
Fixing Memory and Identity: A Spatial Analysis of *Lallan Sweets*

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Abstract: A place endows a special meaning in a person's life. It holds some deep and fixed connections. A person always finds and feels a relation with a place. These relationships are formed through personal and social connections. These connections form memories, identities, narratives and experiences. Robert Tally's concept of Topophrenia also highlights that a place is not just a fixed location or some fixed dimensions, but it also holds some personal and subjective meaning. Srishti Chaudhary's novel *Lallan Sweets* depicts how in Lalaji's life, the shop, which he owns, has a deep connection. Lalaji's identity is deeply rooted in his sweet shop and the memories of Lahore. It has emotional significance in his life. It also highlights the journey of his granddaughter Tara Taneja, who goes on a quest exploring different places helps her build social relations. Topophrenia is an emotional and psychological attachment to a place rooted in personal and social experiences. This paper reflects an analysis of *Lallan Sweets* through the lens of spatial studies, especially the concept of Topophrenia as propounded by Robert Tally. Tally suggests that to understand this concept, one has to apply an egocentric approach, which allows readers to experience incidents as depicted in the works.

Keywords: Identity, Memories, Topophrenia, Spatial Study

Introduction: Topophrenia, as defined by Tally "a certain identifiable 'place-mindedness' that informs our activities and thinking" (Tally 23). By place-mindedness, he means how a particular place holds a deep meaning and also shapes a person's experiences. Tally's term "place-mindedness" is a fundamental human condition, but focuses attention on how affective geography necessarily also involves a degree of "disorder or dis-ease" (Tally 9). A place in the form of narratives and experiences shows movement, and it embarks on the journey of an individual, followed by different memories. Topophrenia is not just about the location; it is about how our thoughts are connected to that place.

Place refers to either a location somewhere or to the occupation of that location. The first sense is of having an address, and the second is about living at that address. Sometimes this distinction is pushed further to

separate the physical place from the phenomenal space in which the place is located. Thus, place becomes a particular or lived space. Location then refers to the fact that places must be located somewhere. Place is specific and location (or space) is general. (Agnew 6)

Tally describes the study of literature in terms of Topophilia. It's about how people think or feel about a particular place and how authors represent them in art and literature. "One might propose Topophilia as a provisional label for that condition of narrative, one that is necessary to any reading or writing of a text, in which persistence of place and subject's relation to it must be taken into account" (Tally 4). Therefore, a place is where people feel comfortable, live with their memories and experience different episodes that happen in their lives in that particular place. By experiencing those feelings, people develop a sense of belonging to the place. "Experience is compounded of feeling and thought. Human feeling is not a succession of discrete sensations; rather, memory and anticipation can wield sensory impacts into a feeling as we do of a life of thought" (Tuan 21). Place is seen as constituted out of space-spanning relationships, place-specific social forms, and a sense of place associated with the relative well-being, disruption, and experience of living somewhere (Agnew 20). Sometimes places are seen as background only; people focus only on the main story, but in some cases, places are seen as an important part of the text, as seen in *Lallan Sweets* () by Srishti Chaudhary.

Lallan Sweets by Srishti Chaudhary is set in the fictional town of Siyaka. The Lallan Sweets shop in Siyaka is renowned for its laddoos, and this shop also holds a deep connection to Lalaji, the owner. His emotional bond with Lallan Sweets is clearly evident. He established the shop after returning from Lahore. It was his father's dream to open a mithai shop in Anarkali Bazaar. With this dream, he set up the shop and made it the most popular in Siyaka. "It was in 1947 when we undertook that perilous journey, the nightmares of which haunt us to this day... We had a thriving business in Lahore, doing very well, in Anarkali Bazaar... Two years later, however, we had to leave it all" (Chaudhary, 32). "But with my father urging us on, asking us not to lose hope, we began again. We built it all up, brick by brick... Siyaka too became a thriving town" (Chaudhary, 32).

The protagonist, Tara Taneja, also has a very strong connection with the town. "There were many things I liked about Siyaka, but the summer breeze was my favourite, what I thought of home and Siyaka." (Chaudhary, 19). She runs a tuition centre and also helps in the family business. She has barely spent a night outside Siyaka. She wants to live in Siyaka and wants to grow her business. She was worried when Lalaji sent her to find the magic ingredient. She goes on a quest alongside her cousins Rohit and Mohit to find the magic ingredient. The journey unfolds into different memories, social relations and emotional connections experienced by Tara in different places. "These relations might be disclosed in the everyday memories or experiences of individuals or groups who inhabit such places, and they may represent a skein of intersecting historical events, narratives, traumas, and so on" (Tally 1). It also shows the emotional transformation of Tara during her journey

with her friend Nikhil Sabharwal. During her quest to find the magic ingredient, Tara meets many people in different places and develops strong emotional connections with them. As a woman, she has navigated many challenges of identity, modernity. Tara's journey symbolises the boundaries imposed by society by fixing the role for a woman. Tara's uncle wants her to marry so that the property of the shop gets divided between his sons. It shows how society has put limitations on a woman due to which she is not able to explore her inner self. The journey to find the magic ingredient helps Tara to explore different spaces and identify herself. "It was about your journey, Children, the time spent on the road, the relationships you formed, the people you met, and the lessons you learnt—not about some silly magic ingredient!" (Chaudhary 260). These spaces are not just geographical locations but become places for Tara as she builds emotional connections with these places. These places help Tara to explore herself, to identify her freedom. Tara's identity is not only shaped by Lallan Sweets shop but by multiple factors like societal expectations, cultural backgrounds, and family heritage. Doreen Massey writes: "This is a notion of place where specificity (local uniqueness, a sense of place) derives not from some mythical internal roots nor from a history of isolation – now to be disrupted by globalisation – but precisely from the absolute particularity of the mixture of influences found together there" (Massey 22). Tara's identity get shaped by the places she visits and her interactions in that places. By the end of her journey, she not only explores different places; but her journey helps her to give meaning to the place.

Siyaka can be studied as the concept of Space and Place. Siyaka is a fictional town with many Victorian buildings, lakes, holds kho-kho tournaments, and has a famous sweet shop 'Lallan Sweets'. A space in the map in which Tara Taneja runs her mathematics tuition centre. Many tourists come here every year to visit. As we move deeper, it can also be viewed through a topophrenic lens. Siyaka becomes a place by different memories, narration and experiences of different people as reflected in the novel. "The real Siyaka lay in the hearts of the people who lived on the edges of the city, taking walks at night, in their gentle nature and easy manner of talking and, of course, in Lallan ke laddoo" (Chaudhary 19). It has grown from a small to a large town. People usually spend their evenings in courtyards, take a walk to enjoy the breeze and develop an emotional bond. Tara's memories with Nikku, finding a man with 'ganne ka juice', finding a place to play 'pithu', spending nights together in 'jagaran', costumed as Radha and Krishan, the view of Dima Lake, and sharing moments show how their memories are rooted in Siyaka.

"You think everything there is to know is already known? There are worlds and knowledge. . . passed down from generation to generation . . . there are crafts well-hidden . . . you will never know what happens there because there are some things you will never know" (Chaudhary 142) Tara's journey intervened between physical and emotional journey.

Place is not just a physical setting but the hidden memories which get pass from generation to generation with some meaning. Siyaka, therefore is not just a town, but collection of memories, cultural belonging and history.

Srishti Chaudhary's *Lallan Sweets* is not just a story about a quest to find a magic ingredient or a tale of love between Tara Taneja and Nikhil Sabharwal; it is a convergence of social experiences and memories. The novel explores two main locations: Lallan Sweet Shop and the town Siyaka, as emotional landscapes. When viewed through the lens of Topophilia, it shifts from a simple narrative into an exploration of space that becomes place through emotional or psychological factors. It demonstrates that geographical location has little connection with people. Lalaji moved the shop from Lahore to Siyaka, but the connection remains the same. Lalaji's memory links his past in Lahore to his present in Siyaka. For Lalaji, the shop is a memory rooted in his past experiences. These experiences give his life some meaning, which is why he never reveals anything about the magic ingredient. Here, the magic ingredient acts as layers of memories that also help Tara find the meaning of her life. The text also shows how a woman defines herself and helps transform a space into a place. Tara grew up in her home and must leave it to find the magic ingredient. It helps her break social boundaries and explore her identity and sense of belonging. Her uncle wants her to marry so that Lallan Sweets will not be inherited by her, illustrating how women are confined to private spaces such as home. Moreover, Siyaka itself is a living place that evolves over time, filled with numerous memories. Siyaka is awash with moments, experiences, and interactions that make it a living place embedded with countless memories. "Place is a pause in movement. Animals, including human beings, stop at a locality because it satisfies certain biological needs. The pause makes it possible for a locality to become a centre of felt value" (Tuan 138). Topophilia enables people to understand emotional bonds, diverse narratives, and how space shapes us. It offers a framework to interpret the text as a form of spatial consciousness—how narratives and memories help transform a space into a place. Thus, *Lallan Sweets* reflects that place is not merely a fixed location or dimension; it is defined by countless memories, experiences, and feelings.

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