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Challenging the Stereotypical Beliefs and Conservative Thoughts of Society from Natal, National and International spaces in Kavita Daswani's *the Village Bride of Beverly Hills*

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Abstract

Kavita Daswani is a contemporary Indian Diaspora writer who presents the diasporic predicaments of her female protagonists who shift from one geographical place to another to occupy varied spaces. The writer draws various traditional, cultural, religious, and social aspects that represent Indian society. Her female protagonists struggle to acquire the places in and out of their natal space. They try to assimilate and adapt the host culture but the indecency of cultural and traditional values of male- oriented society suppresses them and denies them to occupy their spaces. Kavita Daswani shows how her female protagonists are bold and strong enough to break the stereotypical beliefs and conservative thoughts of society in native national and international spaces. They create their own space to stand against male domination and attempt to search for their identity, individuality, freedom, and space. Also, she throws light on the characters' multicultural identities, cultural conflicts, displacement, assimilation, and the migration that they face in their natal, national, and international space. Her female characters move into the various spaces while crossing the different geographical boundaries to create their own existence on their own but somewhere, due to the cultural, traditional, social, and religious obligations they face many problems to create their own spaces.

Key Words: *Indian Diaspora, diasporic predicaments, native, national and international spaces, geographical boundaries, stereotypical beliefs etc.*

Introduction

Kavita Daswani's *The Village Bride of Beverly Hills* is published in 2004, set in two countries, India and the United States, focuses on the issues of migration, identity, cultural conflict, assimilation, and marriage. Daswani settles down in Los Angeles, in international space but her roots are still there in her native space Mumbai, India. She faces multicultural issues in her life since she belongs to India, grows up in Hong Kong, and settled in Los Angelis. She starts her writing career at the age of seventeen and focuses on the various issues of social, cultural, economic, ethnic, and religious problems of the characters' spatial journey. Priya, the protagonist of the novel who is a charming, enthusiastic, trustworthy and straightforward girl of marriageable age. She struggles to maintain the social, cultural, ethnic, religious, familial, and domestic spaces in her spatial journey begins from her natal to international values. Being an Indian, she follows all the norms and traditions of Indian culture. In traditional Indian society women are supposed to do the spatial duties such as in their pre-marital space, they have to serve their father and brothers and later in post-marital space their husband and sons.

Kavita Daswani explores intensively the use of domestic space in the present novel and also shows how domestic space illuminates the major concerns of human geography. In the social processes of human geography, space and place play vital roles to make social change in one's journey. Also, culture plays a pivotal role in the spatial journey of characters' life when they shift from one place to another for any specific purpose. The cultural aspects and traditional values affect the spaces of the individual and create complexities in their spatial life journey. Also, she explores the distressed consciousness of her women subjects whose world is confined with different spatial markers such as homes, kitchens, gardens, courtyards, and the like. Further, the writer focuses on the issues of alienation, exile, displacement, multiculturalism, loneliness, unsettlement, homesickness, nostalgia, identity crisis, and cultural conflicts.

Additionally, she tackles the diasporic experiences of her protagonists who leave in their native space and shift in international space to pursue their careers as independent human beings rather than women. She tries to reflect her female characters intensive passion, love, and urge for their native culture and tradition. Further, she shows how her female characters are entrapped in multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-national backgrounds in national and international spaces.

She throws light upon the female characters' complicated journey from various cultural, social, political, ethnic, and religious intricacies. Her female protagonists experience the loss of identity and fail to acquire spaces to live a comfortable life without the burden of socio-cultural obligations of the traditional society. They face the issues of multiple identities and spaces on their way to get the proper place in the male dominated society.

She focuses on the issue of complexities in marital life. Priya, the protagonist of the novel, moves to Los Angeles, in international space after her marriage. But, her traditional and conventional in-laws family put the various cultural and traditional obligations to her though they live in an alien country. They expect from her that she must play the traditional daughter-in- law's role. But she creates her own existences in international space while occupying the position of receptionists to a reporter in the Hollywood glossy gossip magazine. She plays both the roles simultaneously; the role of professional life and the traditional housewife's role to maintain the tradition and culture of her in-law's family. Rejecting the compulsions and atrocities of her in-laws, Priya comes backs to India to stay away from the discomforts of the marital spaces. Sanjay follows her and finally, acknowledges her trauma as a human being.

Kavita Daswani examines how Priya becomes a victim of arrange marriage. She occupies the responsibilities of the conjugal space to maintain the social and cultural space of her parent's family since her parents advocate the norms of socio-cultural values conventionally. Their living in a conservative space make them more orthodox which become a cause of heavy burden on their daughters' life. As per the tradition of cultural cues of Indian society, marriage occupies a great place for girls since it is a spatial tradition that is carried out for generations which becomes a major instance that shifts the girl and her life from space to the other. In the traditional Indian society, marrying off the daughter, as early as possible, is a matter of great concern for every father, as per the ritual in the Indian society. In the case of Priya, the same thing happens as she is pushed into the well of an early arranged marriage with Sanjay, a fellow from her natal place but he who is in Beverly since his childhood. Being a part of an arranged marriage, it is considered in India, women are generally exploited in their spaces by their in-laws as a part of eastern culture and familial domination. Priya, after shifting from India to the United States suffers in international space more than her native space.

Generally, women face many issues related to their spaces after shifting from one place to another for a specific purpose. When they shift from natal space to international space, they face problems regarding their spatial identity, culture, language and food. Though they are educated and with greater potential, the parochial normative canons of society do not allow them to break these norms easily. Generally, it is evident that Indian women accept the roles and duties assigned to them in the post marital phase. There are two places in their life; the place where they are born and another place where they shift after marriage. But they struggle to acquire the spaces that need to live their lives and to get equal status in society.

After marriage, Priya leaves for California, in international space with her husband, Sanjay. She tries to manage every odd that comes in her way in adjusting herself with the new family along with all the cultural and traditional values. She manages both personal and private spaces in performing her role, as a daughter-in-law in the new family. Though her in-law's family lives in the United States, it follows the rigors of Indian culture and ethnicity rigidly in order to maintain their cultural entity in the host nation. She attempts to adapt and assimilate into the foreign culture but she fails to do the same because of the spatial cultural values and the limitation in her familial space. Her mother-in-law always stands before her as a barrier in her spatial world of glamour. She is the biggest obstacle for Priya to acquire her space to live her life smoothly. She constantly reminds and complaints Priya that she has not made her a grandmother yet and at the same time suggests and insists her to join any workforce "America is expensive" …"This is not India. In this country, everybody works." (Daswani 1) Priya never thinks about the offer given by her mother-in-law, though she is a newlywed and gets a space to think, to go out to search for a good job. She is the first woman in her family and even in her generation of women, who become a job holder, showing intrepid, dauntless examples of women's position and space to be independent and empowered.

Priya feels the United States is a strange country because of her sudden shift in international space after marrying Sanjay but she is not much familiarized with the space of Sanjay and his parents. However, the strangeness of international space and equally the strangeness of Sanjay and his family add to her confusion, aloofness and frustration. Priya attempts her best to save the socio-cultural space wherein she has to live with them. Priya has to face all the challenges in a familial space of playing the most important role of spatial familial duties like cooking, housekeeping, and many other duties and culinary practices that come along with her new position as a new bride, wife, and dutiful daughter-in-law. On the contrary, her pre-marital life is happy and satisfactory. In her native, Priya finds no female entering public space by doing any kind of job. Women prefer to be at home, performing their duties of caring and nurturing the family. Though in her parental home, she occupies a free space her parents never give her a chance to explore her space to know much about the external world. She expresses:

Whether by design or circumstance, my parents had never shown my sisters and me much of the world. To them, there was enough to see and do in India without having to explore what lay beyond the borders of our homeland. (Daswani 2)

Priya's parents belong to a conservative family and follow the traditional and conventional thoughts of society. Their conventional background compels them to restrict the freedom and individuality of their daughters. They fail to provide free space for their daughters to see the world outside. They think that crossing the boundaries and spatial geographical locations can create difficulties and hence they limit the spaces of their daughters. They constantly face

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the challenge of searching for suitable grooms for their daughters in their community. Being more conventional, they keep themselves under a pressure to maintain the respectability of their tradition and culture space.

Thus, Priya gets exposure to create her own space in the open American culture where she finds a free place of freedom that enables her to acquire a new identity and space. She finds a way to go beyond the barrier of conventional, old traditions, customs, and beliefs of her natal place. Her change, in her personality and occupying a good position at her workplace, creates a space of confidence and courage to handle all the problems that come in her personal space. In international space, she creates her own separate identity while breaking all the stereotypical concerns of a traditional Hindu housewife into a successful reporter. Finally, she breaks all the cultural norms of society and returns to her parental home. Daswani observes the resistance of Priya against the traditional institution of marriage where she experiences the loss of her identity and space. In international space, she is locked in the confined space in her in-law's home, but she creates her own space to escape from such a confined cage of familial dominance.

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Conflicts of interest

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