CHAPTER VI

PREREGRINATION TOWARDS SELF IN

THE IMMIGRANT

Mao Zedong said, ‘women hold up half the sky’ and indeed feminist theories cut across a greater cross-section of cultures than any other critical school. Feminist theory begins with the eighteenth century and continues until the present. Feminism rise to a new thinking on issues pertaining to the status and role of women. The core idea of feminism is that women should have same rights, power and opportunity that men have since then women have actually been struggling to achieve a racial, social and economic equality with men. For achieving this equality they are stepping out of the rigid sex roles assigned to them traditionally.

Feminism essentially fosters the idea of an egalitarian society where men and women are considered equal and the idea of male dominance is discarded. Defining feminism very precisely in the article *Feminism in Indian English Fiction*, Chaman Nahal Says:

I define feminism as a mode of existence in which the women are free of the dependence syndrome. There is a dependence syndrome, whether it is a religious group or ethnic group, when women free themselves of he dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of feminism materializes.
The dependence syndrome is however still very much there in life of an average Indian woman. She depends on her father, brother, husband and son and consequently she losses her identity. A quest for identity finds an echo especially in the works of post-independence Indian Women writers like Manju Kapur. Since in all her novels, the story revolves around the female protagonists, Kapur is often called a feminist. In an interview with Deepa Diddi, as quoted by Malti Agarwal, once Manju Kapur clearly asserts and confirms this claim of the critics. She says, 

Yes, I am a feminist writer in the sense that my works are woman-centric. My novels focus on the needs and desires of women from different backgrounds and in different situations”. She further adds, “Women yearns for recognition for their work, particularly since domestic labour so often goes unappreciated. They want concern and a sharing of responsibilities. (159)

Manju Kapur defines feminism, as a belief that all people should be treated equally in legal, economic and social arenas- regardless of gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity and other similar pre-dominant identifying traits. Feminism includes the idea that a person’s gender does not define who they are or their worth; that being a woman (or a man) should not put a person at an overall- and especially institutionalized- disadvantage. The female characters created by Kapur are characterized by the adoption of a critical and reflexive attitude that question their position and as a consequence attempt to redefine cultural and social stereotypes and values in order to create a space of their own, which brings a
redefinition of their identity as well as a controversy and confrontation to the social context and a prevalent and powerful patriarchal ideology.

Kapur highlights the factors which curbs the freedom of the female to live, grow and actualize herself the way men do. The manner in which religion, tradition and myth are misused to condition women into an acceptance of their secondary status causing them to lead claustrophobic and circumscribed lives. The female protagonists resist and overcome the ideological suppression and reshape ideals and existing value systems to re-invent themselves in a meaningful way. In this sense, her novels are a significant contribution towards the realm of Indian English fiction and feminist psychoanalysis in India.

The portrayal of woman in Indian English Fiction as the silent sufferer and up holder of the tradition and traditional values of family and society has undergone a tremendous change and is no longer presented as a passive character. Woman as an individual is rebelling against the traditional role, breaking the silence of suffering, trying to move out of the caged existence and asserting the individual self. The women writers in India about the confusion and pain of daughters before the despotic and distant behavior their family and society. Despotic because daughters are expected to obey without questioning their elders, distant because no room is allowed for dialogue, explanations or flexibility.

The female protagonists of the Indian novels are mostly educated, aspiring individuals caged within the confines of a conservation society. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society become intolerant of them. They struggle between tradition and modernity. It is their
individual struggle with family and society, through which they plunge into a dedicated effort to carve an identity for themselves as qualified women with faultless backgrounds.

Manju Kapur reveals many issues that are deep rooted within the family – revolt against the age old tradition, quest for identity, the problems of marriage and lastly women’s struggle for her survival. Her protagonist in the present novel lives within the sphere of reality and successfully finds her ‘identity’. Earlier in various socio-cultural situations, women were discriminated more on the bias of sex.

Hence, women as their duties to owe domesticity under the pressure of patriarchal notions and controls, where as Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* questions why is a woman in patriarchal system confined to domesticity and childcare. She observe: “For woman, as for man, the need for self-fulfillment-actualization is an important as the sexual need…” (Friedan 1971:282). Manju Kapur’s novels reveal the life of women, their struggle for basic rights, quest for identity and survival. With education they become aware of their self-reliance which is proved in concern with new women. Now they have considerable freedom of expression and thoughts. In each and every field they shoulder with men and work.

*The Immigrant* is a novel in which theme of revolt and rehabilitation of woman has been placed in all alien set-up. But in the novel there is no east-west clash or the theme of alienation. We can overlook the basic theme of man-woman
relationship, Brinda Bose in India Today avers: “This has no longer a novel tale: …has no real novel take on Indian immigrant existence; in North America”.

It is amazing that Brinda Bose too has ignored the basic theme of man and woman relationship and finds more attractive in the locale of Canada. Bose says:

What redeems Kapur’s novel, however is its sure footed trail around the locations of the novel with the female protagonists Nina from the red brick buildings of Miranda House in Delhi University to the bright corridors of Dalhouse University in Halifax where she pursues a degree in Library Science, en route to employment in the adopted country that will provide her with the proverbial (and providential) ticket to ride.

*The Immigrant* is an intimate portrait of an arranged marriage and the another mesmerizing saga from the novelists is an attempt that she not only brings the cultural conflict with feminine self but also shows how to tackle these cultural limitations through establishing their feminine identity. Nina, the female protagonist of the novel is an English lecturer, who took teaching by compulsion as her alma mater. The death of her diplomat father has left Nina and her mother struggling to make ends meet in strained circumstance at the shabby Delhi suburban flat. Life of Nina from that moment became bleak and a tiring struggle for both the daughter and the mother in every way, fighting every moment of their life for their sustenance.
The novelist comments on the dilemma of mature and professional women: “Things are not easy if you are educated, the mind needs companionship, the search become longer” (TI 12). In such atmosphere, the question of her self automatically rises in her mind. Ashok Kumar also says:

The astringent and conical social web constrained women to obliterate her ‘self’, her eccentricity and separate identity. In modern era the self finds it intricate to come to stipulations with the social web because the central values nurtured by the self and the outer social demands are incompatible. This helplessness to formulate the self familiar with the social web result in the alienation of self. (New Lights 163-64)

Nina’s mother Mrs Shanti Batra was all the more worried of getting her daughter married to the right guy in every possible way. With the consultation and the influence of the astrologer, sets her life on a different path through the marriage arranged by the family, with an NRI dentist, who arrives from Halifax, Canada to meet her. Ananda, the prospective groom, left New Delhi a few years back after his parents were killed in an accident. Young, ambitious and determined to qualify as a Canadian dentist and citizen, he has made his mark as a wealthy doctor in Halifax. It is thus a partially arranged marriage promoted by Ananda’s sister and Nina’s mother.

Alka, Ananda’s sister came to know about Nina and she thought that Nina would be an ideal match for her brother, considering that latter has lived abroad,
studied French in Belgium, spoke very knowledgeable about books, even though the girl’s side was not so well off as theirs. Alka thought Nina was the right choice for her NRI dentist brother. Though Nina meets Ananda, through an arranged introduction, yet she doesn’t grab the opportunity to marry an NRI dentist her future. Nina is finally able to leave her colourless life behind to fly to a small town in Canada. She prepares herself for a new life “laced with choices, novelty and excitement” (TI 79) and migrates to Canada to share her husband’s money, body and success.

Nina does not like her introduction to western world. She is denied her self-respect at the Toronto airport where she passes through a rigorous process of close examination. Kapur vividly describes the mental state of her assertive protagonist that,

Rage fills her. Why were people so silent about the humiliations they faced in the west? She was a teacher at a university, yet this woman, probably school pass, can imprison her in a cell like room, scare her and condemn her. (TI 108)

To retain her self-respect, she craves for a mutually beneficial relationship with her husband Ananda in the land of utopian possibilities. Her vision of female sexuality, demanding recognition of her own needs and asserting herself playfully as a sexual subject sets out with an impossible task of searching compassionate love in her diasporic life. She interprets her husband’s impotency in a rational and logical perspective. She rationalizes Ananda’s physical inadequacies in term of immigration trauma that has taken a toll of his body,
Did he not suffer crossing over nine different time zones? Or was Canada so deeply embedded in his body that waking, sleeping, he moved to its rhythms? One day her system too would move to a different beat. (IT 122)

She understands the practical need of commitment in her marriage as Ananda is her only emotional and economic source of stability in the foreign land. She sets out to find entry into system on her terms without violating the sanctity of her embodiment and its desire.

Later, Nina discover that her husband Ananda’s sexual and emotional dysfunctions. Ananda brings to its marriage a kind of loneliness centered on his sense of sexual inadequacy. Suffered from premature ejaculation, he has failed to have relations with the western people earlier. But Nina’s obsessive desire for a child develops into an essentialist desire for identity, self-fulfillment, security, assimilation and belongingness into the new country through motherhood. She contemplates, “if she had a baby, the next 20 years would be taken care of. Her interest in Canada would grow, her child home after all” (TI 162). The sterility of her relationship becomes literalized as she fails to conceive. Nina is transformed from a feisty, lively, brilliant rebel into a depressed, withdrawn, self-absorbed patient obsessed with redeeming herself through her body’s reproductive success. She is quite predictably haunted by a paralyzing sense of guilty, helplessness, loss of confidence in her femininity.

Nina’s rootlessness in the new soil makes her pine for ‘home’. She painfully remembers that “never, for a moment, in all her” years at home, had she
to think about who or what she was. She had belonged. Only now was she beginning to realize how much that meant” (TI 157). The initial mortification that she faces at the Toronto airport makes her feel humiliated for a long time-

Nina has no idea why this happening to her. She has a valid visa… she is decent, respectable, god-fearing and worthy… she feel edgy, she is alone with a woman who makes o eye contact, for whom she is less than human… though she was addressed as ma’am no respect is conveyed. Nina has been used to respect. It came with her class, her education, her accent, her clothes. (TI 107-108)

Pushed into the burden of staying at home jobless and being denied a life outside of marriage, she has to console herself that planning the weekly menu together secures the future in a way in which sex never can.

Nina’s sense of herself as a woman is determined by her ethnic background. But in due course of time she overpowers her sense of inadequacy, acknowledges her bodily needs and breaks the communication lacuna in her sexual life,

Now she had taken the plunge, she had to swim. It’s too short, not even five-ten seconds. Surely that can’t be normal. I love you, but when it’s over so quickly I get frustrated. May be that is why I have not conceived. (TI 183)

Her academic eye probes magazines on sexuality and she reaches to the cause of their sexual problem, “Sex was a form of communication, and if they
couldn’t communicate on this most basic level, what about everything else?” (TI 186). She suggests sexual therapy at Masters and Johnson but his masculinity doesn’t permit him to do so. After an initial inertia, Ananda secretly visits a therapist later and almost cures himself. But his successful experiences with the surrogate make him more adventurous. He becomes the insensitive, straying husband, and takes on a young lad, white mistress. Nina is left alone to brood over her pitiable state.

But, in a few days she too joins a library science course and has an extramarital affair. The couple seeks neither to understand nor love each other. Nina finds she is not only ill prepared for cultural gulf she encounters, but also the gaping distances like intellectual, emotional and physical in her barren relationship. Nina suffers a twofold alienation. In a foreign land with no one talk to but the husband, she feels rootless. This displacement is not merely a change of address but is also socio-cultural. Immigration results in the physical as well as imaginative border crossing. In addition to this is the oppression that a woman suffers from in a male dominated society.

With an amazing insight Kapur probes deep into the psyche of her characters and expresses her observations with a simple yet mesmerizing style. The couple plays out a simultaneous existence in two cultures and face varied problems at different stages on the road to their assimilation of a new culture. They suffer different kinds of losses of identities, familial love, economic security, social status and feel insecure about the preservation of their own religion. Nina’s initial failure to strike a balance between her American and Indian identity brings
in an “identity crisis” in her life. This results in cultural isolation that leads to personal isolation as well.

Ananda had to face the awful loneliness of a recent immigrant when he arrived in Halifax for the first time. In his uncle’s home he missed the intimacies of Indian life, the communal meals, rich spices and vegetarian diet he was used to. But soon his feeling of rejection faded away and he assimilated the western culture. Though he becomes a reputed dentist and tries hard to establish the fact that he is more a Canadian than an Indian by nature, his sense of alienation remains. He becomes Andy and starts taking non-vegetarian food fairly soon after moving to Canada. But for Nina, it is harder to adapt. She believes using the word Andy in her home is to carry alienation into the bedroom. Thus Kapur explores the special challenges that the immigrant wives face through showcasing a young woman’s life, which was already so pressured in professional and reproductive terms, and then becomes an even more impossible balancing act inside a foreign culture:

The immigrant who comes as a wife has more difficult time. If work exits 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. (TI 124)
Nina passes though tortuous physical, mental and emotional agony, which affects her entire personality largely turning her into a whole new being. With her embodied desires, she begins a new life and reinvents her identity: “I need to find my feet in this country. I can’t walk on yours” (216). She sets out on a journey of self-discovery by adapting to the western way of life. She gets a support system in the form of La Leche League that re-instills her confidence in her embodiment through therapeutic situation outside clinical set up:

In a clinical setup the anxieties and problems women have tend to be treated as neurosis, rather than the result of stress that comes from coping in a male dominated world. Often women feel inadequate, powerless even sexually vulnerable because of professional therapies. (TI 217)

Leaving behind the stereotypical expectations of her gender and hollowness of her bodily life, she advances to a life of mind. She gives a practical shape to her vocation of reading and takes up a part time job in library. The novelist presents the progressive thoughts of Nina: “The important thing was to get an entry into the system. From small things big things come, but from nothing come only nothing” (TI 212). The reality of her status dawns to her: “I feel like a shadow. What I am but your wife” (TI 237). Kapur’s protagonist makes her individuality nurture and strengthens its own boundaries by pursuing her interest in studies of library science. Her confidence in her mental power results in an admission with fee waiver. From being controlled by circumstances, Nina takes her step towards autonomy. She becomes a part of a student body, no longer the outsider.
Nina’s journey of self-affirmation takes her away from her uncordial husband to Anton, her batch mate. She soon recognizes that her sexuality is also an aspect of her identity, which she can possess and embrace. She realizes the sexual double standard, the unfair distinction between male and female sexuality in the Indian culture. It is only with Anton that her perceptions of sexuality get altered as for the first time she becomes selfish, intimate and involved in a relationship without any expectations. She creates a new sexual identity that does not come in conflict with her previous self-perceptions. They merely get replace by the new and different perceptions:

Judging from the evidence and sexual therapy. Every citizen in North American regarded good sex as their inalienable right. It was her right too… she did not like being as starkly confronted by the sight… was not something that could lead anywhere. (TI 263)

There were more possibilities in the world she could be open to. Her body was her own and that included her digestive system and her vagina. (TI 271)

Her embodied sexual desires become unrestrained and she plunges into free gratifying sexual expression in togetherness with Anton. For Nina it meant an unconditional give and take of bodies: “it was merely a meeting of bodies, a healthy give and take” (TI 273).

But these moments of pleasure turns traumatic as Anton being colonial male treats Nina’s female body as a site for the interplay of the dynamics of
eroticization and commodification of subaltern female body. He mercilessly crushes Nina’s psyche and body by physically imposing his sexuality on her. Kapur looks from feminist perspective and neither interpret Nina’s adultery as moral depravity nor as a sin of passion but treat the autonomous articulation of sexuality as an act of feminine freedom, personal gratification and sexual autonomy. Her unconventional affair, though unfulfilling has a therapeutic and liberating effect on her embodied self.

Nina discovers the infidelity of Ananda and his breach of commitment result in breach of companionship in marriage. She thinks of her transgression which has been against a faithful husband but the discovery of golden hair on the pillow makes it clear that their marriage “was based on more than one person’s lies” (TI 328). The death of her mother snatches her emotional support. Her life becomes intolerable and she flies to university of New Brunswick Interview. Manju Kapur summarizes the whole difference between the two in a single paragraph:

Life was what you made of it. You could look at a glass and call it half or half empty. You could look out of the window and see the sky or stare at the mud. How often had he heard his parents make these distinctions between types of people? Well, he knew what manner of person he was. And Nina was definitely his opposite. (TI 330)

She becomes anchorless in an alien land. For sometimes, she considers herself a failure, and this is a step for learning, which instigates her to find herself in a world of instability and motion. She gathers her determination to re-establish
herself independently by throwing away the yoke of marriage. At the moment of crisis, she overpowers the disturbances of mind. Some Immigrant women become victims of their circumstances and give up their strength before the struggles of life but Nina re-positions her perspective on her immigrant status. Her thought processes reveal her true identity and grounding what she is and ought to be. Her tragedy which has resulted in displacement and alienation becomes her strength. Instead of crumbling to the circumstances and being an object to the cultural beliefs, practices and norms of the homeland, she becomes a subject and determines to march ahead in life. As Manju Kapur says:

The things that might have made separation in India were hers to command in Canada. Financial self-sufficiency, rental ease, social acceptability. She hoped independence would facilitate her thought processes. She looked down the path on which there would be no husband and so the difficulties, the pain, the solitude. Nevertheless, treading it was not unimaginable…and Nina clarifies her conviction: ‘I need to be myself (TI 333).

At home she could not respond to Ananda’s presence that everything was all right. Each time she considered confronting him with his infidelity, she felt the futility. For what to have any real purpose, she would have to confess her own, they would have to examine why they had betrayed each other, they would have to be a woman’s group, knowing that the only way forward was to function with honesty, trust, all judgement withheld. “She looked the cards of her life as she wondered which hand to deal. In any game she would have flung them down” (TI 330). Ananda revealed his heart:
Marriage had been the most significant step in the remarking of his old self. There was no one to appreciate the irony of this. After he married everything changed, his mind, his heart, his penis. In this change his wife had been left bar behind. It was not her fault. It was the situation. Given his social position, he hoped it was a temporary situation. (TI 332)

She started at him. What he was insinuating was so clear, “to become a ray of sunshine” (TI 331). Buds blossomed, leaves emerged, the grass turned green. Nina enjoyed every breath of air, despite her heavy heart. She graduated and applied for jobs and got a call for interview from the University of New Brunswick, in her bones she knew she would get the job. Interviews had always been ‘easy for her’ (TI 333).

The empty prettiness of the landscape drew her attention. The last time she had gazed at moving scenery her mother’s ashes had lain on her lap. Now there was nothing trying her down anywhere. She was travelling away from Halifax, deliberately pulling at the bonds that held her. (TI 333)

She faces the problems of her marital life boldly, defies the role that tradition has scripted for her, and qualifies as a librarian. Nina now feels relieved and enjoys her regeneration. She sets herself free from the nuptial bond and social sanction and resuscitates her feminine identity. She goes away from Halifax in search of a job and thinks of all those who have been quite nice to her but feels that they were all temporary. The novelist describes:
She thought of those who had been nice to her, wayfarer on the path, nothing permanent, but interacting with them had made that stretch easier. Colleagues at HRL, the woman’s group that encouraged her to be angry and assertive. Beth, Gayatri library school; the sense of community was there, warning but temporary—everything temporary. She finally realizes; “For an immigrant there was no going back. (TI 333)

Through the ages, Indian woman’s history of suffering and rebellion against patriarchal dominance remains almost the same. There are old models and newer ones but the paramount question of adjustment or rebellion in search of identity still remains. Male domination which leads to woman’s subjugation, discrimination, exploitation and oppression presents sexism in its worst form. Pam Morris, in the book Literature and Feminism, point out that literary texts provide a strong powerful understanding of the ways in which society works to the disadvantages of women (07).

A woman’s prime function, as defined by our society, is to serve as the vessel that will bring forth the next generation. From her childhood, an Indian girl is taught that she is born to marry, procreate and serve others mutely. Social institutions shape her to fit these roles ‘voluntarily’. Whether her family is poor or wealthy, whatever her caste, class or religion, an Indian woman knows that motherhood confers upon her a purpose and identity that nothing else in her culture.
The protagonist of the novel, Nina realizes that “We are conditioned to think a woman’s fulfillment lies in birth and motherhood, just as we are conditioned to feel failures if we don’t marry” (TI 233). As a result, each Indian woman faces two kind of oppression; First, by the imposition of ‘motherhood’ as a symbol of her status and second, by the responsibility of continuing the human race. After marriage if the couple fails to conceive, it is the wife who is held responsible most of the times-

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.

(TI 165)

Female sexuality is never recognized and the desires of the body in a female are regarded as a perversion. Society expects women to be meek, docile, silent and sexually passive. Kate Millet, in her Sexual Politics (1970), makes a distinction between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ and argues that ‘sex’ is determined biologically whereas ‘gender’ is culturally, socially, psychologically constructed through sex-role stereotyping. This reminds us of Beauvoir’s observation in The Sex Second:

One is not born but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society, it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature. (457)
Nina understands the necessity of having control of one’s own body, her transference from a vegetarian Indian to a more global citizen who tries to adapt to her new culture, brings about this realization:

That Monday Nina walked to the library, fish and beef indelibly part of her being. Feeling less Indian had its advantages. There were more possibilities in the world she could not be open to. Her body was her own – and that included her digestive system and her vagina. (TI 271)

Thus, in this novel Kapur dares to break certain conventional attitudes that are never questioned in our society. In the last three decades, Indian women writers both in English and regional languages have shown a great deal of courage in dealing with the hitherto taboo subject of female sexuality. An extra-marital affair can be a warm, exciting event and not necessarily a symptom of moral decay or emotional disturbance.

Through many twists and turns Kapur explores this space and reveals the myriad issues that are deep-rooted within the family – revolt against the age old tradition, the search for selfhood, woman’s rights and the politics of marriage. Nina’s decision to forge an identity of her own away from her husband reminds us of the protagonist’s words in Kamala Das’s *I Shall Someday Leave*:

I shall someday leave, leave the cocoon/You built around me with morning tea, love words flung from doorways and of course Your tired lust. (150)
Her realization that “when one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home” (334) empowers her and we see in her a newly gained confidence, courage and identity. The novel ends with an inspiring message

The continent was full of people escaping unhappy parts. She too was heading towards fresh territories, a different set of circumstances, a floating resident of the western world. (TI 334)

Kapur’s fictional work leaves Nina’s immigrant self to carve out a niche for her in the foreign land:

When one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. Pull up your shallow roots and move. Find a new place, new friends, a new family. It had been possible once, it would be possible again. (TI 334)

Although the quest for self, especially in the life of woman has become a much debatable phenomena, as long as this term is growing old, it is losing its authenticity. It is occasionally misinterpreted by literati of the world. No one can deny the fact that women are treated as no entity several times in their life. Their sentiments and emotions are mostly ignored, but as far as their honesty is concerned, they must be vigilant for their chastity and responsibilities. Pooja Tolani says:

Even today, thousands of girls sit within the four walls of their houses and wonder why they do not have the rights to close their
own lives, decide for themselves whether they want to be homemakers or move. Marriage is still the reason for their birth. Freedom is more than just being aloud out for a pizza with friends. (“Written from the Heart”)

In a talk given on *The Immigrant* Kapur made it very clear that Indian women are still facing the Trauma of exploitation:

In general a woman’s role is often highly respected, even glorified – especially in traditional families.

We have a whole slew of goddesses in the Hindu pantheon that represent all kinds of female power.

Yet, how can I say, with our history of crimes against women, our low sex ratio, our female feticide,

how can I that we respect women more than in the west? I can’t. We don’t.

(Kapur, “Manju Kapur on The Immigrant.”)

Nina represents the modern and revolutionary woman of new generation in quest of definite identity of her own. Kapur’s gender portrayal is strong and shows an inclination towards assimilation and acceptance of her protagonist’s existence in the alien land. Nina’s embodied identity is in a flux and inclined towards the land of living. There is no nostalgia of the past and rootlessness at the place of migration, a clinging to the old identity and a resistance to making a transition. The end of the novel finds Nina moving away from Ananda, uncertain of what the
future will bring but nevertheless confident in her decision to leave. Thereby we see her reinvent her identity completely. The protagonist Nina concludes ultimately in the end of the novel with these words:

…the ultimate immigrant experience. Not that any one thing ready 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… (TI 333-34)

To sum up, it would be proper to say that Nina as an individual could create separate room for herself. She as an educated and spirited new woman, could refuse to be treated as an object instead that tried to establish her own identity. It is necessary to note that she belongs to middle class family in metropolis, is born and brought up in India, where social and cultural scenario is different than that of western countries. Her quest for self-identity, struggle for economic independent existence, and her equality with men depend upon Indian social ethos.

It seems that Manju Kapur wants to have complete liberation to new woman in socio-cultural India. She maintains the character of Nina, to create awareness of women’s liberation and equality along with men, not fully bloomed
but at least up to the mark. Kapur has portrayed the protagonist Nina as an educated, confident, self-assured, bold and independent-spirited new woman.

To conclude, Manju Kapur narrates Nina’s immigration experience as a journey wherein female embodiment becomes a site of her bodily quest. The theme of migration leads to self-discovery. Her journey is a journey from self-alienation to self-identification from negation to assertion and from diffidence to confidence. Kapur’s delicate writing depicts the human relations and their social context with great sensibility and close attention to the details of daily life. The novel has been very carefully researched and the text bears ample testimony to Kapur’s confession on how she becomes a writer:

I knew what I was interested in –
family, marriage, women and education but I had no notion of how to weave a story around this. Interviews, research, field trips –
the tools of an academic- these are what I used. I researched as I wrote. (Khan 23)

Socio-political problems of contemporary life portrayed in terms of an individual’s quest for identity and freedom along with a sensitive handling of issues like gender, sexuality and diaspora makes *The Immigrant* a novel with a difference.

Manju Kapur’s *The Immigrant* voices out the sentiments of women and their self-introspections. Nina was eagerly searching for her grounds from a wrong
threshold. She searches for the self-identity in an alien country. The female character, Nina, really wins in the end and is contented to a great extent. The facts raised by Manju Kapur are worth research and inquiry. Through the exemplary figures like Nina, she presents an ideal image of women who amid all thick and thins maintain their chastity and humanity. She presents women who try to establish their own identity. The women of India have indeed achieved their success in half a century of Independence, but if there is to be a true female independence, much remains to be done. The fight for autonomy remains an unfinished combat. Manju Kapur presents the changing image of women: moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring women, self sacrificing women towards self assured, assertive and ambitious women making society aware of their demands and in this way providing a medium of self expression.