

ISSUES IN THE LIFE OF THE IMMIGRANTS: A STUDY OF THE IMMIGRANT

Faryal Latif¹, Dr. Rab Nawaz Khan²

¹M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

²Professor, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

¹latiffaryal76@gmail.com, ²rabnawaz@awkum.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: *

Faryal Latif

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ABSTRACT

The current study analyses the issues that are most commonly faced and coped with by immigrants, as represented in Manju Kapur's novel *The Immigrant*. The novel deals with the issues of immigration, marital relationship, settlement, cultural disharmony, and identity as faced by settlers in a new foreign country, and migration that results in separation is examined as a kind of rebirth, a rebirth in a new place with new cultural norms and new adjustments. For the critical analysis of the text under study, this paper adopts the close reading technique, situated within a qualitative research design and framed theoretically by postcolonialism and identity studies. The immigrant souls represented in the novel are consistently found to be divided; they are unable to overcome every obstacle or to maintain an unwavering resolve, and their ability to survive depends largely on their ability to adapt their mindset to the demands of a new environment. Drawing on close textual reading of key passages, the study traces how displacement and alienation, identity crisis and cultural hybridity, economic marginalization, and racism and discrimination structure the protagonist's journey from Delhi to Halifax, and it situates these findings within the wider body of migration scholarship. The study therefore draws a distinction between life in the homeland and life abroad, and it concludes that Kapur's novel offers a nuanced, empathetic critique of the systemic and psychological costs of immigration.

Keywords: post-colonialism, alienation, identity, cultural hybridity, marginalization, racism

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

An introduction to the study of immigrant issues is of utmost importance because it sets the groundwork for understanding the complexities and dynamics through which the immigrant experience is brought about. Immigration is one of the most important social and political phenomena of the modern era, one in which individuals, families, and societies as a whole come to bear heavy impacts. Migrants move from one country to another in the name of better

opportunities, safety, or other forms of freedom, and in doing so they undergo different trials and tribulations that mould their experience in both good and bad ways. This study analyses the various challenges immigrants face, the systemic inequalities within which they live, and the profound effects of these issues on identity, belonging, and wellbeing, as these are dramatized in a single literary text.

Migration is a social and political phenomenon that has been discussed extensively in academic circles for centuries. Historically, such movement

has represented, by its nature, an economic incentive or, in other cases, a movement forcefully promoted by colonialism, war, or slavery, and the issue remains powerful and highly contested in both developing and developed countries. Though immigrants have contributed to economic growth, cultural diversity, and innovation in host countries, their lives remain full of personal and structural challenges, and understanding these challenges is fundamental to the formulation of policies and interventions aimed at alleviating the immigrant experience. The immigrant experience has accordingly been an area of research across disciplines, including sociology, political science, economics, and psychology, with sociologists interested in how social networks, family structures, and community ties shape the assimilation of immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), and psychologists exploring the emotional and psychological effects of migration, including identity conflict, cultural adjustment, and mental health (Berry, 1997).

The central argument of this study is built around the general theme of displacement, both physical and existential. For most immigrants, leaving a homeland signifies more than a geographical shift; it represents a cut in one's sense of belonging, identity, and self. Immigrants are usually wedged uncomfortably between the familiar world of their homeland and the foreign world of their host country, trapped within a liminal space that can be understood as the sphere between two cultures, languages, and identities, a space fraught with pitfalls and contradictions. In the light of globalization, which speeds up human mobility across borders, it has become ever more essential to learn about the lived experiences of immigrants, since globalization has facilitated the movement of goods and capital but has equally hastened the movement of human beings into landscapes defined by systemic inequality, landscapes that leave immigrants unable to fully integrate or to feel any sense of security in a new home.

This study adopts a postcolonial theoretical framework in order to discuss the long-term impacts of colonialism on the societies and peoples that were once colonized, drawing most notably on Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, whose

work forms an important critical lens for understanding the immigrant experience in relation to international power dynamics, cultural hegemony, and identity formation (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994). Immigration, particularly the immigration that flows from former colonies to former colonial powers, often expresses the long-term impact of colonialism's legacies, and questions are consistently raised regarding how colonial histories continue to shape current social, political, and economic relations surrounding migration. It is within this framework that Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant*, the story of Nina and Ananda's migration from India to Canada, is analysed in the present study as a literary case through which the broader theoretical literature on immigration, displacement, and identity can be examined in close textual detail.

1.2. Research Problem

The Immigrant is a story of several issues; however, cultural conflict, marital issues, settlement issues, and identity crisis are the dominant ones among them. The novel is a depiction of why and how people migrate to foreign countries, what issues they face when they try to settle there, and how they cope with the new challenges that confront them. Although a considerable body of research has revealed the challenges that immigrants face in general terms, there remains much to be understood in the commonality between systemic inequality, social and identity conflict, and economic marginalization as factors influencing outcomes in immigration, particularly as these are represented and worked through in literary narrative rather than in survey or policy data alone. The current study focuses on the aforementioned problems and issues faced by immigrants in the specific context of the novel under study, and it attempts to bridge the identified gap by providing a holistic, multi-dimensional reading of the immigrant experience that goes beyond external determinants such as economic prospects and social support systems to encompass the inner, psychological facets of the immigrant condition.

1.3. Research Questions

The current study is an attempt to answer the following two research questions:

- How does the novelist narrate the issues faced by immigrants or settlers in a foreign country in *The Immigrant*?
- What is the novelist's stance or point of view about the mentioned issues in her novel under study?

1.4. Research Objectives

The prime objectives of the current study are as follows:

- To analyze the way the novelist has narrated various issues faced by immigrants in the novel under study.
- To shed light on the novelist's stance or point of view about the mentioned issues.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The current study is significant in several ways. First, it analyzes issues that are mostly faced and coped with by immigrants, and issues of immigration, marital relationship, settlement, cultural disharmony, and identity are of immense importance both for settlers and for those who desire to settle abroad. Second, the study offers insight into these issues and provides a foundation for future researchers desirous of conducting studies on refugees or immigrant issues, whether in this novel or in comparable literary and social texts. Third, it constitutes a meaningful addition to the already existing body of knowledge and literature on immigrant issues and challenges, extending discussions of displacement, cultural hybridity, and economic marginalization into the domain of South Asian diasporic fiction. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, the study is intended to help readers and researchers become more aware of, and better equipped to cope with, cultural conflict, marital discord, settlement difficulties, and identity crisis, thereby connecting close literary analysis to the lived, practical concerns of immigrant communities.

2. Literature Review

The study of immigration has attracted scholars from a multiplicity of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, economics, and political science (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Immigration is not merely a demographic process but a complex phenomenon shaped by political instability, economic hardship, social dislocation, and the promise of better opportunities in a new country, and immigrants face various challenges emanating from the process of adapting to new environments, including identity conflict, language barriers, cultural adjustment, discrimination, and socioeconomic disparity (Berry, 1997). Immigration is as old as human civilization itself, and its historical drivers have ranged from the pursuit of resources and trade in antiquity to the forces of war, conquest, and colonial expansion in later centuries; the Industrial Revolution, the transatlantic slave trade, and the two World Wars each reshaped global migration in turn, and the post-World War II period marked a new phase of migration in which decolonization and the emergence of new nations in the Global South triggered greater movement toward former colonial powers (Castles & Miller, 2009). These patterns have persisted into the twenty-first century, as increasing numbers of people move for reasons ranging from economic opportunity and political persecution to environmental displacement, and immigration continues to reshape the world's contours, raising for governments and international organizations the challenge of balancing host countries' needs with migrants' rights and dignity.

A range of theoretical models has been developed to explain the processes of immigration and assimilation. Early researchers associated with the Chicago School conceived of assimilation into the majority culture as a linear process unfolding over time, a model later criticized for simplifying the diversity of immigrant experience. More recent models include the segmented assimilation theory of Portes and Zhou (1993), which argues that different immigrant groups follow varied paths of adaptation depending on class, race, and ethnicity, such that some immigrants integrate into the mainstream middle class while others become

relegated to the margins, reproducing social inequalities. Gordon's (1964) classical assimilation theory identified successive stages of cultural, structural, marital, and identificational assimilation, a view later challenged by scholars who emphasize the persistence of ethnic identities and multiculturalism, in which immigrants maintain cultural practices while participating fully in the wider society (Alba & Nee, 2003). Multiculturalism itself, as theorized by Kymlicka (1995), contests the assimilationist approach by affirming that societies should recognize and preserve diverse cultural identities, on the grounds that pluralism enriches societies and fosters greater social cohesion. Transnationalism offers a further corrective to linear assimilation narratives, arguing that many immigrants maintain close ties with their home countries even as they integrate into host societies, engaging in cross-border activities such as remittance and political participation that continue to shape identity and belonging (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992). Complementing these sociological accounts, Kim's (2001) cultural adaptation theory foregrounds the cognitive and affective processes, including the acquisition of new cultural knowledge and the management of cultural dissonance, through which individuals adapt psychologically to a new cultural setting, while Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital helps explain how immigrant networks and community ties facilitate or constrain the integration process. Economic challenges constitute one of the most significant categories of difficulty facing immigrants. Immigrants, particularly those from developing or low-income countries, frequently experience downward occupational mobility after settling in a destination country, often earning less than their skills and qualifications would command in their country of origin (Chiswick & Miller, 2009). Employment discrimination compounds this problem, as foreign qualifications, language proficiency, and cultural background are frequently devalued by employers, a phenomenon commonly described as "brain waste," in which educated immigrants are unable to benefit from their skills in the host country. Linguistic capability plays a particularly decisive

role in shaping the economic experience of immigrants, since a lack of proficiency in the host country's language can severely limit employment opportunities, restrict access to services such as education and healthcare, and deteriorate broader social integration (Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003). Housing affordability, access to formal financial services, and legal status further complicate the economic experience of immigrants, and a significant proportion of an immigrant's income is often spent simply securing adequate housing, leaving little room for savings or investment (Desmond, 2016). Legal status in particular restricts access to employment, healthcare, and social services, while the fear of deportation deters undocumented immigrants from pursuing better employment or reporting workplace abuses, further entrenching their socioeconomic marginalization (Massey, 2012).

Social and cultural integration presents a further major challenge within the host society. According to Berry's (1997) model of acculturation, immigrants must negotiate a tension between preserving their culture of origin and acculturating into the culture of the host society, a process riddled with frustration for many immigrants owing to apparent and less apparent forms of exclusion based on skin colour, religion, or culture of origin (Alba & Nee, 2003). Immigrants often find themselves in a kind of no-man's land in which neither society fully accepts them nor is it easy to return to the culture of origin (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992), and this cultural dissonance can produce feelings of alienation and isolation, particularly among immigrant children who are frequently compelled to reconcile a dual identity (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Language remains one of the major challenges confronting immigrants, especially in countries where their mother tongue is little known; mastery of the dominant host-country language has been shown to determine economic mobility, social integration, and general wellbeing (Chiswick & Miller, 2009), while limited proficiency creates barriers to healthcare, education, and employment and can induce social isolation by making it difficult for immigrants to

initiate and maintain relationships within the host community (Esser, 2006).

Discrimination and xenophobia are persistent problems confronting immigrants across the world. Xenophobia, understood as the fear and hatred of foreigners, frequently manifests as discriminatory policies and attitudes that ostracize immigrants, and visible minority immigrants in particular suffer from stereotyping, racial profiling, and exclusionary practices, problems exacerbated by the rise of nationalist and anti-immigrant political movements in numerous countries. Such experiences of discrimination have been shown to affect immigrants' mental health and wellbeing in addition to their economic and social assimilation. The psychological dimension of migration has likewise received sustained scholarly attention: the process of migration, which frequently involves disengagement from one's family and homeland, can itself be traumatic (Bhugra, 2004), and studies indicate that immigrants, particularly those who have experienced persecution or conflict in their countries of origin, are more likely than the general population to suffer from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Kumar & Bhugra, 2009). Acculturative stress, understood as the strain that results from negotiating one's cultural heritage against the demands of a host culture, is compounded by post-migration stressors such as financial instability, discrimination, and social isolation, while language barriers further hinder access to mental health support and community-based social ties (Kirmayer, 2006). At the same time, studies suggest that immigrants who remain connected to their cultural identity while also achieving meaningful integration into the host society tend to report more favourable mental health outcomes, indicating that cultural identity and pride can function as a protective factor (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001), and that culturally competent, trauma-informed community support plays an important role in mitigating the psychological costs of migration (Miller & Garcia, 2017).

Government policy exerts a decisive influence over the immigrant experience. Policies that encourage

inclusiveness and provide pathways to citizenship and social services tend to support integration, whereas policies that restrict eligibility for legal status, employment, education, and healthcare push immigrant populations toward the periphery of society. Second-generation immigrants, meanwhile, face distinct challenges of identification and belonging, since they are neither fully accepted by the host culture nor straightforwardly tied to their parents' culture of origin, an "in-betweenness" that can translate into disadvantage in education, employment, and social integration (Kao & Tienda, 1995). It is against this substantial body of sociological, economic, and psychological literature on immigration that the present study situates its literary analysis, drawing in particular on the postcolonial theory of Said (1978) and Bhabha (1994), and on the concept of "double consciousness" articulated by Du Bois (1903) to describe the internal conflict between two cultural identities experienced by members of marginalized groups. Where the sociological literature documents the structural and psychological costs of immigration in aggregate, empirical terms, literary texts such as Kapur's (2008) *The Immigrant* dramatize these costs at the level of individual consciousness and lived experience, and it is this complementary, text-based contribution that the present study seeks to make.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Nature of the Study

This study follows a qualitative research method. This method allows researchers to collect, analyze, and understand data by generating rich, descriptive information about meaning, form, metaphor, symbol, and effect, rather than by reducing experience to numerical measurement. Qualitative research of this kind is more interpretive than statistical research, and it draws on a variety of methods to gather evidence, from primary data collection through texts and interviews to secondary data collection through library resources, articles, and prior research. The present study involves the collection of data from both primary and secondary sources: primary data were drawn directly from the novel *The Immigrant*

by Manju Kapur (2008), while secondary sources included relevant scholarly books, journal articles, and online academic resources on immigration, postcolonialism, and identity studies.

3.2. Research Design

A research design outlines the plan of a study, indicating when and how it will be carried out and which techniques and tools will be used; in simple terms, it is the outline or complete plan of the activities to be undertaken during the study. A qualitative research design was judged the most appropriate design for the present study, since it instructs the researcher to ensure that each analytical step is carried out systematically before moving on to the next. In this study, qualitative analysis was performed without recourse to statistical procedures. A difference was first noted between the aims of prior sociological literature on immigration and the aims of the present literary study; key issues were then identified and defined; relevant literature was subsequently collected and reviewed; and a research design was developed according to the specific requirements of the study before the analytical process, guided by thematic and close reading procedures, was initiated and, finally, conclusions were drawn.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

In this study, the novel *The Immigrant* by Manju Kapur (2008) was used as the primary research tool and source of data collection. Manju Kapur has written several novels, including *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), and *Custody* (2011), and is recognized as a significant voice in Indian writing in English both within India and internationally. *The Immigrant* centres on an Indian couple, Nina and Ananda, and traces the story surrounding their arranged marriage and Nina's subsequent migration from Delhi, in northern India, to Halifax, in eastern Canada, in the 1970s, against the political backdrop of Indira Gandhi's India and Pierre Trudeau's Canada. Data relevant to the study's two research questions were collected by identifying and extracting passages from the novel that depict displacement and alienation, identity crisis and cultural

hybridity, economic marginalization, and racism and discrimination, together with passages in which the narrative voice or characters' reflections reveal the novelist's own stance toward these issues. These primary textual data were supplemented by secondary sources, including scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and online academic material on immigration, acculturation, postcolonial theory, and identity studies, which provided the conceptual vocabulary within which the primary textual data could be interpreted.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

To analyze the data collected from the novel, the researcher used thematic content analysis, following the now-standard procedure articulated by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first step involved familiarization with the material, in which the researcher read the entire novel closely, generating an initial analytical interest in recurring patterns of meaning. The second step involved generating initial codes across the dataset, identifying the most basic units of raw textual information relevant to the study's research questions. The third step involved collating these codes into broader candidate themes, namely displacement and alienation, identity crisis and cultural hybridity, economic issues and multidimensional marginalization, and racism and discrimination. The fourth step involved reviewing these candidate themes against two criteria, internal consistency and external variability, ensuring that the data within a theme cohered meaningfully while remaining clearly distinguishable from the data supporting other themes. The fifth step involved defining and refining each theme by identifying its analytical "essence" and assigning it a clear, descriptive name, and the sixth and final step involved report writing, in which the analysed themes were woven together with illustrative textual evidence into a coherent, non-repetitive account.

Within this broader thematic procedure, each selected passage from the novel was additionally subjected to a five-level close reading appropriate to literary textual analysis: a semantic level, examining the literal and connotative meanings of

key words and images; a syntactic level, examining how sentence structure and word order reinforce meaning; a thematic level, connecting the passage to the novel's broader concerns with displacement, identity, and marginalization; an iterative level, tracing how the identified theme recurs and develops across the novel as a whole; and an adversarial or critical level, examining how the passage implicitly critiques the social, economic, or political systems that produce and sustain the immigrant's marginal position. This multi-level close reading procedure allowed the study to move systematically from surface textual detail to broader social and political interpretation while remaining grounded in the language of the novel itself.

3.5. Theoretical Framework

This study is theoretically anchored in postcolonialism and identity studies. As a theoretical approach, postcolonialism analyzes the durable effects of colonialism on formerly colonized societies and their peoples, questioning the power relations between colonizer and colonized and probing themes of identity, cultural hybridity, displacement, and resistance (Said, 1978). The Immigrant can accordingly be read from a postcolonial perspective because the immigration it depicts is continuous with historical lines of colonialism, and the power structures inherited from empire create systemic challenges of racism, exclusion, and economic inequality that immigrants, especially those from formerly colonized societies, must negotiate. In this analysis, postcolonialism is used as a framework within which to explore how the characters in *The Immigrant* push through the marginalizing world they inhabit, how they assert agency, and how both their homeland and their host society construct identities for them. Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of "ambivalence," together with his account of colonial mimicry, is used specifically to examine how the characters occupy an "in-between" position with respect to cultural difference, a position Bhabha describes as involving "not only power and control but also desire and pleasure," and one that Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) describe as

"transcultural," produced by a complex mixture of emotions and tensions that define the relationship between settler and colonized society.

Identity studies, the second component of the theoretical framework, examines how people create and negotiate identity in relation to social, cultural, and political contexts. Within the context of immigration, identity becomes a central theme because immigrants must reconcile a new identity with new and often conflicting cultural norms, a process that can produce identity crisis, cultural hybridity, adaptation, and a sense of lost heritage. W. E. B. Du Bois's (1903) concept of "double consciousness," describing the internal conflict between two cultural identities experienced by members of marginalized groups, provides a particularly pertinent framework for examining the protagonist's experience in *The Immigrant*. Read together, postcolonialism and identity studies allow this analysis to conceptualize, in close textual detail, how the fluidity and fragmentation of immigrant identity feature in the novel's portrayal of its characters' interactions with both their homeland and their new society.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The thematic analysis of *The Immigrant* reveals the multifaceted nature of the immigrant experience, encompassing displacement, identity crisis, economic struggle, and racism, each of which is examined below through representative passages read at the semantic, syntactic, thematic, iterative, and adversarial levels described in the methodology. Early in the novel, the protagonist looks out of the window of a small, cramped apartment, her gaze drifting over the unfamiliar skyline of a city that is supposed to be her new home, yet nothing about it feels like home (Kapur, 2008). At the semantic level, the adjectives describing the apartment as small, cramped, and unfamiliar convey discomfort on both a physical and an emotional level, and the juxtaposition of the new home with the admission that nothing about it felt like home reinforces the protagonist's alienation. At the syntactic level, the sentence structure itself reinforces feelings of imprisonment and disorientation, locating the reader immediately in a setting of discomfort, while at the

thematic level the passage exemplifies the recurring theme of displacement, in which the protagonist, though physically located in a new country, remains psychologically apart, caught in a state of "in-betweenness" that recurs throughout the narrative every time she interacts with her apartment, her workplace, or the city itself. Read adversarially, the passage can be understood as an implicit critique of social systems that fail to make room for immigrants, confining them, both literally and metaphorically, to small and cramped spaces.

A closely related theme concerns identity crisis and cultural hybridity, exemplified in a passage in which the protagonist speaks French in her mind while, outwardly, her lips seem to enunciate alien words that never sound quite right to her (Kapur, 2008). Semantically, this passage renders language itself symbolic of identity, figuring the acquired language of the host country as something that never fully belongs to the speaker; syntactically, the contrast between "in her mind" and "her lips" enacts the very dichotomy it describes, dramatizing the character's double identity through sentence structure alone. Thematically, the passage stages an identity crisis in which the protagonist's resistance to the new language reflects a deeper resistance to losing her sense of self, even as she must find ways to negotiate this new linguistic and cultural reality in order to survive; read iteratively, this crisis recurs throughout the novel, particularly in her interactions with native Canadians and with other immigrants, and read adversarially, the passage critiques the broader social pressure placed on immigrants to assimilate at the cost of their cultural identities.

Economic marginalization forms a third major theme, dramatized in a passage in which the protagonist stands behind a counter every day, her hands moving automatically, scanning items for customers who barely notice her presence, while the hours pass slowly and tips remain few (Kapur, 2008). The adverbial phrasing captures the dehumanizing quality of low-wage immigrant labour, rendering the protagonist a function of the retail system rather than a full human presence to the customers she serves, and thematically the passage speaks to the economic marginalization

that limits opportunity for many immigrants, particularly those without recognized educational credentials in the host country. Read iteratively across the novel, economic struggle functions as a thread woven throughout the protagonist's experience, as she works multiple jobs that fail to provide either financial security or personal fulfilment, and read adversarially, the passage can be understood as an implicit critique of a labour system that exploits immigrant workers while denying them visibility, security, or fair recognition of their contribution.

A fourth theme, racism and discrimination, appears in a passage in which a character looks at the protagonist with a cold smile and remarks, "You people are all the same," before turning away (Kapur, 2008). The phrase "you people" enacts a clear act of dehumanization, reducing the protagonist from an individual to a member of an undifferentiated racial or national category, while the abruptness of the dialogue conveys the casualness with which such dismissals are delivered in everyday social life. Thematically, the passage illustrates the pervasiveness of everyday racism in the immigrant experience, a pervasiveness confirmed at the iterative level by the recurrence of similar prejudicial encounters across the novel, whether at work, in public, or in private social settings, and read adversarially, the passage indicts the broader institutional and social structures that normalize such discrimination, challenging readers to reflect critically on the dehumanizing attitudes it represents.

Turning to the second research question, concerning the novelist's stance or point of view, Kapur combines explicit and implicit modes of narration to communicate her position on the issues faced by immigrants. In one explicit formulation, Kapur writes that a tradition which refuses to accept scepticism or which remains immune to new ideas becomes a prison rather than a continuing life force (Kapur, 2008), a statement that directly highlights the difficulty immigrants face in adapting cultural heritage to the demands of a rapidly changing world. Elsewhere, Kapur's stance emerges more implicitly, through metaphor and symbol, as when she writes that reinventing oneself allows any place

to become home (Kapur, 2008), a line that captures the transformative potential of the immigrant experience even as it acknowledges the psychological turmoil, identity crisis, and longing for home that accompany that transformation. Kapur's treatment of gender within immigrant communities is similarly double-edged: her depiction of Nina's mother, whose frugal habits are rooted in years of chronic worry about money, meaning she can never afford to drive even on her own birthday (Kapur, 2008), reflects the long-term economic sacrifices many immigrant women make, while her account of the pressure on women to marry, to love, and above all to take care of their husbands (Kapur, 2008) critiques the cultural expectations placed on immigrant women and the sacrifices demanded of them in the name of social acceptance.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that Kapur's narrative technique, oscillating between explicit statement and implicit symbol, allows her to render the immigrant experience with considerable psychological and social nuance. Nina's journey, from her arranged marriage in Delhi to her gradual, painful process of adaptation in Halifax, dramatizes what Du Bois (1903) calls double consciousness, the internal conflict between two cultural identities that Nina negotiates continuously between the self she was in India and the self she is becoming in Canada, while Ananda's parallel but divergent journey, marked by his eagerness to embrace Canadian food, dress, and customs while rejecting much of his Indian heritage, illustrates the alternative, assimilationist pole of the same underlying conflict. Read through Bhabha's (1994) concept of ambivalence, the novel's characters occupy a genuinely "in-between" cultural position, neither fully Indian nor fully Canadian, and it is precisely this in-betweenness, rather than any singular or resolved identity, that Kapur presents as the substance of the immigrant condition. In sum, the novel offers not a triumphant narrative of successful assimilation but a clear-eyed, empathetic account of displacement, identity conflict, economic marginalization, and discrimination as continuous, mutually reinforcing features of immigrant life, thereby directly answering both of

the study's research questions: the novelist narrates these issues through a combination of vivid scene-setting, symbolic language, and character interiority, and her stance toward them is one of critical sympathy, exposing the systemic pressures immigrants face while affirming the resilience and adaptive capacity of those who endure them.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

5.1. Conclusion

The experience of the immigrant, as dramatized in *The Immigrant*, is deeply one of physical and emotional dislocation. For an immigrant, leaving one's homeland means not only a cross-country movement but also an existential journey, an uprooting from familiar surroundings, customs, and identities, and the thematic analysis undertaken in this study reveals how it is precisely this sense of displacement that radically shapes both the experiences and the outlook of the novel's protagonist. Dislocation appears in the novel in a multitude of guises: geographical dislocation, as the protagonist crosses from one side of the world to the other; cultural displacement, as she is exposed to an unfamiliar set of customs, values, and norms that at times feel almost hostile; and economic dislocation, as her inability to secure meaningful, well-remunerated work compounds her broader struggle to find a stable place for herself within her new society. In very profound ways, these forms of dislocation reshape the protagonist's sense of identity, generating a liminal space between past and present that is replete with uncertainty and anxiety, a space well described by Du Bois's (1903) notion of double consciousness, the internal conflict between two competing cultural identities.

This identity conflict is compounded by the protagonist's interactions with others, in which she repeatedly occupies the position of the "other," someone who does not fully belong, an othering reinforced by both subtle and overt racism in her daily encounters at work, in social settings, and in routine exchanges. The novel also explores the dual function of memory, which serves simultaneously as a bridge connecting the

protagonist to a more stable, idealized past and as a persistent reminder of the loss and dislocation she experiences in her present circumstances, and it is this tension between memory and reality that structures much of the novel's emotional movement. Economic marginalization, meanwhile, emerges as an everyday reality rather than an isolated setback, part of a broader system of structural inequality that the novel implicitly critiques by exposing the ways in which immigrants are undervalued within the global economic hierarchy of the host society. Taken as a whole, the study demonstrates that *The Immigrant* offers a powerful, psychologically attentive critique of the challenges immigrants face in building new lives abroad, and that Kapur's narrative choices, read through the combined lenses of postcolonial theory and identity studies, provide a valuable and still-relevant window onto the complexities of identity, belonging, and survival that characterize the immigrant condition. In directly answering the study's two research questions, the analysis confirms that Kapur narrates these issues through vivid, symbolically dense scenes that render the protagonist's inner life visible to the reader, and that her stance toward the immigrant condition is one of critical empathy, neither romanticizing nor despairing of the possibility of building a meaningful life across cultural boundaries.

5.2. Suggestions

On the basis of these findings, several suggestions can be offered for future research and for readers engaging with immigrant literature more broadly. First, because the present study was necessarily limited by its focus on a single novel and by the availability of secondary scholarly material, future researchers are encouraged to extend this thematic and postcolonial approach to a wider comparative corpus of immigrant fiction, examining how displacement, identity crisis, economic marginalization, and discrimination are represented across different national, linguistic, and gendered contexts of migration literature. Second, because interpretation of literary texts is inevitably shaped by the researcher's own background, assumptions, and reading position,

future studies would benefit from employing multiple readers or triangulated coding procedures when applying thematic analysis to literary data, in order to strengthen the reliability of thematic categorization while still preserving the interpretive richness that close reading affords.

Third, given that the present study concentrated primarily on the novel's textual content without extensive attention to reader reception or to the author's own biographical and historical context, future research could productively combine close textual analysis of the kind undertaken here with reception studies or with archival research into Manju Kapur's own experience and stated intentions, in order to test and extend the interpretive claims advanced in this paper. Fourth, given the study's finding that economic marginalization, cultural hybridity, and psychological double consciousness operate as mutually reinforcing rather than independent forces in the immigrant experience, future interdisciplinary research combining literary analysis with empirical sociological and psychological methods is recommended, so that the rich, particularized insight literature offers into individual immigrant consciousness can be more systematically connected to the aggregate, population-level findings already well established in migration studies. Finally, at a practical level, the study suggests that educators, counsellors, and policymakers engaging with immigrant communities would benefit from greater familiarity with literary narratives such as *The Immigrant*, since such narratives offer a depth of psychological and cultural insight into the lived experience of displacement, identity conflict, and marginalization that complements, and in some respects exceeds, what quantitative or policy-oriented research alone is able to convey.

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