



A STUDY OF HYBRID IDENTITY AND COMPLEX CULTURAL JOURNEY FROM LOCAL TO INTERNATIONAL SPACE IN KAVITA DASWANI'S SALAAM PARIS

KAUMUDI SANJAY PAWAR

Lecturer in English,
Government Polytechnic,
Mumbai (MS) INDIA

ABSTRACT

The present paper attempts to discover Tanaya's hybrid identity and multifaceted cultural journey from her homeland to a foreign land. She crosses the different geographical boundaries that create the complicated spaces in her life. Her culture, at her natal space, represents the values of conventional, traditional, and religious old beliefs that are different from that of international space. Her shift in space, acquires and assimilates the new culture in international space, and decides to enter into a space of professional life of modeling. Her entering into the spatial environment of the world of fashion is against her ritual, culture, religion, tradition, and social norms in her natal space. She, in her feminine space, disobeys her grandfather's conditioned and socially and culturally filled rules. She keeps herself away from her grandfather's socio-cultural practices to create her individual space in society. She shatters the cultural as well as familial values and leaves an international space to complete her desire.

Tanaya's journey from east to west suggests her yearn to acquire something challenging to make life meaningful. She struggles to acquire her space to create her spatial world away from the socio-cultural and religious obligations. She moves from different geographical locations through different cultural communities to search for her identity and space. In her feminine space, she decides to take a heavier step to cross the national and international borders to enter the world of glamor. If she does not try to shift herself from one place to another, she may keep herself remained in the same constrained place where social status and cultural values give more importance rather than the feelings of human beings.

KAUMUDI SANJAY PAWAR

27 Page



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I INTRODUCTION

Salaam Paris (2007), explores the complicated journey of a young Muslim girl, Tanaya Shah, who is a beautiful, charming, sincere, enthusiastic girl, from an orthodox, and conservative Muslim family in Mahim, a southern suburb of Mumbai. She spends her childhood under the conservative thinking of her grandfather. The culture of the Muslim religion constrains her to live secondary place in her family as she is taught by her family members to occupy a subordinate position in a male domineering society. Tanaya is confined in the traditional stereotypical role of an ordinary human being, in her natal place, Mahim. Being born in a traditional Muslim family, she feels suffocated under the conventional and religious values of society and the age-old beliefs of her grandfather. She decides to move into international space to accomplish her desired goal but due to varied cultural clashes, she becomes nostalgic about her natal culture and space and moves back from international space to her native.

Tanaya's mother is disowned by her father because of her ugly face as in the Muslim religion most of the women are recognized for their beautiful and good-looking faces. Tanaya's great grandmother named, Sundari is a beautiful woman with a charming face, her daughter, Tanaya's grandmother is considered as a "lustrous beauty". Gaura her aunt is known for her "fair skin" and Sohalia is known as a "moon river". These women from her family are the winners of Miss Muslim contest. These are the beautiful women in her family are graced with names that signify attractive facial look who acquire their own spaces except her mother. Her father denies the space of her mother and disowns her only two months after their marriage because of her unattractive and unsatisfactory facial look.

Tanaya yearns to see the glamorous world outside the confined cage of her grandfather's conventional environment at Mahim. Though her grandfather nurtures her like his own daughter, he forbids her to live freely outside the home. He refuses her to use the public bus when she goes to school because of the body gazing and flesh pinching in the crowd by the male is usually unbearding to the ordinary women. He uses a private auto-rickshaw to drop her for the sake of her safety. He reminds her that she is young and should not cross the boundaries of social, religious, and cultural limitations. He warns her:

"You are a young woman now,"...You have nothing else to offer expect the face that Allah has blessed you with. Men of poor mortal standing will start to think things when they see you. I believe it is time to settle your mind on the only role you have in this world: a pretty and quite wife and a devoted mother. Remember that, and you will always be happy. (Daswani 5)



Tanya receives such utmost respect and intensive love from her grandfather but his conventional thinking and religious upbringing lead her to escape from her natal space to international space. In her grandfather's house, she suffers from the suffocative environment of her grandfather's conservative rules. Though she is brought up in such an orthodox family she has a strong impact on the western culture and lifestyle. She, along with her best friend Nilu, in their private space, always read, the copies of the famous magazine Teen Cosmo that lead them to think to go to Paris, her dreamland. Her friend, Nilu reminds her about her beauty that, "You know Tanaya, you are as pretty as this girls." (Daswani 6) Also, she boosts her confidence by saying that she can easily capture the world outside and make a famous personality like Hollywood actresses. Also, Tanaya dreams to go abroad in international space to create her universe in modelling. She wants to escape from the confined space of her grandfather's dominating and oppressive behavior.

Tanaya fights to acquire the space that provides her freedom and liberty to live freely as per her wish. Audrey Hepburn gives her new life to extend her space to live a more comfortable life. She gets mesmerized by the western culture after watching Sabrina. Tanaya decides to be involved in the splendid world of her dream to experience the Sabrina moment. She gets influenced by the words in the letter of Sabrina to her father, "I have learned how to live, how to be in the world and of the world, and not just to stand aside and watch." (Daswani 10) Sabrina's words boost her confidence to go to Paris. Fortunately, her grandfather finds a marriage proposal from Paris where his old classmate approaches him for his grandson. Initially, Tanaya denies the proposal and tries to protest herself, "But Nana, I am only nineteen. I think I'm too young,"... "I have just finished my studies. Please, allow me to wait for a while." (Daswani 12) But, when she comes to know that her marriage proposal is from Paris, she accepts the same very enthusiastically.

Tanaya gets a chance to enter the place where she desperately needs to go to frame her future. She, in her personal space, seizes the chance to pursue her grandfather's mind to send her to Paris before her marriage to know the geographical location of the place. But, as per the status of the traditional and religious norms of the society, her grandfather denies her to enter the space of alien land before marriage. He sticks to his opinion that the boy will come here to see her in her natal space. He accuses her generation as she demands him to go to an international space to see her future husband. He considers it as the idiocy of youth who are not following the rules and norms of socio-cultural and religious spaces. He forces Tanaya to marry him without going to his place before marriage. He expresses his opinion to his sister, Mina who is residing in Paris, about the new generation, when he allows Tanaya to go to Paris, he says, "She wants to come to Paris to see the boy. The marriage will take place, but she is being most stubborn."... "As you know, young people today are different from our day. They don't respect their elders." (Daswani 14-15) Further, with lots of limitations, he sends Tanaya to Paris the spatial place where she decides to create her existence.



Tanaya wants to create her own space to complete her desire but due to familial, cultural, and religious obligations, she fails to achieve it in time. But, when she gets an opportunity, in the form of her marriage, she grabs it and shifts herself from her natal space to international space. She agrees to the marriage proposal not for actually marrying the boy, Tariq Khan, but for entering her dreamland. After the successful arrival in Paris, she feels enchanting and at the same time strange in the new geographical place. She sees many new things and feels overwhelmed but experiences the aloneness in the huge crowd of foreigners. She finds happiness on her face as she gets a chance to enter her desired destination that causes her shift in space. She feels the touch of new land and compares her homeland, “Compared to Mumbai's dry, dusty heat, the Paris air felt chilly on my face.” (Daswani 17)

In Paris, though in international space, she faces gender discrimination as she is supposed to call Tariq Khan first but not he, as it is against the protocol. Her grandfather instructs her to call him first as soon as she reaches Paris. She even loses her expectation about the new atmosphere in international space because she finds that her aunt's house is located in a crowded place on a narrow and congested floor instead of her, “visions of grand halls and curved, polished wooden staircase.” (Daswani 19) Initially, in Paris in international space, she feels a sense of alienation and gets discouraged by the new advanced environment. She gets confused in an alien land and loses her courage, confidence, and space. She says, “But I did not have the courage to enter a store and buy a bottle of water, not knowing how to ask for what I needed, and worried about every euro I would have to spend.” (Daswani 20) She is also tortured by her aunt in various ways and constantly denies her space in her own house. She forces her to leave the place because her daughter Shazia is coming to look after her.

As Doreen Massey, in her most acclaimed book, *Space, Place, and Gender*, explores the changing concepts of place and space in the socio-cultural, spatial, and religious upheavals through the character spatial shift from one geographical place to another. She further, suggests that crossing the geographical, social, cultural, and religious boundaries create the nostalgic longings in the character's mind towards their native place. Tanaya feels a sense of nostalgia about her land, her country, her natal space, and her grandfather who sends her to an alien country for a specific purpose. She is quite aware of her purpose but she needs to complete her motto for that she leaves her natal place. In her personal space, she feels awkward that she deceives her grandfather for the sake of fulfilling her dream. She reveals, “I know I should have been ashamed of myself for misleading them like this, promising one outcome only so I could achieve another.” (Daswani 21) Tanaya wants to achieve her goal while living in Paris-the fashionable, beautiful vibrant place in the world. She tries to create her personal space to live independently in international space. Eventually, fate brings her to a turn where she occupies a space of her ‘self’ that helps her to become a famous fashion model. She becomes the first Muslim girl who acquires a top position in the fashion world.



Tanaya, as an Indian immigrant, migrates from her native space to international space, faces the sense of alienation, and experiences the place of refuge in a new geographical location. She suffers from the foreign society that leads her to bear the loss and rejection in a contradictory and unaccustomed socio-cultural environment. Her journey from India to Paris creates complexities in social concerns and cultural conflicts that keep her uncertain between two different places. She is caught between two different geographical locations, her world of belongingness and settlement that creates confusion in her life. Tanaya faces a challenging life in international space and struggles to create her existence away from the homeland. She is torn between the two different cultures; the culture of her own natal space and other culture from various other international spaces. As an immigrant, she comes up with a hybrid identity in a foreign land and hence compromises her life. She tries to assimilate with a new culture in international space for her comfort but her homesickness towards her natal space creates crisis in her life.

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