Manju Kapur has an uncommon gift for writing about common people without exaggerating their dullness for effect. The characters in her novels deal with the inner conflict. The woman protagonist of her novels strives to quest their identity. The novelist describes the inner most turmoil of woman and their struggle for survival –

‘Manju Kapur has analyzed the ‘Socio-cultural modes and values that have given Indian woman their role and image along with their effort to achieve
The Immigrant is an intimate portrait of an arranged marriage. The novelist handles the delicate issue of married relations. In The Immigrant, she elucidates the struggle of the married woman, Nina and her problems of being immigrated. Her awful aloofness is skillfully described by the novelist. The novel unfolds the various dimensions of Nina’s mind. She is thirty years old and single. In country like India, the marriage is the responsibility of parents. Nina is well aware about the condition of her parents. Hence, her parents were unable to marry her financially. The novelist unveils the novels with the statement –

‘Nina’s skin knew it was thirty, broadcasting the fact at certain angles in front of the mirror. Her spirit felt sixty as she walked from the bus stop to the single room where she lived with her mother. Her heart felt a hundred as it surveyed the many years of hopeless longing it had known.’ [The Immigrant: 1]

Nina’s mother thinks that she should marry by which she [the mother] will be free from all the familial responsibility. But, Nina thinks differently. She says –

‘Yet Education was a gift and she would not exchange the life of the mind for any humdrum marriage.’ [3]

But, in her house, the only thing that is remained is the discussion of her marriage and search of a suitable bridegroom. Manju Kapur says that there is no separate identity of a woman in the Indian society. She has to marry and then she is socially approved. If she decides against it, the society creates trouble in her life. Indian woman has no right to take her decision. Nina is also a part of it. In her family, the discussion goes on marriage. Meanwhile, Nina visits Delhi to acquire higher education. Though the place is changed for Nina, the situation in the family is same. The discussion of her marriage continually chirps in the family. Actually, every Indian mother wishes that her daughter should have a good life partner and have a good house. The novelist says –
‘In Delhi, Nina hoped her mother would lead a fuller life. In Delhi the mother imagined a husband could be found who would give her darling the home she deserved.’ [5]

In her deserted life, Nina is acquainted for the first time with a male friend, Rahul. He comes in her life. As their friendship grows, Nina unknowingly likes Rahul. It was her first experience of male relationship. She keeps secret of this relationship from her family. She seriously thinks about her new relationship. She feels comfort in the company of Rahul. Nina’s mother is worried about her daughter’s loneliness. Actually, she herself felt such awful loneliness, when her husband died. But, now she hopes about the pleasurable life of Nina. She thinks that Nina should enjoy the life with her lovable life partner. Nina’s life should fill with lots of happy moments. She should not feel any discomfort in her life –

‘The mother had fallen through the bad karma of marrying a prince who would die young. The only thing she had to look forward to was her daughter’s marriage, after which she would suffer more loneliness. At least the mother had hope. She had nothing.’ [7]

But, her mother’s wish is evaporated. Nina loses her first relationship. Actually, the relationship was never flourished in the past few days. But, Nina feels the first hurt in her life. Afterwards, she is acquainted with a girl, Zenobia who also suffers in her life. She experiences the pain of separation. The situation of Nina gets serious. Actually, she misses her supportive father. Her father always stood firm for her decision. Nina not only misses her father, but she is also worried about her widowed mother. Both of them lose their father’s support and their life is full of misery. Nina says –

‘Papa didn’t need this kind of fear to make him work’, burst out Nina. Her tall, vital handsome father, hair graying at the temples, black framed glasses, clean-haven face, slightly yellowing teeth, whose laughter was a series of snorts, who could charm with every word he spoke. Were he alive their lives would have been completely different. She tried never to think such thoughts for they led
nowhere, but today, on her birthday, circumstances demanded them.’[10]

Manju Kapur moves the story and introduces another character, Ananda. He too suffers in both ways. He lives deserted life due to the death of his parents. He is lonely because of migration. He experienced the migrated feeling in abroad. He was practicing as a dentist in Dehradun and he never thought that he will leave India. Although his uncle was practicing in Canada, he had no clue about his future –

‘From the moment of his birth Ananda had been surrounded by the ritual of his caste. Before he left home, his parents did their best to reinforce the practices of a lifetime. He was a Brahmin; his body must never be polluted by dead flesh. Low caste boys in the college hostel might try and tempt him towards non-veg, cigarettes and alcohol. Should he deviate from the pure habits they had instilled in him, his mother’s heart would break up.’ [Op Cit: 157]

He worked in Dehradun with some dreams to serve his old parents. The family was given many sacrifices on the study of Ananda. The parents hope that this present investment flourishes in the future time. But, the destiny is graceless to Ananda. His parents suddenly die in an accident. He is stunned with the exit of his parents. But, life never stops. Manju Kapur describes:

‘He flipped through the Gita his brother-in-law had left him. Do your duty, never think of the consequences; life is full of suffering—that he liked. Every time he read life is full of suffering he felt a mournful resonance deep within him.’[16]

The relatives repeatedly visit the house. But, now he is alone. He lost his supportive parent who stood firm behind him. Now, his life is empty. The novelist skillfully portrays the two protagonists who fall in the same situation. Both Anand and Nina feel awful aloofness and their lives are empty. Then Ananda’s uncle who practices in Canada decides that Ananda should leave India and stay with him for further study. He advises Ananda that his house
often tortures him with the past memories and there are lots of opportunities in Canada. The life of Ananda is now going to change.

‘Ananda was mostly silent. His situation had changed so much that he already had the mindset of an immigrant departing with no desire to return.’ [18]

Now, Manju Kapur presents the life of Ananda in a foreign land. It is just like a new birth of Ananda at new place with new people who are totally unknown. But, it is very hard for him to adjust with the family of his uncle –

‘He was alone, all alone, with relatives who did not wake with the fall of his feet on the floor, the blood that joined them diluted with the water of an ocean.’ [19]

Ananda’s freedom is bound in rules of foreign lifestyle. Hence, he feels nervous in his uncle’s family. His free nature is strangled in the shackles of foreign life –

‘The tightness in Ananda’s chest increased. Not even one day had passed and they were giving him rules to live by- presupposing he was an ignorant, good for nothing freeloader.’ [20]

Actually, Ananda suffers a lot in Halifax. He intensively misses his parents who sacrificed their wishes for him. He misses the happiest moments which he spent in the company of his parents. But, now it is over. In the foreign country, there is no one to take him into account. He questions himself in the foreign world –

‘The feeling of being taken care of melted away. Of course this was not a world where family sacrificed their all for your success; here blood expected you to stand on your own.’ [24]

The relation in foreign land is darted. His uncle is also grown up. There are no sacrifices for family members. The relations in Canada are maintained only on profit. No warm feeling in relation remains in foreign land. Ananda thinks about his parents who spent their whole life for him. But, here everything is artificial. Ananda’s uncle is also practical about this –
‘I will pay you back, uncle; he murmured. You had to learn fast in the West. It was sink or swim, and Ananda was trying out his strokes.’ [24]

Ananda thinks that how the children of his uncle are totally unknown about their father’s birthplace. They are totally separated from the great Indian tradition –

‘How can they be proud of their ancient heritage if they see nothing of it?’ [26]

Furthermore, Ananda is now very much adjusted in the new country. He observes that in the foreign land, the immigrants have fewer opportunities to connect with the great Indian tradition. The new generation is totally alienated with the tradition. In Halifax, the Indian immigrants try to establish bond between Indian and western culture. Ananda thinks about his earlier days in India where he celebrated all the festivals with enthusiasm and with his parents. In Halifax –

‘Diwali and holi. Every year their dates change, but around the beginning and end of winter come the festivals that make Indians think with longing of celebrations in the mother country. Halifax was no exception. Home to four hundred Indian families, home to the India club whose main aim was to ensure that expatriates did not feel deprived during festive occasions and to expose the next generation to Indian traditions. Ananda would have preferred not to know when Dewali and Holi fell. ……… there was no way he could replicate any ceremony on his own; he preferred complete rejection.’ [27]

But, the festivals in the foreign land are not much grand like India. And for Ananda ‘another hybrid Diwali over’ [Ibid: 27]. After Diwali, Ananda’s uncle informed him that the privacy in the foreign land is important. Actually, indirectly he wanted to say that in a foreign country, it is hard to bear a relative. Hence, Ananda too would move and settle his life separately. Ananda now understands –
‘Privacy was an important issue in this culture and though the felt sounded he said nothing. His uncle wanted to shut him up in a cage.’ [28]

And his uncle, though by birth Indian where emotions were maintained in the relation, dries up emotions in the foreign land. He says –

‘Family here means different things, beta. We help you be independent. we do not want to cripple you,’ he could almost taste the sugar on the pill being used to get rid of him.’ [29]

Afterwards, Ananda shifts in the house of his Canadian friend, Gary. He stays with him as a paying guest. The family is surprised with vegetarian nature of Ananda. He thinks –

‘A Brahmin like himself, but only marginally connected to vegetables. How long could one hang on to caste taboos for whom and for what? His parents were dead. And he had broken taboos when he drank alcohol in college.’ [32]

Though Ananda is now with his friends, he feels loneliness. The awful aloofness gives him more trouble. Though his life is filled with companions and friends, the hollowness in life hounds him –

‘Weekends were the worst, and he had much time in which to relive his parents deaths. His isolation pressed upon him and numbed his capacity to break his solitude. In India, whether at home or in the hostel he had always been surrounded by people, his life open to inspection, comment and group participation.’ [35]

Ananda’s uncle is an example of hybrid culture. He sets a good example for Ananda –

‘He offered himself as an example. Should one’s identity depend on what one ate? If Ananda married a local girl, he would find himself in a difficult situation. When one came to a new country, one had to come wholeheartedly otherwise one could be very miserable.’ [35]
Afterwards, the novelist delicately handles the first experience of Ananda towards a foreign girl. Actually, the novelist describes the two different cultures. In the foreign land, there is free lifestyle that allows men and women to meet freely. But, in India, the free meeting is prohibited. The author illustrates the two diverse cultures through the character of Ananda –

‘Segregation was the norm. Dating was not possible; people would see, talk, the girl’s reputation would get spoilt. Of course everything was done, but not out in the open.’ [37]

Ananda then moves in the house of Galler where Gary, the close friend, introduces Sue, a nurse who later on becomes his sexual mate passing through the unsuccessful intercourse –

‘She took the initiative, kissing him, unbuttoning his shirt, zipping open his pants, while his hands and tongue followed where they were led. He climaxed before he reached the desire goal then threw himself face down between her legs so that hopefully she would not hold it against him.’ [Kumar, Satendra: 2013: 143]

The novelist minutely explores the dilemma of Ananda. First, he tries to establish in the foreign country –

‘He was still clinging to his parents, still unable to come to term with their deaths, still faithful to the notions of purity they had instilled in him. In his more despairing moments he liked to imagine he was indelibly marked by a tragedy that had imperceptibly seeped into his blood, bones and muscle. He who had never failed at anything was now failing in this most fundamental act, an act which even the poorest, meanest, most deprived peasant in Indian performed with ease.’ [40]

Ananda’s life in the foreign country is miserable. Actually, he feels isolated in Canada. He is just like a part of crowd. There are very rare moments of joy in his life. Meanwhile, Ananda’s sister Alka writes about the marriage proposals. Ananda actually goes into the confused condition. He recently goes through the
love failure and now through the new marriage proposal. He thinks that this may bring happiness in his life.

‘Whether the breakthrough moment would come with an arranged marriage. Certainly he could count on a willing patient, forgiving, loving partner.’ [47]

The same situation arises for Nina also. She turns over thirty and her mother worries about her future. Though Nina never thinks about her married life, her mother is desperate about her marriage. Nina thinks –

‘She was only human. Only human, she assured herself, as she witnessed her youth end and her courage.’ [49]

The life of Nina is also full of struggles. After her father’s death, her life becomes miserable. She tries to make an adjustment with life. The novelist here describes how Nina, a traditional Indian girl, makes adjustment with the situation –

‘Her circumstances will make her grateful and loving.’ [55]

The story progresses and the novelist describes the situation of mind of Nina. She shares her every moment with Ananda. She weaves a new relation with new bondages. On the other side, Ananda also thinks of Nina and his married life. But, he also thinks about the immigrant experience. In Canada, the Indian immigrants celebrate the festival in a club. He thinks that how an Indian girl will adjust her life in the foreign country –

‘He didn’t see why being an immigrant should make him socialize with other immigrant.’ [60]

The novelist explores the condition of immigrant Indian through the character of Ananda. The solitude and alienated experience and miseries of life have been described skillfully by the novelist. On the other hand, she also expresses the plight of Nina. She imagines about her future life. After many solitary years, she starts a new life with new identity. Ananda’s sister brings the proposal of Nina for her brother. She thinks that this girl should bring happiness
in Ananda’s life. On the other hand, Nina’s mother also thinks that Ananda would be the best life partner to Nina. Nina initially rejects the discussion upon her marriage. But, afterwards, she thinks about her mother. After the death of father, she has the only responsibility of her daughter’s marriage. Hence, she seriously thinks about the proposal of Ananda –

‘She was walking down a street in Brussels with her mother. The sky was overcast, a few snow flurries had begun to fall. Snow was so magical. She lifted her palm and watched the flakes melt on the red woolen mitten. Her mother laughed, took her hand, and they walked home brimming with the warmth of happiness and material security.’ [61]

After a few days, Ananda accepts the marriage proposal of Nina. But, Nina is not in the situation to decide about her marriage. She is unable to take firm decision. She worries about her mother. If she gets marry, her mother will remain alone and isolated in India. Her situation is delicately exposed by Manju Kapur –

‘That night Nina couldn’t sleep. It was clear he had come determined to marry, barring absolute hideousness on her part. But she hadn’t felt the part of instinct attraction. Was that so necessary in marriage? He was decent, considerate thoughtful, everything his letters had suggested. Perhaps, given time, he would grow on her. Together they would walk the path of slowly growing respect, mutual dependence, create the habits that tied people together like a tree and vine.’ [70]

At one side, the author has expressed the emotional condition of Nina and worry about her mother’s loneliness. On the other side, she describes the awful experiences of Ananda in the foreign country. He struggles in Canada to establish her dentistry and nationality. The struggles of the both characters are beautifully arranged by the novelist –

‘He was reminded unpleasantly of seven years ago when he had left, putting his youth and the deaths of his parents behind him. When would his life be sorted out, when would he have someone of his own? He was glad he had not told anybody in
Halifax, should his hopes he dashed, the distress would only be his.’ [77]

Not only this, but Ananda has tried to fulfill his wife’s wishes. He is aware about the sexual experience. Satendar Kumar explains the sexual intercourse which creates strong bond between Ananda and his wife –

‘His arm around her waist felt nothing but padding and he slopped his hand under her sweater so he could feel her skin…. His hand caressed her stomach, brushed against her breasts. More delight, she was not wearing a bra, beneath the outer volume of clothing she was very accessible… She pressed herself closer…. His hand played fast and furious with her breast, now no barriers between him and them. Involuntarily she opened her legs slightly, with alacrity he followed that invitation as well.’ [Kumar, Satendra: 2013: 144]

Ananda hopes that the arrival of wife in his life should evacuate the awful loneliness from his life. Nina is also positive with her new life in Canada. She has experienced the emptiness after the death of her father. Hence, she hopes that the marriage will fill her life with new joy and happiness. The author explores the common Indian girl who is going to marry soon. The writer skillfully unveils the dream of Nina. She experiences coldness and icy road of Canada. She dreams the cold atmosphere of Canada. She will be the part of it soon:

‘Every day was numbered, the last one of its kind. The last May, the last June. Nina would soon break out of this prison of heat. As she sweated, and fanned herself during electricity breakdowns, she could scarcely believe that for the rest of her life she need never be this hot again.’ [81]

The day of marriage is decided. It is the quality of Manju Kapur that she minutely describes the Indian traditional marriages. Actually, the author has unveiled the tradition of India for immigrants. In the plot, Manju Kapur skillfully describes the Indian culture, its tradition and the events like marriage. Nina is happy with the condition of her mother. She is now content with the marriage of her daughter. She thinks that she has completed her duties after the
death of her husband. The marriage ceremony brings two families together. Actually, this is the last festive ceremony for Nina in India. In the country like Canada, there is very rare moment to celebrate the Indian festival –

‘Two days later December 26th, the Arya Samaj Mandir in Mount Kailash colony. It is eight in the morning and still misty. Guest clutches their shawls around them. Birds twitter in trees next to the temple compound. In the covered verandah bridal couples are seated before a fire, flanked by their parents, opposite a pundit. The on lookers it on white sheeted mattresses that surround the bride and groom. Nancy and Lara are wearing saris that Nina’s mother had long ago purchased for her daughter’s in-law, Lenny and his father are wearing the silk kurta pyjamas she had bought during the Diwali discount sales from Khadi Gramodyog. This family half Indian, half foreign, stand out and are explained again and again.’ [87]

The novelist never fails to elucidate the dilemma of the newly married couple. Actually, Manju Kapur boldly expresses the relation of husband and wife. She expresses the sexual relation between husband and wife. It is not merely the sexual intercourse. But, it creates the bond between two unfamiliar people. Manju Kapur vividly describes the first night experience of Ananda and Nina. Satendar Kumar expresses –

‘The bridal night. Now that the moment was close, Nina felt shy. Ananda closed the door and grabbed her. His hands leapt all over, under her blouse, her petticoats; they forced her on the body. Startled, she tried to slow him down, but in five minutes he had come, five minutes and he had not even entered her. The rest was done with his hands, but that was stuff she could have done on her own…. Second time he closed her mouth with a kiss. She kissed him back and slid her arms around his long slender waist. If he did not smell anything, it must be her imagination. This time he did make it inside her. For less than minute, but the marriage had been consummated. They both felt the importance of this.’ [Op.Cit: 145]
This is the new beginning of the life of Nina. She gets new relations. She has new name and surname full with joy. But, her mother’s thought makes her upset. She thinks that how her mother spent her remaining years in loneliness –

‘Her irritation could not continue under this show of concern. A phone would make her mother less isolated. What could she do but accept the offer, and smile-thought the smile stuck in her throat.’ [94]

Nina continually thinks about her mother. She worries about her mother. She thinks that how her mother spent her solitary years –

‘At home she could not escape the sorrow of leaving her mother. Every glance at the sad pathetic face, pinched cheeks, badly dyed hair, eyes, blinking behind spectacle marred her happiness.’ [101]

Nina not only worries about her mother’s isolation, but about her own separation from India. Now, her identity will change and she will become Canadian –

‘Hours and hours, minutes and minutes, thousands and thousands of second more. And during every one of those seconds the links between her and home stretched tighter and tighter.’ [102]

The day dawns in the life of Nina. Today, she leaves India. It is very hard for her to leave her home. The relation of thirty years with her homeland now stretches. She enters a new life, new country with strange people and new identity. She has a new experience of immigration. The process and paperwork of immigration hurts her. She feels alone at the airport. She leaves the note to Ananda –

‘Seeme in this airport, off all passengers the only one not allowed to sail through immigration, made to feel like an illegal alien. See, see, see.’ [107]
Afterwards, Ananda takes her in the apartment. It is now her new world forever. But, the clean and shine city does not give comfort to Nina. In India, she is surrounded with her mother and friend. But, here, she is completely alone –

‘The front door banged, and she was left in silence.
Alone she was alone.’[113]

The Novelist expresses the struggles of immigrant in the foreign country. She has exposed the grief of Indian woman in the foreign world –

‘The immigrant who comes as a wife has a more difficult time. If work exists for her, it is in the future and after much finding of feet. At present all she is, is a wife, and a wife is alone for many, many hours. There will come a day when even books are powerless to distract. when the house and its conveniences can no longer completely charm or compensate. Then she realizes she is an immigrant for life.’[122]

Nina faces the problem of settlement in Canada. She hopes that she will manage all the things and definitely have a better future in the foreign country.

‘One day she would have looked her fill, satisfied enough longing to feel replete……. bearing her produce in a backpack.’[127]

Ananda and Nina, a newly married couple, struggle to adjust their life in Canada. Ananda regularly says to Nina about the difference of the countries. Actually, he determines of foreign lifestyle. But, Nina is still new to the country. On the contrary, Ananda never accepts the traditional attitude of Nina. He says –

‘That you are a traditional backward Indian girl, like some of these woman you see at the Indian club can’t even speak English properly.’[147]

The novelist expresses the tendency of immigrants. She has elaborated the style of wearing of immigrants. The cloth is a part of identity. But, in the foreign land, the immigrant confuses whether to wear traditional or western –
‘An immigrant fly across ocean they shed their old clothing, because clothes maketh the man and new ones help ease the transition. Men’s clothing has less international variation; the changes is not so drastic. But those women who are not used to wearing Western clothes find themselves in a dilemma. If they focus on integration, convenience and conformity they have to sacrifice habit, style and self-perception. The choice is hard, and in Nina’s case it took month’s to sear down her resistance.’ [150]

Besides, thinking about her loneliness, Nina always hopes about her better future. She thinks that in this foreign land, she is habitual with this loneliness. She dreams her future life and family –

‘One day she would be sitting here with her children. All this would seem very natural to them; their minds would be imprinted with Canadian images from the day they were born. It made her a little sad that they should be so different from their mother. On the other hand, they wouldn’t have inherited the template in the mother’s mind where every experience contained a hidden double. If she saw hordes, it stood against the emaciated beast back home; if horse droppings were cleared she was reminded of the way cow dung patties dried in the sun, if she wandered around a fair it was against the vast backdrop of Diwalimelas. Compound images shuttled to and fro in her mind, faster than the speed of lightning covering thousands of miles there and back, there and back, there and back.’ [158]

But, Nina has difficulty to adjust her life in Canada. The land is completely unknown. In India, she is surrounded with the people. But, here, she is completely alone. She has the habit of people. Before getting married, she never feels alone. Though her father died earlier, her life is full of friends and companions. In Canada, she is totally alone and alone. The author elaborates –

‘Till Nina came to Canada she hadn’t know what lonely meant. At home one was never really alone. The presence of her mother, the vendors who came to the door, the half hour gardener who watered their plants, the part time maid who washed and
cleaned, the encounters with the landlady, all these had been woven into her day. When she mourned her loneliness to Zenobia, it was a romantic companionate loneliness she was referring to, no the soul destroying absence of human beings form her life. She had worried about her mother’s lack of companionship after her marriage; it would have been worse to have spared a thought for herself as well.’ [159]

The newly married couple faces the new problem. The couple wishes to have children. But the destiny is not in the fever of Nina and Ananda. Manju Kapur through this describes the condition of Indian woman. To the novelist, the woman is educated having the equal position in society. Still when infertility arises, the society always blames woman –

‘Though medically speaking, infertility was not specifically a woman’s problem, it was she who bore the brunt of this particular deficiency. Her feminine self in question, she could end up hating her body.’ [163]

Ananda is unaware about the condition of Nina. He never understands the feeling of Nina. He actually thinks that the priority should be given to the settlement in the foreign country. He also thinks that to give birth to a child in the early years of marriage is backward thing. He says –

‘To get pregnant as soon as you married was a very stupid backward thing to do, it was more important to settle down first.’ [167]

Nina is desperate about the pregnancy. She thinks that the child may settle their life, but she never discusses the matter with Ananda. He gets upset and argues with Nina on the subject of her pregnancy. He denies the test also. However, Nina gets upset. She thinks that –

‘She could think of nothing to say to this. Dr. Abbot had said very clearly, they both had to be equally committed; otherwise it was not going to work. If Ananda was not as desperate about children, there was little she could do. Already she could see her dreams falling into fragments around the dining table. Tears gathered in her eyes.’ [171]
Nina hopes that one day her husband would understand her feeling. But, every day, her hope is demolished–

‘For years and years Nina had masturbated, hoping the day would come when a loving partner would circumvent the furtive, dissatisfied feeling this left her with. Thrice a day on average, and this restraint only due to the fact that she was working. Guilt ridden, she would promise herself, this is the last time, but her restlessness made this impossible.’ [179]

Nina gets alone in the foreign country and she thinks about her dream in the foreign world. She tried to adjust herself in the unknown land. But she fails in it. Her dreams are vanishes in the awful loneliness. Even in the company with her husband she fells isolated. Nina could see her dreams falling into fragments around the dining table. Tears gathered in her eyes –

‘Long moments were spent gazing at herself in the mirror, in her underwear or sexy nightie. Her bare skin, the curves of her body, her black hair falling over her shoulders, all were delectable. Desire rose in her as she consumed with her reflection. She pushed her breasts up and gazed at the seductive cleavage that would surely drive any man to fondle. Having a husband should not have meant such lonely desperation. For years and years Nina had masturbation, hoping the ay would come when a loving partner would circumvent the furtive, dissatisfied feeling this left her with... He never noticed, never asked what she had been doing for a long, when she marched determinedly towards the bathroom, sat on the toilet, opened her legs, jammed her fingers in, leaned back, and closed her eyes.’ [Kumar, Satendra: 2013: 146]

In the strange country, Nina is totally alone. She spends her days in idle ways. The hollowness in her life makes her unhappy and serious –

‘With Ananda gone Nina had even less to do. Alone, her thoughts grew darker. The hollowness of the landscape reverberated inside her, with no people, no conversation to even glaze the surfaces. Hour after hour, day after day could pass without a single word uttered.’ [186]
The strain between the relationship of Ananda and Nina is caused by infertility. Ananda is also desperate about the child. He thinks that he should take care about the treatment. He visits a doctor in California for the treatment. The treatment is strange in America –

‘In the evening he walked down Telegraph Avenue, looking for dinner. The place was dotted with cheap student places. all around the could see people in every kind of ethnic variation. In Halifax you had to look hard to see an Indian, here the place was crawling with them.’ [194]

While Ananda takes treatment in America, Nina is isolated in Halifax. She feels emptiness in her life. She is totally alone, alone in strange land –

‘She brooded over his behaviour during daily walks that grew progressively longer as her mind grew more disturbed. The short chilly days lent themselves well to her moody shuffling down the sidewalk and into point Pleasant Park. In the Park she looked at all the dead leaves on the ground, brown, damp shriveled, waiting to decompose into the earth and give up their leafy natures.’ [202]

To free from this isolation, Nina decides that she should join the woman group who will share the problems of the woman. Nina thinks that the group may understand her feeling and isolation. Ananda, on the other hand, thinks that this is merely wasting of time. In the group, Nina introduces with various problems of woman. The group is made only to heal the burden of mind. It helps free the burden –

‘Nina heard of sexual harassment in the work place, of women having to struggle with housework, child care and a job, while the husband watched TV, of a mother who suspected her estranged husband of molesting their daughter, of a jobless husband who resented every cent his wife made, of infidelities that came in all guises and with all justification.’ [215]
Nina joins the group to relieve from helplessness and isolation. She hopes that the burden she carries form last one year should vanish. She unfolds her mind in front of the group. She says –

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 stereo typical expectations? I don’t know.’ [229]

Ananda is unaware about the condition of Nina. He never thinks about Nina’s isolation and unhappiness in the country. She says that –

‘I miss home I miss a job- I miss doing things. I feel like a shadow. What am I but your wife?’ [233]

Ananda also falls into two different situations. Actually, he wants a strong support. But, Nina engages with a group and always in a serious mood. Ananda actually wants someone who satisfies his need. He searches for this and falls in love with Mandy. Though he himself is aware about the extra marital affair, he is in need to satisfy his feeling. The experience with Mandy is different for Ananda. He thinks that –

‘Mandy encouraged him to be wild, free uninhibited, playful. With Nina he was his mother’s son, his sister’s brother, the good husband, playing out a role he had been trained for since childhood. Nina years in Canada had not dimmed the need to be his person.’ [239]

Afterwards, Nina decides to take an admission in Library field. The degree is a way to evacuate from the loneliness. She thinks that the education may make her life filled with new thing. Ananda also agrees with the idea of getting library degree. At one point, Nina thinks that she actually follows those steps which Ananda already follows –

‘She was following the path her husband had trodden when he came here all those years ago, getting a degree that would affect the makeover of her Canadian identity.’ [244]
Meanwhile, Nina engages with her library degree. But, for Ananda, he is frustrated with his affair. He never reveals it with anyone. He never has the close friend to discuss the issue. And, on the other hand, he also feels guilty that he misleads his wife –

‘Filled with the guilt of this, he couldn’t fight with Nina even when she was irritating him. This artifice lessened their relationship and made it seem superficial. Love for Nina began to wear the face of responsibility, and when he was with Mandy he naturally felt less burdened.’ [250]

Not only Ananda, but Nina also feels differently when she attends the classes of library degree and first experiences with a white man, Anton. Actually, it is not the feeling of attraction –

‘Fleetingly he dropped his hand on her arm. Later, she thought of that instant many times. Was that when she should have been on guard? But how could she have known? In a plane full of people, Anton drops his hand on her arm, she looks at it startled, he removes it, smiles boyishly, she reads charm, friendliness and contrition in that look, and smile back to show no hard feeling.’ [254]

Afterwards, in the company of Anton, Nina feels free. There is no burden of responsibility and relation. Though she experiences the extra marital affairs, she has no guilt about it. Actually, she thinks that she gets the real space of freedom in the company of Anton. Her love affair offers ‘Self’ space. But, that love affair makes her puppet in the hand of lovers –

Nina was a toy to be used, abused, misused and finally to be thrown from the human phase. ‘Her first lover had taken her virginity and her hopes, her second lover had been her husband, her third had made her international.’ [Kumar, Satendra: 2013: 147]

At the end of the trip, everyone is in a mood to celebrate. Snatching the opportunity which Anton has baked in his mind earlier has made background throughout the travels. Here, the novelist elaborates the first affair of Nina. She thinks that she has got real pleasure which is rarely found in Ananda –
‘He was ‘an admirer of beauty, and he really loved her skin, the way she looked, the way she talked, so different from western women.’ [Op. cit: 148]

The extra marital affair with Anton actually gives support in the life of Nina. She thinks that the affair with Anton makes her free from all the dullness and idleness. Now, Nina’s life is full of new things. Even, first time, she eats meat of cow. It is unbelievable for Nina to this first experience –

‘That weekend was spareribs the real test. Red meat. Flesh. Mammals. Cow. Cows that looked into your eyes- cows that her mother worshipped on fixed days of the Hindu calendar. She could have graduated to chicken form fish, but Nina did not want the dishonesty involved in these slow, cautious step.’ [267]

Nina is surprised with the marriage system of Canada. Here, there are no restrictions and responsibilities. She herself is in that condition where she dependent upon her husband –

‘All around her she heard of open marriage, of no bonds but the voluntary, of no living according to the rules of others. Her life was her own; she didn’t owe anybody and explanation.’ [270]

The relationship between husband and wife is pale one. A newly married couple is totally isolated. They often talk to each other. The awful silence takes place between them –

‘It was after dinner and there was silence between them. This was very dreadful for Nina. A couple who have nothing to talk about are in a bad state, and he often babbled simply so this would not happen. Today she was tired depressed, babble did not came easily. [278]

Both Ananda and Nina search their individuality in the foreign land. Though they live together, they never find happiness in married life. Ananda also thinks that his married life is just a commitment. Hence, he, at one point thinks that the relation with Mandy is rational one –
‘Although he tried to never compare the woman in this life, Ananda ended up doing this constantly. Now he thought one nice thing about Mandy was that he never had to have conversations about India with her. She wasn’t even curious; she had never said, like so many people did, that, India was a place she had always wanted to visit.’ [279]

Meanwhile, Ananda offers Nina to visit India. Actually, this is a surprise to Nina. But, she is also tired with all these things. And she is also desperate to meet her mother. She thinks that the burden she carries from last one year should be unfolded to her mother. Nina visits India. It is most delightful visit to her. She is nostalgic with visiting Delhi. The mesmerizing movement arises in the mind of Nina. The visit of relatives reminds her that how she and Ananda are alone in the country –

‘Nina left Ananda’s family with sadness; her interaction with them had been easy and uncomplicated. If only she could live in the same city, within the sense of community that their presence created so effortlessly. ‘Please come and visit me,’ she pleaded,’ we are so alone.’ [285]

The visit of India fills the new spirit in the life of Nina. The trip of India gives her peace, clarity and wisdom. But two months later, peace, clarity and wisdom play hide and seek. Nina thinks that now her life is filled with misery. The novelist expresses –

‘Back in Canada. Back to Ananda, back to jetlag, back to silence and isolation.’ [292]

Ananda is desperate about his married life. He understands that the married relationship between him and Nina is in drastic condition. He also understands that it is difficult for someone to adjust in the foreign land. He himself experiences this one. But, it is hard to restore their relationship –

‘Ananda did want to bring excitement into his marriage, but too many potential sources of conflict bogged him down. For one thing Nina had reverted to her earlier obsession about children. Going o India had her in this direction, he occurred.’ [294]
But, the strain has emerged in the relationship between Nina and Ananda. She is actually tired with these entire uninteresting daily struggles –

‘Above all her feeling of isolation was creeping back. It was borne on her that she was living with a man who never understood a word. She was saying.’ [296]

Her mind is full of loneliness. Her thought is stagnant. She has never revealed because she has no close friend like Zenobia in Halifax. Her life is filled with misery and awful loneliness–

‘The following months she hurt more than she had bargained for. She sat alone in the deep purple armchairs ranged against the big glass windows overlooking the courtyard, pretending to study while thinking about her life. Even though she could see that Anton had been using her, she grieved over him. Humiliated by her own longing, she wondered why she was such a sucker.’ [298]

Meanwhile, Nina successfully completes her library course. She is desperate about job. Actually, she gets suffocation in the restricted life style in Canada. She wishes change in her life –

‘Come May she would be qualified to look for a job anywhere. Any change would be welcome. She was tired of the life she was living.’ [315]

But, the suffering of Nina still follows. Her only hope to visit India vanishes with the death of her mother. She dies suddenly. Nina is stunned and is surprised with it. The family of Ananda arranges all the final ceremony. When Nina and Ananda visit India, they console her –

‘The steam of familiar sounding words continued, words that accompanied any death Nina had ever known. Grief for her father added to the loss. She sobbed and sobbed, pulled tissue after flowered tissue from the box thrust under her hand.’ [317]
Meanwhile, Nina decides to visit the house where her mother was taking final breath. She thinks that she should take the experience of her mother. When she visits, she feels that her mother appears in every corner of the house –

‘The bed strings moaned as she shifted. She had come prepared to touch, to connect, to go into the past, yet all she could sense was the sadness of her mother’s life.’ [319]

Afterwards, Nina takes her mother’s ashes to Haridwar for the final ritual. When she offers the remaining ashes in the river Ganga, she experiences the hollowness. She thinks that now in this land, she is alone –

‘Soon she would be back in Delhi, in a few days back in Canada what was there to bring her to India again.’ [323]

After getting back to Halifax, Nina experiences loneliness and aloofness. She thinks that her life is filled with hollowness. The comfortable atmosphere of Halifax does not give comfort to her –

‘The atmosphere in the house was so oppressive he dreaded coming home. He had done so much for her, and all she could do was sit there with a long face and behave like a deprived immigrant.’ [327]

At last, Nina becomes serious in the dump atmosphere. She thinks that she has to live with this atmosphere. Here, her soul is full with sorrows. She thinks about her mother and her married life. The novel ends with her acceptance of her destiny and fate in the foreign country –

‘Perhaps that was the ultimate immigrant experience. Not that any one thing was steady enough to attach yourself to for the rest of your life, but that you found different ways to belong, ways not necessarily lasting, but ones that made your journey less lonely for a while. When something failed it was a signal to move on. For an immigrant there was no going back.’ [330]

At the end of the novel the novelist handles the issue of immigrant through immense word. It also deals with the condition of immigrant in the foreign country.
WORKS CITED

