is less than human.” (Kapur 107) When she reaches home and complains to her husband about all the discrimination he calms her because Ananda is also one such victim, because when he goes to Canada for the first time he stays in his uncle’s house elaborates on his alienation and pain. So in later periods, Ananda has learned how people and life are in new places. And starts to behave like a Canadian he gets familiar with the dressing, food, and people. Adopts the attitude of ‘When in Rome do what Romans do.’ (Kapur 135) Often the diasporic people undergo this repression and bigotry when they start their life in the foreign land. Incidents like this, drive the immigrant to lose their identity just to survive in the new country.

The settlement and compromises become easy for Ananda when it is compared to Nina. As the Days go by Ananda even changes his name and wants everyone to call him

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'Andy'. Nina is no better than the caged bird. In *Black Body: Women, Colonialism, and Space* (1999)

Radhika Mohanram discusses Migration for women is not merely a physical journey across borders but a complex navigation of deeply gendered spaces in both their homeland and the diaspora. Before migration, societal expectations often dictate their roles within family and community, influencing their reasons for leaving. However, migration does not free them from patriarchal constraints; rather, they encounter new challenges, including the reinforcement of traditional roles within diasporic communities and systemic discrimination in the host country. This perspective aligns with Nina's struggles to balance Indian traditions and Western expectations, revealing how migration for women is as much about navigating power structures as it is about physical relocation.

After settling in Canada Nina feels of having alone at home like a caged bird and the new surroundings of new people, language, culture, food, and new dressing styles make her alienated in the new place but she starts to wear jeans and t-shirts even though she is not comfortable and eating steak although she was vegetarian just for survival in a new country. In this different country, Nina's identity was not like in India where she was a lecturer, but for the fittest of survival, a new engagement she forced herself to join the Library Science Course.

All immigrants want a better life but realize that east is east and west is west and never shall twain meet. Like other immigrants, Nina also feels isolated. She has lost her home and her job. She cries, "I miss home – I miss a job – I miss doing things. I feel like a shadow. What am I but your wife?"(237) Nina's feeling of loss takes her to a group of women who work on feminist principles. Her distress resulting in her wailing before Beth, "everything is very strange", she said in a rush, "I used to be a teacher, in fact, I taught for ten years before I came here. And now I do nothing. I have not even been able to conceive. Am I locked into stereotypical expectations? I don't know."(232)

One of the most profound aspects of Nina's psychological turmoil is her realization that marriage and migration have not provided her with the companionship or emotional security she had hoped for. Ananda's indifference and later infidelity make her feel increasingly disconnected, intensifying her sense of loneliness. She oscillates between trying to adjust and resisting the loss of her identity. Unlike Ananda, who reshapes himself to fit his new surroundings, Nina holds on to aspects of her past, making her psychological struggle even more painful as she cannot find a space where she fully belongs.

Her psychological turmoil eventually leads to a breaking point where she recognizes that she must reclaim control over her own life. She comes to see that migration, rather than opening doors, has confined her in different ways. Her decision to leave Ananda and seek independence is not just an act of defiance but an assertion of selfhood. She chooses to step out of the illusion that marriage and migration would complete her and instead embraces

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uncertainty on her terms. This marks a crucial transformation—while she does not find easy answers or a clear sense of belonging, she acknowledges that her journey must be self-directed rather than dictated by societal or marital expectations.

**Conclusion:**

Thus Manju Kapur illustrates the life and problems of migrants in Canada with the interwoven theme of Diaspora and Migration and Alienation. Nina and Ananda, the protagonists, face the problems of diaspora such as nostalgia, loss, betrayal, and alienation in a new country. Every decision they make to please the people around them ruins them. When they realize the mistake or the identity they lost in aspiring to the new world, they don't bravely come out of the deceptive world. They live to survive; their survival is based on their changing attitude. It is all about the creation of a new identity and a place for growth. She looks forward in the direction of reorientation to stabilize her socio-psychological conditions. I conclude this paper saying that the illusions of migration depends upon how to tackle bravely and gradually with mingling and making balance with new culture.

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