



**Displaced Intellectuals: Comparative Narratives of Educational Migration
and Generated Subjectivity in Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri**

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Abstract:

The fictional writings of Jhumpa Lahiri and Manju Kapur depict academic mobility as deeply affecting female identities, aiming to evoke empathy and understanding for their dislocation and reinvention in postcolonial contexts. This paper adopts a comparative perspective to consider the emotional toll of intellectual-aimed migration on these gendered identities—the female subjectivities developed by Lahiri attempt to negotiate the alienating phenomenon of intellectual Diaspora in the West. In contrast, Kapur's gendered subjectivities are conflicted as 'educated women' within the claustrophobic domestic spaces of post-independence India. The essay discusses how education, as a motive for migration, creates a 'displaced intellect,' a condition that traps the female subject between intellectual emancipation and cultural regulation, thus illuminating the gendered dimensions of postcolonial female identity formation.

Keywords: Educational migration, Gendered subjectivity, Displaced intellect, Postcolonial feminism, Intellectual nomadism.

Introduction

Negotiated conditions between Tradition and modernity in the literary ethnos capes of South Asian women writers depict a way to foster understanding and reflection. South Asian women writers often depict the complex realities that exist between Tradition and modernity, aiming to evoke empathy for their internal struggles and societal pressures. This approach encourages the audience to feel connected to the characters' internal conflicts and societal challenges. In Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri's texts, the female subject is always in transit intellectually, emotionally, and often, geographically. Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* portrays women navigating the emotional toll of social conservatism, evoking empathy for their internal struggles.

Nevertheless, it exposes them to the deeply ingrained gendered expectations of their family and society. Kapur's female characters undergo an internal migration even as they pursue education. In other words, education is a psychological stratagem when her female characters transition from the home to the alien realm of the classroom. Lahiri's *Essays and Novels: The Namesake and Interpreter of Maladies*, as opposed to Kapur. The influence of education on women's relationship with 'home' and 'abroad' is central to understanding displacement and identity. By juxtaposing these two authors, the paper illustrates two distinct but interconnected phases of intellectual dislocation that specifically impact female identity. Kapur points out the emotional and personal costs of education for an emerging nation-state, highlighting how 'displaced intellect' manifests as a gendered experience of cultural and emotional dislocation. In contrast, Lahiri highlights the existential and cultural effects of intellectual migration within the Diaspora, emphasizing how 'displaced intellect' shapes female subjectivities across borders. Through the influence of education, women's relationship with 'home' is permanently modified in both cases, leading to a struggle between Tradition and modernity, self and other, and the emergence of a 'third space' subjectivity that is gendered.

Methodology

The essay adopts a comparative literary approach to analyse Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, Lahiri's *The Namesake*, and several stories from *Interpreter of Maladies*. The process involves close reading to trace the thematic connection between educational migration and gendered subjectivity. The first theoretical imprint stems from postcolonial feminist theory. To this end, we employ Bhabha's conception of hybridity and the 'third space manifests' (Bhabha 37). Both these constructs bring new politics, "a difference without an opposite and a space in which we may develop strategies of self-representation" (Bhabha 37). In addition, we base the findings on Butler's notion of gender performativity. The study concludes by incorporating perspectives on "exile and displacement" (Said 173), sociological interventions into diasporic subject formation (Dhingra 45), and feminist theorisation of education as a site of gendered conflict.

Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial Feminism, Hybridity, and Gendered Subjectivity

provide the necessary lens for interpreting how Lahiri and Kapur's characters embody hybrid identities shaped by colonial legacies and cultural negotiations. This linkage explicitly demonstrates how these frameworks illuminate the gendered aspects of displaced female subjectivities, connecting theory directly to the literary analysis and deepening understanding of postcolonial female identity formation. Though it is essential for this study to engage with a theoretical framework that more fully accounts for the complexity of the 'displaced intellect' in Kapur and Lahiri, it will situate the writer within postcolonial feminism and feminist theorisations of hybridity.

Postcolonial Feminism and the Displaced Subject:

Postcolonial feminism conjoins colonialism, nationalism, and gender by showing the way women's bodies become the site of political and cultural warfare (Rajan 15). Both Kapur and Lahiri work within a postcolonial feminist sensibility that sees formal schooling as a colonial

and postcolonial legacy, as both a possibility and a restriction. In other words, while school may work as a liberatory site, it also reinscribes newer forms of cultural othering and gendered disciplining.

The significance of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay lies in his demonstration and attempt to show how the subaltern (read: Indian woman) can become subject through the instrument of education. According to Spivak, the subaltern woman can become a subject through education, provided it translates into an articulation of agency on her part. It does not result in her becoming an object any further.

Hybridity and the "Third Space"

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity may explain the diasporic and postcolonial subjectivities that the texts present, encouraging the audience to reflect on identity formation as a space of cultural possibility and transformation.

The characters often simultaneously invoke the meaning of their Indian origin and the modernity of their Western assimilation as an 'other' culture in their own performative play that is always textually and culturally limited. Stereotype 2 highlights the diasporic characters' dependence on multiple cultures and meanings to build their identities. Most importantly,

Gender Performativity and the Educated Woman:

Judith Butler has argued that the performativity of gender is key in educating and altering or reforming the identity of the characters in relation to their gender. Butler contends that gender is not a fixed identity; instead, it is a repeated and citational practice. A body becomes the active details that create the identity. As a result of this violation of permissions, the body of the mark finds itself performing restricted versions of something that is not quite an act that represents their individual identities. We see education performing this perplexing operation in both Kapur and Lahiri.

The "Educated Woman" carries out a genre that complicates other genres. She is not just a gendered subject. She is also a modern intellectual who must perform the genre of autonomy.

Exile, Intellectual Nomadism, and Diasporic Identity:

Through Edward Said's lens on exile, we sense the emotions behind educational migration. According to Said, being out of place is not a pathetic condition but a critical awareness situation that can lead to more comprehensible self-identification. Lahiri's diaspora characters' intellectual migration takes them out of their homeland and also distances them from the host culture.

The 'intellectual nomad' proposed by Deepika Bahri describes those who feel at home in liminal, often painful spaces between fixed indigenous identities. They occupy a whole host of spaces that are constantly shifting across borders, cultures, and identities (Bahri 115). The main characters of both Kapur and Lahiri display a kind of nomadic intellectualism, embodying subjectivities that are neither fully rooted nor completely displaced but always somewhere in between.

Intellectual Displacement: Defining the “Displaced Intellect”:

According to Kapur, the shattered intellect is a disruption of female subjectivity. In other words, it opens up a social space in which women can create different understandings of place that withdraw and exclude their cultural experience and the patriarchal space of reason. The statement also demonstrates social-spatial displacement. Put differently, the term represents a break from gendered cultural practices. From notions of femininity based on patriarchy. It comprehends the dislocation of language and knowledge.

In Kapur's Novels- Kapur's works depict themes of intranational dislocation. Additionally, it is mental. The southern part of Bangalore is increasingly becoming the subject of debate. Situations like dowry, domestic violence, widow remarriage, and sectarianism. However, at

home, they are reconciled with their conservative mums. Furthermore, this place is also where they commit their offences. In other words, the intellect opposes the domestic but becomes a place of disgrace. In the Work of Lahiri: Transnational Displacement in the Fiction of Lahiri. It is also cultural, geographic, and linguistic. Many intellectuals in the Diaspora possess a cultural framework. Moreover, they exist within a fragmented Diaspora. Thus, dismissal by the native and enmity from the Western natives create complex negotiations with the other.

Comparative Analysis: Intellectual Migration and Gendered Subjectivity:

The main anxiety, or worry, is education, through which the protagonist attempts to create distance from home and negotiate her identity between Tradition and Western modernity. Kapur's story of migration is, in the main, ideological; Virmati's migration from the provincial town of Amritsar to the university city of Lahore marks an important ideological shift. According to Chakravarti, "the 'difficult' woman/aunty/sister-in-law is a specific figure whose very 'difficulty' stems from challenging caste and gender hierarchies through their assertion of educational 'rights' and their scientific 'rationality' (Chakravarti 112). By comparing the domestic and intellectual discourses that shape the conditions of Virmati's subject formation, this paper demonstrates that education is an important site where intergenerational conflict plays out with great intensity. Therefore, the narrative Kapur sets in motion on education is essentially ideological: one that does not merely focus on resisting but also debunking patriarchy. Her story of internal migration crosses ideological boundaries as the marginal subject negotiates a middle ground between progressive and regressive in the sphere of Tradition.

Kapur's portrayal of the father is that of an archetype whose identity is essentially defined externally through his presence within and against an oppressive network of patriarchal relations within the joint family. Chakravarti observes that the troublesome woman

symbolisthaes one who, because of caste and gender hierarchies, has become 'difficult' because of the way she challenges discrimination. What it meant was like a telecom company that delivers internet access to a company's employees; i.e., employees can check whatever they want, since the company has it, so there should be no consequences. Such repercussions are unjust for the worker who merely uses the company's network and equipment. If a friend sees him using someone else's Wi-Fi, or a neighbour is using their Wi-Fi, one always has the right to sue them for using it without their permission. If an employee uses data internally and does not use any extra bandwidth for personal use, their company cannot sue that employee as long as it is not losing anything. Thanks to the internet, employees can reach.

Data is cheaper than ever. However, that does not mean employees can use work data for personal use just because the internet is an exploration space. A major company, for example, may have its headquarters in a country without reliable or affordable internet access. Nonetheless, if their employees in a country where costs are low access the company's network to download items and run up charges, the employees may face legal action by the company or litigation. Yes, businesses have every right to do this if, say, they lack the bandwidth to provide the employees with personal usage. He is a student at VM Bhop. Said describes the experience of Lahiri's characters as an intellectual exile, defined by nostalgia and the inability to quite belong (182).

The Classroom and the Continent: Spaces of Intellectual and Emotional Displacement

The classroom in Kapur's work is a threshold space that suspends patriarchy for the duration of the class. Virmati associates academic success with a break in the path towards marriage and motherhood. However, within the academic space, her sense of intellectual freedom is constantly disturbed by the intrusion of the domestic world, which passes judgment. As characters in Lahiri's works move across geographical boundaries, they encounter physical,

emotional, and linguistic dislocation. Throughout the *Namesake*, Ashima exhibits this dual heterogeneity due to her education and professional experience, though she is both familiar and foreign.

Spatial disorientation connected to the "linguistic migration" undergone by Kapur's and Lahiri's protagonists. The characters of the first novel, who occupy the divide between the vernaculars of Punjabi and Hindi and the legacy of English as a colonial language – which in any case gets appropriated as a feminist language – and the characters of the other novel, who often experience the "wanting" of a heart language as circumstances force them into participation in a cosmopolitan intellectual discourse, which estranges them from their original intimate cultural discourse (Bose 45).

Tradition, Marriage, and the Reconfiguration of Gendered Subjectivity:

Kapur's narrative showcases a pronounced conflict between women's education and their marriageability. The emergence of 'difficult daughters' results from their getting educated and thus refusing to conform to the roles that social institutions and, in this case, the family prepare women for, disrupting the marriage market (Rajan 103). Here, education serves both as a weapon and a stigma. Lahiri's presentation is quite uncertain. In diasporic communities, education often becomes a tool that ensures the preparedness of women for the marriage market, as "educated brides" aid in the facilitation of "educated grooms" (Koshy 92). Nonetheless,

The Language of Displacement: Linguistic Migration and Intellectual Identity:

A very important facet of the displaced mind is language. Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* acquires its aggression from the conflict that language introduces in the life of the dispossessed intellect. The story's character, an educated woman, received her education in English, a colonial language. The language itself is a sign of the clash between traditional and modern. The

protagonist's "intellect" is now speaking in the colonial tongue, alien and "other" in the "material colony" of native speech and practice (Kapur, *Difficult Daughters* 75). The struggle exists mostly within the character. However, internalised cultural displacement triggers a disconnect.

Lahiri uses self-translation and its challenges as the primary device to portray competing loyalties and conflicting locations in English. According to Bahri's wording, the characters' Moushumi plus the narrator's language of 'The Third plus Final Continent' are postnational cosmopolitanism. However, this cosmopolitanism implies the absence of a 'heart language,' a language of the heart, intimacy, and 'mother tongue'. Lahiri's dispossessed intellectuals must speak a foreign language as learned abroad. However, in their personal relationships, they remain mute, inarticulate, and "linguistically binational" and distance themselves from "the language of the heart." Educational migration encompasses the totality of experiences of culture translation and estrangement in linguistic migration.

The Failed Return: Permanence of Displacement:

Kapur and Lahiri's text deals with the theme of the failed return. The idea is that once the woman is educated and displaced, there can be no longer reintegration into the space. For example, Virmati's failure and social exile after her return from abroad mark a break with her family. She finds herself unable to completely re-assimilate into her family. Lahiri's diasporic characters frequently make return journeys to India, yet these returns are temporary, and they return to America. Furthermore, the return journeys are often performances rather than returns or visits. Such patterns of temporary return and performative visits are revealed in the narratives, thereby highlighting the hybrid identities of the returnees.

Virmati's ability to think for herself makes her into "a ghost in the family"; the family exiles from the domesticity she occupies; this estrangement is neither reinstated nor reiterated; it is

always already there (Kapur 198). Because of the character's intellectual migration, her subjectivity has undergone an irreversible displacement, and the repercussions will last forever. The return visits of Lihari characters are performances that raise the question: "Return to where? "Revert or return?"

Theoretical Synthesis: Education, Gender, and Postcolonial Subjectivity:

The theoretical frameworks of Kapur and Lahiri are meritorious, the author says. For instance, Bhabha's concept of the third space demonstrates that the education of the individual, or of women, creates a hybrid space. Moreover, this space situates the individual, neither in the East nor the West. Instead, they find themselves in an intermediate position, a "where I live mypaced but not fixed; neither the one nor the other". The traditional or conservative - a displaced intellectual - is propelled to the third space because of his/her educational migrant status. (Bhabha 37) Nonetheless, this pressured hybridisation is exactly what creates the discordances and ambivalences in Tradition. It likewise questions the essentialized binary divisions of East/West, self/other, and tradition/modernity.

In the same way that Butler's concept of gender performativity explains how the education of self or of woman affects or disrupts the gendered role assigned by society. According to Butler, an educated female is a subject who performs a subversive gendered act that destabilises gender and proves gender is a construct, multiple and not binary (Butler 25). In a similar vein, Said's notion of exile aptly addresses the politics of dislocation, alienation, and loneliness of the intellectual migrant (Said 173)—as does Spivak's.

Conclusion:

An analysis of Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and *Interpreter of Maladies* shows that educational displacement functions as both a rupture and a repressive agent in the construction of female subjectivity. The various diasporas: nationalism,

culture, and identity, edited by Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, uses the umbrella term 'Diaspora'. The Diaspora has now become so common that scholars research from a variety of angles, and the authors of this work have taken the same approach, examining Diaspora from identity, national, and cultural viewpoints. Morey and Yaqin open the book with a brief introduction to the subject and a discussion of what other authors cover in their texts.

Through their education, South Asian women become permanently displaced intellectually, culturally, and emotionally, at the same time as unsettling the certainties of their indigenous patriarchal and patriarchal context. The term displaced intellect in this sense applies to them. The intellectual manqués in respect of this text, then, are the displaced intellectuals. They are the ones who have become scorched in intellect. A defeat that destroys their intellectual dying. Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* foregrounds the domestic impact of education on the female body while taking the frame of internal/intranational displacement—Kapur's.

The phrase "displaced intellect" not only highlights the cost of intellectual migration but also demonstrates how women assert control over their own identities through knowledge, at the cost of belonging. The fact that both stories conclude not with a formulaic ending, but with the assertion of intellectual autonomy and dignity, is of great significance. Accordingly, this intellectual exile becomes permanent, displacing identities and necessitating continuous redefinition. The parochial set-up of transnational co-ordinates is one of the striking features of globalization. They subsequently become displaced intellectual personalities. The postcolonial feminist writings of Kapur and Lahiri thus foreground education as a gendered site of contestation, situating it from a postcolonial feminist perspective.

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