

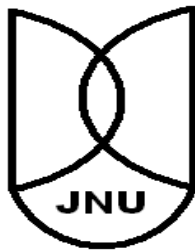
**Not Quite at Home: A Study of the House in Cotemporary
Indian English Fiction**

Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

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This Thesis titled “**Not Quite at Home: A Study of the House in Contemporary Indian English Fiction,**” submitted by me for the award of the Degree of doctor of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

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My journey into serious academics began with JNU, when I came here to do my MA. It turned out to be an intellectually invigorating experience that has stayed with me throughout. Coming back to JNU to do my PhD was nothing short of a homecoming for me. So my first thanks are due to all the teachers and friends at CES, for opening up a new world for me.

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INTRODUCTION

A fish does not know of water as long as he is in it, and the notion of home would not be seen as posing a problem as long as all is well in this realm. But not all is well and certainly not for all, not even the satiated and affluent among us. It seems as if the very means we as a human race have evolved to make our world habitable and to enable us to strive for goals beyond organisation – are now among the chief causes of a mere survival-- technology and labour- divisive social widespread sense of alienation, displacement, homelessness.¹

Home, as the opening quote suggests, must be one of the most invisible and taken for granted realities of life, except of course, for the homeless poor. The significance of home as an anchor of one's life, the place one returns to and sets forth in the world, is not only a commonplace experience, but has also engendered a vast body of literature across disciplines. A random Google search for quotations on 'home' reiterates notions of love and belonging, attachment and strong affection that are associated with the idea of home in popular imagination.² It is marked as the place that provides comfort, a 'shelter' from all kinds of storms, where one is free to laugh or cry without shyness.³ Going by some popular notions of home, as the place 'where the heart is' or 'home sweet home' etc., one realises that the idea of home tends to carry positive connotations, in popular imagination, a positivity that is also reflected in a large number of scholarly studies on 'home'. Yet, despite founding and living in homes that provide warmth and refuge, contemporary realities seem to have condemned most of us to a state of 'alienation' and 'homelessness,' contends Paul Tesar above. If this idea of 'home' jars with the common perception, it would do well to explore and examine, at first hand, the various notions and perceptions of home that obtain in the vast literature on the subject.

¹ Tesar, Paul. "Dreams of Home." *The Spirit of Home: Proceedings of the 74th Annual Meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 1986*. Washington, DC: Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture. 2006. Pp 74.

² To cite a few examples: Mother Teresa: "Love begins at home..."; Christian Morgenstern: "Home is not where you live, but where they understand you"; Goethe: "He is the happiest, be he king or peasant, who finds peace at home"; Henry Van Dyke: "Every house where love abides/And friendship is a guest,/ Is surely home, and home sweet home/ For there the heart can rest"

³ Jane Austen: "There is nothing like staying at home for real comfort;" Also, William J. Bennet: "Home is a shelter from storms- all sorts of storms" In the words of Vernon Baker, "Home is where the heart can laugh without shyness," and where "the heart's tears can dry at their own pace.

A house is ideally the space that one marks out as one that evokes a sense of belonging and security, surrounded by family and friends. The deep bonding one has for the home arguably comes not just from the people who make up the home, but the very house itself that often evokes warmth and fond memories. Yet, there is a tendency to take this place for granted, as no one delves into the role houses and homes play in the life of the inhabitants. Beyond being a shelter, not only does the house provide the space to engender familial bonding and nurture the inhabitant, it also helps shape the individual and give them an identity.

Extensive interdisciplinary and cross cultural studies of domestic space have drawn on architecture, anthropology, archaeology, sociology and ‘man-environment’ studies to establish a dynamic link between architecture and the use of built environments, and culture. “In architecture,” argues Roderick J Lawrence, “the relationship between building form, its use, its meaning and time is a transactional process between physical and affective factors.”⁴ Drawing upon contemporary theories of built space and space-use, this thesis examines the ‘house’ as ‘home’ in various narratives that can be categorised under the umbrella term ‘Indian Fiction in English,’ and explores the kind of relationships the characters have with the domestic space they inhabit. At the outset, it is pertinent to point out that the narratives selected for this study are largely stories of characters that belong to the so-called ‘middle-class,’ residing in fairly commonplace middle-class homes. Yet, if one were to read narratives of, for instance, the marginalised or the dispossessed poor, the trials and tribulations these middle-class characters seemingly endure ensconced as they are in materially comfortable houses, seem rather affected. However, before one delves into the dynamics of space use in the given narratives, this introduction intends to delineate the connections between architecture and culture - links that allow this thesis to tease out a fresh approach to reading fictional narratives as one of the abundant representations of culture.

Numerous studies of architecture and space use have pointed out the link between architecture and culture, as each is conditioned by, and conditions the other. On the basis of the interface of culture and architecture, this thesis explores the various facets of culture that the spatial analysis of the ‘house’ as depicted in fiction may reveal and reflect. To understand how theories of space can be used to study literature and correspondingly, culture, it would be

⁴Lawrence, Roderick J. “Public Collective and Private Space.” *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An Inter-disciplinary, Cross-Cultural Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1990. Pp78.

best to start by looking at the recent debates that reconfigure the older framework of temporality in favour of spatiality. The disciplines of anthropology and sociology have conventionally used the science of architecture as one of the methodological tools for arriving at a clearer understanding of human society and culture. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, “(a)rchitectural space ... can define sensation and render them vivid.” Also, Tuan further contends that “the built environment, like language, has the power to define and refine sensibility. It can sharpen and enlarge consciousness. Without architecture feelings about space must remain diffuse and fleeting.”⁵ Noted American geographer Edward W Soja recognizes the critical role of space in the conduct of society. In a 1984 essay entitled “The Spatiality of Social Life: Towards a Transformative Rethorization”, he contends that “(t)o be alive is to participate in the social production of space, to shape and be shaped by a constantly evolving spatiality which constitutes and concretizes social action and relationship.”⁶ Taking into account the symbiotic relationship that Soja traces between human society and built space, ‘built space’ is best seen both in terms of its materiality as well as an entity that is socially produced and consumed, an amenable tool to study human society. To map the field of spatial analysis at this preliminary stage of inquiry, one could turn to John Archers’ cogently titled article, “Social Theory of Space: Architecture and the Production of Self, Culture and Society”. He contends that “(i)nquiries into that complex instrumentality of built space have been ongoing in many disciplines since the beginning of the twentieth century, with consequences that have become critical to the pursuit and understanding of architectural history.”⁷

If ‘culture’ is loosely defined as a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviour and artefacts, it would be interesting to see how, if at all, is built space related to culture. It is this interrelation that Susan Kent highlights in her introduction to a collection of essays entitled *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An Interdisciplinary Cross-Cultural Study*(1990). She contends that although the different authors may be at variance over which aspect of culture influences architecture and the use of space, all of them reiterate that some component of culture is the most important variable that influences architecture. Clearly then,

⁵Tuan, Yi-Fu. “Architectural Spaces and Awareness.” *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives on Modern Domestic Architecture*, edited by Barbara M. Lane. London: Routledge, 2007. Pp 78-9.

⁶ Soja, E.W. “The Spatiality of Social Life: Towards a Transformative Rethorisation.” *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, edited by Gregory D. and J. Urry. Handmills, Basingstoke: MacMillan. Pp 90.

⁷ Archer, J. “Social Theory of Space: Architecture and the Production of the Self, Culture and Society.” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. 64 No. 4 (Dec. 2005) Pp 430-433. Pp 430. .

a study of architecture and the use of space could be used as a means to analyze a given culture. Taking a cue from Kent, this thesis draws upon the vast empirical and theoretical research on domestic space, house and home, from fields as diverse as Architecture to Archaeology, Philosophy to Environmental Psychology, Geography to Sociology and Anthropology to Culture Studies. This vast body of literature proves to be a valuable resource to analyse domestic space in fiction, to examine not only the dynamics of space use, but also the meanings of 'home' and 'belongingness.'

"Home," according to Roderick J. Lawrence, "evokes a wide range of divergent images and concepts which reflect its multidimensional nature. The meanings and uses of home, like that of housing, are not only complex and elusive, but they vary from person to person, between social groups in the same society, across cultures and during the course of time."⁸ Thus, 'home', 'house' and 'dwelling,' are three words that variously evoke notions of rest and repose, of nurturance and family. It would be impossible to define 'home' in its entirety, as the complexity of the notion is belied by the fact of it being a commonplace reality and experience for most of us, if not all. The 'house' one lives in may or may not feel like 'home' to some, yet this may be the 'place' they like to 'dwell' in, a place where they 'feel-at-home.' The 'house' may be made of brick and mortar, but its four walls embody deep felt emotions and feelings, reflected in the sense of attachment, identification, or even pride one harbours for 'home,' as even a random survey is sure to reveal. Further, the house may variously be seen as a microcosm of society and culture, the locus of interconnections in a global world, the material symbol of everyday life, an amalgamation of influences in a mediated world, and so on.⁹ Just as the home can mean so many things to different people, a study of the house is also open to a range of approaches across disciplines that can help unravel its many layers. The house is then a 'space,' made into a meaningful 'place' by bringing together four walls and a roof, demarcating the space within by walls that mark off rooms meant for different functions. It is of interest not just to the architect, but also the geographer who wishes to explore the relationship between space, place and the inhabitant. Moreover, the house is filled with utilities and objects that may have functional value, use value or aesthetic value, each of which may be reflective of a milieu, culture and the society it comes from. The material

⁸ Lawrence, R.J. "The Meaning and Use of Home: It's Interior." *The Meaning and Use of Housing: International Perspectives, Approaches and Their Applications*, Ethnoscapes: Current Challenges in the Environmental Social Sciences, Vol 7, Series Editors: David Canter and David Stea. Aldershot: Avebury Ashgate Publishing Limited. 1993. Pp73.

⁹ Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence Zuniga map out anthropological concepts vis-a-vis home, house and family. "Introduction: Houses and Families in Europe." *House Life: Space, Place and Family in Europe*, edited by Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence Zuniga. Oxford: Berg. 1999. Pp 1-35.

culture that it represents would in itself be of interest to not just the anthropologist but also the sociologist or even the historian, among others. Again, a house is meant for people to live in, as members of a family or household, or it could even be 'home' to a single person.¹⁰ The 'house' can be thus a rich site or text for the sociologist or psychologist, or any scholar keen to study human society. It is arguably demarcated as the 'private' space, in contrast to the world outside as the 'public space.'¹¹ Also, notions of private and public bring into play the notion of gender, as the 'house,' feminist scholars point out, is also seen as the 'container of women.'¹² Essentially, the blurring of boundaries across disciplines would go a long way in grasping the varied hues of house and home, to unravel what the dynamics of space use can reveal. In effect, this thesis follows the 'dwelling perspective,' as opposed to the 'building perspective,' a concept coined by Tim Ingold in the course of his explorations of the relationship between people and the environment. He contends that "it is through being lived in, rather than through having been constructed along some lines of formal design, that the world becomes a meaningful environment."¹³

To begin with, the introduction briefly outlines the basis of its study of the house and home drawn primarily from the work of "environment-behavior" researchers ranging from social, environmental, and developmental psychologists, sociologists, geographers, and anthropologists, to research-oriented architects, landscape architects, and planners. However, a brief review of the relevant literature that follows reveals that these disciplines tend to have porous boundaries that seemingly encroach into diverse fields. Thus, this thesis finds that the study of 'space' and 'place' under geography leads to an examination of the 'place' of greatest significance to people, the 'home.' Architecture plays an obviously significant role in creating the structures that house us, yet the import of the edifice it builds encompasses not just material value, but a symbolic value as well. Norberg-Schulz, for instance, approaches architecture through phenomenology to examine its psychic implications. Also, human behaviour and environment arguably have a symbiotic relationship, and it is the built

¹⁰ Peter Saunders and Peter Williams contend that members of a household may or may not be related, thus redefining 'home' as the abode not just of 'family' but any other social group or individual. "The Constitution of Home: Towards a Research Agenda." *Housing Studies* 3. Issue 2 (2007): Pp 81-93.. Pp 82.

¹¹ Philippe Aries observes that it was only as recent as the eighteenth century that the notions of domesticity, privacy, and isolation found shape within the precincts of the 'family home,' in P Aries' *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*(1962).

¹² Linda MacDowell points out how women were encouraged or sometimes forced to identify with and restrict themselves to the home. "Home, Place and Identity." *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 1999.Pp 75.

¹³ Ingold, Tim."Building, Dwelling, Living: How Animals and People Make Themselves at Home in the World..*Practicing Culture, Cultural Geography: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences*, edited by N.Thrift and S. Whatmore.Vol 2.London: Routledge. Pp 268.

environment in general and the house in particular that has sparked a range of studies by environmental psychologists. This multi- and inter-disciplinarity only enriches the scholar's understanding even as it explores the complexities imbued in the notions of 'house' and 'home.' Subsequently, the introduction maps some of the debates that the notions of 'house' and 'home' have evoked across disciplines, and identifies the aspects that are of particular relevance to the thesis.

'Cultural Geographies,' as the editors of a critical dictionary of key concepts of the discipline try to impress upon the reader, variously engage with and challenge core geographical categories such as space and place, landscape and environment, etc. The importance of 'Cultural Geography,' they contend, lies in the way it explores "how social groups engage with their landscapes, how people construct and make sense of their places and spaces."¹⁴ In an introductory essay on 'Space' and 'Place,' Phil Hubbard alerts us to the complexities of the seemingly commonplace and 'self-explanatory' concepts. "(T)hey have been (and remain)," he argues, "two of the most diffused, ill-defined and inchoate concepts in the social sciences and humanities."¹⁵ He goes on to chart out two distinct approaches that human geographers tend to follow in their study of 'space' and 'place.' Thus, humanistic geographers tend to focus on the 'sense of place' in different settings, while Marxist and materialist accounts lay emphasis on space "as socially produced and consumed."¹⁶ While initially, 'space' was looked upon as the 'surface' on which social life was played out, the historical and geographical materialism of the 1970s turned the focus to a view that looked upon space as 'implicated' in social relations, "both socially produced and consumed."¹⁷ Lefebvre, for instance, proposed a "trialectics of spatiality that explores the entwining of cultural practices, representations and imaginations."¹⁸ In Lefebvre's reading then, Hubbard elaborates, 'place' is the particular form of space that may be created through naming, or typical 'activities' and 'imaginings' associated with particular social spaces.

To put the debate between definitions of 'space' and 'place,' this thesis concurs with Casey's contention that the two entities are beyond any simple or direct comparison as they

¹⁴ Atkinson, David, et al. "Editor's Preface: On Cultural and Critical Geographies." *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*, edited by David Atkinson et al. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2007. Rept. of *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*. London: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd. 2005. Pp vii-xviii. Pp xv.

¹⁵ Hubbard, Phil. "Space/Place." *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*, edited by David Atkinson, et al. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2007. Pp 41-48. Pp 41. .

¹⁶ ---. "Space/Place." 2005. Pp 41.

¹⁷ ---. "Space/Place." 2005. Pp 42.

¹⁸ ---. "Space/Place." 2005. Pp 42.

are a part of two different orders of reality.¹⁹ Drawing upon the Cartesian principle, he argues, the Modernist view eschewed any connection between ‘place’ and ‘self.’ However, according to Casey, the late Modern or the Postmodern thought contests the dichotomy between the physical and personal identity: “place and self help construct and activate each other.”²⁰ Moreover, the concept of ‘place’ is a valuable tool for the present study, as it provides a theoretical basis for addressing the relationship between people and the external world.²¹

However, it is the contrasting approach that humanist geographers take by shifting the focus from ‘social space’ to ‘lived space,’ that is of particular interest to the thesis, for, if nothing else, the ‘house’ is the most intimately experienced ‘lived space’. It is, as Hubbard points out, a shift from the ‘people-less geographies of positivist spatial science’ to an approach that draws upon the philosophies of existentialism and phenomenology. Hubbard highlights the work of two humanist geographers in particular, Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph, who have been influential in drawing out the aesthetic, emotional and human-centred dimensions of place. Tuan, for instance, talks about the emotional attachment people have with places, arguing that ‘undifferentiated space’ becomes ‘place’ as one gets to know it better, and bestow value upon it.²² Edward Relph, Hubbard points out, valorises ‘rootedness’ and ‘belongingness’ through his empathetic and human centred understanding of place that is experienced as a lived reality. The humanist approach to place that foregrounds notions such as ‘attachment’ and ‘rootedness’ to place are of particular relevance to this thesis. Their work is germane to an understanding of the ‘house’ as a significant ‘place,’ and will be used as an entrée point into this thesis’ understanding of ‘domestic space.’

In an essay on ‘Place,’ Patricia L. Price draws out the various ways in which ‘place’ is seen as that created through human intervention in ‘space,’ or else as an entity ‘produced’ out of ‘space’ that exists.²³ She also goes on to throw light on various approaches to ‘space’ and ‘place’ through the discourse of modernity and globalisation. While geographers with Marxist leanings would explore labour, capital and the production of place in their work, humanist geographers examine the humanistic aspect of place. Since the present thesis is concerned

¹⁹ Casey, E. S. “Body, Self and Landscape: A Geophilosophical Inquiry into the Place-World.” *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* by P.C. Adams et. al. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. Pp 403-419. Pp 404.

²⁰ ---. Casey. “Body, Self, and Landscape.” 2001. Pp 414-416..

²¹ Easthope, H. “A Place Called Home.” *Housing and Society* 21. Issue3 (2004): pp128-138.

²² Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. London: Edward Arnold Ltd. 1977. Pp 6.

²³ Price, Patricia, L. “Place.” *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*, edited by Nuala C. Johnson et al. Malden, MA: John Wiley and Sons. 2013. Pp 120.

with the 'house' as meaningful place in human experience, it will only focus on the work of humanistic scholars who, as Price puts it, have posited 'place-awareness', 'place attachment' and 'place-making' as central activities of the human condition. The words of humanist geographer Edward Relph are pertinent to the thesis: "To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and to know *your* place (italics in original)."»²⁴

Price's self-confessed leanings towards humanistic geography ensure that the essay explores this aspect of 'place' in more detail. What is of the greatest interest and relevance to the thesis is Price's delineation of the emotional component to the relationship between person and place. She begins by talking about the deep attachment to place that is forged in childhood, before cultural mores condition individuals to practice 'socio-spatial distancing.' Yet, she argues, place-attachments deepen and strengthen with time. Price also brings up the notions of 'inside' versus 'outside,' in terms of belonging and exclusion that are connected with the notion of identity. "Thus, one of the most central emotional needs with respect to place is belonging; concomitantly, one of the most universally feared conditions is that of exclusion."»²⁵ Of all the places that human beings relate to, 'home' is arguably the site of one's most intimate relationship with place', and, she goes on to argue, one of the first that we experience:

Homes (places invested with meaning and experience) and houses (the physical structures within which most humans reside) frame the family dynamics that are so central to shaping us as adults.²⁶

Thus, the notions of place, place-making and place-attachment would be productive in examining the significance of 'homes' and 'houses.'

This thesis extensively draws upon research categorised under 'geography of emotions', 'phenomenology', 'gender and sexuality' and 'identity' to analyse the fictional narratives selected for this study.²⁷ The essay entitled 'Landscapes of Home,' in the reader *A Companion to Cultural Geography*(2004e)presents various approaches to explore one of the

²⁴Relph, E. *Place and PLacelessness*. London: Pion Ltd. 1976.Pp 1.

²⁵ Price, Patricia L. "Place." *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*, edited by N.C. Johnson, et al. .2013.Pp 125.

²⁶---. "Place.." *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*.2013..Pp 126.

²⁷Lambert, David and J S Duncan. "Landscapes of Home." *A Companion to Cultural Geography*, edited by J.S. Duncan, et al .Oxford: Blackwell.2004.Pp 382-403. These are some of the categories under which the idea of 'home' is explored in the essay.

‘most powerful and emotive’ concepts called home through the prism of geography.²⁸ This introduction presents a brief outlay of some of these ways of reading ‘home’ given in the above essay and highlights the readings that are pertinent to this thesis. Of the two approaches mentioned, that by ‘structural anthropologists’ and by ‘phenomenologists,’ this thesis prefers to look at the work of phenomenologists. Duncan and Lambert map out the phenomenological approach that draws upon from the work of Gaston Bachelard. Yi-Fu Tuan and Seamon and Mugerauer’s phenomenological work brings deep feelings of value and caring to the idea of home, according to the reviewers. They also categorise Bell Hooks under this approach for defining the home as a place of ‘warmth, caring and safety.’ One of the major shortcomings in the phenomenological approach foregrounded by the reviewers is the failure to recognise the politics of the domestic realm. They argue that the phenomenologist’s overarching simplifications ignore the politics of gender, race, and class within the home. The idea of home as sanctuary, a legacy of the nineteenth century romanticism, they point out, needs to be corrected by the feminist readings that alert the reader to the idea of home as a site of violence, especially against women and children. The next section in the essay is categorised as ‘Gender and Sexuality,’ where the complexity and fluidity of contested gender relations is brought up, most importantly in the home: “As a primary site of the transformation of gender relations, the home should be central to the study of the history of gender relations, work that must, of course, avoid reproducing the mind/body, public/private, and male/female set of dualisms.”²⁹ ‘Housing and Identity’ flags another important aspect of research on home, as the residential landscape is the primary site that evokes powerful sentiments, helps constitute family and community values and is crucial to forming place-based identities (Bourdieu, 1984; Duncan and Duncan, 1981; Miller 2001). An additional significant aspect of home is an exploration of the manner in which class identity is performed through objects in the home (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Bourdieu 1984). The essay also explores notions of ‘Transnational Homes and Communities’ and ‘Home and Empire’, aspects that are beyond the scope of this thesis.

The science of architecture is not just confined to bricks and mortar, but embodies a variety of meanings and values to human society. In the words of Juhani Pallasmaa, “(t)he ultimate meaning of any building is beyond architecture; it directs our consciousness back to the world

²⁸ ---. “Landscapes of Home.” *A Companion to Cultural Geography*. 2004. Pp 382.

²⁹ ---. “Landscapes of Home.” *A Companion to Cultural Geography*. 2004. Pp 385.

and towards our own sense of self and being.”³⁰ This thesis also draws upon the work of architects who have explored the meaning and significance of built space. In a philosophical essay on architecture, Juhani Pallasmaa, for instance, writes on the temporal dimension of existential space. He contends that the value of architectural structures goes beyond the functional, they also perform a significant existential and mental task: “they domesticate space for human occupation by turning anonymous, uniform and limitless space into distinct places of human significance. Equally importantly, they make endless time tolerable by giving duration its human measure.”³¹ The study of ‘domestic space’ in this thesis finds valuable inputs from the explorations into the meaning and use of architecture. For instance, Susan Kent, even as an archaeologist, believes that it is important to engage with ‘space’ and ‘architecture’³² Kent explores the variables that influence the relationship between architecture and use of space, positing that architecture creates boundaries out of ‘open’ space, and the type of boundary that is partitioned depends on the culture and time period it functions in. Thus, it could result in a ‘private’ space, or create an inside to an outside, a sacred-profane, and so on. Her collection of essays on ‘domestic space’ is valuable as they provide new ways to approach and analyse the dynamics of space use in the house. It is not so much the concurrence amongst the scholars whose work is listed, as the divergence of views that makes the collection interesting. Thus, if one writer considers architecture as structuring aspects of culture, other authors contend it to be the other way around. Essentially, Kent argues that “architecture is a reflection of behaviour or the use of space which, in turn, is a reflection of culture- in other words, they are not one and the same.”³³ The authors variously study how settings and cultural landscapes are a result of culture-specific and temporal-specific designs, or how economics and symbolism influence architecture and the organisation of space. Kent specifically singles out Roderick J. Lawrence’s theorem that can as well apply to other cultures. Lawrence contends that “the relationship between habitat and resident is dynamic or changeable....”³⁴ This inclusion of the variable of time is a valuable input in the relationship with space, as evidenced in, for instance, the analysis of the fictional narratives that follows. Also, Lawrence’s delineation on territoriality and boundary control,

³⁰Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. Preface by Steven Hall. West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons. 2005.Pp 11.

³¹---. “*Space, Place, Memory and Imagination: The Temporal Dimensions of Existential Space.*” in MacKeith, Peter, ed. *Encounters 2: Architectural Essays*. Finland: Rakennustieto Publishing., 2012.Pp 23-24.

³²Kent, S. *Domestic Architecture*. 1990. Pp 1.

³³---. *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S. Kent.1990.Pp 3.

³⁴ Lawrence, R.J., “*Public Collective and Private Space: A Study of Urban Housing in Switzerland.*” *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S.Kent 1990., Pp 78.

for instance, is an interesting way to look at the manner in which some characters try to control others by establishing boundaries. Another contributor to Kent's collection of essays Donley-Reid's proposal that "architecture plays an active role in structuring social hierarchies and creating power strategies" finds substance in various narratives.³⁵ Also, her contention that "objects are not neutral or passive backdrops for life, they also actively participate in creating and maintaining power relations" is a valuable tool for the analysis of fictional narratives in this thesis.³⁶

John Archer maps the theoretical exploration of 'space' across a range of phenomenologists such as Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, to the Marxist and structuralist analysis of Durkheim and Foucault in his cogently titled article, "Social Theory of Space: Architecture and the Production of Self, Culture and Society." The essay is valuable as it draws out the significance of phenomenological study of space as an approach to exploring architecture. He contends that "(i)nquiries into that complex instrumentality of built space have been ongoing in many disciplines since the beginning of the twentieth century, with consequences that have become critical to the pursuit and understanding of architectural history."³⁷

In *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory* (1997), Niel Leach brings together a collection of essays on architecture by key thinkers of the twentieth century. He defines architecture as the outcome of a way of thought. He divides the essays under five different approaches to architecture, viz., Modernism, Phenomenology, Structuralism, Postmodernism and Poststructuralism. This thesis will only draw upon some of the essays categorised under Phenomenology. The essays under 'Phenomenology' address "humankind's situatedness in the world, and focus on the depthlessness of human existence."³⁸ Further, Leach contends that phenomenology "demands a receptivity to the full ontological potential of human experience."³⁹ A phenomenological engagement with architecture, he adds, not only requires a sensory understanding, but also a 'potential revelation of some truth.' These writers, he points out, do not look upon space as an abstract, neutral entity, but as 'lived

³⁵ Donley-Reid, Linda W., "A Structuring Structure: the Swahili House." *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S. Kent 1990. Pp 115.

³⁶ ---, "A Structuring Structure." *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S. Kent. Pp 115.

³⁷ Archer, John., "Social Theory of Space: Architecture and the Production of Self, Culture, and Society," in *Journal of Society of Architectural Historians*, 64, No.4, (December 2005), Pp 430-433; Pp 430. accessed on 19/07/2012.

³⁸ Leach, Neil. Introduction. *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge. 1997. Pp xv.

³⁹ ---. "Phenomenology." *Rethinking Architecture*. 1997. Pp 83.

experience.’ Among the phenomenologists whose explorations Neil Leach includes in his *Reader*, this thesis focuses on the work of Gaston Bachelard and Martin Heidegger.

The phenomenological approach to architecture is a valuable tool to unravel the meaning and significance of built space, particularly domestic space, as the work of Gaston Bachelard reiterates. Bachelard, the phenomenologist of ‘intimate spaces’ considers the ‘house’ as a privileged entity for phenomenological study of the intimate values of ‘inside space.’ Bachelard is vociferous in propagating the significance and value of the house in one’s life. It is, he contends, “our corner of the world... our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word.”⁴⁰ Bachelard looks upon the house as an ‘oneiric space,’ one that contains one’s memories and allows one to dream. Before man is ‘cast’ into the world, he is ‘cradled’, argues Bachelard, by the house. In fact, he goes to the extent of positing that the house may well be taken as a “tool for analysis of the human soul.”⁴¹ Clearly, he is emphatic in reiterating the importance of one’s house, especially where one was born, the childhood home. Bachelard’s poetics of the house comes across as an idyllic, if not idealised cocoon enclosing people from the cares of the world. As a matter of fact, his work has been criticised for presenting a romanticised view of the house and home, especially by feminist scholars of domestic space, who contend that it is as important to look at the ‘politics’ of home, along with the ‘poetics.’⁴² Despite a rather essentialist view of ‘home,’ this thesis partakes Bachelard’s notion of the significance of home, or, what he terms as the ‘value of inhabited space.’⁴³

The notion of ‘dwelling’ is deeply imbricated in the notions of ‘house’ and ‘home.’ Perla Korosec-Serfaty chooses to examine the subjective experience of ‘dwelling’ in ‘home as place’ rather than quibble over notions of ‘house’ and ‘home.’ She expounds on the significance of a phenomenological approach to explore the experience of dwelling: “Phenomenology... describes those concrete phenomena that constitute the experience of the *incarnate subject*, meaning that the person’s apprehensions of the world is rooted and

⁴⁰ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*. Foreword by John R. Stilgoe, Boston: Beacon Press. 1994. Pp 40. Trsl by Maria Jolas. *La Poétique de L’Espace*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 1958 Web.

⁴¹ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. 1994. Pp 36.

⁴² Blunt, Alison and R. Dowling. Introduction. *Home: Key Words in Geography*. London: Routledge. 2006. Pp 12.

⁴³ Leach, Niel. “Bachelard: Poetics of Space, Abstract.” *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*. 1997. Pp 87.

articulated in his or her own spatiality.”⁴⁴ However, it is the work of Martin Heidegger that is crucial to an understanding of the notions of ‘house’ and ‘dwelling,’ for “man’s situatedness in the world is inextricably bound up with the question of dwelling.”⁴⁵ In *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*, Heidegger probes into the meaning of ‘buildings’ that ‘house’ man, as spaces that he ostensibly ‘inhabits,’ but need not necessarily ‘dwell’ in. The building may be the ‘domain’ of man’s dwelling, but it is not restricted to that domain. Heidegger cites the example of the truck driver who may well be ‘at home’ on the road. In fact, he questions the certainty that ‘houses’ ensure that ‘dwelling’ takes place within them.⁴⁶ Heidegger begins by delving into the etymology of the German word for building, ‘*Bauen*.’ “The Old English and High German word for building, *buan*,” he tells us, means to dwell. To Heidegger, ‘dwelling’ is not restricted to one kind of activity, that is, domestic life as opposed to work, etc, performed outside the house, but it entails a mode of being: “The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on earth, is *Buan*, dwelling.”⁴⁷ While contemporary usage of ‘*buan*’ has lost this meaning, Heidegger goes on to add, it retains the two modes of ‘building,’ as ‘cultivating,’ and ‘constructing.’ Heidegger’s concern, Tim Ingold points out, “is to regain the original perspective, so that we can once again understand how the activities of building – of cultivating and construction – belong to our dwelling in the world, to the way we are.”⁴⁸ Thus, according to Heidegger,

We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is because we are dwellers..... to build is in itself already to dwell.... *Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build*⁴⁹(sic).

⁴⁴Korosec-Serfaty, Perla.“Experience and Use of the Dwelling.”*Home Environments*, edited by Irwin Altman and Carol M. Werner. , Vol 8. New York: Springer Science +Business Media(Check for the plus sign).1985. Pp 66.

⁴⁵Leach, Neil.“Martin Heidegger: Building, Dwelling, Thinking, Abstract.” *Rethinking Architecture*..1997. Pp 98.

⁴⁶ Since ‘houses’ are places where most people, except the homeless poor live, this thesis problematizes the instance of ‘house’ as ‘home,’ looking at the quality and experience of ‘dwelling’ and the feeling of ‘at-homeness’ at home. It also examines the experience of being ‘homeless’ at ‘home,’ Or to put in other words, feeling ‘homeless’ even when they are not ‘houseless.’ However, since this thesis explores the domestic space in general, and the notions of ‘house’ and ‘home’ in particular, the thesis will delve into Heidegger’s exegesis on dwelling towards the end of the analysis. Of course, it is doubtful if the real homeless (as in houseless) can feel ‘at home’ anywhere, despite Heidegger’s romanticised notion of the possibility of feeling ‘at home’ elsewhere,, other than the domain of the dwelling.

⁴⁷Leach, Niel.“Martin Heidegger: Building Dwelling, Thinking, Abstract.” *Rethinking Architecture*. s1997. Pp 101.

⁴⁸ Ingold, Tim. “Building, Dwelling, Living..”*Practicing Cultural Geography: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences*, edited by Nigel Thrift and S. Whatmore.. London: Routledge, 2004. Pp 279.

⁴⁹Leach, Niel. “Martin Heidegger:Building Dwelling, Thinking, Abstract.”*Rethinking Architecture*..1997.Pp 108-109.

Ingold takes this to be the founding statement of the 'dwelling perspective' mentioned earlier, the perspective this thesis also follows in its exploration of the 'house', 'home' and 'dwelling.'

Mike Pearson and Colin Richards draw upon the work of philosophers such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard, to posit that one's relation to place consists in dwelling, going on to argue that "dwelling is the basic principle of existence."⁵⁰ While buildings are primarily meant to provide human beings with shelter and security from the elements and the wild, their function goes beyond the fulfilment of a pragmatic necessity. This is evident not only in lived experience of buildings and places, but has been explored through phenomenological readings of the built environment by architects and geographers, as Pearson and Richards point out. They go on to propound how 'space' is first conceived in the mind before it is built, and the resultant interface between people and the built environment is not static but dynamic. Gregory and Urry, for instance, use Giddens's structuration theory to argue that spatial structure can no longer be seen as a passive site for human action, but as "a medium through which social relations are produced and reproduced."⁵¹

Anne Buttimer's essay entitled "Grasping the Dynamism of Lifeworld" is an important intervention as she brings a phenomenological approach to geography that opens up the discipline to explore the 'sense of place,' 'social' space and 'time-space' rhythms. She focuses on the phenomenological concept of the 'lifeworld,' "the culturally defined spatiotemporal setting or horizon of everyday life," that can enrich the geographer's understanding of the human world.⁵² She contends that the pattern of living shapes, and is shaped by the 'sense of place'. This 'sense of place,' she contends, is best exemplified in the phenomenologist's concept of the 'zero point of reference' that every individual has, the 'concentric layers of lived space' they inhabit, from room to home, neighbourhood and so on.⁵³ The commonality she traces between geography and phenomenology, despite the differences in style and orientation, is the notion of rhythm:

⁵⁰ Pearson, M. and Colin Richards. "Ordering the World: Perceptions of Architecture, Space and Time." *Architecture and Order: Approaches to Social Space*. 1994. London: Routledge. Pp 2.

⁵¹ Gregory, Derek and John Urry. "Introduction." *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, edited by Gregory and Urry. Hampshire: Macmillan. 1985. Pp 3.

⁵² Buttimer, Anne. "Grasping the Dynamism of the Lifeworld." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 66. Issue 2 (1976). Pp 277-292.

⁵³ ---. "Grasping the Dynamism of the Lifeworld." *Annals of Association of American Geographers*. 1976. Pp 283-284.

The everyday lifeworld, viewed from the vantage point of place, could be seen as a tension (orchestration) of stabilising and innovative forces, many of which may not be consciously grasped until stress or illness betrays some disharmony between person and world. This tension between stability and change within rhythms of different scales, expressed by the body's relationship to the world, maybe seen as prototype of the relationship between places and space, *home and range* in the human experience of the world (italics mine).⁵⁴

The 'home,' according to Buttimer, is the 'zero point of reference,' the most significant 'place,' from which the individual sets forth into the world, and returns to.

Patricia L. Price identifies the experience of 'belonging to place' as "one of the most central needs" for a human being.⁵⁵ An absence of this sense of 'belonging,' she goes on to argue, can evoke extreme dread or fear. Given the significance of 'home' as the most important 'place,' and the elemental need for 'belonging,' an exploration of the feeling of 'at-homeness' and 'belonging' with respect to home is one of the focal points of the analysis of domestic spaces in this thesis. David Seamon brings a phenomenological perspective to human being's relationship to place by focusing on the sense of belonging and rootedness that make people's relationship to places fulfilling.⁵⁶ He divides people's everyday life into three themes that reveal their behavioural and geographical world, viz., 'movement,' 'rest' and 'encounter.' Under 'movement,' Seamon explores the role of the body, habit and routine, under 'rest' he examines the attachment to place, and under 'encounter' he considers the ways in which people observe the world around them. It is his study of the body at 'rest' where he elaborates on the significance of 'home' that is pertinent to the present thesis. Not only does he propound 'home' as the most important 'centre,' he also connects it to the crucial experience of '*at-homeness*' –"the taken-for-granted situation of being comfortable and familiar with the world in which one lives his or her day-to-day life."⁵⁷ It is the dwelling place, according to him, that is most likely to be the spatial centre of '*at-homeness*.' The home, he argues, provides a sense of rootedness, the power of appropriation or control, the space for regeneration, at-easeness and warmth. However, this kind of attachment to place could also be manifest in, he contends,

⁵⁴---. "Grasping the Dynamism of the Lifeworld." *Annals of Association of American Biographers*. 1976. Pp 285.

⁵⁵Price, Patricia L. "Place." *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*, edited by Nuala Johnson, et al. 2013. Pp 125.

⁵⁶ Seamon, David. *A Geography of the Lifeworld: Movement, Rest and Encounter*. London: Croom and Helm. 1979. Pp 9.

⁵⁷ Seamon, David. *A Geography of the Lifeworld*. 1979. Pp 78.

rooms, city streets, or other places. This thesis focuses on the ‘*at- homeness*,’ or the lack of it, that the fictional characters experience in their dwelling places in particular.⁵⁸

Christian Norberg-Schulz brings phenomenology to architecture as he attempts to examine the ‘psychic’ implications of architecture in *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. According to him, architecture “represents a means to give man an “existential foothold.””⁵⁹ He argues that since the human being is influenced by the environment, the purpose of architecture transcends the functional. Clearly, a study of built space that this thesis examines is a fruitful means of exploring various facets of society as revealed by the symbolic meaning and value Norberg-Schulz ascribes to the interface between the social and the spatial worlds. Further, the relationship between man and his environment is conceived by Norberg-Schulz as ‘existential space,’ a notion that brings together the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘character,’ in tandem with the basic psychic functions of “orientation” and “identification.” He begins by defining ‘place’ as a ‘concrete term’ for the environment, something that is ‘integral’ to human existence. “The existential purpose of building (architecture) is... to make a site become a place, that is, to uncover the meanings potentially present in the given environment.”⁶⁰ He takes up the ancient Roman concept of ‘Genius Loci’ or spirit of place, from the idea that a spirit that infuses life into all people and places that determines their ‘character’ and stays with them all through. Drawing upon the notion of ‘dwelling’ propounded by Heidegger as the total ‘man-place relationship,’ Norberg-Schulz argues that man needs to gain an ‘existential foothold’ by both ‘orienting’ himself and ‘identifying’ himself with the place he ‘dwells’ in. Norberg-Schulz’s understanding of ‘dwelling’ is noteworthy for this thesis as it can open up explorations into the notion of belonging to the house the respective characters live in.

The field of ‘environmental psychology’ opens another approach to the study of domestic space. It is an interesting field of study that is based on the premise that the physical environment can only be understood in terms of human experience and social organisation.

⁵⁸ There are instances in the narratives discussed in the thesis, when the protagonist seeks places other than the house, where they are more comfortable and feel ‘at home.’ For instance, the children in *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* discussed in chapter 5 are happier in the wide open spaces of the ruined fort.

⁵⁹Norberg-Schulz, C. “Preface.” *Genius Loci: Towards A Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli. ,reprint. 1984.Pp 5. First Published in Italian as *Genius Loci: Paesaggio, Ambiente, Architettura*. Milano: Gruppo Editoriale Electa, 1979.

⁶⁰---. “Preface.” *Genius Loci*. 1984. Pp 18.

Susan Saegert explicates on the idea of 'dwelling' as the basic theoretical construct for environmental psychology:

It describes the physical, social, and psychological transactions by which a person maintains his or her own life, joins that life with others, creates new lives and social categories, and gives meaning to the process, thus gaining a sense of identity and place in the world.⁶¹

Since people and their residential environment is the subject of study of the present thesis, the discipline of environmental psychology would be a productive tool for spatial analysis. This approach looks upon physical settings not only as a context for behaviour, but also as active components of behaviour that are simultaneously the expression of a particular culture and its values.⁶² Thus, the design, function and meaning of settings are variously conditioned by cultural and social variables. Within a given milieu, the writers contend, settings can be used, adapted or changed in many ways. Moreover, the symbolic meaning associated with spaces is an important aspect of environmental behaviour that is also rooted in social and cultural mores. 'Socialisation,' they argue, is central to an understanding of how the group behaviour is conditioned by the cultural norms and values in a given setting or environmental context. Facets of behaviour such as roles and rules, postures and location, appropriate or inappropriate conduct are practiced for the smooth functioning of a given society. What is of particular interest to the thesis is spacing behaviour, that is, "the distances maintained under different social conditions, the projection of the self into space sometimes labelled personal space and territoriality."⁶³ In this context, Edward T. Hall's work on proxemics, or, the theories and observations on use of space by individuals in society, is insightful.⁶⁴ Hall's concepts of the four distance zones, viz., 'intimate distance,' 'personal distance,' 'social distance' and 'public distance' are useful tools to examine interpersonal and spatial behaviour in the given setting of 'domestic space.'

Carl Jung's *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*(1973)is an interesting account where he delves into his own psyche and analyses his dreams to be able to administer to his patients.

⁶¹ Saegert, Susan."The Role of Housing in the Experience of Dwelling." *Home Environments*, edited by I.Altman and C.Werner..1985.Pp 288.

⁶² Proshansky, Harold, M., W.H. Ittleson,and L.G. Rivlin "Social Processes and the Environment." *Environmental Psychology: People and Their Physical Settings*, edited by Proshansky et al.New York: Rienhart and Winston, Inc. 1970.Pp 155.

⁶³ ---. "Social Processes and the Environment." *Environmental Psychology*. 1970. Pp 157.

⁶⁴ Hall, Edward T."The Anthropology of Space: An Organising Principle." *Environmental Psychology: People and Their Settings*, edited byProshansky, et al.1970. Pp 158.

Of the dream of his house, Jung has famously observed that “the house represented a kind of image of the psyche....”⁶⁵ Drawing upon Jung’s concepts of the ‘Collective Unconscious,’ the ‘Archetype’ and the ‘Symbol,’ Clare Cooper contends that the house can be taken as a symbol of the self, thus opening up another approach to the study of ‘house’ and ‘home’: “The house... nicely reflects how man sees himself, with both an intimate interior, or self as viewed from within and revealed only to those intimates who are invited inside, and a public exterior... or the self we choose to display to others.”⁶⁶ Jeanne Moore’s article “Placing *Home* in Context” reviews a wide range of environmental psychological studies that examine the psychological meaning of ‘home,’ establishing the richness and diversity of an approach to the study of ‘home’ using Environmental Psychology.⁶⁷ Moore begins by reviewing the available literature under three broad categories: the cultural, linguistic and historical context; the philosophical and phenomenological context; and the psychological context. Moore quotes the most comprehensive definition of ‘home’ put forward by Benjamin, yet finds that it does not reflect the shared cultural significance of the concept. Drawing upon Rybczynski’s analogy of understanding home to describing an onion, Moore traces the etymology across the Romance, Germanic and English languages. From being used as a reference to the birthplace, village or country, ‘home’ has also signified the end of life’s journey, she goes on to elaborate. It was only by the domestication of the word that began in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, that ‘home’ came to be referred to as the house. In the philosophical and phenomenological context, it is the existential and spiritual aspects of home and dwelling that are examined, Moore contends. She turns to review the psychological explorations of the affective bonds between people and their home environments that environmental psychology has drawn upon. However, she finds a tension between the ‘intangible phenomenological explorations’ of home, or what she terms as ‘meaning studies,’ and ‘satisfaction studies’ that seem to be examining indirect objective criteria.⁶⁸ Moore also goes on to discuss the diversity and tensions in the contexts and experience of home, citing literature this thesis largely draws upon. Her extensive review notwithstanding, she points out a lacuna in these studies of ‘home’ that tend to leave relatively unexplored or take for granted the physical form, in

⁶⁵ Jung, Carl. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*,(()) New York: Pantheon Books. 1973. Pp 160.Trans. from German by Richard and Clara Winston. *Erinnerungen, Traume, Gedanken*. Exlibris. 1961.

⁶⁶ Cooper, Clare.“The House as Symbol of the Self.”*Environmental Psychology: People and Their Settings*, edited by Proshansky, et. al.1970.Pp 436.

⁶⁷ Moore, Jeanne, ”Placing *Home* in Context.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.,20.Issue 3 (2000).Pp 207-217.

⁶⁸ ---. ”Placing *Home* in Context.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.,20.Issue 3 (2000).Pp 207-217.Pp 211.

comparison with the personal and psychological aspects.⁶⁹ This thesis attempts to address that lacuna as it examines the ‘house’ as ‘home,’ exploring the meanings of ‘home’ and ‘dwelling’ for the characters/ inhabitants.

Given that geographical ‘space’ is a given from which humankind carves out ‘places’ of value and significance by engaging with them, a look at the process of ‘place-making’ would give an insight not only into how human beings transform ‘space’ into ‘place,’ but also help understand how ‘places’ can be ascribed with value and meaning. Sarah Menin’s collection of essays entitled *Constructing Place: Mind and Matter* (2003) is a valuable exploration of the processes, histories and impact of constructing ‘place.’⁷⁰ In the introduction, Menin begins with the premise that place-making is as much a mental construct, as material construct. She draws upon research that reiterates the isomorphic connection between the environment and the healthy ‘self’ as evidence of the sense of ‘being-in-place’ as a psychological reality. Menin lays stress on the mental take on place that determines its import, suggesting that “it is as much a process of creating selves as it is creating place.”⁷¹ In fact a depressed self that is not creative, she goes on to point out, would look upon both decrepit and beautiful places as deadening. Another aspect brought up is the flexibility of the boundaries between mind and matter. “Boundaries between the phenomenon of people and the phenomenon of the place are crossed: both negatively and positively.”⁷² This is an interesting insight to the thesis as it helps map the kinds of attachment characters manifest to their ‘homeplace’ in the fiction being analysed. It also helps understand variations in positive and negative feelings characters harbour for the house they co-reside in. An approach that looks upon ‘environmental chaos’ as ‘our’ chaos, a crisis that is “in and through us, not something outside,” certainly facilitates an understanding of inhabited space this thesis explores, as a means to reveal character.⁷³ Moreover, if “one’s interaction with the environment leaves neither party unaffected,” an examination of domestic space in fictional narratives proves all the more instructive, as this thesis establishes.⁷⁴

Further, Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff’s concept of ‘place identity’ and ‘place dependence’ are also valuable inputs that help comprehend notions of attachment to places,

⁶⁹---. ”Placing *Home* in Context.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.,20.Issue 3 (2000).Pp 207-217.Pp 213.

⁷⁰Menin, Sarah. “Introduction”. *Constructing Place: Mind and Matter*, edited by Sarah Menin. 2003.London: Routledge, Pp 1.

⁷¹---”Introduction.” *Constructing Place*. 2003. Pp 6.

⁷²---”Introduction.” *Constructing Place*. 2003. Pp 9.

⁷³---”Introduction”.*Constructing Place*. 2003. Pp 10.

⁷⁴---”Introduction.” *Constructing Place*. 2003. Pp 12.

though their research is not restricted to 'home.' Proshansky, et al, begin the essay with a brief view of the social and cultural processes involved in development of the 'self,' focusing on the notion of 'self-identity.' Place identity is defined as a:

sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives.... At the core of such environmental-related cognitions is the 'environmental past' of the person; a past consisting of places, spaces and their properties which have served instrumentally in the satisfaction of the person's biological, psychological, social and cultural needs.⁷⁵

Some of their key insights on place identity such as the 'dynamic nature of self and place identity evolves in response to a changing world,' and that 'other people are important in shaping the place-identity' of a person are great analytical tools for this thesis. Reviewing the work of geographers such as Edward Relph, Anne Buttimer and Yi-Fu Tuan, Proshansky, et al identify two assumptions shared by these geographers: that a person acquires a sense of belonging and purpose through personal attachment to geographically locatable places, and secondly, that this sense of rootedness is unselfconscious. Also, despite their varying approaches to 'place,' the writers point out, these geographers zero down on the 'home' as the place of greatest significance or the 'central reference point' of human existence. In an article on "*Place and Identity Process*," Twigger-Ross and Uzzell take the analysis further by adding notions of 'distinctiveness,' 'continuity' and 'self-efficacy' to the self-esteem model of place attachment propounded by Proshansky et al.⁷⁶

This thesis focuses on the dynamics of space use, as everyday activities are not only conditioned by a given space, but the space also structures and shapes the dynamics. The material objects that are invariably strewn around the house may be emblematic even as they serve pragmatic ends. According to Roxana Waterson, use of space is a significant means that permeates the environment with meaning, even as the environment itself moulds and reproduces patterns of social relationships: "This production of meaning may take place, firstly, through the positioning and manipulation of objects in space, and secondly, through the human body itself- its placement in, movement through, or exclusion from a particular

⁷⁵ Proshansky, H.M., A.K. Fabian and R. Kaminoff. "Place-Identity: Physical World Socialisation of the Self." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 3. Issue 1 (1983). Pp 57-83.

⁷⁶ Twigger-Ross, C.L. and D.L. Uzzell. "Place and Identity Process." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 16. Issue 3 (1996): Pp 205-20.

space, or in people's spatial interactions with each other."⁷⁷ Clearly, a close reading of the placement, movement, use of the objects in the house, as well as the placement, postures and movement of the characters inhabiting the domestic space could be productive in exploring and understanding the meaning of that space. Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the Kabyle house is a well known example of evaluating the 'objects' and 'actions' in domestic space as reflective of a particular symbolic system: "... the opposition between the house and the men's assembly, between the private life and public life, or, if you will, between the full light of day and the secrecy of night, corresponds exactly to the opposition between the dark, nocturnal, lower part of the house, and the noble, brightly lit, upper part."⁷⁸

Having charted the study of space and place across disciplines, it is now imperative to explore the debate around the apparently synonymous terms 'house' and 'home,' before reviewing the many definitions of 'house' and 'home' across disciplines. This introduction will, at best, map out some of the meanings and approaches to the concept, and clarify the parameters within which this thesis formulates the arguments. Just as the terms 'space' and 'place' do not seem to have clear cut boundaries, one would be hard put to distinguish between 'house' and 'home' beyond a point. While a house can arguably be a 'home,' not all 'houses' can taken to be 'homes.' For instance, according to Jim Kemeny, a 'house' basically provides "the space which frames and often defines many of the activities that constitute the primary relationships in the home."⁷⁹ Joseph Rykwert, a historian of architecture delves into the distinction between 'house' and 'home' to point out to architects on the need to focus only on creating 'houses.'⁸⁰ Transforming a house into a home, he contends, should best be left to the dweller. He suggests that the idea of 'home' carries with it notions of 'well-being,' 'stability' and 'ownership' in most languages, in contrast to, what he terms as the relatively 'inert' notion of the 'house.' This distinction, he argues, "persists through very powerful cultural shifts and over vast distances."⁸¹ Thus, according to him, a 'home' can always exist even in the absence of a building, but the 'house' would always need one to mark its existence. He places 'home' firmly at the centre of one's existence, also collating it with the notion of 'family.' 'Home' can also be conceptualised as "neither the dwelling", nor just the

⁷⁷ Waterson, Roxana. "Space and the Shaping of Social Relations." *The Living House: An Anthropology of Architecture in South-East Asia*. Singapore: Thames and Hudson. 1997, Pp 167.

⁷⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Kabyle House or the World Reversed.." *Algeria 1960: The Disenchantment of the World; The Sense of Honour; The Kabyle House or the World Reversed*. Trans. by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1963. Pp 142.

⁷⁹ Kemeny, Jim. "Residence and Social Structure." *Housing and Social Theory*. London: Routledge. 1992. Pp 157.

⁸⁰ Rykwert, J. "House and Home." *Social Research*. 58.1 (1991): Pp 51-63.

⁸¹ ---. Rykwert, J. "House and Home." *Social Research*. 1991. Pp 54.

“feeling,” but “the relation between the two.”⁸² In a book length study of ‘house-life’ and family in Europe, Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence Zuniga draw out the centrality of the ‘house’ in the study of households and family for anthropologists, archaeologists, historians and ethnographers. Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence Zuniga also associate the ‘house’ with some manner of physical structure, reserving a rather expansive definition of ‘home’ as a place of origin or retreat, “a concept of place rather than space, implying emotional attachment and meaning beyond the constraints of the physicality of any particular dwelling house.”⁸³ However, they tend to use the words ‘home’ and ‘house’ interchangeably, as in their discussion of ‘public’ and ‘private’ spaces within the *home* (italics mine).⁸⁴ Houses ‘become’ homes when the space is used as a shelter shared by a group of intimates in a special, meaningful way, according to Newmark and Thompson. The two words, they argue, “reflect two aspects of a single experience.”⁸⁵

Kimberly Dovey begins his essay “Home and Homelessness” by making a distinction between the concepts of ‘house’ and ‘home.’ Thus, if the house is seen as an ‘object’ or ‘environment,’ the home is defined by an emotional and meaningful relationship people have with their dwelling environment.⁸⁶ Yet, he cautions, it would be impossible to identify the precise point at which a ‘house’ turns into a ‘home,’ adding that the properties of home that he lists do not define the home in totality, but only add to the meaning of home. For Susan Saegert, it is the notion of ‘dwelling’ that reveals the contrast between ‘house’ and ‘home.’ To begin with, she presents ‘dwelling’ as a ‘basic theoretical construct’ for environmental psychology: “It describes the physical, social, and psychological transactions by which a person maintains his or her own life, joins that life with others, creates new lives and social categories, and gives meaning to the process, thus gaining a sense of identity and place in the world.”⁸⁷ The home is seen as a more restrictive and place-based idea than dwelling, where most important daily life activities are conducted. She refrains from listing objective distinctions between ‘home,’ ‘house’ and ‘dwelling,’ preferring to explore them

⁸² Blunt, Alison and Robyn Dowling. “Introduction.” *Home :Key Ideas in Geography Series*. London: Routledge.Pp22.

⁸³Birdwell-Pheasant, D. and Denise Lawrence Zuniga. “Introduction: Houses and Families in Europe.” *House Life: Space, Place and Family in Europe*. Oxford: Berg. 1999.Pp 6.

⁸⁴---.Introduction.*House Life*. 1999. Pp 4.

⁸⁵Newmark, Norma L. and P.J. Thompson. “Prologue: Why Study Housing?”*.Self, Space and Shelter: An Introduction to Housing*, edited by Newmark, and Thompson. . San Francisco: Canfield Press. Pp 2.

⁸⁶Dovey, Kimberly..“Home and Homelessness.”*Home Environments*, edited by Irwin Altman and Carol Werner. Vol 8. New York: Springer Science + Business Media. 1985.Pp 34.

⁸⁷ Saegert, Susan.“The Role of Housing in the Experience of Dwelling.”*Home Environments*, edited byAltman and Werner.1985.Pp 288.

experientially. Thus, she contends that phenomenologically it would be more accurate to examine the extent to which a house or residence is regarded as a home, and what place the home occupies in the experience of ‘dwelling.’

On the other hand, ‘dwelling,’ like the ‘house,’ has also been seen as physical or spatial entity, while ‘household,’ like ‘home,’ is seen as a social entity. ‘Household’ and ‘dwelling’ is another pair of terms that seem to defy conceptual resolution, leading, to ambivalence in housing research, according to Jim Kemeny. Without going into the detailed discussion of these concepts, what is of immediate interest to the thesis is Kemney’s argument that puts ‘home’ at the centre of the socio-spatial relationship between the household and dwelling:

The home cannot be understood except as a product of the social organisation of the household in relation to the dwelling as a spatial reflection of that organisation and the limitations that this places on, and the possibilities that it opens up, for household members’ activities and relationships.⁸⁸

The broadest and most commonplace definition of ‘house’ is a structure that fulfils the basic human need for shelter. In a study entitled *Self, Space and Shelter: An Introduction to Housing*, Newmark and Thompson draw upon a variety of disciplines that engage with ‘housing studies’ to come to a better understanding of housing environments that could lead to creating environments more conducive to human growth and satisfaction.⁸⁹ If nothing else, the diversity of disciplines listed by them give clues to the complex factors that go on to make a satisfactory ‘residential environment.’ Thus, the disciplines range from the physical sciences that explore the parameters of ideal heating, cooling or sanitation, etc, to the social sciences that through anthropology, political science, sociology or economy that help influence housing choices. Subjects under humanities such as literature, history and philosophy, they contend, help in understanding the human condition and the sense of place and purpose that keeps society going. Last but not the least, the arts such as architecture, fine arts and graphic arts help to express and create environments that enrich the experience of natural and built environment. Among the primary reasons for studying housing, among the handful the editors list, is the central role and significance it plays in daily life as the centre for personal and familial life. Maslow’s study of human motivation that lists five levels of human needs is taken as a framework to understand the needs that housing as shelter helps realise. Thus, at

⁸⁸ Kemney, Jim. *Housing and Social Theory*. London: Routledge. 1992. Pp 158.

⁸⁹ ---. “Prologue: Why Study Housing?.” *Self, Space and Shelter*. 1977. Pp 4.

the first level are physiological needs that are elemental and common to all human beings for survival. The house can provide appropriate conditions to fulfil these basic needs such as light, temperature, ventilation, sanitation, etc. The next level of 'needs' are the 'security and safety needs,' that are again met by protecting the inhabitants from the outside world. The third level needs are 'social needs,' that are met by the house providing the space or site for social interaction with friends and family. The fourth level needs are the 'self-esteem or ego needs,' which are fulfilled when the house and its location confers a socially acknowledged sense of worth and upward mobility. The house can be seen as the reflection, or even a symbol of "self-expression and self-realisation," the self-actualisation needs that Maslow prioritises the most.⁹⁰ Marjorie Branin Keiser also draws upon Cooper's delineation of the basic human needs a house fulfils, which essentially mirror the psychological needs developed by Maslow.⁹¹ Thus, she argues, the house fulfils 'physical needs' by providing desirable measure of light, heat and sound, sanitation and comfort, etc. Further, the residence fulfils 'psychological needs' such as privacy, aesthetic appeal, desired amount of proximity with others etc. Last but not the least, Keiser lists 'social needs' such as bonding with friends and the community and a sense of place, fostered by a proper location of buildings. The house also serves as a symbol of social status, as well as fulfilling aesthetic needs, she contends. In Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zuniga, the production and use of houses involves more than the practical generation of cultural forms: "they entail the reciprocal influence of the domestic environment on actors who find their daily activities both enabled and constrained by the physical character of the house and its contents."⁹² They also point to the ease with which the 'house' can lend itself as an agent of differentiation and hierarchisation within societies, given their uniqueness as an essential resource for biological and social reproduction. Also, in both enabling and constraining social action, "houses often can be seen as instruments in the hegemony of gender, generation and class within even the most 'traditional' systems."⁹³ Many of these arguments are substantiated by the reading of homes and houses in this thesis.

Of the various kinds of structures that human beings construct and build, the house is of the greatest personal significance as it fulfils the elemental human requirements or the

⁹⁰---. "Prologue: Why Study Housing?." *Self, Space and Shelter*. 1977. Pp 12.

⁹¹ Keiser, Marjorie B. *Housing: An Environment for Living*. New York: Macmillan and Co. 1978. Pp 36-40.

⁹² Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zuniga. "Introduction: Houses and Families in Europe." *House Life: Space, Place and Family in Europe*. 1999. Pp 9.

⁹³---. "Introduction: Houses and Families in Europe." *House Life: Space, Place and Family in Europe*. 1999. Pp 10.

basic human needs. The architect Amos Rapoport describes the 'house' as not just a physical structure, but also an institution designed for a complex set of purposes.⁹⁴ According to him, like all buildings, the form and organisation of the house is conditioned by the socio-cultural milieu to which it belongs. He looks upon the house as an expression of ideal environments that reflect different world views and ways of life. Broadly speaking, he categorises five factors that would influence house form, viz., basic needs, structure and type of family, position of women, notions of privacy, and social intercourse. A study of the house would thus be revealing, as it would give an insight into the socio-cultural milieu of the inhabitants. Thus, for instance, the question Rapoport posits would not be whether there will be doors and windows, but what would be their form, placement and orientation.

As part of a series on 'key ideas in geography' that include book length studies on concepts such as 'Nature', 'Landscape' and 'Scale', there is also a study entitled '*Home*.'⁹⁵ If the former topics of discussion seemingly 'belong' to the discipline of geography, the inclusion of 'home' as a geographical keyword should alert one to the range of perspectives that is now brought to the study of domestic space. The issue on *Home*, Blunt and Dowling assert, aims to provide the reader with a 'critical geography' of home. As the work discusses in detail a range of approaches and debates around 'home,' it is worth delving into at length for the thesis. What is interesting in their approach is that they look upon 'home' as an 'imaginary' imbued with feelings: "Home is thus a *spatial imaginary*: a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places."⁹⁶ In defining the contours of their work, they point out that the idea of 'home' extends beyond 'houses and households.' To begin with, Blunt and Dowling map three of the key frameworks within which 'home' may be understood, viz., housing studies, Marxism and humanism. Since the idea of 'home' as house or shelter is an important element in any understanding of 'home,' the field of housing studies could be a good starting point. To simplify the diversity and complexity within this intellectual tradition, the writers identify four major strands. Thus, it entails elements such as 'housing policy,' the 'economics of housing provision,' 'house design,' and, what is arguably the most important to the thesis, the 'experience and meaning of home.' Although the volume

⁹⁴Rapoport, Amos, "Socio-Cultural Factors and House Form." *House Form and Culture*. Englewood-Cliffs, N.Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc. 1969. Pp 41.

⁹⁵ Blunt, Alison and R. Dowling. *Home: Key Ideas in Geography*, Series editor Sarah Holloway and Gill Valentine. 2006. London: Routledge.

⁹⁶Blunt, Alison and R. Dowling. "Setting Up Home: An Introduction." *Home: Key Ideas in Geography*,. 2006. Pp 2.

draws extensively on the ‘social,’ ‘economic’ and ‘cultural’ embeddedness of house as home within housing studies, it diverges sharply from the approach that takes ‘house’ as the sole entrée point to the study of ‘home.’⁹⁷ The writers contend that the atmosphere of a house is as likely to be ‘oppressive and alienating,’ as it could be ‘supportive and comfortable,’ citing the possibility of domestic violence, home detention, experiences of poverty and poor living conditions, or the parental censure of young lesbians or gays that may alienate them from home. This thesis goes along with the argument presented by Blunt and Dowling that “the spatialities of home are broader and more complex than just housing,” yet restricts the examination of the imaginaries of ‘home’ to the ‘house’ in particular. This thesis explores the houses in various narratives as ‘home,’ to examine whether or not, the protagonists experience a sense of ‘belongingness’ at home.

Further, according to Blunt and Dowling, Marxism provided an important theoretical framework in the 1970s and 1980s for the study of geography as they focused on the study of means of production, but this theoretical framework largely ignored the home. The Marxists, Blunt and Dowling argue, reduced ‘home’ as a space of ‘social reproduction,’ where ‘labour power’ is reproduced. In contrast, humanistic geographers, they point out, explore the ways in which places are significant and meaningful for people, and the idea of home is privileged as an ‘essential place,’ one that grounds identity. Drawing upon the work of humanistic geographers such as Relph, Tuan and Dovey, the writers propound that “(h)ome is hearth, an anchoring point through which human beings are centred.”⁹⁸ While Blunt and Dowling applaud the humanistic geographers for foregrounding ‘home,’ they also censure them for a romanticised and static conception of home and make a case for looking at home as an ongoing process of establishing connections with others and creating order as part of society. It is also important, they contend, to look at the differentiation of the experience of dwelling, as people in different societies, across race, class and gender are bound to have diverse experiences of the idea of home. This differential in the experience of home, this thesis argues, is not only valid for different sets of people as proposed above, but obtains even within the same dwelling. In fact, Lynne Manzo’s insight on people’s relationship with

⁹⁷---. Blunt, Alison and R. Dowling. “Setting Up Home: An Introduction.” *Home: Key Ideas in Geography*, 2006. Pp 6-10.

⁹⁸Blunt, Alison and R. Dowling. “Setting Up Home: An Introduction.” *Home: Key Ideas in Geography*, 2006. Pp 11.

places, including home, as ‘dynamic’ is a valuable input to enriching the understanding of the meanings of ‘home.’⁹⁹

Moreover, Blunt and Dowling point out, Feminist and Cultural geographies bring new ways of scrutinising the notion of ‘home.’ Feminist interest in home is particularly relevant, contend Blunt and Dowling, because of the significance of ‘gender’ to the experiences and imaginaries of home: “Household and domestic relations are critically gendered, whether through relations of caring and domestic labour, affective relations of belonging, or establishing connections between the individual, household and society.”¹⁰⁰ One of the significant contributions of feminist readings of home is in their exposure of home as the site of oppression, violence and alienation for women. This thesis explores the theme of violence and conflict at home in Chapter 4, drawing upon reams of empirical and theoretical research on the subject. Another contribution of the feminist geographers has been the critique and reinterpretation of Humanistic and Marxist understanding of geography, the writers point out. Thus, the Humanistic geographer’s characterisation of home as ‘an essential grounding of human identity’ is critiqued as masculinist, one that ignores the experience of women. Moreover, the Marxist view of the home as a site for ‘social reproduction’ has been questioned, as it can also be looked upon as a ‘workplace,’ especially for women who are responsible for much of the domestic labour. In fact, “(a)rticulating the links between home and work is part of a broader concern to challenge and reformulate the simple categorisation of home with domestic and private spheres.”¹⁰¹ Thus, Blunt and Dowling draw upon these frameworks to create a ‘critical geography’ of home that is both ‘spatialised’ and ‘politicised.’ That is, ‘home’ is seen as a ‘spatial imaginary’ that travels across space and is also a particular site. At the same time, by looking at it as ‘politicised,’ they remain alert to home being a site of oppression and resistance. The writers go on to elaborate on three components of a critical geography of home: “home as simultaneously material and imaginative”; “the nexus between home, power and identity”; and “home as multi-scalar.”¹⁰² Thus, the ‘home’ could be a room, a corner, the house, one’s native village or even the nation. Home, as the writers point out, is a lived experience; also, what home means and how it is materially concretised are aspects that are constantly created and re-created through everyday practices.

⁹⁹ Manzo, Lynne, C. “Beyond House and Haven: Toward a Revisioning of Emotional Relationship with Places.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 23, Issue 1 (2003): Pp 47-61.

¹⁰⁰ Blunt, Alison and R. Dowling. “Setting Up Home: An Introduction.” *Home: Key Ideas in Geography*, 2006.. Pp 15..

¹⁰¹ Blunt, Alison and R. Dowling. “Setting Up Home: An Introduction.” *Home: Key Ideas in Geography*, 2006. Pp 16.

¹⁰² Blunt, Alison and R. Dowling. “Setting Up Home: An Introduction.” *Home*. 2006. Pp 22.

Further, as far as exploring the nexus between home, identity and power is concerned, home constitutes identities both as a place and an imaginary by giving people a sense of who they are. These identities are, in turn, the writers point out, ‘produced and articulated through relations of power’. This thesis uses these two components, that is, ‘power’ and ‘identity’ as frames of reference to explore and examine the houses and homes in the given fictional narratives.

In the Introduction to *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives on Modern Domestic Architecture*, Barbara Miller Lane notes that the terms of scholarly discussion on domestic architecture have moved beyond discussions of the façade and the structure.¹⁰³ Issues such as the public and private spaces within and around the dwelling, the gendered character of these spaces, the impact of consumption patterns on the spaces, its arrangement and decoration are among some of the inhabitant’s experience of domestic space that are now part of the discussion. It is in the way that dwellers personalise their space as an ongoing process, she argues, by constantly re-building, re-decorating, furnishing, etc. that gives an insight into their individuality. The house is also the site where notions of privacy, family, politics and society are played out in various ways. Feminist scholarship, she contends, has been instrumental in bringing new perspectives to the study of domestic space. They have enriched the study of domestic architecture, Lane points out, by examining it through the prism of archaeology, sociology, film studies, literary theory, and economic and social history, to name a few. Notions of the ‘domestic’ as private sphere and the world without as ‘public sphere’ have also undergone a change too, as she points out. Feminist scholars have begun to examine the ‘interpenetration of the private and the public’ within the home.

What is interesting is the recent research on the emotional attachment to ‘home’ that Barbara Lane quotes. According to Lane, recent research establishes that the attachment “usually equated with domesticity was a modern invention, a by-product of the experience of transience and uprooting that characterised the industrial revolution.”¹⁰⁴ An example of feminist re-reading of traditional androcentric ideology that relegated women and children to the inconsequential domestic sphere, while the ‘superior’ and ‘dominant’ public sphere was marked as belonging to the male, is Suzanne Spencer-Wood’s essay “The World Their Household: Changing Meanings of the Domestic Sphere in the Nineteenth Century.” Spencer-

¹⁰³Lane, Barbara M. “Introduction.” *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives on Modern Domestic Architecture*, edited by B.M. Lane. London: Routledge. 2007. Pp 2-3.

¹⁰⁴---. “Introduction.” *Housing and Dwelling*. 2007. Pp 3.

Wood contends that household activities in other cultures were shaped by archaeological projections of elite Victorian gender ideology as the universal gender system throughout history for the Classical times. However, she counters this by presenting feminist research that established that “a gender dichotomy was not universally espoused or practiced in Classical Greece....”¹⁰⁵

Rather than define ‘home’ by any of its functions, Mary Douglas prefers to explore the idea of ‘home’ as an ‘embryonic community.’¹⁰⁶ She contends that it is located in space, though the ‘space’ is not necessarily ‘fixed space.’ She further argues that having a ‘shelter,’ a ‘house’ or even a ‘household’ is not a guarantor of having a ‘home,’ an assertion reiterated by many scholars.¹⁰⁷ However, this thesis focuses only on the ‘house’ as ‘home,’ exploring the kind of ‘homes’ the houses in given fictional narratives manifest. What is remarkable in Douglas’s approach is bringing together the idea of time along with space in her definition of ‘home.’ Thus, she posits that it has both a particular ‘space,’ as well as some structure in time, along with ‘aesthetic’ and ‘moral’ dimensions for the people who share that framework of time and space. Douglas draws upon Suzanne Langer’s philosophy, where the latter defines architecture as a “virtual ethnic domain” that, to Douglas, comes across as a reference to the idea of home. Thus, Douglas paraphrases Langer as saying: “architecture can also present the largest metaphors of society and religion; it can project meanings about life and death and eschatology into the everyday arrangements that it covers.” (qtd. in Douglas, 1991)¹⁰⁸ The ‘home’ also allocates time and space resources over the long term to its inhabitants, Douglas argues, and can be seen as the site for ‘distributive justice.’ Yet, Douglas also alerts us to remain aware of the less complimentary aspects of ‘home’ by pointing out the ‘tyrannies of home.’ Thus, the home can exert tyranny over its inhabitants in terms of keeping tabs on their time and even tastes, as everyone is expected to adjust to the needs and demands of the head of the family or the man of the house.

¹⁰⁵ Spencer-Wood, S.M. “The World their Household: Changing Meanings of the Domestic Sphere in the Nineteenth Century.” *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives on Modern Domestic Architecture*, edited by Barbara M. Lane. 2007. Pp 33.

¹⁰⁶ Douglas, Mary. “The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space.” *Social Research*. 58.1 (1991): Pp 287-307.

¹⁰⁷ See Tyner, James A. “Home.” *Space, Place, and Violence: Violence and the Embodied Geographies of Race, Sex, and Gender*. New York: Routledge. 2012; See also R. Dobash and E. Dobash. *Women, Violence and Social Change*. London: Routledge. 1992; See Manzo, Lynne C. “Beyond House and Haven: Towards A Revisioning of Emotional Relationships With Places.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 23. Issue 1 (2003): 47-61, to name a few.

¹⁰⁸ Douglas, M. “The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space.” *Social Research* 58 No. 1 (Spring 1991). Pp 287-307. Pp 293.

Bell Hooks' reading of 'homeplace' as a site of resistance is an affirmative stance that counters the politics of race and, arguably, also of gender, by ascribing to black women the positivity they bring in through their practices of 'home-making':

Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was the one place where one could freely confront the issue of humanisation, where one could resist. Black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship and deprivation, where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world.¹⁰⁹

At the risk of conceptual oversimplification, one can't but help notice the contrast in position that the matrix of race and gender evokes. The home has been seen by the white feminist geographer as the place that arguably puts women under constraint, denying her freedom, agency, or even in some cases, exposing her to domestic violence, quite in contrast to an Afro-American feminist scholar who marks it as the site of resistance and constructive agency, particularly for women, despite the probability of domestic abuse.¹¹⁰

There are, of course, other ways of reading 'home' by looking at it as a site of consumption and reproduction, for instance. Tim Putnam explores the home in a postmodern geography, in a world where the domestic is considered as "dominated and decentred, a territory of 'consumption' and 'reproduction,' rather than signifying or consequential action."¹¹¹ Looking at different parameters of the modern home, Putnam raises the issue of 'global connectedness' effected by information technology that seems to have eroded the boundaries of 'home,' and thereby attenuating the 'sense of place,' even as the time invested in these new commodities produced for domestic consumption give rise to a new 'privatism.' Under the broad rubrics of 'consumption studies,' the material and symbolic space of the

¹⁰⁹ Hooks, Bell. "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance." *Housing and Dwelling*, edited by Barbara M. Lane. 2007. Pp 69.

¹¹⁰ McDowell, Linda. "Home, Place and Identity." *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 1999. Pp 88-89.

¹¹¹ Putnam, Tim. "Beyond the Modern Home: Shifting Parameters of Residence." *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, edited by Jon Bird et al. London: Routledge. 1993. Pp 150.

home becomes a key site in which “cultural practices and meanings of consumption are created, embedded and transformed.”¹¹²

Judith Sixsmith conducted a phenomenological based study to explore the meanings of home that were revealed through everyday experiences, an approach that is a valuable analytical tool for this thesis.¹¹³ Through her study, she finds that for a home to come across as ‘home’ depends on the extent to which it can fulfil the person’s requirements, objectives and circumstances, even as they are in constant flux. She lists four findings at the end of her study: that a range of places are defined as ‘home’ by people, subject to individual differences; secondly, these places may exist on many levels, such as existential space, and may have a clear-cut, minimal or non-existent physical component; thirdly, what is ‘home’ to one may not feel the same to another; and finally, ‘home’ need not necessarily be constant in nature, but may even be transitory. The structural relations between meanings of home she formulates is pertinent to the argument followed by this thesis. Sixsmith classifies the ‘home’ under three qualitatively different categories, viz., the ‘personal home,’ the ‘social home,’ and the ‘physical home.’ The *personal home*, she contends, can be seen as an extension of oneself in the sense of a ‘subjective self,’ and in the sense of an ‘objective self.’ In the first case, the home would be conceived in terms of an inner development of the self, epitomising a ‘way of being’ in the world. In the second case, there is a distinction between the feelings of belonging and those aspects of home that seem to contribute to the person’s sense of self-identity. Thus, home would be the place that allows self-expression like preferred settings or furnishings, and then become the place that the inhabitants are most comfortable in. However, Sixsmith argues, strong ties between the person and his environment are forged when important events and people become an integral part of the person’s history and self-identity. Sixsmith points to the significance of ‘place-identity’ as a sub-set of self-identity.¹¹⁴ Thus, the home, “in terms of the kind of opportunities it affords people for personal and social action and how these enable self impression and expression is one profound centre of significance contributing to a sense of place identity.”¹¹⁵

¹¹²Lane, Ruth, et al. eds. “Introduction.” *Material Geographies of Household Sustainability*. Surrey: Ashgate. 2011. Pp 3.

¹¹³ Sixsmith, Judith. “The Meaning of Home: An Exploratory Study of Environmental Experience.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 6. Issue 3 (1986): Pp 281-98.

¹¹⁴ Place identity has been extensively studied by Proshansky, et al, (1983) among others, and will be referred to in the context of place attachment and attachment to home, later in the Introduction.

¹¹⁵ Sixsmith, J. “The Meaning of Home.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 6 Issue 4 (1986). Pp 281-98.

The *social home* is defined by the sense of home that comes about as a result of social relationships with other people. It is the presence and relationships with other people that are important, the familiarity with their habits, emotions, etc., that create an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance and contribute to the feeling of 'home.' Clearly, if the relationships have turned bitter, it can have a negative impact on the atmosphere of home. The *physical home* refers to not just the physical entity of the house, but also the human space available. This aspect of home becomes significant, contends Sixsmith, in as much as it becomes a focus of the individual's activities, memories and experiences, and a sense of identity. Of course, Sixsmith is careful to point out that these three modes of home experience have been distinguished only as analytical categories, but remain indivisible and inter-related in the 'man-environment unity.' Essentially, she argues that home is a multidimensional phenomenon, and "each home features a unique and dynamic combination of personal, social and physical properties and meanings."¹¹⁶

One of the ways of approaching the meanings of 'home' is through an exploration of the meaning of 'homelessness.' Peter Somerville, for instance, examines 'homelessness' in the light of recent research on the meanings of 'home.' Homelessness, like home, he contends, is a multidimensional concept. "Home," according to Somerville, "can be argued to have at least six or seven dimensions of meaning, identified by the 'key signifiers' of shelter, hearth, heart, privacy, roots, abode and (possibly) paradise."¹¹⁷ Homelessness, to a large extent, he contends, can be taken as the semantic contrary of home. What is interesting is the greater significance ascribed to the evidence of domestic relations than an investigation of symbolic status or tenure to the understanding of 'home' or 'homelessness.' The domestic relations may encompass looking into domestic division of labour, domestic violence and child abuse, and affective and economic relations amongst members of the family or household, etc. For instance, the sexist manner of division of domestic labour that emerges from various studies results in different experience and meaning of home to men and women. Thus, Somerville observes, "(f)or women and men alike, home is where the heart is, but love means unpaid caring and labour for women, whereas for men it means emotional stability and gratification."¹¹⁸ Again, Somerville comments on the uniform sense of dispossession and lack of privacy that both men and women are likely to experience through 'homelessness,' but

¹¹⁶---. "The Meaning of Home." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 6 Issue 4 (1986). Pp 281-98.

¹¹⁷ Somerville, Peter. "Homelessness and the Meaning of Home: Rooflessness or Rootlessness?" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 16. Issue 4 (1992): Pp 529-539.

¹¹⁸ Somerville, P. "Homelessness and the Meaning of Home: Rooflessness or Rootlessness?" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 16. Issue 4 (1992): Pp 529-539 Pp 535.

given their varied involvement with home, men and women are again likely to have varying experiences. Thus, to the men it may come across as 'propertylessness,' but to the women, it would mean a more serious 'disruption of routine.' However, while this thesis does not deal with instances of 'homelessness' in particular, readings like Somerville's are useful in mapping the experience and meanings of 'home.' Kimberly Dovey in his essay "Home and Homelessness" takes another approach to the idea of 'homelessness', after dwelling at length on the idea of 'home.'¹¹⁹ Drawing generously from fields as diverse as phenomenological philosophy to geography, to cross-cultural work in anthropology and literature, Dovey lists some 'properties of home' such as 'order', 'identity' and 'connectedness.' While the 'house' may remain, in his view, a static entity, the meaning of home only emerges when seen as dynamic processes, one that comes from a dialectical interaction of binary oppositions such as self and other, rest and movement, familiar and strange, room and house, etc. A sense of home, according to him, can only evolve in conjunction with journeying away. Moreover, he contends, one wouldn't be concerned with the meaning of 'home,' if there was no 'homelessness.' Of course, to Dovey, it is the peculiar conditions of modernity that are eroding the sense of 'home' leading to a kind of 'homelessness.' Thus, 'rationalism and technology' are reducing the meaning of home to a house, and 'commoditization' market 'home' rather than 'house' as a commodity to be bought and used, thus eroding the relationship of the dweller with the dwelling. Also, Julia Wardaugh coins the concept of 'homeless at home' for victims of violence and abuse experienced at home.¹²⁰

The range and diversity of approaches to understanding home are too multifarious to be adequately covered by this introduction. The collection of essays in *Home Environments*, a work under the series on 'Human Behaviour and Environment' gives a fair idea of the numerous approaches that can be productively applied to the study of home environments. For instance, Carol Werner et al suggest one looks into the temporal aspects of homes, using a transactional perspective.¹²¹ Perla Korosec-Serfaty chooses to examine the 'experience' and 'use' aspects of dwelling, while Roderick J. Lawrence argues for a more 'humane history' of homes. To James S. Duncan, the house is a symbol of social structure, while Ralph Taylor and Sidney Brower examine the home and near home territories. Susan Saegert explores the

¹¹⁹Dovey, Kimberly. "Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*, edited by Altman and Werner. 1985. Pp 33-64.

¹²⁰Wardaugh, Julia. "The Unaccommodated Woman: Home, Homelessness and Identity." *The Sociological Review* 47. Issue 1 (1999): Pp 91-109.

¹²¹Werner, Carol, Irwin Altman and Diana Oxley. "Temporal Aspects of Homes: A Transactional Perspective." *Home Environments*, edited by Werner and Altman. 1985. Pp 1-2..

role of housing in the experience of dwelling, while Amos Rapoport would like to formulate a conceptual framework for studying home environments.

There are, of course, other ways of reading 'home' by looking at home as a site of consumption and reproduction, for instance. Tim Putnam explores the home in a postmodern geography, in a world where the domestic is considered as "dominated and decentred, a territory of 'consumption' and 'reproduction,' rather than signifying or consequential action."¹²² Looking at different parameters of the modern home, Putnam raises the issue of 'global connectedness' effected by information technology that seems to have eroded the boundaries of 'home,' and thereby attenuating the 'sense of place,' even as the time invested in these new commodities produced for domestic consumption give rise to a new 'privatism.' Under the broad rubrics of 'consumption studies,' the material and symbolic space of the home becomes a key site in which "cultural practices and meanings of consumption are created, embedded and transformed."¹²³

John Lukacs' essay "The Bourgeois Interior" is a good starting point for examining the interiors of a house, as his work brings a historical insight into the key elements that have been variously touched upon by the vast scholarship on domestic space. It was the relative lack of self-consciousness of the medieval people, he argues, that was reflected in rather bare interiors of the rich and poor alike. Drawing upon the work of Philip Aries' *Centuries of Childhood*, Lukacs traces the demarcation of rooms for specific functions and the gradual appearance of furniture in the seventeenth century:

What is involved here is far more important than the history of furniture: it involves the history of the family and the home. Domesticity, privacy, comfort, the concept of the home and of the family: these are, literally, principal achievements of the Bourgeois Age.¹²⁴

Drawing upon Lukacs' thesis that the furniture of the bourgeois home appeared simultaneously with the interiority of the human mind, Witold Rybczynski also delineates on the evolution of 'comfort' as he traces the history of 'home,' pointing to the increasing

¹²² Putnam, Tim. "Beyond the Modern Home: Shifting Parameters of Residence." *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, edited by Jon Bird. London: Routledge. 1993. Pp 150.

¹²³ Lane, Ruth and Andrew Gorman-Murray. "Introduction." *Material Geographies of Household Sustainability*, edited by Lane and Gorman-Murray. 2011. Surrey: Ashgate. Pp 3.

¹²⁴ Lukacs, John. "The Bourgeois Interior." *The American Scholar*. 39. Issue 4 (1970): Pp((616-30))).

significance of the materiality of home.¹²⁵ Daniel Miller, for instance, insists that much of human life in contemporary industrialised societies takes place behind closed doors, in the privacy of home, making people's relationship with their own home the focal point of attention: "It is the material culture within our home that appears as our appropriation of the larger world and often as the representation of that world within our private domain."¹²⁶ This study is an example of the growing interest in the creation of home through consumption, though the approach is only of tangential interest to the thesis.

Delving into the history of household furniture and objects is clearly beyond the scope of the present work, but research that points to the affective bonds and value people attach to their household effects surely opens another window into the meaning of home. Rachel Hurdley, for instance, in a study of objects in the home, analyses interview based narratives to show how people account for themselves by recounting stories of their home possessions.¹²⁷ A couple of essays in Duncan's cross-cultural study of housing examine the role of possessions in the construction of identity, proving to be a helpful resource to the present analysis.¹²⁸ Household objects, according to Linda Donley-Reid, derive meaning through their mundane or ceremonial use. Hence, they cannot be merely seen as passive or neutral backdrops for life but should be taken as agents that participate in creating and maintaining power relations.¹²⁹ In a landmark study on the meaning of home and prized possessions therein, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton interviewed three hundred people living in intergenerational households to analyse their description of their home, different rooms and the cherished objects to unravel the meaning of things as domestic symbols and their impact on the notion of 'self.' To begin with, they define 'people' and 'things,' and go on to explore the function of 'things.' Thus, if man is seen as the 'maker' and user of objects, they argue that objects in turn also 'make' and 'use' them. The subsequent sections on 'object relations and the 'development of the self', home as 'symbolic environment', as well as one on the transactions between persons and things and 'signs of family life' are particularly insightful to the thesis. According to the writers, the home can be seen as a 'shell' to shelter the owner's

¹²⁵ Rybczynski, Witold *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. New York: Penguin. 1987. Pp 35-36.

¹²⁶ Miller, Daniel. "Behind Closed Doors." *Home Possessions: Material Culture behind Closed Doors*, edited by D. Miller. Oxford: Berg. Pp 1.

¹²⁷ Hurdley, Rachel. "Dismantling Mantelpieces: Narrating Identities and Materialising Culture in the Home." *Sociology*. 40. Issue 4 (2006): Pp 717- 733.

¹²⁸ Duncan, J.S., ed. *Housing and Identity: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. London: Croom Helm. 1981.

¹²⁹ Donley-Reid, Linda W. "A Structuring Structure: the Swahili House." *Domestic Architecture*, edited by Susan Kent. 1990. Pp 115.

personality. Possessions, they argue, “(g)ive a tangible expression and thus a continued existence through signs to one’s relationships, experiences and values.”¹³⁰

The idea of ‘home’ has been seen as correlated with the idea of ‘family,’ not just in the popular imagination, but also substantiated by many scholars. For instance, Lukacs propounds that with the coming together of home and family, the idea of equating ‘home’ with ‘family’ finds many takers. This interpenetration of the idea of ‘home’ and ‘family’ is an important aspect this thesis explores. Numerous scholars have explored the ideas of ‘home’ and ‘family,’ as revealed in the literature on ‘house’ and ‘home’ this thesis draws upon. Philippe Aries, for instance, goes so far as to claim that “(t)he concept of the home is another aspect of the concept of the family.”¹³¹ For Graham Allan and Graham Crow, “(i)t is this idea of the active construction of the home around the family that explains the title given to (their) volume, *Home and Family: Creating the Domestic Sphere*.”¹³²

As domestic architecture has a dynamic relationship with the specific culture it is a part of, both conditioned by and conditioning it in turn, this introduction attempts to offset a possible criticism of the methodology employed by the thesis. At the risk of oversimplification, the rationale of using ‘Western’ empirical and theoretical study of houses and homes to analyse domestic space in narratives arguably based in an ‘Eastern’ culture could appear problematic. However, Anthony King’s discussion of the evolution of the ‘bungalow’ as a global house form is fruitful and relevant to this thesis in bringing the two together. He examines Western influences on an indigenous or vernacular house form in his work entitled *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture*. Not only does King trace the socio-economic and political factors in Colonial India that led to the evolution of the ‘bungalow’ as the symbol of imperial power, he also examines the processes by which the traditional ways of life and the dwellings in which they were conducted, were influenced and transformed by European ideas and lifestyles.¹³³ The introduction of furniture and cutlery, for instance, is just one of the many manifestations of that influence that are taken for granted realities of contemporary middle-class Indian homes.

¹³⁰ Csikszentmihalyi, M. and Rochberg-Halton, E. *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1981. Pp 189.

¹³¹ Aries, P. “The Family: From the Medieval to the Modern Family..” *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. 1962. Trsl by Robert Baldick. L’Enfant et la Vie Familiale Sous L’Ancien Regime. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1960., Pp 404.

¹³² Allan, G. and G. Crow. “Introduction” *Home and Family: Creating the Domestic Sphere*, edited by Graham Allan and G. Crow, Houndmills: The Macmillan Press. 1989. Pp 1.

¹³³ King, A.D. *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1984.

Moreover, by using empirical research on homes and houses to analyse fictional narratives may seem farfetched, but this thesis believes the homes and houses depicted in the narratives that the protagonists inhabit are not merely passive backdrop for the story. The materiality of the house actively shapes, as it is shaped by its residents. This contention can be substantiated by drawing upon Juhani Pallasmaa's argument: "Indeed, writers, film directors, poets, and painters do not just depict landscapes or houses as unavoidable geographic and physical settings of the events of their stories; they seek to express, evoke and amplify human emotions, mental states and memories through purposeful depictions of settings, both natural and man-made."¹³⁴

Going by a brief sampling of theories of spatial analysis given above, one can surmise that a study of the dwelling could variously reveal social structure and value systems, cultural norms and conventions even as it exposes the psychological framework of the characters. For purposes of the present research, this thesis explores the dwelling unit primarily in terms of the socio-spatial relationship between the household and the dwelling; the different households that may be sharing a dwelling, and the multiple houses that may be depicted in a narrative that the protagonists may inhabit at various points of time in the narrative.

It is beyond the scope of this work to include every novel centred around a house published in a given time period. Hence, this work resorts to the method of comprehensive sampling to arrive at a broad categories of types of dwelling represented so as to determine if there is any concomitant pattern in people-environment interaction; whether there are any changes in the pattern of use through the course of the narrative, and if so, what is the nature of change, and the outcome. A house is particularly meant to provide space for privacy and intimacy to its inhabitants. This study also proposes to examine to what extent this premise holds good, and whether the same is accessible to all inhabitants in equal measure. As this thesis examines the dynamics of space use by the inhabitants within a given domestic space, novels that have a clearly etched out house in which the protagonist(s) live, or once inhabited, have been shortlisted. Twelve Indian novels in English published between 1980 and 2010 have been chosen for the study, divided into six broad categories, on the basis of the kind of dwelling depicted, its affective value, and the role that the house plays in the narrative. Limiting the choice to books published within a certain time period is more to keep the scope of the study to manageable levels. Since categorization is only a tool to simplify analysis by

¹³⁴Pallasmaa, Juhani. *Encounters 2: Architectural Essays*, edited by Peter MacKeith. Finland: Rakennustieto Publishing. 2012.Pp 30.

discovering the underlying patterns, it can neither be final nor self-sufficient. There are overlapping elements which would only elucidate the complex ways in which dwellings can be represented and the various functions that they can play in the narrative. The six categories under which the narratives are discussed are: ‘striking roots: marking identity’; ‘moving home: relocate and return’; ‘dilapidated homes: endings and beginnings’; ‘house as threatening space or prison’; ‘back to roots: reclaiming (childhood) home.’

Taking a cue from the interdisciplinary studies done by scholars who have looked into the interface between domestic architecture, use of space and culture, this thesis analyzes the family dynamics in terms of their space use in given domestic spaces, to come to some understanding of how built space and space use impact family relationships and vice-versa. It problematises the changes in dynamics and its impact on the feeling of ‘homeliness’ one associates with the idea of ‘home.’ Architecture, in the words of Amos Rapoport, an expert in the field of environment-behaviour studies, “encloses behaviour”¹³⁵. He further elaborates on how to study behavior as a function of multiple factors at work in an environment of activity. The environment, he conceptualises, consists of:

fixed feature elements (buildings, floors, walls etc.), semi-fixed feature elements (“furnishings, etc.) and non-fixed feature elements (people and their activities and behaviours). Settings guide behaviour (i.e. non-fixed feature elements) not only, or even principally through the fixed feature elements of architecture but through semi-fixed feature elements which provide essential cues; other people present and their activities and behaviours are also most important cues.¹³⁶

Thus, an analysis of the given narratives entails examining not only the spatial features of the domestic spaces that the protagonists inhabit, but also the various furnishings, settings, objects therein and how the same are made use of by various members at various points of time. As one goes through the narratives, one can find ample evidence of how the three kinds of elements listed by Rapoport throw up different equations, giving rise to a variety of behavioural responses. At this point, it would be relevant to also mention Donald Sander’s observation that “(s)emiotic explanations provide a detailed theoretical foundation for

¹³⁵ Rapoport, Amos. “Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings.” *Domestic Architecture*, edited by Susan Kent. 1990. P9.

¹³⁶ ---. “Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings.” *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 13.

demonstrating links between architecture and behaviour....”¹³⁷ Eventually, this thesis examines the concept of ‘house’ as synonymous with ‘home’, where ‘home’ may be considered as a “concept of order and identity”. This study explores the various which meanings and imaginaries of home that obtain in the houses inhabited by the fictional characters.

In a seminal work entitled *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*(1994), Gaston Bachelard demarcates the house as a very special, quasi sacred space. It is, according to him, “(our) corner of the world, our first universe, a real cosmos....”¹³⁸ That he finds it akin to a ‘cradle’ highlights the crucial significance of the house in the life of an individual. However, if the brief, tentative categorization suggested above is anything to go by, this idyllic picture of the house as a ‘cradle’ seems to be less and less tenable. Most of the narratives seem to be housed in conflictual or threatening spaces. Homes full of warmth, care and joy are more often mere memories rather than a tangible reality. It is interesting to examine the gap, if any, between Bachelard’s ideal, and contemporary reality, albeit fictional. Thus, this thesis looks at the representation of the ‘house’ as built space and metaphor in fiction, by studying the subjective location of the protagonist within the frame work of the interplay between space use and architecture, which in turn, can be seen as a condition and reflection of culture.

Before embarking on the analysis of fictional narratives for this thesis, it would be prudent to look at similar research done recently. Malashri Lal’s study entitled *The Law of the Threshold: Women Writers in Indian English* (1995) analyses female subjectivity within the parameters of domestic space. However, as Malashri Lal clarifies, the study is specifically a methodological resource for feminist literary criticism in India. While the work allows for the manner in which the confines of the house is used literally to ‘contain’ the women therein, it is the metaphysical notions “that create totem and taboos of human conduct,” that are prioritized.¹³⁹ In *Indian Women in the House of Fiction*, Geetanjali Singh Chanda also locates her feminist reading of women’s fiction in the ‘house’, delineating on the form of the house, as the site of her thesis. Thus, a ‘Haveli’ or a ‘bungalow’ is seen as a gendered space where

¹³⁷ Sanders, Donald. “Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology: Method for the Analysis of Ancient Architectures.” *Domestic Architecture*., edited by Susan Kent. 1990. Pp 47.

¹³⁸ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. 1994. Pp 40.

¹³⁹ Lal, Malashri. *The Law of the Threshold: Women Writers in Indian English*. Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study. Second edition, 1995.

relationships between men and women or amongst women are renegotiated. While broadly looking at the 'structure' of the house that may 'contain' a joint or nuclear family, Chanda focuses on the concepts of 'home' and 'womenspace' in her study.¹⁴⁰

There have been occasional studies that incorporate spatial analyses of individual texts, especially those that lend themselves more obviously to such analyses, such as Rabindranath Tagore's *Home and the World*. Antoinette Burton, for instance, has written an article titled 'House / Daughter / Nation: Interiority, Architecture, and Historical Imagination in Janaki Majumdar's 'Family History'.'¹⁴¹

Seen as a gendered space, gender roles are played out in culturally conditioned ways in the house, with some cultures going to the extent of demarcating 'male' or public space and 'female' or private space within the house. Keeping in mind the work done by Malashri Lal and Geetanjali Singh Chanda, who examine the domestic space in terms of the location and position of woman in the house, the present study is not limited to presenting a specifically feminist reading of the house. It focuses on the study of the dwelling space as represented in fiction, the location of the character protagonist therein, the dynamics of space use and the interface amongst the family members. This work is different both in its extensive use of sociological studies of domestic architecture, theories of space and space use, as well as the body of literature that methodology is applied to, viz. contemporary Indian fiction in English.

The first chapter is entitled 'Striking Roots: Marking Identity' and examines novels that focus on building or establishing a desired dwelling. The purpose could either be to mark a change of status, usually to exhibit upward social mobility; or it may be necessitated by impending change of professional status, such as retirement. The second chapter is called 'Moving Home: Relocate and Return,' as it explores narratives where the protagonists have to change residence, only to come back later and re-establish themselves in their original homes. The movement allows for different experiences of 'home,' and thus, evokes varied meanings and understanding of the idea of 'home.' The third chapter is called 'Dilapidated Homes: Beginnings and Endings.' The two novels in this section have old and crumbling family homes at the centre, and the difference in inter-generational feelings and attachment to home leads to a deeper understanding of the idea, even as they mark continuity and change in the two narratives, respectively. Chapter 4, 'House as Threatening Space or Prison' examines

¹⁴⁰Chanda, Geetanjali Singh. *Indian Women in the House of Fiction*. New Delhi: Zuban Books. Reprint 2008.

¹⁴¹ Burton, Antoinette. "House/Daughter/ Nation: Interiority, Architecture, and Historical Imagination in Janaki Majumdar's "Family History"." *The Journal Of Asian Studies* 56 No. 3 (August 1997). Pp 921-946.

narratives where the female protagonists are subjected to familial violence, rendering home as 'prison.' The narratives also reveal how the 'victims' break free of the bond in their attempts at redefining 'home.'

The final chapter, 'Back to Roots: Home is Belonging' takes the protagonist back to their origins. The novels in this chapter revolve around the many 'homes' the protagonists establish and inhabit, but the conclusive move is towards a reclamation of the natal home, reiterating the power of the childhood home over the imagination. In the concluding chapter, to begin with, the commonalities across the various 'houses' and 'homes' bracketed under different categories are discussed. The discussion again takes up the notion of 'at-homeness,' to examine and explore the kinds of 'homes' the protagonists inhabit.

CHAPTER 1

STRIKING ROOTS, MARKING IDENTITY

“We are plants which- whether we like it or not- must with our roots rise out of the earth in order to bloom in the ether and bear fruit.”
(Martin Heidegger qtd. in Harvey, 1996)¹⁴²

“Man’s first priority is to build a decent house on this humble earth.
Building one on higher ground comes later.”¹⁴³

“Sona’s visions of herself as mistress of modern conveniences with vast rooms to spread out in gained clarity with every new development her brother-in-law took pains to acquaint her with.”¹⁴⁴

‘You see, Masi,’ said Nisha... ‘there is no place for me in this house...’ [*Home*, p 280].

. Human beings have an intense need to feel rooted, to have a sense of belonging to a place they can identify as their own. A place they can set forth into the world from, and can come back to. A place where they can be their own selves, without fear or inhibitions, a place not only that gives them shelter, but also nourishes them and helps them lead a fulfilling life.¹⁴⁵ Across cultures and continents, it is the ‘house’ that gives the human being that sense of belonging in the world, at one level not only fulfilling the essential need for shelter, but also anchoring our need for having a place we can call our own, we can identify with, and dwell in. As one of the characters, quoted above, reiterates, establishing one’s abode on earth should take precedence over working towards reserving a place for oneself in heaven. The next quote reflects the enthusiasm of a character filled with wonder as she visualises her

¹⁴²Harvey, David. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc. 1996. P 301.

¹⁴³ Khanna, Balraj. *Sweet Chillies*, London: Constable and Company, 1991. Pp 27. Subsequent references to the novel incorporated in the text with page numbers as *SC*.

¹⁴⁴Kapur, Manju,. *Home*, New Delhi: Random House Publishers, Sixth impression, 2012., Pp 175. Subsequent references to the text incorporated as *Home* with page numbers.

¹⁴⁵ Relph, E. “Geographical Experiences and Being-In-The-World: Phenomenological Origins of Geography,” in Seamon, D and Mugerauer, R. (eds.) *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards A Phenomenology of Person and World*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1989.

dream house taking shape. Yet, another character seems to be feeling out of place in her own house, the one place where a ‘feeling of belongingness’ is taken for granted by most people.

Christian Norberg-Schultz, an architectural phenomenologist charts out the connectedness between man and his environment through human history. In his work entitled *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1979), he propounds on our innate psychological need as human beings, for orientation in, and identification with the environment we are a part of, in the absence of which we could suffer from a feeling of ‘being lost’.¹⁴⁶ The opposite of being lost would be the feeling of security that comes from ‘dwelling’. Dwelling, according to him, primarily presupposes “*identification with the environment*” [italics in original].¹⁴⁷ He goes on to explicate how in primitive societies, man knew the most insignificant of environmental details, but modern urban man’s relationship with the natural environment is “fragmentary.” “Instead, he has to identify with man made things, such as streets and houses.”¹⁴⁸ Human identity, Norberg-Schulz contends, is to a great extent, a function of places and things. Since man has traditionally valourised freedom, true freedom, he argues, presupposes ‘belonging,’ and “‘dwelling’ means belonging to a concrete place.” Drawing upon Heidegger, Norberg-Schulz etymologically delves into the several connotations of the word ‘dwell.’ Thus, ‘dwelling’ encompasses connotations of ‘to be at peace’, ‘to be free, protected from harm or danger’, as well as ‘building,’ ‘habit’ and ‘habitat.’ “Man dwells when he is able to concretise the world in buildings and things. Again, drawing on Heidegger’s elucidation of the interrelationship between ‘building’, ‘being’ and ‘dwelling’, Norberg-Schulz concludes that “...dwelling means to gather the world as a concrete building or “thing”, and that the archetypal act of building is...enclosure Only poetry in all its forms (also as the “art of living”) makes human existence meaningful, and *meaningful* is the fundamental human need. ...When the environment is meaningful man feels “at home.” The places where we have grown up are such “homes”; we know exactly how it feels to walk on that particular ground, to be under that particular sky, or between those particular trees.... In general, we know the “realities” which carry our existence.¹⁴⁹

Taking on from Norbert-Schulz’s explication of the significance of an ‘enclosure’ or building, that gives us a sense of being rooted to a place, and that only in a ‘meaningful

¹⁴⁶ Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* .New York: Rizzoli.reprint 1984. Pp 20-23.

¹⁴⁷Norberg-Schulz. *Genius Loci*. 1984. Pp 20.

¹⁴⁸ Norberg-Schulz. *Genius Loci*.1984. Pp 21.

¹⁴⁹ Norberg-Schulz. *Genius Loci*. 1979. Pp 23

environment' can we 'feel at home,' a feeling of security that comes with our identification with one's home, this chapter examines this 'identification' with one's home through a close reading of two narratives primarily revolving around establishing roots, i.e. building up the family house, and turning it into 'home' literally and figuratively. It explores the many facets that make a 'house' a 'home,' even as it exposes the varying parameters of defining 'home.' Thus, for instance, one of the narratives embodies only a materially/ materialistically progressive definition of 'house' - from a 'shapeless mud house' in a refugee camp to a swank house in a posh neighbourhood. 'Home'to the protagonists, however, always remains the place where the family is housed together. Kapur's novel, on the other hand, throws up far more complex facets of 'home,' even as the narrative embodies the family's moves towards rebuilding the house to mark their rise in status and prosperity. This linkage between the house, status, and identity, an aspect shared by both the novels that entail a move into a bigger, more impressive house to proclaim one's 'rise' in the world will also be explored at length in this chapter.

While it is important to explore the social, psychological and emotive aspects of attachment to home, turning the house into an expression of aspirational needs points to the political and economic aspects of home. A common factor shared by both the narratives discussed below is the way the character's desire to improve their status in society is channelized into creating or upgrading their residential accommodation.¹⁵⁰ Discussing the significance of place and political economy, David Harvey argues that since the 1970s, the rapid changes in the pattern of global accumulation have made us more insecure in our places. To compensate for the increasing uncertainty about the meaning of place in general, people try to invest in both place-construction and the creation of the 'right' images.¹⁵¹ Drawing upon Harvey's argument, Hazel Easthope contends that

[t]his is increasingly true of our dwelling places, as people spend more and more money on improving the images of the houses and apartments where they live. Hence, as a result of the perceived threat to place posed by the volatile

¹⁵⁰ Edward Relph argues that "[t]o build a new house or to settle in a new territory is a fundamental project, equivalent perhaps to a repetition of the founding of the world." *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion Ltd. 1976. Pp 83.

¹⁵¹ David Harvey. "From Space to Place and Back Again" *Justice, Nature and Geography of Difference*. Cambridge, Massachussettes: Blackwell Publishers. Inc. 1996. Pp 297. Print.

processes of globalisation, there has been an increasing trend for people to invest more money in place construction.¹⁵²

If the respective narratives exemplify the character's attempts and desire to make themselves a better home, it is a move that can also be seen emerging from particular socio-economic changes resulting from globalisation.

Another approach to understanding the value of house ownership and identity is explored by John Agnew in his essay "Home Ownership and Identity in Capitalist Societies". Agnew draws upon Marxian theory of self-evaluation in capitalist societies in order to explicate on the significance of 'house-ownership' as a basis for judging self-worth.¹⁵³ As capitalist societies offer little basis for self-evaluation, people necessarily turn to the objects they own as a means of self-evaluation. Thus, "the possession of a house offers a major physical object for use as an indicator of status and a source of personal autonomy," even as it also has an "exchange value...as...a commodity that can be bought and sold."¹⁵⁴

Apart from fulfilling a social need, a house also fulfils our basic need for territoriality. In his article "*Home: The Territorial Core*," J.D.Porteous argues that the home satisfies all three of man's territorial needs, viz., the control, personalisation and the defense of space. He goes on to elaborate that the personalisation of space is an "assertion of identity" and through defense of space, stimulation is achieved and security ensured. He elaborates further, that the home accords both 'physical' and 'psychic security'.¹⁵⁵ Nancy G Duncan refers to Simone Weil's well known suggestion "that private property is 'a vital need for the soul.'"¹⁵⁶

Balraj Khanna's *Sweet Chillies* (1991) and Manju Kapur's *Home* (2006) are narratives that revolve around families who are setting up homes, building, and modifying the house as the family grows. Both the novels depict business families and the ensuing modification, expansion, even change of house is necessitated not only by a growing family, but also affected by a rise in prosperity. Yet, despite these commonalities, there are also marked differences in the dynamics of space use across the two narratives. Khanna's novel opens with the only son coming home with his new bride and any conflict of space use comes from inter-

¹⁵² Easthope, H. "A Place Called Home." *Housing, Theory and Society* 21 Issue 3 (2004) Pp 128-138; p 136. .

¹⁵³ Agnew, John, "Home Ownership and Identity in Capitalist Societies." *Housing and Identity: Cross Cultural Perspectives*, edited by J S Duncan. London: Croom Helm. 1981. Print. Pp 60-97. Pp. 74-76.

¹⁵⁴ Agnew, John. "Home Ownership". *Housing and Identity*. Ed. by J.S. Duncan 1981. Pp 74.

¹⁵⁵ Porteous, J Douglas, "Home: The Territorial Core." *The Geographical Review*. 66. No. 4 (1976)Pp 383-390. Pp 383.

¹⁵⁶ Duncan, Nancy G. "Home Ownership and Social Theory." *Housing and Identity*. Ed. by J.S. Duncan. 1981.Pp 98-134. Pp 112.

generational pulls or from the grand aspirations of the young son, who dreams not only of expanding the business but also of changing their residence to a more 'respectable' or posh part of town. Compared to this simple narrative of rise and growth of a unit family, Manju Kapur's novel *Home* is more complex. It depicts a joint family, with two grown up sons and a daughter, their respective marriages and the concomitant tussle over space use that ensues. The conflict is not just intergenerational, it is also intra-generational, as well as across the gender divide. However, as in the first novel, this family is also driven by aspirations and the desire to proclaim to the world the rise in their status and prosperity by building for themselves a bigger and grand house.

The patriarch in the novel *Sweet Chillies* started off as a refugee from Pakistan, eking a living initially as the owner of a small *dhaba*, then a *halwai* shop in the dusty little town of Panchkula, dreaming of setting up shop in the swank new capital, Chandigarh. Khanna's prequel to this novel entitled *A Nation of Fools* (1988) delineates Shadi Lal's trials and tribulations as he goes about fulfilling his dream of being the proud owner of a proper 'red-brick' establishment, a far cry from the 'wood and corrugated dump,' that passes for his present premises, or the 'shapeless mud house' in the refugee camp that was 'home.'¹⁵⁷ Pinning his hopes on his young son, he has not only managed to get a toehold in the capital city, but, true to his word, reaps benefits from the investment in his son's English tuitions. Confident of impressing the city's elite with his accent, the only thing his son worries about is their residence above the shop: "But the shop worried him. He could improve his accent, but what about his home?"¹⁵⁸ Looking back on his life, Shadi Lal Khatri is quite satisfied with his progress, from a pennyless Partition survivor, to the owner of a posh restaurant in Chandigarh. His son, Om Prakash Khatri, however, thinks otherwise. Omi, as the protagonist is called, is in fact ashamed of a past that was marked by the Dhaba and the Halwai Shop; the present, revolving around the Restaurant, with their house above it was 'fine,' but he has his eyes firmly set on a bigger future. "What would they say when they saw the Khatri's lived above a shop converted into a restaurant in Sector 23! *Nobody* lived in Sector 23" (SC, 189-190) [emphasis in original]. A graduate and married off by his parents at twenty-one, the narrative is an account of the protagonist fulfilling his dreams of not only becoming a millionaire by twenty-five, but also effecting a move to a posh address.

¹⁵⁷ Khanna, Balraj. *A Nation of Fools: Or, Scenes From Indian Life*, London: Michael Joseph. 1984.

¹⁵⁸ Khanna, Balraj. *A Nation of Fools*. 1984. Pp 192.

Set in the post-Partition era, the novel projects 'English' as the language of status and aspiration. An unlettered man himself, Shadi Lal Khatri however is well aware of the horizons that open up for those well-versed in English and ensures his son speaks the language fluently by hiring a college professor to teach him. In fact, the success of the restaurant is apparently due, in some measure, to the patronage of the smart young, English educated crowd of Chandigarh, also known as 'Simla Pinks' in the novel. Of course, it was only Omi's impeccable English with the right accent that has given him a toehold in this exclusive, upper-class society. The Khatri's have managed to create an ambiance in their restaurant that was quite in contrast to the typical bazaar outside, with vendors soliciting customers as they haggle loudly over the prices. But inside the Pall Mall Restaurant, it was a different world altogether: "Inside were people from a different planet. They had haloes behind their head which outshone its soft lights and they talked in hush voices as they sampled the Pall Mall specialities" (SC,155).

The highlight of the opening scene is the arrival of the bride, accompanied by a huge dowry that literally leaves the world "awestruck":

it had never seen anything like it- a brand new sofa set in lush green velvet, a dining table complete with six chairs, a full-length-mirror dressing-table [sic], twin palangs (beds) with sculptured legs and feet and lush green velvet quilts, a Murphy radio, a revolving electric fan, a Royal Albert dinner service, his 'n' her made-in-England Raleigh Bicycles, a Singer sewing-machine, a Godrej steel almirah, two Romer wrist watches, two Parker pens, an Afghan carpet, more furniture and crockery and cutlery and brassware, two trunkload of saris ... (SC 13-14).

The social obligation of providing a dowry [on the father of the bride] notwithstanding, there doesn't seem to be any suitable space in the modest house above the restaurant. All the fancy goods and furniture are rather unceremoniously crammed into Omi's old room, now the 'Bridal Suite.' If the beds with the sculptured legs don't seem incongruous enough, the 'Royal Albert dinner service' and the 'Parker pens' certainly seem out of place in the household of an unlettered and rustic '*halwai-turned- restaurateur*,' to say the least. Interestingly, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton have pointed out that "the things people use, own, and surround themselves with might quite accurately reflect aspects of the owner's

personality.”¹⁵⁹ One can thus see that these very incongruous artefacts such as the Albert dinner service or the Parker pens serve to hint at an acquired ‘English’ taste and education of the new bride who has brought them along, a fact yet to be revealed to the protagonist and the reader.

What follows in the narrative is an inter-generational clash over the relatively ‘modern’ notions of intimacy and privacy. The newly-wed Omi loses all interest in the restaurant downstairs that had until now been his life and the house becomes just a place to eat and sleep in. Marriage opens up another world for him as he now loathes to leave the ‘bridal-suite’ to look after his business. Adding to the allure of a nubile young bride is the unexpected discovery that she can converse in impeccable ‘Queen’s English.’ The next day, for instance, his newly married son fails to show up for their routine visit to the local market for the day’s groceries, emerging from the ‘bridal-suite’ only at noon, much to the elder Khatri’s disappointment. The parents could hear the new bride through the night, as they slept on the roof, worried if the neighbours could hear them too. Paro, Khatri’s wife, gives them a lecture on being more discreet, even as her daughter-in-law cringes with embarrassment. Even though the flat is clean and spacious with all the basic amenities, it proves to be insufficient to contain the exuberance of the newly married couple. Made of thin pine wood, the closed doors fail to muffle the sounds of the young couple cavorting with each other. They never seem to get enough time with each other, are seldom left alone and are on constant lookout for moments of togetherness and intimacy. Khatri, in fact, has to announce his arrival upstairs into the house, each time he ventures there in his wife Paro’s absence, else he is sure to run into the pair ensconced in each other’s arms in just about any corner of the house. “Khatri had to develop a new habit he was not particularly fond of – of coughing loudly while coming up the stairs when he knew Paro was not at home and they were” (SC,85). Clearly, the older Khatri belongs to a generation that learnt to be discreet, having lived in cramped quarters and in close proximity to the extended family, a trait the younger generation is yet to imbibe. This clash across generations over the idea of ‘conjugal privacy,’ only a mild irritant here, surfaces to disturbing consequences, in the novel *Home* discussed later in the chapter.

Following the honoured tradition of the devout householder, Khatri announces his decision of handing over reins of the business to his son, now that he has fulfilled his ‘worldly’ duties and can devote his time to seeking spiritual fulfilment. Omi, however, has his

¹⁵⁹ Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Eugene Rochberg-Halton. “What Things Are For”.. *The Meaning of Things Domestic: Domestic Symbols and The Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Pp 14.

own plans and is dismayed by the possibility of having to devote himself entirely/ full time to the business, when he would much rather devote himself to a far more attractive proposition at home. However, before he takes on the mantle, he proposes to take his bride for a 'honeymoon' to Simla, like the 'Simla Pinks,' even as his mother is aghast at the idea. As the narrative projects 'English' as the means that helps one move faster on the road to success, there are a number of instances where it literally catapults them into the right circles and helps establish elite alliances. Thus, on way to Simla for the honeymoon, they coincidentally befriend the young owners of the fanciest hotel in Simla, The Ritz, where they get to stay on the house, amidst the company of Royalty and the elite. At the hotel, they charm the Prince and Princess of Kalan Pur so much that the latter leave behind a necklace and a pair of cufflinks for Omi and his wife Munni, as a farewell gift.

Once he gets back home from the honeymoon, Omi knows he has to find a fool-proof way to keep his father from going into exile and enlists the help of the family Guru to talk sense into his father. By way of exhorting his disciple to shelve his idea of renouncing life of the householder, the Guru tells Shadi Lal he still has much to accomplish, such as building a "bigger house," besides expanding the family business. Of course, it is interesting that the Guru can formulate his advice for expanding the business and get him more involved by speaking in terms of building a bigger house, apart from may be a bigger restaurant or a hotel. Rapoport in his essay "Identity and Environment: a Cross-cultural Perspective," contends that the house or dwelling plays a significant role as a marker of one's identity and /or status depending on whether relations in the community are structured on the principle of 'collectivism' , or 'individualism'. While the former, he argues, sees the house merely as "a container of women and goods," the latter sees the house as "a status symbol critical to one's social or personal identity."¹⁶⁰ He makes a case for contemporary Western culture as one that tends to give primacy to the individual, whereby the concepts of 'self-identity' and 'self-esteem' given paramount importance. It is in this backdrop that the house has been seen as a 'symbol of self,' an aspect that rings true in the Khanna's novel as well. A newly-independent India, the juncture in history where the given narrative is located, is presented as a society deeply influenced by Western culture, reflected in the 'Simla Pinks' portrayed in the narrative.

¹⁶⁰ Rapoport, Amos. "Identity and Environment: A Cross Cultural Perspective". *Housing and Identity: Cross-cultural Perspectives*. ed. J.S. Duncan. London: Croom Helm, 1981. pp 9-11.

The idea of moving out of the neighbourhood to a more 'posh' locality begins to take shape primarily as a means of marking their rise in business, but the actual move to the new house is precipitated by their new proximity to the Chief Minister's wife. Omi has, of course always been self-conscious and embarrassed about living in a house above the restaurant, a fact he is at pains to hide from the 'Simla Pink' circle. It seemed to be extremely 'unfashionable' from their point of view. To add to it is the incident with a jealous neighbour Hiralal, whom Omi and his father beat up in the market for causing the misunderstanding about the jewels the Prince of Kalan Pur had given as a gift. Even as Paro berates the father and son for fighting with a neighbour like street urchins, she uses the opportunity to reiterate the Guru's suggestion of building a house in a better locality like the 'North End.' Hira Lal, in the mean time, takes them to court, where he loses the case and vows to take revenge.

That the idea of a new house in a posh locality is uppermost in Omi's mind is reflected in his meeting with his wife's mentor Mrs. Doolittle. Omi, enamoured by all things English, is completely charmed by Ms Doolittle, the old English lady who had tutored Munni in her flawless English,. When Ms. Doolittle expresses a desire to see the capital city Chandigarh, he promptly extends her an invitation as the first house-guest at their 'new house,' even as Munni listens dumbfounded. There is no 'new house' that the family can claim ownership over at this point in the narrative. Yet, whether it is to get away from a crass neighbourhood, or to entertain his anglicised guests, or a place he deemed fit to receive an august personage as the Chief Minister's wife, Omi is determined to move into a posh North End house.

Egged on by his son, Khatri senior again starts making plans to expand his business. Emboldened by his Guru's advice, he starts to dream of setting up a five star hotel. Through connivance with Government Officials, they acquire a plot of land at a low rate for their hotel. However, they are befooled by a middleman trying to arrange for the loan, who claims since no bank is willing to give a loan, he can arrange for a buyer at half the cost. Even as they try to find a way to make good their investment, Omi gets an invite to tea at the Chief Minister's Residence. Though the senior Khatri is reluctant to go to the Residence of his idol, Omi feels quite in his element there. Khatri senior is, nevertheless, proud like his son, of having reached a stage where they can rub shoulders with the Who's Who of the State.

His boy, totally relaxed, was in his element... He belonged here, in this perfumed garden smelling of power and money and... well, just smelling good. Smells get into you. In due course they become your body smells, your own smells.

The smells of the perfumed garden had got into Omi (SC, 189).

As various members of his family try to negotiate their way through this gathering of the rich and the famous, with varying degrees of success, it is his mother Paro, an unlettered rustic woman, who deals a master stroke by inviting the Chief Minister's wife to their house for tea. Needless to add, this proximity with the first Family of the State opens many a door for them.

In an essay entitled "*Home As Haven, Home As Trap*," Clare Cooper Marcus examines the extent and the kind of emotional attachment people have with their house, through a field study of people who had extremely positive or negative feelings for their abode. Through her explorations of these deep feelings, Cooper surmises that the home can either be a haven or a trap.¹⁶¹ It is through the character of the young daughter-in-law and her exposure to other young women, that the reader is presented with contrasting experiences of 'home' and 'house.' Thus, in contrast to the freedom that Munni enjoys in the Khatri household is the case of the neighbour's daughter-in-law Asha, who is practically kept imprisoned in the marital home by her in-laws. In fact, she is known in the neighbourhood as the 'Black Lady of the Window,' as she is always seen glued to the windowpane, gazing out wistfully, well and truly trapped in the house.¹⁶² Eventually, with the help of her friend Munni, Asha manages to escape and join her husband who lives independently in another town for work. On the other hand Munni's exposure to the lifestyle of a high society woman Titli, has her wide eyed with wonder at everything from the posh address, an opulence matching the Chief Minister's house, to the liveried servants. The naïve Munni finds they have something in common, the 'Albert tea service,' pleased that its ownership puts her at par with the affluent woman. However, Omi's old girlfriend, manipulative as ever, also exposes his wife to the underside of this society, making her flee in disgust. Yet, despite her naiveté, it is her husband Omi who proves far more susceptible. The wealth and the lifestyle of the 'Simla Pinks' rub off on him as he leaves no stone unturned to outdo even his father's aspirations. Of course, as the

¹⁶¹ Marcus, Clare Cooper. "Home-As-Haven, Home-As Trap" *The Spirit of Home: Proceedings of the 74th Annual Meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture*, 1986. Ed. Patrick Quinn and Robert Benson. Washington DC: Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 2006. Pp 2.

¹⁶² There are numerous connotations to the image of the woman by the window, as a fascinating study of 'Dutch windows' by Irene Cieraad reveals. For instance, she argues that "[t]he symbolic interpretation of the historical relationship between Dutch women and Dutch windows stresses the coinciding of two important borderlines: a physical one and a societal one." "Dutch Windows: Female Virtue and Female Vice". *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*. Ed by Irene Cieraad New York: Syracuse University Press (1999) p 50.

narrative unfolds, the family has to bear the unsavoury consequences of their dalliance with power and money to get rich quick.

Various studies have established the significance of a private garden vis-à-vis the idea of ‘home-making,’ as both the home and the garden is best treated as ‘fluid’ in terms of its ‘meanings and boundaries,’ offering ‘multiple social possibilities.’¹⁶³ Drawing upon geographical and sociological perspectives, Bhatti and Church argue that the garden can variously be seen as “a social place for sharing; a connection to personal history; a reflection of one’s identity; a status symbol,” etc.¹⁶⁴ The garden as a symbol of identity and status resonates through the narrative in question. The daughter-in-law’s parents, the Kandharis, are lucky to have a gardener who can work magic with his hands, and the garden at their residence is unmatched in its splendour. The senior Khatri, typically tries to ‘buy’ the services of the famed Mali, only to be snubbed by the latter, as his art is not for sale. Eventually, however, it is for the love of his master’s daughter Munni that the Mali agrees to create a garden at the Khatri’s house in Chandigarh. Thus, with her marriage, the daughter-in-law not only brings with her a dowry that leaves the neighbours awestruck, she is also the reason the Khatri’s soon have the bald patch outside their house turn into a beautiful garden blooming with flowers. An enviable mark of status, it turns the head of no less a personage than the Chief Minister’s wife. An unwilling Mali is soon forced by the precedence of rank to go and work on the Chief Minister’s garden as well. The Khatri’s, in turn, make optimum use of their new-found connections.

The Khatri’s are soon catapulted into the big league, as they change their place of residence and get their dream project going. Befitting their newfound ‘status’ and ‘connections’, they move into a big house with a garden in Sector 9, in the neighbourhood of the rich and the powerful. With the Sardarni’s patronage, they get all the requisite clearances, and the work on the construction of their five-star Hotel begins. Riding on the wave of power and contacts, little do they realise that there is a price for everything, even so called ‘gratitude’ and ‘friendship.’ When the Sardarni demands her pound of flesh by way of a quarter of the share in the hotel, the Khatri’s get trapped in a web of deceit. Since they refuse to give in to her demands, they have no choice but to give up their recent privileges. One of

¹⁶³ Bhatti, Mark and Andrew Church. “Cultivating Natures: Homes and Gardens in Late Modernity”. *Sociology* 35.2 (2001).Pp 365-383. Also, Mark Bhatti and Andrew Church. “I Never Promised You A Rose Garden’: Gender, Leisure and Home-making,”. *Leisure Studies* 19 (2000). Pp 183-197,; Freeman, Claire, et al., “My Garden is an Expression of Me”: Exploring Householder’s Relationships with Their Gardens”. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 32 (2012) pp 136-143.

¹⁶⁴Bhatti and Mark, “Cultivating Natures” .Op. Cit. 2001 p 380.

the focal points of the narrative is the move into a bigger house befitting the family's rise in status or a mark of their progress. This is quite in keeping with Newmark and Thompson's argument that housing fulfils each of Maslow's five needs, particularly the one regarding the fourth level or self-esteem needs.¹⁶⁵ In the introduction to their book, they explicate how each of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is fulfilled. In most cultures, they argue, housing has a status-conferring function. They explain that success grants status, and in allowing a family to move up, it is realised through improved housing in a better locality. "[T]o the extent our homes enhance our feelings of personal worth, they contribute to self-esteem needs."¹⁶⁶ The move to a bigger house is an essential part of establishing their new-found status in society. And now they are about to be uprooted again.

Khatri was paralysed. He did not have the heart to sell this lovely house, his first real home after being kicked out of Peshawar by the tide of politics and Indian madness- communalism and regionalism. It had taken him all these years to get into it: he was not going to give it up, not without a fight (*SC*, 241)

More than the setback in business, it is in having to give up their posh house that deeply affects the Khatri. Having been uprooted once due to the Partition makes the older Khatri dread dispossession. All his subsequent hard work and energies have focused on re-establishing himself firmly in society, carving a solid base he could not ever be dislodged from again. That is why he could never settle for simply a 'roof over their heads,' and keeps striving for something better than his humble abode as a refugee. Thus, it was after a long struggle and hard work that he had managed to move from a refugee camp to own a red brick, modern house in the Capital city. The subsequent move to the 'North End house' had really marked his 'arrival' in society, a move that filled him with pride. It signified to him the culmination of his struggle, marking his progress, the house symbolising the end of his long journey. That's why he finds it so difficult to part with it.

Pushed on the mat by the Sardarni's machinations, the Khatri is in a tight spot as they can neither find a buyer for the house, nor someone willing to finance their project. Omi's hotelier friend Bunny can only make a promise in principle, and when a desperate Omi tries to

¹⁶⁵ Newmark, Norma L. & Patricia J. Thompson. eds. *Self, Space, Shelter: An Introduction to Housing*. San Francisco: Canfield Press. 1977

¹⁶⁶ Newmark & Thompson. *Self, Space, Shelter*. 1977. Op. Cit., Pp 10.

meet the Chief Minister, he is put in the police lock up for the night. Once the letter from the bank arrives informing them of imminent ‘legal action’ or bankruptcy, Omi has a horrifying and humiliating vision of all their possessions up for a public auction out in the street. “*This handsome dressing-table complete with full length mirror and four drawers, original price 140 rs. Bidding starts at Rs.5. ...*”(SC, 255). To visualise one’s house and its possessions up for auction would certainly come across as humiliating experience, for it would be akin to having one’s inner, private world that is closed against the uninvited gaze, exposed to the world at large. Finch and Hayes argue that the centrality of ‘privacy’ to the concept of ‘home’ can help explain the discomfort which people experience in entering someone else’s home without invitation.¹⁶⁷ The inverse of this theorem can, in turn, help explain the discomfort that the protagonist experience, to have their household possessions out in the open, exposed to the eyes of the neighbours and random strangers. It is as if, in effect, all the material goods that make up ‘home’, enclosed within the house from unwanted prying eyes, is laid bare and exposed.¹⁶⁸ Thus, the protagonist of *Sweet Chilli* is extremely discomfited by this feeling of having their private world open to unwanted scrutiny, and, under the circumstances, ridicule. Omi feels sorry for his parents and his wife, feeling responsible for having dragged them into this situation, propelled by his overambitious desires.

Forced by the turn of events to give up the fancy address, watched by the neighbours as they shamefacedly go back to their old house above the restaurant in Sector 23, from where they had moved out with so much disdain. Surprisingly, Paro takes it more bravely than the others, reminding her husband they had survived the far worse days of the Partition. Though Omi expected his mother to take it hard, she surprises him with her resilience, reminding her husband of having survived a worse crisis, when they lost everything to the Partition. It’s their faithful servants who actually breakdown at their plight.

However, another tragedy awaits them as they approach their Restaurant and home. The Pall Mall is on fire, and burns down .. “The Khatri were homeless...Refugees a second time...” [SC, P 261]. After the initial shock is over, Omi finds solace in recovering this loss through insurance, and is also pleased to find his friend Bunny come in with his offer of

¹⁶⁷ Finch, J. and L. Hayes. “Inheritance, Death, and the Concept of the Home.” *Sociology* 28 Issue2 (May, 1994) Pp 417-433. Web..

¹⁶⁸ R.J. Lawrence contends that the experience of ‘home’ is marked by “dwelling practices and human relationships that endow domestic space, activities, and *objects* with cherished meaning.” [emphasis mine]. “What Makes a House a Home.” *Environment and Behaviour* Vol 19 No. 2 (March 1987) p 162. Web

partnership for building the hotel. Since the threat of taking revenge after his last skirmish with Omi, Heeralal, the jeweller is the prime suspect for having a motive to cause the fire. It is his servant who reveals Heeralal has gone on a pilgrimage to celebrate the purchase of the house in Sector 9, in the name of a false company in Delhi. The mystery of the secret buyer is finally revealed.

The neighbours offer to take in the Khattris, but Paro prefers to be with her sister. Though Omi suggests they to go to a fancy hotel, no one else seems keen; in the end, it felt oddly "...comforting to be all together" (SC, 262). Once Heeralal is charged and tried, justice prevails as he agrees to sell back their Sector 9 house to them at the same price he had bought it, and the novel closes with the celebrations of the birth of Omi's son. Whether it is Munni's brush with the high-society woman Titli, or the family's tryst with the Chief Minister's wily wife, the moneyed class with their big houses and lavish lifestyles that Omi seemingly aspires for and tries to emulate, have not been presented in complimentary light. Perhaps that is why the end of the narrative sees them back at their starting point, for Omi had tried to go too far, too fast. What is undeniable, however, is the zeal to stake claim over a place that marks their progress and rise in status.

Manju Kapur's 2006 novel entitled *Home* also revolves around a joint business family with a large, well established shop and their own house in Karolbagh, a commercial hub of Delhi. The narrative introduces two sisters, both married but childless. While Sona is married to the eldest son of a well-established cloth merchant, the other, Rupa, is married to a poorly paid government servant and makes pickles and preserves to augment the family income. In the opening scene, they are seen arguing over who is happier of the two, the one who has the entire 'house' to call her own, or the one whose 'house' is under dispute but has a loving 'home.' There is, thus, an underlying refrain about the idea of 'home' and the concomitant feeling of 'belongingness' that the protagonists feel that they are denied by their respective circumstances. Clearly, Sona misses the emotive aspect in her experience of 'home,' while Rupa feels she loses out due to the dispute over 'ownership' of the residence.¹⁶⁹ As this novel is women-centric, the narrative is necessarily structured around their lives in a patriarchal set-

¹⁶⁹ The emotive aspect of home is discussed by Jeanne Moore in "Placing *Home* in Context," *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 20, Pp 207-217; for a discussion of 'ownership' and tenure, see Peter Williams in "Constituting Class and Gender: A Social History of the Home, 1700-1901". *Class and Space: The Making of an Urban Society*, edited by Nigel Thrift and Peter Williams. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1987. Pp 154-204.

up, subject to constant surveillance and censure, depending on the fulfilment of their respective hetero-normative roles.

With her husband and father-in-law locked in an unending legal battle against a tenant who refuses to vacate, and the concomitant drain on their resources, Rupa feels her sister Sona is lucky to have no such worries: “At least your house is properly your own.” “Depends on what you mean by properly, thought Sona sourly” (*Home*, 24). To Sona, on the other hand, a troublesome tenant seems to be the most insignificant of worries, for Rupa is otherwise happy with a caring husband and a benign father-in-law, despite her childlessness. Sona’s courtship and marriage to Yashpal, the elder son of the Banwari Lal family, in contrast, had caused a lot of heartburn to the family. His insistence on marrying the beautiful young girl who had walked into their sari shop horrifies the parents, for her family is no match in money or status. They had, instead, hoped to arrange an alliance for their son that would be a strategic value addition to the business. Left with no choice but to give in to his demand, the initial section of the narrative reveals the changed family dynamics as the bride settles in her marital home.

It doesn’t take long for young Sona to feel the brunt of her mother-in-law’s obvious dislike for her. If having come without any dowry isn’t reason enough for the old woman to hold her in disfavour, having her besotted son spend more time than ever before at home, hovering around his new bride, only fuels her anger. Thus, throughout the day, Sona is treated like an ‘unwanted intruder’ in the house by her mother-in-law, until the men-folk return, whereupon the matriarch makes it seem like ‘one big happy family’. The younger brother-in-law is temporarily moved to the dining room, until it is time for him to get married. The mother-in-law’s machinations are emblematic of Linda Donley-Reid’s contention that “architecture plays an active role in structuring social hierarchies and creating power strategies.” (qtd. in Kent: 1990)¹⁷⁰

Wary of losing out on the material gains accruing from a son’s marriage the second time around, the parents are careful to fix a ‘good’ match for the younger son. From the makeshift arrangements in the dining hall, the younger son is elevated to the upstairs quarters, lording over the large dowry brought in by the new bride. The apartment is fully furnished by the father of the bride before she even steps in. “The most extensive studies of objects as

¹⁷⁰ Kent, Susan. “Activity Areas and Architecture: An Interdisciplinary View of the Relationship Between Use of Space and Domestic Built Environments.” Ed. Susan Kent. *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An Inter-disciplinary Cross-cultural Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Pp 3.

expression of the self,” argue Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, in their book on domestic objects, “have been done in connection with the status giving role of things.”¹⁷¹ What comes across clearly in the narrative is the way the younger daughter-in-law’s status in the family hierarchy is automatically elevated, literally and otherwise, by virtue of the household goods she brings into the marriage, as her dowry. The system of ‘dowry’ is of course peculiar to Indian culture, practically determining the ‘status’ of the bride in the family. Writing on women and society in India, Neera Desai and M. Krishnaraj contend that receiving a large dowry for a son is considered a mark of status of the family: “The quick economic gain by a family/ group are exhibited by the show of wealth at the time of marriage.”¹⁷² Not only will the reader be witness to differential treatment of the two daughters-in-law by the family, but also be able to discern differential experiences of ‘home’ for the new incumbents of the household. As the narrative unfolds, one shall see the complex dynamics of space use play out within the house, substantiating Susan Kent’s theorem on the role of culture as a determinant of space use and vice versa: “...culture structures behaviour in terms of the use of space and that the use of space structures cultural material in terms of built environment.”¹⁷³ What is interesting is that these spatial dynamics will be played out over time across generations, reflecting the cultural ethos of the middle-class India family.

Sona can only feign pride in showing visitors around the ‘fully stocked kitchen’ and the ‘rooms furnished with the fancy furniture,’ but they fill her with a sense of inadequacy that all her husband’s love cannot recompense. She knows it is her childlessness despite two years of marriage that has denied her the privilege of moving into the upstairs quarters, which would have been rightfully hers, with or without the fancy furniture. The ‘bulk’ of the newly-furnished apartment, in all its resplendence, weighs heavily on her. Of course, to maintain the façade of ‘family unity,’ all meals are cooked and eaten downstairs collectively, and the upstairs kitchen is only to be used for some tea and the like, or for emergencies.

Bolstered up by the solid worth of her dowry, the younger daughter-in-law stakes her claim in the marital home in a way the elder one never could. Giving birth to two sons in quick succession cements her position, even as it renders the still childless Sona in an even more vulnerable situation. Despite a husband who dotes on her, Sona is still struggling to

¹⁷¹ Csikszentmihalyi, M. and E. Rocheberg-Halton. *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1981. Pp 29.

¹⁷² Desai, Neerja and Maithreyi Krishnaraj. ‘The Family.’ *Women and Society in India*. New Delhi: Ajanta Publications. 1987. Pp 206.

¹⁷³ Kent, S., “Activity Areas and Architecture: An Interdisciplinary View of the Relationship Between Use of Space and Domestic Built Environments.” *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S. Kent. 1999. Pp 5.

establish her space in the marital home, while Sushila, having ticked all the requisite boxes, has her heels dug in well and firm.

Sunita, Banwari Lal's daughter, had not married well and her husband constantly hounds her to get his rich in-laws help him in his business. On his part, to cover on the guilt for having done badly by his daughter, Banwari Lal makes his sons visit her at least once in a year, and they do so reluctantly. Her accidental death in a kitchen fire at home makes the old man take her ten year old son Vicky under his wings, as he feels that taking responsibility for the grandson's upbringing would in some way make up for the neglect of the daughter. Murli, the boy's father, readily acquiesces, as that would free him of the burden of having to bring him up singlehandedly.

Of the two daughters-in-law, Sushila has her hands full with two small children, and the childless Sona is the obvious choice to be given charge of the motherless boy. So Vicky is hoisted on a reluctant Sona, who is repulsed by this boy who had "skin the splotchy brown of mud, large staring eyes ...and snot that ran continually into his shirt sleeve" [*Home*, P 20]. Subjected to the constant jibes about her childlessness, and now coerced into being a foster parent to Vicky, she feels, is tantamount to declaring her barren for good. Edward Relph's concepts of 'existential insiderness' and 'outsiderness' are relevant to an understanding of the sense of alienation that some of the characters experience in the given situation. "The essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centres of human existence."¹⁷⁴ Far from feeling as if she belongs, she begins to feel so alienated that she starts to lose both her appetite and her weight, and almost contemplates sweet-talking her husband into moving out of the house and staying independently. However, Sona doesn't put that plan in action, but continues to play foster mother to Vicky, though quite reluctantly. 'Existential insiderness,' Relph propounds, is linked with identity; the more 'inside' one feels, the more strongly one identifies with it. 'Existential outsiderness,' on the other hand, generates a feeling of alienation from people and places, the sense of 'not belonging.'¹⁷⁵ Forced into playing 'foster mother' to her sister-in-law's son, Sona experiences what can best be termed as 'existential outsiderness.' Eventually, Vicky will turn even more of an 'outsider,' once Sona has children of her own. However, coarse and crass as he is, Vicky is incapable of grasping the nuances of his own marginalisation. It is only later in the narrative

¹⁷⁴ Relph, E. *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion Ltd. 1976. Pp 43.

¹⁷⁵ Relph, E. *Place and Placeness*, 1976. Pp 49 and 51.

that his perceptive wife Asha will grapple with the subtleties of ‘existential outsidership’ and push her husband into staking his claim.

A pilgrimage undertaken by Sona and her husband Yashpal, bears the long awaited fruit, as Sona soon gives birth to a baby girl. Now Vicky is even more of a burden to Sona, too busy with the baby, and she resents having to feed his large appetite. Vicky, on his part, is fascinated by the little baby, and Sona dislikes the interest Vicky takes in Nisha. Having shown no inclination to complete his education, he is finally initiated into the family business. With the birth of her son Raju, Sona’s cup of happiness brims over; now she is not just a mother, but the ‘proud’ mother of a son. Finally she feels she has achieved a status equivalent to the other women of the family. Needless to add, the birth of her son turns the foster son’s position even more precarious, as Vicky is now literally nobody’s child; he is shunted between the aunts and the grandparents, upstairs and downstairs, shop and house. Sona alternates between using him to help with the children, and trying to keep him out of her way. However, the upstairs/ downstairs rivalry between the two sisters-in-law continues to simmer, occasionally fuelled by nothing Sona’s dislike for Vicky, who would sometimes escape upstairs to get away from Sona. Finally ‘blessed’ with a complete family, Sona’s position is now secure in the marital home, after years of standing on shaky ground. The focus of the novel now shifts to the growing family, the dynamics of a simmering rivalry between ‘upstairs’ and ‘downstairs,’ as well as a the many meanings of ‘home’ that are played out in what is, essentially, a gendered space.¹⁷⁶

As the only girl amongst a bunch of boisterous siblings, Nisha, contrary to her inclinations is dolled up every evening, and kept confined to the house, whining as she watches the boys go out to play. Cosseted and pampered by everyone, she gradually reconciles herself to playing board games with her grandmother, just so she could fit into the role of the Princess her family assigned her.¹⁷⁷ The upbringing and socialisation of the daughter depicted here is quite in tune with Dobash and Dobash’s delineation on how the little girl is socialised, in their book *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against Patriarchy*. The little girl, they argue, is prepared gently but persuasively, how to become a ‘good wife’, being subjected to selective and discriminative training. Unlike boys, who are encouraged to explore

¹⁷⁶ Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling argue that “gender is crucial in lived experiences and imaginaries of home.”; Blunt, Alison and Robyn Dowling... “Setting Up Home: An Introduction.” *Home*. Ed. by A. Blunt and R. Dowling. 2006. Pp 15.

¹⁷⁷ Peter Saunders and Peter Williams contend that “[t]he key dimensions which differentiate the meaning of home *between different household members* are gender and age. [emphasis in original]. “The Constitution of the Home: Towards a Research Agenda.” *Housing Studies* Vol. 3 No. 2 . (1988) Pp 85. web

the world, girls are restricted largely to the home, and a bit of the outer world. If the boys can practically run free, they argue, the girl's movements are always restricted and supervised.¹⁷⁸

Yet, for all the constant 'supervision' and 'restrictions,' Nisha experiences molestation and abuse within the four walls of the house that is her natal home. Of her siblings, it is only Vicky who pays her any attention, and is often the only one willing to play with her. He would touch her and stroke her when he could, bringing her some toffee or little things occasionally. One afternoon, she follows Vicky up to the roof with her board game. He likes to go up there to study, and get away from Sona for a while. He tries to gain Nisha's sympathy, blaming his neglect by the family for his poor grades, his only hope lying in clearing High School, so he can gain some freedom and independence. Nisha, in her innocence, tries to make up for the charge of being unloved by clinging to him to show her affection. However, before she can understand what is happening, and, despite her protests, he exposes himself and molests her. Dazed after the incident, filled with shame and guilt, she just withdraws into herself, growing silent in the days that follow. "For the first time she felt divided from the family she had so unthinkingly been a part of" (*Home*, 59). The home no longer offers the security it is meant to. Nisha's sense of estrangement is unfortunately engendered before she is even old enough to grasp the import. This 'existential outsidersness,' to use Relph's phrase, only gets more pronounced, both literally and figuratively, as she grows older.

Vicky, in the meanwhile, starts to find excuses to come home earlier, bringing small gifts for Nisha, and trying to get her alone more and more. He also earns Sona's approval by making himself useful with her son. In fact, Vicky finds Nisha, seemingly unaffected by the incident as she showed no signs of remembering anything. While it is natural for the perpetrator to find his victim 'normal' and thus remain guilt-free for any wrongdoing, what is shocking is that the adults in the family, the very people who dote on her, too stay oblivious to her silences.

Vicky gets another opportunity to molest her, when he finds her alone in her grandmother's room finishing her homework. He brazenly forces her to fondle him again, while her Grandmother is outside busy talking with a neighbour and her mother is upstairs chatting with her Aunt. Vicky threatens her into keeping quiet by warning her of 'punishment'

¹⁷⁸ Dobash, R.Emerson and Russel Dobash. "Becoming a Wife." *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against Patriarchy*. London: Open Books, 1980. Pp 77.

for *her* 'wrongdoing.' Terrorised into silence, the girl retreats into the kitchen and cowers in a corner until her mother comes down and scolds her for neglecting her schoolwork. She is unable to eat anything at dinner, but her mother is only more exasperated. Her mother berates her for having sneaked upstairs and filled herself up with 'rubbish,' losing her appetite for dinner. Nisha is stung by this allegation, and all she can offer by way of explanation was that not only was she downstairs all along, but so was Vicky, choking on the word. Unfortunately for her, nothing seems amiss or 'out of place' when she calls attention to Vicky's 'presence' in the same room as her, in the 'absence' of adults. In despair, all she can do is throw herself in her Grandmother's lap, burrowing her head in the folds of her sari, and cry her heart out: "Once in that safe, filtered world, she wept and wept" (*Home*, 63). It is tragic and ironic, that even within her natal home, the only place she finds secure and comforting is the lap of, not her mother but grandmother. It is in the folds of her grandmother's sari that she finds the freedom to give vent to her emotions, in the only way she can, through her tears.¹⁷⁹ Writing on "*Dwelling and Houses*," Kemsley and Platt, contend that "[h]ouses are buildings in which we must invest our vulnerability and expect in return physical and emotional security from what the world can throw at us."¹⁸⁰ It is in sleep, they argue, that we are at our most vulnerable, and when our need for security is the most, a need ordinarily fulfilled in one's house. The child Nisha has been robbed of that sense of security at home, and is unable to sleep in peace there.¹⁸¹

It's not merely circumstantial that such an incident could take place more than once and go unnoticed in a house peopled by a large family, but also a reflection on the gender biases ingrained in a society besotted by the male child which tends to overlook the well-being of the girl child. If Sona was once marginalised in the house because she had produced no heirs, the same Sona, ironically, marginalises her little daughter Nisha once a son is born to her. Sona is so wrapped up in him that she has no time or patience left for her daughter, summarily shunting her out to the grandmother. Though the old lady makes some show of displeasure at this additional responsibility, she is secretly thrilled to share the warmth of a small child lying next to her, after a gap of three decades. Naturally, it is to the grandmother the traumatised

¹⁷⁹ R.E.Dobash and R. Dobash have established through extensive research that people, especially women and children, are more likely to be exposed to violence within the family group, more likely at home than the street outside. "Violence Against Wives: A Case Against Patriarchy." *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against Patriarchy*. London: Open Books, 1980 Pp7.

¹⁸⁰ Kemsley, R. & C. Platt. *Dwelling With Architecture*. London: Routledge, 2013. Pp 88.

¹⁸¹ Julia Wardhaugh points out that people who are abused or violated within the home are likely to feel 'homeless at home.' "The Unaccommodated Woman: Home, Homelessness and Identity." *The Sociological Review*. 47.1 (1999). Pp 91-109; Pp 96-97.

child turns now, who in turn is deeply perturbed to see the little girl in so much distress. A child who never had any trouble falling asleep is now terrified of falling asleep, berating them for letting her fall asleep each time she dozes off out of sheer exhaustion. All she tells them is she had some bad dreams, without being more specific. Ironically, the Grandmother tries to put her fears to rest by reminding her she was in her own 'home', 'safe and sound', 'surrounded by people who loved her.'¹⁸²

However, the nightmares continue unabated, as do her screams, during the night. Everyone is worried, yet clueless as to the cause. Her sister-in-law as well as her sister offer to take the child in, but Sona cannot bring herself to accept any offers for help without weighing the pros and cons. When Sushila and Pyarelal offer to have her sleep with them, she turns down the offer, making them think she was too self-centred to put the interest of the children above her own. Nisha's distress only worsens with time, the deteriorating situation demanded an immediate solution, but Sona was torn between accepting there could be something at home that could frighten her, and agreeing to send her away. Sona's sister Rupa suggests she should let her sleep in her own bed, Sona isn't taken up with the idea because she is more concerned about her son's uninterrupted sleep, than bothered about her daughter's traumatised sleeplessness. Unlike all the other children in the house who were heavy sleepers, we are told, who had no choice but to accommodate to the "restricted space and unrestricted noise," Raju's sleep has been "fiercely guarded" by the mother (*Home*, 64).

Finally, she gives in to Rupa's suggestion and lets the child move in with her aunt, even though it was tantamount to accepting there was something that came in the way of the house being a 'safe haven' for the young girl. On the other hand, it saves Sona taking a favour from the upstairs family, an obligation she would never have been able to recompense. Once the child has been sent to live with her aunt, everyone in the Banwari household feels Sona preferred to send her away as she was jealous of the child's attachment to her grandmother, or the other relatives. Ironically, no one can visualise the menace that lies within the folds of the family home. For, what could have frightened the child, 'when she was never alone?' In the event, the ultimate paradox is that the grandmother is so sure of her house being nothing short

¹⁸² Nisha's experience of 'home' not only goes contrary to the grandmother's notion of the positive valence the home provides, it is also contrary to any popular definition of home as the place that may offer 'rest, peace, quiet,' as well as 'privacy, freedom and choice,' Williams, P. "Constituting Class and Gender: A Social History of Home." *Class and Space: The Making of Urban Society*, edited by N. Thrift and P. Williams.. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987. Pp 155-156.

of a 'loving home' for the children to grow up in, that she is blind to the kind of 'love' and 'attention' her eldest grandson Vicky has been bestowing on young Nisha.¹⁸³

Thus, Nisha is twice displaced from her rightful 'place,' first within the house, then to another house, when she is still just a vulnerable child. She is first moved out of her parents' bedroom to make way for her baby brother, and relocated to her grand-parents room. After the incident with Vicky, she is unable to feel safe and secure enough to close her eyes and sleep in the very room where she was molested, or even in the upstairs section of the house. Ironically, the very house where her own mother could never feel rooted or have a sense of belonging for years after her marriage, is also the house that doesn't seem to have a place for its daughter. She is sent away to her Aunt Rupa's house, a place she begins to feel truly 'at home.' She blooms under the undivided attention of her Aunt and Uncle who nurture with great love and affection.

At Rupa's house, Nisha has three adults watch over every bite of food she eats, watch her in repose, as she sleeps peacefully, in sharp contrast to the nightmarish sleeplessness she endured at home. It doesn't take long for Rupa and her husband, Prem Nath to surmise something must have happened to her within the house itself, for she never went out. It takes a concerned but dispassionate observer in Rupa, who reads the cessation of the girl's bad dreams and her return to normality as proof that the demon lay at home. Else, she observes, no child would willingly leave her mother and her home. As the only child in her Aunt's house, she is the centre of attention and concern, in an atmosphere very different from the one she was born in. The child Nisha now gets to experience an idea of 'home' that is faultless in terms of all that the adults there provide, so much so that when she has to 'return' to her own home and family, she longs to go back. The 'ideal home,' then was only available as a temporary arrangement.

Nisha's father, though deeply involved in the flourishing business, is astute enough to observe that there may be some truth in Rupa's oblique suggestion that his nephew Vicky may have caused his daughter some harm. Moreover, Yashpal is sure his daughter will be better off with a caring aunt and uncle, than a mother who is too absorbed with her son. Thus, for the next ten years, the pattern is set and Nisha stays with her aunt during the weekdays and

¹⁸³ Sophie Bowlby, Susan Gregory and Linda McKie point out that 'home' is seen as a place where children are or will be reared. "In the present instance, however, this aspect of 'home' is taken for granted and a household teeming with family cannot safeguard the vulnerability of the only girl child." "Doing Home": Patriarchy, Caring and Space." *Women's Studies International Forum* 20 No..3 (1997) Pp 343-350. Pp 344.

attends school, but comes home for the weekends so she can be initiated into the family mores. On those days, Yashpal ensures that Vicky does not get near her. Nisha flourishes under the loving care and guidance of Prem Nath and his family and excels at school. Interestingly, these years are the most fulfilling for both the sisters, as each was the centre of a child's world, though the child in Rupa's house is a 'borrowed' one. Yet, between the two households, Rupa's "...was a complete home and a happy heart" (*Home*, 91).

From an unravelling of these contrary imaginaries of 'home,' the focus of the narrative now turns to the many 'homes' the Banwari Lal household spouts, with the growing family. There is the constant tussle between the families of the two brothers: "Between upstairs and downstairs there existed a rivalry that flourished or languished depending on the material it could feed upon" (*Home*, 97). If it was the children's performance at school, to begin with, it later finds fuel in the choice of well-placed alliances the respective sons land up with. Unfortunately for Sona, her own son Raju turns out to be as academically dim as her detested foster son Vicky was. Not that excellence at school mattered to a shopkeeper's family, but it was galling to have her son do so poorly at school when the 'Upstairs' sons were doing so well.

If there is one thing the family is unanimous about is their dislike for Vicky, finding him deceitful and cunning, taken not after, they believed, his benign mother, but his wily father. Once Vicky's basic schooling was over, the rest of the family is determined to pack him off, send him back where he belonged, to his father, having done enough by seeing him through his childhood. Vicky of course, is not in the least inclined to return to his only surviving parent, but the family succeeds in sending him back to Bareilly, reminding him that "[h]owever unprepossessing the person or place, Vicky's home was here, with his father" (*Home*, 77).

It takes just a month for Vicky to 'escape' to Delhi, giving excuses and reasons nobody believed in. The family decides he may be happier married off, but Vicky is smart enough to negotiate marriage on his own terms. After much deliberation, the family decides upon a solution that would fulfil their obligation, and keep him out of the family ambit at the same time. They build him a room and a toilet on the roof top, his own quarter, literally out of sight. Once the marriage is fixed, his father takes the opportunity to brainwash him into believing that he should never let go of his hold in the maternal grandfather's family, for they owe him some recompense after having neglected their daughter, thus effectively washing his hands off

any responsibility for his only son. As the narrative unfolds, one shall see how the actual 'location' of the new family units reflect their position and status in the family. On the one hand, one 'son' is relegated to the rooftop, while doors are opened up for another 'son' to take his bride within the family-fold.

It doesn't take long for Asha, Vicky's bride, to surmise their marginal status in the family.¹⁸⁴ It's not so much the lack of space or cramped quarters, but the metaphorical distance maintained by the family with them that is hard to miss. "The barsati was sufficient, but it was too separate." (*Home*, 102). No one comes up to share the space or pass some time with the lonely bride, she tries to explain to her husband. Both perceptive and astute, with an eye to the future, Asha goes about creating a space for herself where there was none, sure that her link with Sona would go a long way in making her position in the house stronger. Asha knows that it's the mistress of the hearth who rules over the domestic front, and because they ate from Sona's kitchen, Asha decides that her best interests lay in directing her allegiance towards Sona. Thus, rather than lament over their marginalisation passively, or wait for someone to show some interest, she takes the initiative to ensconce herself in Sona's kitchen, making herself so useful that Sona cannot help but occasionally marvel at Vicky's father's choice.

The patriarch suffers a sudden stroke and is paralysed as a result, but his second stroke proves fatal. The widowed old lady takes it very hard, and even a month later continues to weep all the time. Her elder son Yashpal, deeply concerned for her, decides to have his daughter come back home, as her company may cheer up the grandmother. Sona is less sympathetic to her mother-in-law's suffering. Having endured her taunts and insults over ten years of barrenness, she isn't too keen to have Nisha brought back from Rupa's place. In the event, Nisha is recalled home, leaving behind two adults frozen in a "...house that screamed of loss" (*Home*, 124). To Rupa and her husband, the child's presence had given their home a new meaning.¹⁸⁵ For Nisha, the return to her own home and family also proves to be an unhappy experience, as she is uprooted from the idyllic cocoon that she experienced as 'home.'

¹⁸⁴ Edward Relph has famously asserted that 'to be human is to have and to know your place.' *Place and Placelessness*. 1976. Pp 1.

¹⁸⁵ Recall Sophie Bowlby et al's argument that one of the crucial factors that mark a commonplace understanding of 'home' is as a place where children are or will be reared. Getting to nurture a niece only completes that experience of the idyllic, for Rupa and her husband. The child's subsequent absence is keenly felt. "Doing Home: Patriarchy, Caring and Space." *Women's Studies International Forum* 20 No. 3 (1997). Pp 343-350. Pp 344.

It's now a reversal for Nisha, moving from a household where she was the centre of attention, with all activities channelized towards the enhancement of her learning and growth, the atmosphere she finds herself back in her 'own house' is, on the other hand, quite contrary. Sona berates Nisha's upbringing, as her sister neglected to teach her the requisite skills essential to a woman, particularly those required in the kitchen.¹⁸⁶ From devoting her time to pursuing her curriculum, she is now expected to be in constant attendance in the kitchen, with her mother yelling at her, and Asha, her sister-in-law laughing at her clumsiness and sheer ignorance.¹⁸⁷

From time to time Nisha fantasises about returning to her aunt's place. They repeatedly told her this was where she was needed, this was her home, but it didn't feel comfortable. The moment she opened her books, she missed her Uncle,... when she slept, she missed the quietness...when she worked, she missed the encouragement. Her hands, altered from spotless white to nicked and burnt, reflected the change in her situation. Worst of all, no one imagined there was any lack in her life that needed to be filled (*Home*, 128).

Her studies begin to slip because her parents' house affords her little time or space to study in peace. To the utter shock of her mentor, Uncle Prem Nath, she does very poorly and has to repeat two papers to clear her exams. Her motivation sags as she begins to enjoy the life of ease, chatting and spending time with the extended family. However, even with the distraction of her cousin Ajay's engagement and marriage, Nisha manages to secure a decent percentage in her class twelfth exams, thanks to her uncle's training. Her brother, however, fares poorly in his higher secondary exams, and is sent to his Aunt Rupa's place with the hope that he too will do well under the Uncle's guidance, like his sister. After much debate over her future, and having 'failed' to land a match at her cousin Ajay's wedding much to her mother's disappointment, Nisha is enrolled in college. However, she soon catches the fancy of a 'roadside Romeo,' and a few months into college, begins to date him. Initially the family

¹⁸⁶ Julia Wardhaugh has pointed out that home is unproblematically associated with femaleness: women are expected to maintain hearth and home. "The Unaccommodated Woman: Home, Homelessness and Identity." *The Sociological Review*. Vol 47. 1 (Feb. 1999), pp 91-109; p 97.

¹⁸⁷ According to Manisha Roy, what really matters in Indian society is how well a woman acts out her roles of daughter, wife or mother. In keeping with the gendered socialisation of the girl child, Nisha is also expected to focus only on honing skills that will prepare her to become a good wife. "The Concepts of 'Femininity' and 'Liberation' in the Context of Changing Sex Roles: Women in Modern India and America." *Women in Indian Society: A Reader*, edited by R.Ghadially. New Delhi: Sage. 1988. Pp 139. Pamela Abbott et al also assert that cooking is largely seen as women's work. P Abbott, C. Wallace & M. Tyler. *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives*. Oxon: Routledge (1990). First Indian Reprint 2008. Saurabh Printers. P 232.

doesn't get to know because the young man manages to get her second hand notes and she does rather well at her exams, making up for all the classes missed so far. Towards the end of her second year, she becomes bolder in her dress and manner, very much in love.

In the meanwhile, with the death of the patriarch, the winds of change that Banwari Lal had resisted cannot be contained by the elder son Yash Pal, who struggles to carry on with the tradition established by his father. Negotiations begin to buy the area above the shop so it could be expanded and modernised, in keeping with the way the other shops in the market have been modified. The flat above the shop is eventually bought from the money that comes in as dowry of younger son Vijay's bride. His wedding is fixed for May, to Rekha, who comes from a well-known business family. "It was Sushila's big moment. Her son was adding to the prestige, status and wealth of the house" (*Home*, 160). Differences crop up across the two generations over how best to remodel the space, with the youngsters wanting a fancy place while the elders think it is a waste of money. Finally, the youngsters prevail over their elders, an architect is hired after much resistance from the two seniors, bribes paid to the local authorities, and work commences to transform the shop in keeping with the latest trends in the market.

Of course, the bride whose dowry plays a crucial role in upgrading the family business has smoothly established her credentials in the marital family, making it hard to ignore her whims and desires. Apparently, she finds it impossible to live in conditions where her privacy is compromised over a shared toilet. "The single bathroom upstairs turned into bone of contention so big that the whole house could not contain it" (*Home*, 167). While the others have so far adjusted themselves to the arrangement, the new bride, daughter of a rich, well established business family, is obviously used to better living arrangements. However, what is interesting is the way the novelist presents the situation in a note of surprise with a hint of irony. The element of frivolity on the part of the new bride who finds it difficult to make do with the state of affairs is hard to miss:

Did she find it inconvenient to creep into the bathroom" at odd hours? "Did she feel embarrassed washing her hands and brushing her teeth in full view? Did she find it awkward to knock" on the toilet door when she couldn't wait for her in-laws to finish using it? "Did the adjustment process break down when she had to confront a sink, a toilet, and a bathing area in separate corners of the house? (*Home*, 167).

The rumblings of her ‘disgruntled feelings’ reverberate through the upstairs section of the house, and spill over downstairs. Of course, her family status and her resources ensure that her whims are taken seriously, for neither her husband nor her parents-in-law wish to antagonise her, and risk losing out on the gains that may accrue from the alliance. To begin with, her new husband follows her lead and starts complaining about a toilet he had never found problematic earlier. Her mother-in-law Sushila complains about the bigger space crunch they face upstairs in comparison to the downstairs. With one room to each of the three couples, and the spare room crammed with all the furniture that came in with the dowries, she complains to Sona, there is no space left.¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, she tries to point out how it’s been much easier downstairs with just four people and four rooms, with a verandah and a courtyard in addition to it. Sona is not impressed by Sushila’s tale of woe, pointing out that Vicky and Asha spend all their time with them, and there had been times when nine people crammed together in the same rooms. Sona patronisingly tells them to adjust without complaining, in keeping with the spirit of family togetherness.

The issue of space crunch gathers momentum until an idea for the ‘need’ either for a bigger house, or for rebuilding and renovating the present house begins to take shape. Yashpal, as the head of the family, feels these measures are too drastic, over what, to him are minor adjustment problems. In a clear reflection of the adage that the ‘house’ symbolises the ‘family,’ Yashpal voices fears that a new house may lead to a division or breakdown of the joint family that has so far functioned as a single household, even offering to accommodate one couple downstairs.¹⁸⁹ His brother Pyare Lal, the proponent of the idea, has nevertheless set the ball rolling, though he knows he has to tread cautiously. He drums up a ‘fortuitous’ contact with a builder, who would ‘charge’ nothing just for a discussion. Sushila is overjoyed to see her husband finally emerge from the shadows of his elders, as she sees him taking a firm lead in the matter.

As Yashpal confabulates with his wife Sona, they realise the ‘upstairs family’ with two married sons and one powerful set of in-laws have more weight on their side, while their own

¹⁸⁸ The room crammed with furniture that has come in as dowry must be as unique, as it is typical of Indian culture. Both the narratives that incorporate a son’s wedding, invariably flaunt it as a mark of ‘status.’ The irony, of course is hard to miss, that one would rather have a room full of furniture that cannot be used for lack of space, and actually eats up some of the available space.

¹⁸⁹ Sophie Bowlby, S. Gregory and L. McKie explore the overlap between the concepts of ‘home’ and ‘family’. “‘Doing Home’: Patriarchy, Caring and Space.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 20. 3 (1997). Pp 344. See also Philippe Aries. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. Trsl Robert Baldick. New York: Alfred A. Knopf (1962) Pp 404.; Graham Allan and Graham Crow. Eds. *Home and Family: Creating the Domestic Sphere*. Houndmills, Hampshire: The Macmillan Press (1989) p 1.

son is still at school. Feeling cornered, Yashpal acquiesces to his brother's demands. Pyare Lal, on his part, to soften the opposition, shows the blueprints first to his sister-in-law Sona, selling to her the convenience of attached toilets, with the biggest bait being a kitchen with a fridge and the latest appliances. His words "...poured ghee into her ears" as she pictures herself as "...a woman in a magazine ad for kitchen appliances"[*Home*, 172]. The builder proposed to construct four floors and a basement, offering to give them two floors and fifty thousand in cash. Sona's character epitomises the rise of the middle class for whom, as Bonnie Loyd points out, the home is not just a 'container' of the family, but a status symbol, reflecting an economy that both produces a large number of consumer goods and aggressively promotes mass consumption.¹⁹⁰

Asha is all ears to these plans, but soon realises that Vicky and his family feature nowhere. "In a joint family, space is carved out inch by inch, but there has to be material to work with"(*Home*, 172). Vicky has a very limited view of life, satisfied with his daily routine, but Asha is far more ambitious. For ten years she has suffered on the roof, watching the houses around torn and redone as mini palaces, imagining if the same would be done there, they would be able to live more comfortably. While Vicky feels it is the Banwari Lal family house, none of his business, it is Asha who alerts him to their tenancy rights over the roof, if nothing else. While the old man was alive, Vicky never felt discriminated against; though they had to make do with one room on the roof, but then nobody else in the family had much space, and he had an edge over them in that it allowed him his privacy, something none of them had. Now that the situation is all set to change, it is only his wife's smart thinking that prompts him to do some research and find out that he could stake his claim over tenancy rights, if he was construed as a tenant.

Meanwhile, Pyare Lal's ploy of bringing Sona into the picture works to perfection as she's completely sold on the idea of herself as the "mistress of modern conveniences," and the family looks forward to making a new house (*Home*, 175). Moreover, the idea of 'home' as concurrent with 'family' is played out in a way that literally cleaves out those not considered as part of the 'family.' Any differences between the late Banwari Lal's sons, Yashpal and Pyare Lal are smoothed out as they come together in their dislike for Vicky. The division of spoils, that is, the space in the house would be negatively impacted if Vicky's family was to

¹⁹⁰ Loyd, B. "Women, Home and Status". *Housing and Identity: Cross-cultural Perspectives*, edited by J S Duncan. London: Croom Helm. 1981.

be counted in. Not only would the size of each flat come down, the extra cash that the builder offered to give would also be reduced. Obviously, they have no interest in accommodating Vicky if it means accepting a less beneficial offer. Any sense of familial duty towards Vicky had died with old Banwari Lal, and since his sons have only looked upon him as a burden they have tolerated for so long. The brothers decide there is literally no space for him in the new house. His claim on being 'part' of the family, based on a tenuous sense of familial duty, died with the patriarch. Now all they needed to do was to they have to find a way to get rid of Vicky.

As the 'anti-Vicky' feelings gather momentum, his wife bolsters his resolve to stand up for his rights. Asha plays her cards very well and uses her powers of persuasion to awaken the dormant sense of self-respect and justice within her husband. Vicky realises that location is crucial to playing this game; so long as he lives under the same roof, he cannot but be construed as 'part of the family.' The family, in turn, is aghast he has the 'shamelessness' by asserting rights over what was only their largesse. Yet, they are also anxious lest his claims to tenancy rights prove a spoiler to their plans. Finally the family manages to bring down his demand to tolerable limits, Vicky relinquishes his hold over 'a corner of the house', and demolition can begin.

The family moves out to a hotel after forty five years of inhabiting the house, while work on rebuilding the house begins. Once the new house is ready, Rupa can find no fault in this gleaming new abode, jealous of a sister who always got things in abundance, in comparison to her, be it two children for her barrenness, or this 'palace' in place of dark, inconvenient rooms of her own house. Ruing her own husband's steadfastness against paying a bribe to rid them of the tenant, preferring to be embroiled in decades old litigation, she dreams of a day when she too can have a place like this, in the future, for they had as much space and less number of people. Yet, in comparison with her sister, she may not be the mistress of abundance, material or otherwise, she nevertheless could stake claim to a happier home. In a discussion of the 'concept of home,' Gill Jones draws upon Watson and Austerberry's formulation who suggest that "home and homelessness are constructed from the following dimensions: material conditions, emotional and physical well-being, loving and caring social relations, control and privacy, and living/sleeping space" (Watson and

Austerberry qtd. in Jones, 2000).¹⁹¹ Thus, the ‘material conditions’ of Rupa’s house may compare poorly with Sona’s swank new house, there is nothing wanting in her home when it comes to measuring any of the other dimensions listed by Watson and Austerberry above. Her relationship with her husband and father-in-law are quite cordial, so much so that they had no hesitation in showering their affection on her sister’s child. Rupa has never been belittled by her family for her ‘barrenness,’ unlike Sona. Sona’s home, this thesis argues on the other hand, is found wanting on all but the first dimension, as evidenced in the discussion that follows.

Feminist and cultural geographies of ‘home,’ point out Blunt and Dowling, are an important intervention into the readings of home as they reiterate the significance of gender to the lived experiences and imaginaries of home.¹⁹² Thus the meanings and experience of ‘home’ varies across gender. If it is a place of rest and repose for the man, it could be a space of oppression and violence for the woman. The women protagonists in this novel, it is argued, experience ‘home’ differently primarily due to their gender. As women are defined by their gender, and assigned socially sanctioned roles determined by culture, to fit as ideal daughter, wives and mothers, in this narrative, the woman who does not conform to the assigned role, or transgresses in some manner, is persecuted in a variety of ways. Thus, as Sona has been constantly harangued for not bringing dowry, for not becoming a mother, etc. the constant needling left her feeling unsettled in her marital home until she gave birth. Her sister-in-law, in contrast, faces no such problems, and is well-ensconced ‘at home’ right from the word go. Nisha as a young woman is punished for exploring her sexuality by literally being imprisoned at home, as the rather fragile ‘reputation’ of the family rests on her shoulders. As a woman of marriageable age, she is marginalised and made to feel like an outsider, until she can land herself a match and don the roles of ‘wife’ and ‘mother.’¹⁹³

Towards the end of her third year, a letter from the college informing her parents of the shortage of attendance alerts them to the goings on in their daughter’s life they have so far been oblivious of. Although the matter of attendance is resolved through a medical certificate, it gets the parents questioning her about the real cause for the shortage. Nisha manages to ask

¹⁹¹Jones, Gill. “Experimenting With Households and Inventing ‘Home.’” *International Social Science Journal* Vol 52, Issue 164 (June 2000). Pp184. .

¹⁹²Blunt, Alison and Robert Dowling. “Introduction.” *Home*. edited by Blunt and Dowling. Pp15.

¹⁹³ Recall Peter Saunders and Peter Williams’ identification of ‘gender’ and ‘age’ as the two crucial factors that condition varying experiences of ‘home’ in a given household as they enjoy “different capacities for action and encounter different constraints for action...” “The Constitution of the Home: Towards a Research Agenda.” *Housing Studies* 3 Issue 2 (1988)., Pp 85.

her boyfriend Suresh to declare himself and meet her father, but that sets the alarm bells ringing in the family. For all the stars in her eyes that she had for her boyfriend, he is considered no match for their precious daughter, and the family immediately moves into damage control mode. As a first step, she is banned from going to the college, ends up moving around the house like a 'guilty, lowly creature'. She is not even allowed 'Upstairs', lest it give Sona's rival, her Aunt Sushila, some fodder for canon. Clearly, the extent or reach of the 'family circle', who falls within or without, varies according to the situation. Some matters are best kept to the immediate family.¹⁹⁴ Interestingly, it's her younger brother Raju who is conferred the responsibility of 'guarding' his sister's 'honour'. Practically imprisoned in the house, even the phone is padlocked so only incoming calls could be received without the key, effectively cutting her off from the world outside. Susan Wadley examines the roles women play in society and contends that the norms of behaviour are not just contingent on biology or social situations, but can be traced to the myths and legends of Indian culture. "Thus, women, because of their evil inclinations and birth, are to be kept under control of men at all stages of their lives."¹⁹⁵

Prisoner of her 'deeds', Nisha is in no state of mind to prepare for her final exams. Wracked by guilt for her failed love affair, it is the memories of intimacy in the Vijay Nagar room that play uppermost in her mind. "[E]mbedded in her mind as a grown up secret," those memories were "now veering towards a grown up sin" (*Home*, 207). Relph writes that the contrary relationship to places can vary between "a strong affection (topophilia)" or "an aversion (topophobia)" - concepts that aptly explicate Nisha's extreme reactions that certain places evoke in her.¹⁹⁶ The distinction between Suresh's 'touch of love' and Vicky's 'touch of lust' begin to dissolve in her mind, and she begins to confuse one for the other. What had lain forgotten in the recesses of her mind, now surfaces to haunt her inexorably. Wracked by the guilt of one intimacy tainted the other intimacy, she pathetically tries to console herself that she is still a 'virgin'. All these years she had managed to keep Vicky beyond the margins of her consciousness, for he lived out of sight, on the roof. But now, the terrifying past comes to

¹⁹⁴ Donald Sanders elaborates on how invisible boundaries are created in relation to each individual, and concomitantly, this thesis suggests, the family unit, to map personal space and set boundaries of acceptable behaviour. "Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology," *Domestic Architecture*, ed.S.Kent, 1990 Pp 49.

¹⁹⁵ Susan Wadley. "Women and the Hindu Tradition." *Women in Indian Society: A Reader*, edited by R. Ghadially. New Delhi: Sage. 1988, Pp 31.

¹⁹⁶ Relph, E. "Geographical Experiences and Being-in-the-World: The Phenomenological Origins of Geography". *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards A Phenomenology of Person and World* edited by David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer. New York: Columbia University Press Morningside Edition. 1989., pp 15-31; Pp27

haunt her as she tries to convince herself these demons would vanish if only she could marry Suresh.

On the first day of her exams, she is shocked to discover she is no longer free to go to the college by herself, as her parents have deputed her younger brother to escort her. Moreover, once the exams are over, she is the focus of their attention, "...the sole occupant of the tower her family was laying siege to" (*Home*, p 212). They work on her with a mix of threats and presents, love and blackmail, while Suresh, her boyfriend, is paid off to disappear from her life. Nisha has no choice but to reconcile herself to a life sans Suresh. Sander's concept of boundary control as a means of directing behaviour is relevant in this instance.¹⁹⁷ "Now a prisoner in her home, she played the part of the king in chess. She needed to be protected, as without her there could be no game. The moves concerning her were carefully planned, but she herself was powerless, quiescent, mute, and waiting" (*Home*, 217). Trying to adjust to the changed scenario, her nights are filled with restlessness and her skin begins to develop itchy patches that she scratches through the night. The initial marriage proposals don't fructify because news of her dalliance with Suresh is already floating about, much to the family's annoyance. As she awaits a suitable alliance, Nisha expresses her desire to do a course, but her mother would let her join an institution only "over her dead body" (*Home*, 227). Marriage is the passport that will grant her the freedom to move around freely again. The woman who transgresses acceptable norms finds herself physically restrained, in the name of 'family honour.'

Effectively grounded, Nisha's frustration manifests itself in angry, itchy eruptions all over her body, the dark brown patches turning her once pristine, carefully nurtured skin, the pride of the family, into something ugly and disgusting. What had begun as a manifestation of her shame after her clandestine trips to the rented room in Vijay Nagar, in the form of mild itching, now becomes a full blown manifestation of her guilty 'past', starkly visible for all to see; the very 'past' her family has been trying so hard to suppress, if not erase. Of her family, her father is the only one who is sympathetic to her suffering, exploring all possible doctors and cures. Her mother and brother, however, feel she has brought it upon herself. They berate her for all the trouble she is causing them, from the inability to find her a match, to the numerous rounds to different doctors in search of a cure for her. As for Nisha, she seems to have internalised the value system that pronounced her guilty, for her own body, with its dark

¹⁹⁷ Sanders, D. "Behavioural conventions and archaeology" in *Domestic Architecture*, edited. By S. Kent, 1990. Pp 43-73.

eruptions, begins to haunt her dreams: “She was covered with huge gaping mouths... She was more than a monster...Nisha’s vulnerability meant a silent acceptance of her guilt, even before a rhetorical question” (*Home*, 229).¹⁹⁸

Endless rounds of doctors and medication do not seem to have made much of a difference, and her erstwhile guardians, Aunt Roopa and Uncle Prem Nath are deeply saddened to see her wilt away in her house. They wonder if living with them again could improve her condition, just like she had bloomed in their house earlier, but there is no guarantee. So Nisha stays on in her new house, in her new bedroom next to her parents. The irony is that in her own house, her rightful place, but she is like an unwanted alien, neither ‘at home’ in her skin, nor in her house that is meant to be ‘home’.¹⁹⁹ The gleaming newness of the house seems to be mocking at her once pristine skin now turned dark and mottled.

Sona may be beset by her daughter’s problems, but it doesn’t keep her from feeling secretly pleased to find out that her sister-in-law is finding it hard to keep the family together, what with having to deal with two warring daughters-in-law. Sona welcomes tid-bits from the maid about the strife between the two daughters-in-law upstairs, and her sister-in-law Sheela’s difficulties in keeping the family together. But the very grapevine Sona has nurtured surreptitiously proves to be her undoing. It is through the same grapevine Nisha gets to know that her brother Raju’s wedding has been fixed, shocked that she has been kept in the dark about it.

Yashpal, Sona’s father, however, is genuinely perturbed in having to sideline an older daughter and entertain a marriage proposal for his son. His brother Pyare Lal tries to convince him of the immense benefits that would accrue to the family and the business in accepting the proposal if they overlook the relatively minor stumbling block of having to supersede an older daughter. Yashpal cannot help but worry about his daughter’s future. Yet again, the gendered difference in the meaning and experience of ‘home’ comes across. If the

¹⁹⁸ James Krasner elaborates of the emotionally resonant spaces of the home, and contends that “the tangible dynamics of our everyday lives create our identities and come under stress when those identities are called into question.” “Our perceptions of our own bodies,” Krasner goes on to argue, “and of the spaces in our homes, are fraught with anxieties that emerge most vividly when the tactile practices of embodiment become misaligned with the material structures of domesticity.” Nisha’s ‘identity’ as the ‘ideal’ and ‘unsullied’ daughter of the family has come into question by her seeming wayward behaviour, and the stress is manifest in the breakout on her skin. *Home Bodies: Tactile Experience in Domestic Space*. Columbus: Ohio State University. 2010. Pp 2, 7.

¹⁹⁹ Juhani Pallasmaa’s exploration of the interconnections between architecture and the senses is pertinent. He contends that there is a strong identity between naked skin and the sensation of home: “Home and the pleasure of the skin turn into a singular sensation.” *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.2005, Pp 58-59.

daughter Nisha feels alienated from home because she made the mistake of having a 'pre-marital affair,' she has also been unsuccessful in landing a suitable match. Her brother, on the contrary, gets to strut around at home as he is about to get 'honourably' married and start his family. Their father, Yashpal, though genuinely concerned about his daughter's future, cannot help feeling proud of the imposing 'house' that he calls 'home,' an embodiment of his hard work and success.

Drawing upon Cooper's Jungian identification of house' as symbol of the self, Douglas Porteous suggests that the home itself can become "...a vehicle for expressing identity through manipulation of its external appearance," over and above being the individual's personal space within its four walls. "The house, then, is a means of projecting an image both inwardly and outwardly."²⁰⁰ Looking up at their new house with its "imposing exterior..., the curved balconies, the wrought iron gates, the shining glass windows," fills Yashpal with a great sense of pride at the visible manifestation of their success. "They had risen in the world, husbanded their resources, and had three boys whose transitions into adult life had been predictable" (*Home*, 244).

As the preparations for the wedding go ahead in full swing, and relatives throng the house, Nisha naturally feels increasingly forlorn and miserable. Her skin breaks out afresh, demanding another round of treatment. As she awaits her turn at the clinic, with her blotchy skin, she is a sad picture of contrast to her brother in his engagement finery. But she can neither escape from her situation, nor her condition. Sona, on the other hand, can't believe her good fortune at having netted a dowry substantially larger than the one Vijay upstairs had got. But then, the bride is 'flawed' by a large scar on her face, and "scars have to be paid for," Sona surmises, wondering if they would have to do the same for Nisha (*Home*, 253). The contrast between the husband and wife is interesting, for the husband takes pride in the material growth that is the result of their own efforts and the wife takes pride from the bigger dowry her son could commandeer with his marriage. Perhaps it was because Sona had constantly been belittled by her mother-in-law for having brought no dowry when she came as a bride, more so when the other daughter-in-law had come laden with gifts and furniture that she is so pleased now. This 'lack' in Sona's life has been more than compensated by the

²⁰⁰ Douglas Porteous, J. "Home: The Territorial Core". *The Geographical Review* Vol 66, No. 4 (Oct,1976), Pp 383-390; P 384.

impressive array of a car, furniture, clothes, cash and all possible consumer durables that come at her son's wedding.²⁰¹

The phenomenon of homes, according to Kimberly Dovey, is embodied in an ordered structure that is at once spatial, temporal and socio-cultural.²⁰² His notion of home as social order is valuable as it unravels both the flexibility in the pattern of behaviour and experience that allows one to recreate 'home' wherever one goes, even as he alerts us to its conservative aspect. There is an 'all pervasiveness' and 'taken-for-grantedness' in the sociocultural order of home that is rather conservative, according to Dovey. "Through being deeply rooted in the past, home also carries with it considerable inertia to change."²⁰³ It is the conservative aspect of home as socio-cultural order that is particularly valuable in comprehending the tussel that ensues in the household over patterns of behaviour once the new bride settles in. Sona, as the narrative reveals, finds it extremely difficult to accept the daughter-in-law's patterns of behaviour that go against the established norms.

After a month long all-expense paid honeymoon to Europe, the newlyweds Raju and Pooja arrive to a huge family welcome at the airport. However, the family dynamics change completely once they settle in, as the couple refuses to blend with the established routines of the house.²⁰⁴ They make it very clear they prefer to spend all their time together in their own unit, unapologetic and seemingly shameless:

Home from the shop, Raju could barely be greeted, let alone fussed over, before he disappeared into the maw of his bedroom, shutting the door softly but oh so firmly behind him. After a while, Pooja emerged to make tea. Only two solitary betraying mugs on the tray... (*Home*, 257).

As the door shuts again on their tea, it leaves Sona anxious and wondering why Raju can't have his tea and relax along with everyone else, like old times. Some days, to counter these efforts to block her out, Sona 'asserted her rights' and knocked on the 'unwelcoming

²⁰¹ Goran Therborn observes that apart from personal and household items and jewellery, "the dowry is also expected to bring wealth to the groom's family..." *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World, 1900-2000*. London: Routledge (2004).

²⁰² Dovey, Kimberly. "Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*, edited by Irwin Altman and Carol M. Werner. New York: Springer Science + Business Media LLC. 1985 Pp 38. Human Behaviour and Environment: Advancement in Theory and Research Series. Vol 8.

²⁰³ Dovey, Kimberly. "Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner 1985 Pp 39.

²⁰⁴ Dovey points to the stability of routine behaviour and experience as a prominent feature of the home environment. "Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*. Eds. I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985. Pp 37.

door', if only to reiterate the family tradition of 'togetherness'. Though she is welcomed 'heartily,' what followed would at best be 'desultory conversation,' before Sona, "propelled by the unfamiliar, claustrophobic atmosphere of the room, [would get] up to leave" (*Home* 257). Sona complains to her son about her 'un-daughter-in-law- like' behaviour, keeping aloof from the family, unlike her cousin Rekha upstairs. Far from giving her a sympathetic ear, Raju only parrots his wife's words back to his mother, accusing her of being difficult with her daughter-in-law, reminding her that he was in no rush to get married, before disappearing behind the closed door. It galls Sona to have them vanish into their own little world, effectively blocking the family out with the door firmly shut in its face. Clearly, Sona's notion of privacy and acceptable behaviour is at complete variance to her daughter-in-law's ideas. Privacy, contends Altman, is a universal phenomenon, but involves culturally unique mechanisms for regulation, an aspect that is reflected in the narrative.²⁰⁵ The present instance exemplifies what Altman has termed as a culture that practices 'minimal privacy,' that is, members are unable to control interaction with others. Given this norm of 'minimal privacy,' obviously there is a clash over the behaviour of the newest member of the family. A wily Puja resorts to all possible privacy mechanisms such as 'verbal,' 'nonverbal' and 'environmental' to achieve her desired levels of privacy,²⁰⁶ all directed at avoiding 'unwanted' interaction with the in-laws.²⁰⁷

Ironically, the same Sona who was dead against her daughter joining an institution for further education, is now very keen to have Pooja resume college, if only to have her out of the house for a while. Just as Sona's mother-in-law earlier had resented her presence in the house, treating her like an 'intruder' who had taken the son away from the mother, Sona in turn too looks for an opportunity to reclaim her space, if only temporarily. However, she is denied the notional relief it might have brought her. She is informed by her son that Pooja has decided to complete her graduation through the distance learning programme.

On her part, Pooja keeps oblivious to any duties or responsibilities in her marital home, using it, in the words of her mother-in-law, "like a hotel" (*Home*, 264). Pooja comes and goes as she pleases, visiting her parents or her friends, returning only in the evenings when her husband goes to fetch her. The 'liberty' enjoyed by the married daughter-in-law is in sharp

²⁰⁵ Altman, I. "Privacy Regulation: Culturally Universal or Culturally Specific?" *Journal of Social Issues* 33(3) (1977). Pp 66-84; p 66.

²⁰⁶ ---. "Privacy: A Conceptual Analysis". *Environment and Behaviour* 8 Issue 1 (1976). Pp 7-30; p 18-20.

²⁰⁷ ---. "Privacy Regulation: Culturally Universal or Culturally Specific?" *Journal of Social Issues* 33, No. 3 (1977). Pp 66-84. Pp 80. . In-law avoidance, in general, and hostility to the mother-in-law in particular has not only been widely studied by anthropologists, but also reportedly prevalent across cultures.

contrast to the restrictions imposed on the unmarried daughter of the house. Nisha's estrangement is exacerbated when the well-meaning parents insist she be taken along by the brother and sister-in-law when the latter go for an outing.

Homebound herself, Nisha shares in her mother's misgivings. If her mother chafes at being side-lined from the life of the son around whom her life had revolved all these years, Nisha's feelings for her sister-in-law are far from pleasant: 'hating' her was an all-time 'occupation'. She looks upon Pooja as a 'snake' in the house, though a legitimate one. To Nisha, her legitimacy derives from the site of 'marital bliss': "She slithered towards the family from the fastness of her bedroom with its brand new double bed and its matching teak-veneer side tables"(Home, 262). Simply 'awaiting marriage' proves to be too amorphous and passive an 'activity' to keep her engaged and stop her from feeling depressed and useless, especially as her skin condition comes in the way of a suitable settlement.

Yashpal is alarmed at her wish to be alone, when he finds his daughter sitting drooped and forlorn by herself on the park bench one morning, as he returns from his morning walk. She had been feeling so claustrophobic and restless in the house, unable to sleep, she tells him, and came to spend some quiet moments alone in the garden. Her words echo his own deepest fears for his daughter: "...[S]he will go mad sitting inside the house," she tells her father (Home, 267). To some, home may just as well be a 'trap.'²⁰⁸ As the daughter-in-law makes herself 'at home' in the marital household, the daughter begins to feel like an intruder. The house seems to have no space left for her. The anxious father begins to weigh the alternatives to provide his housebound daughter with some breathing space to mitigate her claustrophobia, literal and otherwise. As the daughter of the family, he can't have her work as a sales woman at their shop, and after exploring other options, gets her to start teaching small children at a Play School nearby. Though Nisha isn't too taken up by the task of teaching the young ones, what she really welcomes is the opportunity to be with colleagues who don't sit in judgement over her past, comment on her skin ailment, or even her poor marriage prospects.

Raju's announcement of his wife's pregnancy changes the dynamics of home once again. Nisha is consumed by anger for her life having come to a standstill, while other

²⁰⁸ Marcus, Clare Cooper. "Home-As-Haven, Home-As-Trap: Explorations in the Experience of Dwelling." *The Spirit of Home: Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 1986*, edited by Patrick Quinn and Robert Benson. Washington, D.C.: Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 2006. Pp 1-21.

people's lives seem to progress smoothly, ticking the appropriate boxes for 'marriage,' 'children,' etc. On the other hand, if Sona had been marginalised by her daughter-in-law in the early stages of marriage, now there is a complete reversal once the daughter-in-law is in the family way. The pregnancy becomes the focus of Sona's attention, for she looks upon it as the future of the family that needs to be nurtured. As Pooja develops some complications and needs extra care and attention, the same mother-in-law she had once blocked out, comes to her rescue. Sona rallies around Pooja constantly, not leaving her alone for even a minute. In sharp contrast to the 'exclusive' tea time with her husband that Pooja had engineered in the early days of her marriage, Sona now gets the whole family to have their evening tea around the young woman's bed to make her feel included within the family fold.

Once the doctor declares it is safe for Pooja to move around, her husband is encouraged to go home early and take her out for the evening. Again, out of a misguided sense of concern for their daughter as well, they insist she be taken along, as she doesn't get to go out either. The feeling of hatred is mutual amongst the two sisters-in-law, and neither bothers to camouflage it. The outings are necessarily disastrous. However, Nisha feels betrayed by her mother. For the love of her son and his baby, Sona seems to have changed her allegiance, as her feelings change from 'hatred' to 'love' for Pooja. All along Nisha had 'supported' her mother in hating Pooja, but now she seems to be the only one doing so. Once the baby arrives, the grandmother has her hands full in helping her daughter-in-law look after the baby. Nisha is well and truly left out of this charmed circle of the infant, mother and grandmother. It takes a couple of incidents for a horrified Nisha to realise Pooja treats her like an untouchable, not letting her come near the baby. Even as her aunt stands by Nisha and agrees that her skin ailment is not contagious, her mother simply glosses over Nisha's anger and hurt by saying Pooja is just an overprotective mother.

Her father is concerned and sensitive to her needs, but she can't really be frank or open with him. Her aunt is her only ally with whom she feels free to open her heart out, and through whom she can convey her thoughts to the family. As soon as her mother walks out, she tells her: "You see, Maasi...there is no place for me in the house" (*Home*, 280). Her need to get away from the house is so overpowering that she confesses she is willing to marry anyone, if marriage is what will get her out of the house. When her aunt reminds her of the job at the school her father arranged for her, Nisha rues the rest of the twenty hours she is still stuck at home. Clearly, Nisha's sense of alienation at home is absolute.

She prefers, for instance, to sit alone in the balcony, rather than join the family in the daily after-dinner ritual of watching TV together. Her father chides her for not spending time with the family and she reiterates her sense of isolation. The anonymity of an ashram seems to be more welcoming to her than living at home, where she feels robbed of any dignity or respect. Eventually, she goes in to join the family as her father exhorts her: “Without you it is not the same” (*Home*, 282). To Nisha, however, sitting together to watch TV is akin to playing out the farce of a ‘happy family,’ a meaningless pretence: “Silently she went inside and for a few hours they could pretend she was part of a happy family, watching a film together” (*Home*, 282). Nisha’s stress levels increase as she feels more and more isolated at home, causing her skin to break out again. As the doctor explains that stress triggers off the eczema, her mother pretends there is nothing that could cause stress in the house, except not having found her a match. It suits the mother and son to act as if there could be no reason for Nisha to get stressed, for they are the ones primarily responsible for her sense of alienation. In fact, her brother Raju smirks at his sibling’s plight even as he marvels at his own good fortune.

At work, when she comes across a colleague selling home-made dresses, Nisha hits upon the idea of starting her own business doing the same, and is so charged up that her father is compelled to take her seriously. She seeks the blessings of her aunt and mentor, who has herself been a successful entrepreneur. Of course, not everyone in the family responds with enthusiasm. Her father, deeply concerned about her situation at home, is eager to support her, though he’s not sure how his brother would react. Surprisingly, Pyare Lal pitches in too, and the objections come from the women of the family. Her mother thinks it’s a waste of effort as she has to get married and go away; her Aunt Sushila wonders how the profits would be handled, if they would be ploughed back into the business; also, what if the daughters-in-law also demanded to start their own businesses. Overcoming opposition, Nisha soon turns out to be a successful entrepreneur. What is interesting is that her family had always imagined ‘marriage’ could be her only ‘career’ and the ticket to an autonomous identity, but the narrative allows her the opportunity to find her own footing.

Things begin to look up for Nisha as she finds her own space and rhythm with her work. Soon, a suitable match is found for Nisha, a widower with his own business. Asked to meet the prospective groom alone, Nisha panics for a fleeting moment as her mind darts back to the

“sewers of the past” and the “threatening places of her old house”²⁰⁹ (*Home*, 297). She eventually gets married in a simple ceremony, finally at peace, as her husband welcomes her with the words: “Now you are home” (*Home*, 321). The narrative closes with the birth of her twins. In a patriarchal society, it is only as ‘wife’ and ‘mother’ that Nisha can finally feel suffused with the sense of belonging, ‘at home’ with herself and her world.

Rapoport in his essay “Identity and Environment: a Cross-cultural Perspective,” contends that the house or dwelling plays a significant role as a marker of one’s identity and /or status depending on whether relations in the community are structured on the principle of ‘collectivism’ , or ‘individualism’. While the former, he argues, see the house merely as “a container of women and goods,” the latter see the house as “a status symbol critical to one’s social or personal identity.”²¹⁰ He makes a case for contemporary Western culture as one that tends to give primacy to the individual, whereby the concepts of ‘self-identity’ and ‘self-esteem’ given paramount importance. It is in this backdrop that the house has been seen as a ‘symbol of self’. However, the house can also be a status symbol, an expression of the family’s aspiration. This contention is substantiated by the reading of Balraj Khanna and Manju Kapur’s respective narratives discussed above.

In a case-study of social worlds and status across two upper class groups in Hyderabad, J. S. Duncan presents an interesting observation of the way the dwelling is used to establish their identity. The difference is observed across generations, where the younger, more ‘modern’ group uses the house as a symbol of status, in a ‘Western’ way, while the older, more traditional group doesn’t give much importance to the house in that sense. The older, traditional generation’s ‘belonging’ to a closed group is a well-established and well known fact that does not need to be corroborated by the materiality of the house. One can find a similar pattern in the two novels discussed here, as in both cases, the younger generation makes a conscious effort to upgrade their residence to fulfil their aspirations, either by way of procuring a bigger one in a posh locality, or by rebuilding a more modern and impressive house.²¹¹ In *Sweet Chillies*, it is the son Omi whose aspirations take the family way out of their comfort zone, as he tries to achieve too much too fast. His father was satisfied with a flourishing shop in the city, but his son wants to upgrade not just the shop, but also the

²⁰⁹Relph’s notion of ‘topophobia’ is pertinent. “Geographical Experiences and Being-in the World.” *Dwelling, Place and Environment*.” Ed by D.Seamon and R. Mugeurauer. 1989., Pp 27.

²¹⁰ Amos Rapoport, “Identity and Environment: A Cross Cultural Perspective.” *Housing And Identity*, edited by J S Duncan, London: Croom Helm. 1981. Pp 9 &11.

²¹¹ Duncan, J.S. ”From Container of Women to Status Symbol: The Impact of Social Structure on the Meaning of House.” *Housing and Identity*. Ed. by J S Duncan. 1981. Pp 51-53.

residence. In the narrative of *Home* too there is a clash across generations over the need to modernise the shop and rebuild the house.

Douglas Porteous in his article “*Home: The Territorial Core*,” points out that the home provides both physical and psychic security.²¹² He also draws upon Robert Sommer’s assertion that spatial control of one’s personal space is necessary for the maintenance of psychic health. (qtd in Douglas Porteous).²¹³ While the protagonist of *Sweet Chillies* experiences home in just those terms, all strife and conflict limited to the world outside, the same does not hold true for the protagonist of *Home*. Sona, the elder daughter-in-law was always made to feel like an unwanted intruder into the family in the early days of her marriage, and couldn’t feel ‘secure’ of her position in the marital home until she becomes a mother. Her daughter Nisha is denied and deprived of physical and psychic security in her natal home, the place that Gaston Bachelard has called as human being’s ‘first world,’ akin to a ‘cradle.’²¹⁴ Her childhood is marked by neglect and abuse, until she is sent away to live with her Aunt and Uncle, who nurture her with love and affection. The Aunt’s house is the only place she truly feels ‘at home.’ Summoned back to make herself useful at home, she is castigated and confined for having brought disrepute to the family, and has to suffer constant humiliation for not landing a match, until she gets married and leaves home. As one can see, Nisha’s experience of home is a far cry from the safe cocoon it is meant to be.²¹⁵

That the home confers ‘privacy’ and ‘autonomy’ to its occupants has been established through various studies on the home.²¹⁶ However, the scholars are quick to point out that these findings do not obtain as universal but gendered values. Thus, as Ann Dupuis and David Thorns explore the experience of ontological security amongst a community of home owners in New Zealand, they concur that while ownership certainly allows autonomy over the domestic space, it holds true largely for the men; women get to exercise autonomy only once they are sole owners of the same.²¹⁷ Thus, an Omi in *Sweet Chillies* is never in doubt about his proprietorship over his home space as an inalienable right, for a Sona or a Nisha, any

²¹²Porteous, Douglas. “Home: The Territorial Core”, 1976 Pp 384.

²¹³ ---1976 Op Cit. p 383.

²¹⁴ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. Originally published: New York: Orion Press, 1964. Transl of *La poetique de l'espace*.

²¹⁵ Kimberly Dovey argues that to be ‘at home’ is akin to inhabiting a secure centre. “Home and Homelessness.” *Home Environments*. Eds. I Altman and C. Werner. 1985. Op. Cit., Pp 36.

²¹⁶ Douglas Porteous in the essay cited earlier; Dupuis, Ann and David Thorns. “Home, Home Ownership and the Search for Ontological Security”. *Sociological Review* 46 Numbers1-4 (1998). Pp 24-47.

²¹⁷ Ann Dupuis & David Thorns. ‘Home Ownership and the Search for Ontological Security. *Sociological Review* 46. 1. (1998). Pp 24-47.

rights are limited to them fitting into the roles a patriarchal society slots them into. Even Vicky is buffeted around and finally expelled from the family home because he was the sister's son. Manzo's observation that "our relationship to places are influenced by who we are, with all of the political implications of this identity" can help locate the subject positions of quite a few characters in the novel.²¹⁸ Thus, a Sona can feel alienated as she neither came endowed with 'dowry,' nor manages to have any progeny for the first decade and a half of her marriage. A Vicky was always the 'unwanted child' foisted on her, losing the tenuous title of a foster-child once Sona has children of her own. He is tolerated on the margins of the household and the family business, but occluded from the redesigned 'family home' as the place is strictly meant for the Banwari Lal family.

One of the focal points of both the narratives discussed above is the move into a bigger house befitting the family's rise in status or a mark of their progress. This is quite in keeping with Newmark and Thompson's argument that housing fulfils each of Maslow's five needs, particularly the one regarding the fourth level or self-esteem needs.²¹⁹ In the introduction to their book, they explicate how each of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is fulfilled. In most cultures, they argue, housing has a status- conferring function. They explain that success grants status, and in allowing a family to move up, it is realised through improved housing in a better locality. "[T]o the extent our homes enhance our feelings of personal worth, they contribute to self-esteem needs."²²⁰ The move to a bigger house is an essential aspect of marking their status in society.

Also, Clare Cooper Marcus' study of the two faces of home, as 'haven' and 'trap' can give another dimension to the reading of these two narratives. Marcus Cooper's examination of the extent and the kind of emotional attachment people have with their house, reveals that the home can either be a haven or a trap.²²¹ The Khatri home as depicted in *Sweet Chillies* seems to embody the former, exemplifying a typical 'happy home,' to use a cliché. They face all their travails and tribulations together, for even when they are forced to relinquish their posh house in Sector 9, only to find their old house burned down, they happily make do in the

²¹⁸ Manzo, Lynne. "Beyond House and Haven: Towards a Revisioning of Emotional Relationships with Places." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 23 Issue (2003). Pp 54.

²¹⁹ Newmark, Norma L. and Patricia J. Thompson. *Self, Space, Shelter: An Introduction to Housing*. San Francisco: Canfield Press. 1977

²²⁰ Newmark & Thompson. *Self, Space, Shelter*. 1977. Pp 10.

²²¹ Clare Cooper Marcus, 'Home-As-Have, Home-As Trap.' *The Spirit of Home: Proceedings of the 74th Annual Meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 1986*. Washington DC: Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 2006. Pp 4.

cramped space of the sister-in-law's house, confident they will soon be back in their own abode. Nisha, the protagonist of *Home*, on the other hand, experiences her natal home as a 'trap,' struggling to breathe free, a reality that only changes after she enters her marital home.

CHAPTER 2

MOVING HOME: RELOCATE AND RETURN

“We had no home anymore.....there was nothing left.”²²²

“Why leave the flat at all? It’s like heaven in here. This building isn’t called Chateau Felicity for nothing. I would lock out the hell of the outside world and spend all my days indoors.”

“You couldn’t,” said Nariman. “Hell has ways of permeating heaven’s membrane.”²²³

Some things are best valued only when they are gone. Until then, one tends to take them for granted. The loss of one’s home is akin to losing everything. For this is arguably the most significant place for an individual, the ‘haven’ that is meant to give one refuge from the world, the cocoon that one runs to for shelter and security, and the place sought for rest and repose. Yet, to the disconcertment of the protagonists, these very common-place and popular expectations seem belied. One cannot dispel the ‘darkness’ outside by securing the doors and windows and taking refuge within the four walls. ‘Hell’ finds ways of penetrating the walls of the most secure home.

This chapter, as the title suggests, explores narratives that involve moving out of home, to give up the home one has known, if only temporarily. The movement variously entails an unravelling of certainties that had been subconsciously taken for granted, the loss of which call into question the very meaning of ‘home’ as imagined and experienced. The two novels chosen for this chapter are Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence* (1988) and Rohinton Mistry’s *Family Matters* (2002). Both the narratives involve a temporary change of residence for the respective protagonists, necessitated by circumstances not of their own making. This chapter examines the impact of moving out of one’s house and home. ‘Home,’ according to Kimberly Dovey, is “a relationship that is created and evolved over time,” one that embodies

²²² Deshpande, Shashi. 1988. *That Long Silence*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1989. Pp 156; 181-182. (Subsequent references to the novel incorporated in the text as *TLS*, with pg nos.)

²²³ Mistry, Rohinton. *Family Matters*. 2nd Edition. London: Faber and Faber. 2006. P 4. (Subsequent references to the novel incorporated in the text as *FM*, with page numbers.)

a commitment of emotion over a period of time.²²⁴ Thus, leaving this very familiar place is likely to unearth the many meanings of ‘home’ as the protagonist tries to grapple with the new version of ‘home.’ Does the move prompt new imaginaries of home as the experience of the new abode would be necessarily different, and does it colour one’s notions and experience of the old house one returns to later are aspects that are explored in this chapter. Has the relocation and return rendered the older one ‘new’ as well? Interestingly, in neither case can the move from their homes mark a fresh beginning as the protagonists are not moving into new houses but to ones they are, in a sense, familiar with. If the move is seen as an authorial device to bring about a change in the status quo, it would be fruitful to analyse the new developments that take shape due to the move. This chapter focuses on the impact that the move from a habitual /familiar residence manifests in the narrative in general, and on the protagonist in particular, examining the consequent changes and their significance or impact. It would also be fruitful to examine the ‘home’ that the protagonists return to, after the temporary displacement, exploring the evolution in the idea of ‘home.’

The concept of ‘home’ encompasses both an idea rooted to the material space of a particular house and, as Heidegger puts it, a feeling of being ‘at home’ that may as well be experienced in a variety of other places too.²²⁵ In the words of phenomenologist David Seamon, “the dwelling place is generally the spatial centre of at-homeness,” even though, he argues, the person would go on to establish a level of familiarity and comfort in a geographical world that extends beyond that residence.²²⁶ Clearly, a house may not be portable, but the feeling of being ‘at home’ is. Moving out of one’s home can be unsettling, leaving one with the feeling of being ‘unhomed,’ dispossessed, de-familiarised, even as one tries to adapt to the change. ‘Feeling at home’ is a complex phenomenon, both rooted in a particular place or residence, as well as felt in other places we are comfortable in. Also, we can ‘carry’ the idea of ‘home’ wherever we go, and that mobility allows us to ‘set up’ home in new places too.²²⁷ Keeping in mind Seamon’s concept of ‘at-homeness,’ this chapter seeks to

²²⁴ Kimberly Dovey. “Home and Homelessness.” *Home Environments*, edited by Altman and Werner. 1985. Pp 54.

²²⁵ Heidegger, Martin. “Building, Dwelling, Thinking.” *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, edited by Neil Leach. London: Routledge. 1997. Pp 100.

²²⁶ Seamon, David. *A Geography of the Lifeworld: Movement, Rest and Encounter*. London: Croom and Helm. 1970. Pp 70.

²²⁷ Kimberly Dovey argues that the notion of ‘home’ as ‘social order’ is both flexible and conservative. The flexibility lies in the meaning of home embodied not so much in the ‘house’ but in the patterning of experience and behaviour that can easily be transposed from place to place. “Home and Homelessness.” *Home Environments*, edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985. Pp 38-39.

examine and explore the extent to which the respective protagonists can apprehend that feeling in their own experiences or imaginaries of 'home' in the different houses they inhabit.

Both the narratives involve a moving into another house that, in a sense, also belongs to the family. Hence, there is an element of familiarity for the respective protagonists with the other place they take up residence in. Yet, it is not the same as living in the house that has been 'home' for long. For instance, the Dadar flat in *That Long Silence* belongs to Jaya's family and she has lived there earlier, yet going back is not the same thing. Not only is this a far cry from the upmarket 'Churchgate House' she has been used to living in until now, it is not even the same 'Jaya' who has come to stay there now. Nariman, the seventy-nine year old protagonist of *Family Matters*, has been forced to leave his natal home in Chateau Felicity and be accommodated in the tiny flat of his beloved daughter Roxana. However, there is a big difference in enjoying a pleasant evening with Roxana and her family in his house at Chateau Felicity, to having to impose on their cramped space at Pleasant Villa. Roderick J. Lawrence contends that the meaning and use of domestic architecture is not just a function of its built form, but its significance goes beyond the material structure. It is essential, he goes on to argue, that the transactions between spatial, cultural, social and personal variables are examined over a passage of time for a fruitful study of domestic environments.²²⁸ Thus, analysing the given narratives that entail change of home and residence, in terms of the dynamics of domestic space and space use through the passage of time would yield valuable insights into the evolution of the characters and the meaning of home.

Except the obvious commonality of moving home, there is a vast difference in the two novels in terms of the outcome of the relocation. Not only are the situations different, but the difference in age and gender of the respective protagonists are some of the variables that also have a bearing on the outcome of the move. Interestingly, both the protagonists are propelled into taking up residence in alternative premises not so much of their own volition, but only to accommodate to the dictates of family members. Both the novels open on a crisis and the respective protagonists are clearly in a position of subordination to other family members who can commandeer them to relocate. Thus, Jaya has no choice but to 'Sita-like' follow her husband Mohan, from their swank, well-furnished abode at Churchgate into the relatively drab and bare flat in Dadar. Nariman is unceremoniously dumped by his step-children in his other daughter's tiny flat, as a bedridden invalid. The ramifications of the move, however, are

²²⁸Lawrence, Roderick J. "Public Collective and Private Space: A Study of Urban Housing in Switzerland." *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 76.

quite different for the 'dutiful wife' and the 'hapless old man.' The former finds herself removed not only from the household she presided over with much pride, but also, being bereft of all family leaves her 'free' to ruminate over a lifetime of half-truths and falsities. The latter, however, has no agency left after his fracture renders him immobile, and it is those around him who are impacted by the move as the dynamics of the household necessarily undergoes a drastic change.

To be able to deal with the idea of 'home' that is both conceptually as well as experientially diverse and complex, it would be good to recall Blunt and Dowling's engagement with the idea in their work entitled *Home* under the Key Words in Geography Series. Arguing that 'home' is both a place where we live as well as an idea, they conceptualise home as a 'spatial imaginary,' a matrix of ideas and feelings that extends across space and scales, connecting place.²²⁹ Rohinton Mistry and Shashi Deshpande take different approaches to express and reflect the imaginaries of home, particularly in the context of the kaleidoscope that a change of home entails in their respective narratives. In *Family Matters*, for instance, Mistry focuses on the infinitesimal changes in the minutiae of day to day life of the Chenoy household that come about after the old protagonist has been added. The writer closely monitors the same to explore the changing meanings of 'home' and 'belonging' as experienced by the various characters. Deshpande, on the other hand, takes a macro-view of the idea of 'home' and 'belonging,' by looking at the assorted homes and houses the protagonist has dwelt in through her lifetime. It is through Jaya's musing and introspection of the homes and houses of her childhood and those occupied later, that Deshpande explores the protagonist's 'imaginaries' of home in *That Long Silence*.

Jaya has no choice but to follow her husband Mohan to the relative anonymity of the non-descript Dadar flat, as Mohan has to go into hiding to evade getting caught for misappropriation of funds. As she invokes the image of a pair of bullocks yoked together, one gets the idea she seems to be following him not of her volition but due to the bondage that is marriage. Far removed from their official residence at Churchgate, the narrative unravels Jaya's vulnerabilities and insecurities as she soon finds herself sans the security of familiar and familial routine. Having stepped into a house seeped with old memories, she examines herself in the roles of wife, mother, daughter and sister, exploring the gaps and fissures in her various personas.

²²⁹Blunt, Alison and Robyn Dowling. *Home*. London: Routledge. 2006. Pp 2.

The narrative proper opens with the protagonist Jaya's vision of a 'happy family' in their gleaming home, an ideal she seeks, and finds, only in glossy advertisements. In fact, she can almost visualise her own family at a meal portraying a similar picture, the mother 'serving food with love and care,' the father 'smiling indulgently,' the children 'lively'. But she can find no words to match that picture.²³⁰ If anything, all that emerges from her memories of their dinner-time conversations is the 'scum of hostility' that threatens to break the surface. It is, indeed, the lie of the 'happy family.' One of the first things we are told is that Jaya finds family life unendurable, always dreaming of her own space, away from the kin. Following her husband's admission of guilt, her world seems to have fallen apart, a 'world' largely defined through the prism of home and family, and it is only natural that the narrative goes on to explore the various 'imaginaries' of home.²³¹ As the children are away for a holiday with family friends, it is convenient for the husband and wife to get away to the flat at Dadar. This 'retreat,' if one may call it so, turns out to be an effective authorial device to pluck Jaya out of her plush and secure middle-class haven. Once free of the entanglements and entrapments of that life, it gives her an opportunity to look within herself and engage with her falsities and prejudices. It means delving into her inner persona, drawing upon her memories of the family and the homes and houses that shaped her subjectivity. "We not only give a sense of identity to the place we call home, but we also draw our identity from that of the place."²³²

In contrast, as Jaya tells us, Mohan has always had very clear ideas about himself, always sure of "the kind of life he wanted to lead, the kind of home he would live in..." (TLS, 25). For a man who has put in a great deal of effort in 'elevating' himself from the dingy flat in Lohanagar to the posh and spacious accommodation in Churchgate, it is not easy to willingly go back to a house that proclaims its lack of class in every aspect of its being, both in its structure and location. Earlier, in his move from the small industrial town Lohanagar to Mumbai, they had stayed in the Dadar flat only as a stop gap arrangement until he manages to set himself up in more classy surroundings. Now, forced by his situation to go back and seek refuge in the flat at Dadar, he has no choice but acquiesce to living in such

²³⁰ Anthropologist Edmund Leach calls this 'the cereal packet family.' *A Runaway World?* London: BBC Publications. Quoted in Pamela Abbott, Claire Wallace and Melissa Tyler. *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives*. Third Edition. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.1990.2008.Pp144.

²³¹ Ann Oakley, sociologist, declared that "Housewife is...a shorthand symbol for the convenience to a male oriented society of women's continued captivity in a world of domestic affairs- a one word reference to those myths of women's pace which chart their presence in the home as a natural and universal necessity." *Women's Work: The Housewife, Past and Present*. New York: Pantheon Books (1974), p 240. Quoted in Andre, Rae. *Homemakers: The Forgotten Workers*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.1981.Pp11.

²³² Dovey, Kimberly. "Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*. Ed. by I. Altman and C. Werner.1985 Pp41.

shabby conditions. However, the move ultimately proves to have a positive outcome for Jaya, as she evolves during her sojourn at the suburban flat. In the words of Roshan G. Shahani, “In [the novel], while the ‘yuppie’ life of comfortable conformity that the couple had earlier enjoyed is epitomised by their plush apartment at Churchgate, their later move, on account of the husband’s culpability, to a shoddy flat in Dadar symbolises a new perspective, and even a sense of affirmation on the part of the woman.”²³³

Looking back on the day they arrived at the flat, the reader is given the wife’s account of a husband who now pales in comparison to his own earlier self. Once a fastidious and authoritative man of the house, he seems to have lost his self-assurance as he makes his way up through the trail of garbage and stink. It is there in the way he wilts under his wife’s gaze after a brief burst of irritation at having to walk through the filth; it is there in his indifference to the plight of the poor cleaning woman whom Jaya is interacting with; these traits have always been there, but are now marked by an uncharacteristic loss of confidence. To Jaya, he seems akin to some Graham Greene character, a “sad, bewildered man,... reconciled to failure”(TLS, 8). That is the only manner in which she can explain his acquiescence to her not handing him the keys.

Assailed by the mildew and the fetid stench, the first thing Mohan demands is that they clean up, as he finds it impossible to live in the ‘mess.’ Mohan’s fastidiousness and love for order had amazed Jaya, from the time she first got married, because she had never seen any such concern in the houses she grew up in or was familiar with. Putting her husband’s fussiness in perspective, Jaya finds it a characteristic typical of him but can find no traces of such qualities in either his childhood home or his upbringing. If she came from a careless household, Mohan’s was downright sloppy. The image of Mohan’s childhood home in Saptagiri seems rather incongruous to have spawned such a stickler for cleanliness: “the inner room with its haphazardly piled mattresses, a faint odour of urine still clinging to them, the string tied from wall to wall on which the family, all of them except Mohan, threw their clothes without folding them” (TLS, 13). Jaya’s childhood home at Saptagiri was no less disordered: “...objects had cheerfully strayed away from their places, if they ever had any, and nobody had minded it...” (TLS, 12). She remembered her paternal and maternal grandparent homes to be “as bad.” The town house in Saptagiri where her paternal family stayed “was austere and bare, ... pared down to the basic essentials.” The other grandmother’s

²³³Roshan G. Shahani, “Polyphonous Voices in the City,” *Bombay: Mosaic of Modern Culture*, edited by S. Patel and A. Thorner. Bombay: Oxford university Press. Pp 107.

home in Ambegaon was equally chaotic “with it’s rarely made beds and clothes piled high on to the large clothes horse, until it threatened to collapse” (*TLS*,12). Thus, having grown up in a rather slipshod household, she now finds that the ‘bareness’ and the ‘ugliness’ of the Dadar flat pleases her more than the ‘carefully furnished home in Churchgate’ ever did. When she arrives here with Mohan, she has a queer sense of homecoming: “...while Mohan prowled about uneasy and fearful, like a trapped, confined animal, I was at ease with myself and my surroundings”(*TLS*, 25-26).

Coming from an impoverished background, with an abusive father and an emaciated mother, Mohan has distanced himself as much as possible from his past. It is evident in terms of his material progress as well as in the way he surrounds himself with the accoutrements of a respectable middle-class life.²³⁴ Mohan’s anxiety over maintaining order suggests that he is highly image-conscious, having set himself a certain ideal to reflect his new-found class and status, constantly struggling until he achieve a desired level of ‘respectability. The Churchgate house is the epitome of his achievement. In a detailed study entitled “Place-Identity: Physical World Socialisation Of The Self,” Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff establish the linkage between the self and the physical world one is a part of, going on not only to explicate the notion of ‘place-identity’ but also the significant functions that place-identity fulfils. Thus, of the various functions listed by them, the ‘Expressive-Requirement function’ would be most pertinent to an understanding of Mohan’s innate need to set up a home in a location that proclaims his status and position. According to the writers, it is the cognition of the desired tastes and preferences that initiates a ‘personalisation’ of space:

...for each individual in any group, unique experiences and personality characteristics also impose their influence on tastes and preferences for physical settings and their properties. ...when physical settings do not match these preferences, when the person’s desires in this respect are not met, it is then that the expressive function of place identity is initiated.²³⁵

Any changes initiated thereby, they go on to argue, would be “an affirmation of the individual’s self-identity.”²³⁶

²³⁴ J.S.Duncan argues that “the house, its address and its façade, as well as its interior, affirm one’s status in the eyes of strangers.” “From Container of Women to Status Symbol: the Impact of Social Structure on the Meaning of the House.” *Housing and Identity: Cross Cultural Perspectives*, edited by J S Duncan. London: Croom Helm.1981. Pp38.

²³⁵ Proshansky, H M, et al. “Place-Identity: Physical World Socialisation of the Self.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology Vol 3 Issue 1* (1983) .Pp 69.

²³⁶ Proshansky, et al, “Place-Identity.” 3 Issue 1 (1983). Pp 69.

Now, having had to take refuge in the Dadar flat, the threat of disgrace looming large, he seems to have lost his self-assurance, despite the veneer of disparagement for what the house embodies. Mohan has always viewed the flat as a stop gap arrangement as he moved up the social ladder, one that he finds unbearable even now. To Jaya, on the other hand, it has been a refuge, a home she has been coming back to from time to time. This time, however, what she is unprepared for are the ghosts that spring out at her the moment she enters. From the ghost of Makarandmama who owned the flat, to one of her elder brother's Dada who had stayed here occasionally, his friends, and even the images of her young children when they had lived here earlier, come crowding the house. Some seem to have left their mark behind, literally as much as figuratively. If Makarandmama had plastered the walls of his house with large self-portraits that refused to be erased, Vanitamami's Kusum had made the flat her own by marking it with "her own brand of squalor"(TLS, 20).²³⁷ Mohan can't hide his distaste when he finds out that the 'haldi and kumkum' marks on the calendar with the Goddess's picture were Kusum's handiwork. Kusum had been taken into the Ambegaon household by her childless aunt, Jaya's Vanitamami, but was barely accepted or tolerated by the rest of the family, always a furtive presence. Later, when she turns 'mad' and is no longer 'of use to anyone,' as Jaya's mother had cruelly put it, Jaya surprises everyone by reaching out to her and taking her under her care. However, Mohan had put his foot down against having a 'mad woman' at home with the children, Kusum had to be 'housed' at Dadar, the address they no longer want to associate with. Jaya is nevertheless annoyed with Kusum for letting the flat slip back to its old grubby state, after all the efforts she had once taken to turn it spick and span. That is why she can only look in irritation at the room "... on which [Kusum] had managed to impress her own brand of squalor...her sari... on the bed... ignominiously crushed and crumpled... a comb with an ugly hunk of hair in it leered at her..."(TLS, 20). Not only does Jaya live by her husband's ideals of good housekeeping, she has internalised that value system so deeply that she takes her cousin Kusum to task for letting the 'old stains' come back with a vengeance.

It is only in retrospect that his wife Jaya realises the extent to which she has internalised her husband's ideals, giving shape to them through her zealous efforts at keeping house, whether it was the Dadar flat earlier, or the Churchgate flat subsequently. Conditioned by his

²³⁷ This personalisation of space is in keeping with Proshansky et al's discussion of the 'Expressive-Requirement function' mentioned above.

expectations, she had conflated ‘good housekeeping’ with being a good wife and mother.²³⁸ Today she may critique and question her husband’s fervour for cleanliness, yet she cannot ignore the ghost of her earlier self, the one who took great pride in scrubbing and cleaning with all her might. “[T]he ghost most fearful to confront is the ghost of one’s old self.... a woman who scrubbed and cleaned and had taken an inordinate pride in her achievements, even in a toilet free from stains and smells” (*TLS*, 13). In writing about ‘intimate spaces’ of the home, Gaston Bachelard takes up the example of women’s household work such as the ‘daily polishing’ and care given to household objects as a means of ‘creating,’ or rather, ‘re-creating’ or making fresh, the house: “...we can sense how a human being can devote himself to things and make them his own by perfecting their beauty. Through housewifely care a house re-covers not so much its originality as its origin.”²³⁹ Clearly, the protagonist of Deshpande’s narrative lives Bachelard’s contention, having internalised her husband’s value system. Bachelard, however, seems to romanticise housework, glossing over the mundane drudgery that is usually gendered in a patriarchal society. In fact, feminist readings of home foreground the aspect of home being a work-place for women that requires intensive domestic labour. Blunt and Dowling cite many such readings, even as they critique Bachelard’s masculinist view-point.²⁴⁰

A change of residence is not merely a change of location, but demands a recalibration of routine at a practical level, yet the difference in their response to the situation exposes the inherent vulnerabilities. For instance, it takes her just a few moments after waking up to feel at home, while her husband distinctly feels ill at ease. Thus, waking up to what she thinks is the usual roar of the sea she is used to in her large bedroom at Churchgate, it takes her just a moment to remember she’s now in the cramped bedroom of Makarandmama’s flat at Dadar. Yet, unlike her husband, she experiences none of the “frightening” disorientation she has on waking up in a strange place, when she “can’t connect” herself to the world. In fact, she is reassured by the sight of the decrepit but familiar old things: “the dressing table with its tarnished mirror...the large bare table,” even familiar with every squeak of the steel bed (*TLS*,

²³⁸ Graham Allan contends that the expectation that wives and mothers take responsibility for most of the housework and caring remains a central feature of family life. *Family Life: Domestic Roles and Social Organisation*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1985. Pp 26.

²³⁹ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places* (1958). Trsl from French by Maria Jolas. Foreword by John R. Stilgoe. Boston: Beacon Press. 1994 Pp 104.

²⁴⁰ Blunt and Dowling. *Home*. 2006. Pp 15-16.

18).²⁴¹ She looks upon them as markers that locate one's position, like an anchor; so long as they stay in sight, she feels, one can't get lost. "But what happens if you get lost in spite of these things?" she wonders pertinently (*TLS*, 18). Her husband's unexpected disclosure of having accepted a bribe and the impending danger of losing his job and position makes her feel at a loss. She may be in a place that feels quite familiar, in fact she is quite at home here, yet their carefully constructed life, seems to be collapsing around her. What follows is an account of her life unravelling; the certainties she has lived by until now, seem to be dissolving rapidly.

If Jaya has experienced the Dadar flat as 'home,' her husband, whose unscrupulous conduct is the reason they have to seek refuge in this flat, experiences the panic of waking up in an 'unfamiliar place'. Mohan has never taken to this flat as 'home'. In contrast to Jaya's sound sleep, Mohan could only sleep fitfully. It is in Jaya's astute observations of his unusual responses to the changed material circumstances that the reader gets an insight into his character. For instance, she observes that he drank his tea without commenting on the 'ugly, chipped mug' it had been served in, something he would never countenance in the Churchgate house. However, more than an anxiety over the future, they are confounded by the immediate present. Plucked from a regulated existence, they are unsure of what to do or how conduct themselves. It is in the void left behind that she realises how significant the roles one assigns oneself as part of routine middle-class existence are, effectively the crutches on which life goes on. The husband sans his files, meetings, phone-calls and office doesn't seem to be 'anyone,' certainly not the same man around whose needs and desires the wife had woven her life. The woman who shopped and cooked, cleaned and organised, seems to have vanished, much to Jaya's surprise. What hits her is the blankness they are left with: "The nothingness of what seemed like a busy and full life was frightening" (*TLS*, 25).

Recent research in women's domestic roles suggests that their preoccupation or obsession about housekeeping is often a reflection of their own insecurities. Proshansky et al contend that physical settings can be used to protect one's identity against low self-esteem. Thus, a setting that is 'overdone,' perfect in every sense, would guard against a poor reflection of the self. Low self-esteem and related conflicts in family life allow for and nourish distortion in the use of physical space. For example, the wife who persistently

²⁴¹ Harold M. Proshansky et al suggest that "[v]ery poor physical settings may lead to positive connotations because the social context is a very rewarding and positive one for the person." "Place Identity: Physical World Socialisation of the Self." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 3 Issue 1 (1983.) Pp 77.

emphasises her skill in maintaining the neatest and cleanest house as a measure of her own self-worth may be using it to protect her poor self-esteem insofar as the role of wife, mother and community member.²⁴² Jaya, as it emerges through the narrative, certainly defines her self-worth in terms of keeping a ‘perfect’ house. It is only as she introspects her roles and persona later in the novel does she realise the hollowness of the benchmark.

Ann Oakley in her work entitled *The Sociology of Housework* undertakes an empirical study of the various perceptions and aspects of housework amongst housewives. She begins with an observation of two popular but conflicting stereotypes of housework. On the one hand housework is seen as oppressive and degrading; yet on the other hand it is also seen as ‘homemaking’, a creative and fulfilling role for the housewife. In the chapter on ‘Standards and Routines, she elaborates on the ‘standards’ of housekeeping ranging from the ‘casual’ to the ‘perfectionist’. She cites a study by the psychiatrist John Cooper’s on the personality characteristics of the ‘house-proud’ woman. Her findings corroborate Cooper’s contention that such women exhibit signs of abnormality in their behaviour similar to that found in obsessively ill people. (qtd. in Oakley, 1990)²⁴³ The ‘house-proud’ Jaya certainly stands guilty of such obsessive behaviour.

Even as Jaya laments the loss of a set routine, she also experiences a sense of freedom from the mundane drudgery. Having invested all her time and energy into keeping a spotless and sparkling house, its only in distancing herself from that world literally and otherwise that she realises these tasks have been nothing short of bondage. Of her freedom, she says:

“There was nothing to be cleaned, nothing to be arranged or rearranged. I was free, after years, of all those monsters that had ruled my life, gadgets that had to be kept in order, the glassware that had to sparkle, the furniture and the curios that had to be kept spotless and dust-free, ...and those never ending piles of clothes... Thinking of those two rows of mahogany elephants...in [the] living room at home in Churchgate was like remembering a vanquished enemy; how much time I had spent dusting and polishing them, how punctilious I had been about it...” (TLS, 25).

However, Jaya doesn’t really put the blame on her husband for the domestic enslavement. Rather, she acknowledges that unlike her husband, she was clueless about what

²⁴² Proshansky, et al. “Place Identity: Physical World Socialisation of the Self.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3 Issue 1 (1983) Pp 74.

²⁴³ Oakley, Ann. *The Sociology of Housework*. Second edition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1990. Pp 108.

she wanted from life, and has simply followed his ideals. Significantly, it is her move out of the Churchgate house that occasions her new insights into the workings of her own mind, such as her obsession with housekeeping, and some degree of clarity on what she wants.

Elaborating on the poetics of the house, Gaston Bachelard contends that as the repository of our dreams, our various dwelling places ‘co-penetrate,’ and through our dreams and memories, enrich the new house we move to. He suggests that our entire past comes to live with us in our new house.²⁴⁴ To Jaya, the houses she grew up in are never far from her memory. Coming again to the Dadar flat takes her back to the days of her early childhood, to the memory of her Grandmother Ajji’s room in the Saptagiri house. Her widowed grandmother had pared down her life to the bare minimum, and her room and the possessions reflected her state. The room had a bed with no mattress, and two chairs “unredeemed by cushions, augmented, in fact, by sharp nails” that could poke one anywhere (*TLS*, 26). The bed was there only as a memorial to the dead grandfather, while the chairs were meant for any male visitors who could not sit comfortably on the floor. As a child, she had avoided Ajji’s room, preferring to spend time in the ‘outside sitting room,’ which was like a museum and had remained unchanged all through her childhood. It was a “dead room,” yet she preferred it for the solitude it offered as she sat reading the collection of paperbacks there. Proshansky, et al, make a strong case for establishing each individual’s innate need to connect with his or her environment. They contend that this identification with ‘place’ is but a “sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of ... cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives.”²⁴⁵ Further, they argue, these cognitions encompass the gamut of thoughts, ideas, feelings, experiences and memories, both of the place and the people that comprise their environment. More importantly, “[a]t the core of such physical environment-related cognitions is the environmental past of the person; a past consisting of places, spaces and their properties which have served instrumentally in the satisfaction of the person’s biological, psychological, social and cultural needs.”²⁴⁶ Clearly, Jaya’s deep attachment to her grandmother’s house lie not in any material comfort or pleasure that it allowed, but in the affective ties forged during her father’s routine visits to his mother’s house, with the child-Jaya in tow. Now, sitting with Mohan in the Dadar flat, reminds her of Ajji’s room, where no one could ever be comfortable either. “Being with Ajji was like sitting on those chairs in her

²⁴⁴ Bachelard, G. *Poetics of Space*. 1994...Pp 5-6.

²⁴⁵ Proshansky, et al.. “Place Identity: Physical World Socialisation of the Self.” *Journal of Environment Psychology* 3 Issue 1 (1983). . Pp 59.

²⁴⁶ ---. ”Place Identity” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3 Issue 1 (1983) .Pp59.

room; there were always nails that came out to pierce and hurt” (*TLS*, 27). With Mohan too, there can only be an uneasy silence, for there were too many unanswered questions hanging in the air. It is the emotional disconnect between Jaya and Mohan that is reflected in the feeling of the physical discomfort from sitting on a chair with nails poking out. Jaya, otherwise quite at home in the Dadar flat, feels unsettled by Mohan’s lack of connectedness with the place.

In all their years together, Mohan had been rather reticent in talking about his childhood, as if, Jaya felt, he was ashamed to admit a connection between those early years of deprivation, and the man he had transformed into, with all the accoutrements of success. Holed up in the Dadar flat, however, Mohan digs into all his memories, even the most painful and humiliating ones, and pours them into Jaya’s ears. He tells her of his Spartan childhood, his abusive father and of his silently suffering mother. Apparently, Jaya is not the only one who has to contend with her ghosts in this house, Mohan seems to have a few he needs to exorcise as well. Trying to fathom this sudden need to lay his past bare, Jaya imagines that he may be hoping to trace the trajectory that culminates in their hiding like fugitives in the Dadar flat.

Roderick J. Lawrence observes that although houses are primarily functional objects, “they can serve a range of purposes and be attributed a range of values, including an economic value, an exchange value, a aesthetic value, a use value, a sentimental value, and a symbolic value.”²⁴⁷ The Dadar flat interestingly embodies a range of purposes and values to the different characters who have claimed propriety over it. The flat was originally owned by Makarandmama, who had set himself up independently to fulfil his dreams of becoming an actor. Reviled by his family for his choice of profession, the flat was the refuge that embodied his aspirations, visibly marked in the countless self-portraits that lined the wall of the entire flat. To Makarand, the flat’s ‘aesthetic’ and ‘symbolic’ value took precedence over its ‘exchange’ or ‘economic value’. Yet, once he dies, the family that had alienated him for his choices, seemingly change their opinion as they eye the ‘economic’ and ‘exchange’ value of the flat he has left behind. The family members ‘discover’ hidden feelings of ‘admiration’ and ‘sympathy’ for him after his death, to bolster their claims over the property. Jaya’s mother blocks out her sister-in-law’s move to take over by manipulating her elder son Dinkar into moving in, an unwilling ally to her machinations. Later, as the narrative progresses, the flat will come to embody a range of intangible values to Jaya.

²⁴⁷Lawrence, Roderick J. “Public Collective and Private Space.” *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 78.

On first entering the apartment, Jaya and her natal family are astounded to find the entire flat lined with large photographs of their Uncle, with heavy, black frames like Obituary pictures. Their mother rules against Dinkar's attempts at removing the photographs, perhaps to assuage her guilt. Her brother concurred to let the "amiable ghost" of their "amiable uncle" continue to haunt them. Thus, the portraits literally stand as an ironic reminder of who the flat really belongs to. Now, after all these years of lying vacant, the portraits begin to surface again, the 'amiable ghost' giving a warning to the interloper. On her part, Jaya doesn't mind them because she has never denied the legitimacy of ownership. It is her husband Mohan, however, who has always summarily staked his claim as per convenience. The 'portraits' always manage to unsettle him.

Jaya had been quite taken aback years ago when her husband had nonchalantly claimed to his superior that a transfer to Bombay wouldn't be a problem, "as they had a flat there" (TLS, 41). Jaya was surprised her husband could stake a claim over a flat that had been willed to her brother Dinkar. Naturally, she was both astonished and angered by Mohan's assumption that they would go and live there. Dinkar, with his eyes set on emigrating to the States, has no interest in settling down in the flat, and neither does his wife. Clearly, to Dinkar and his wife, the flat embodies none of the 'values' listed by Lawrence above. Dinkar secretly wills it to Jaya when he emigrates, reassuring her that his wife Geeta wouldn't object. In fact, Geeta had openly despised this part of Bombay, not only "for the filth and squalor, but also for the kind of people who lived there" (TLS, 42). Jaya's contempt for an expatriate who has erased her middle class origins, pretending she has lived all her life in "bacteria-free, prosperous suburbs" is ironic, for she has also acquiesced to similar pretensions of her husband (TLS, 42).

Recalling Roderick J. Lawrence's proposition on the range of values a house can embody, Mohan can only find it worthy in terms of its 'use' value.²⁴⁸ One of the first tasks Mohan undertakes on taking possession of the Dadar flat is to rid the house of all traces of its owner, tackling the 'portraits' in particular with great vehemence.²⁴⁹ "He had done it with all the thoroughness that had reminded me of an army taking possession of invaded territory" (TLS, 46). Jaya's description suggests a kind of 'annexation' by Mohan, staking claim where

²⁴⁸ Lawrence, R. J. "Public Collective and Private Space." *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 78.

²⁴⁹ J. Douglas Porteous lists three essential satisfactions that the 'home' confers, viz., identity, security and stimulation. 'Stimulation,' in terms of modifying or personalising space is pertinent here. Mohan 'personalises' the space by erasing traces of the previous owner, so it can feel like 'home' to him. 'Home: The Territorial Core.' *The Geographical Review*. Vol. 66 Issue 4. (1976). Pp 385.

he has none, in his haste to climb up the social ladder. Also, the fact that the walls need to be painted over not once but thrice to obliterate all signs of the portraits connotes the mute resistance of the 'house' against such 'usurpation,' a vain effort to safeguard the interests of the dead owner. In the event, the denuded walls glare accusingly at a guilty Jaya, though Mohan stays oblivious. The same guilt surfaces again when they come back a second time, as those 'ghostly rectangles' begin to show once more, "[a]s if Makarandmama was gently, unobtrusively, coming back to his old home" (*TLS*, 47). It is, as if the 'house' refuses to be appropriated by someone who doesn't really care for it as 'home,' for he has never experienced a 'sense of belonging' to the house.

Tracking his journey from Lohanagar to Churchgate, Mohan reminds Jaya of the efforts he has put in to take his family as far and as fast from his humble beginnings as was possible, even as he wonders where he went wrong. Thus, he begins by talking about his relief and joy on getting his first job at the Lohanagar plant, imagining all his worries to be over. Yet, if the Lohanagar plant symbolised hope and opportunity to him, for the country and for those who worked there, to Jaya it merely symbolised drab houses, dusty roads, the baby's wails and sleeplessness. However, the demands of the family soon catch up with him, and he chafes at the realisation that he hadn't progressed much; he had only moved from "not having enough money for clothes and books" to "not having enough money for a gas connection, for travelling in comfort," or for the needs of his siblings (*TLS*, 60). He has always been anxious to overcome the shabbiness that comes with limited means, and keeps on the lookout for an opportunity to upgrade him-self. Jaya conveniently keeps her eyes shut through this journey, 'Gandhari-like,' to the processes that facilitated the move from a 'Type B flat' to a bigger 'Type C flat,' until they are ensconced in a well-furnished home located in a posh locality of the metropolis.

Various interdisciplinary studies by writers such as J.S.Duncan, Gerry Pratt and Bonnie Loyd on housing and identity have established the relation between house and social status.²⁵⁰ For instance, in a study of the social worlds of the old and the new elites in the city of Hyderabad, Duncan establishes that for the Westernised new elite, "the most important status object ... was the house."²⁵¹ Bonnie Loyd similarly contends that "[t]he use of the house as a

²⁵⁰Duncan, J S."Introduction." *Housing and Identity: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, edited by J S Duncan. London: Croom Helm. 1981. Pp 1-5.

²⁵¹---. "From Container of Women to Status Symbol: The Impact of Social Structure on the Meaning of the House." *Housing and Identity*. 1981.. Pp 37.

representation of the social status has grown with the expansion of the middle class.”²⁵² With its gleaming furniture and sparkling glassware, the Churchgate house certainly creates the image of the perfect home, the pinnacle of achievement for a man who could only complete his basic education with the aid of a benefactor. The brief glimpses we are given of the living room of the Churchgate house, with its artefacts and carefully done décor, corroborate the picture of aesthetic perfection. Also, numerous scholars of domestic space have commented on the special role and status of the living room in the house.²⁵³ Cooper, for instance, suggests that the living room “reflects the individual’s conscious and unconscious attempts to express a social identity.”²⁵⁴ In the words of Amrita Bhalla, the Churchgate house, “is a validation of the dreams of success of a couple aspiring to both the gloss and chimera of happiness portrayed in advertisements....”²⁵⁵ Yet, it is only when Jaya moves out of that ‘carefully constructed world’ does she realise the extent of hollowness and false pretences it symbolised. To begin with is her realisation of the unending drudgery that the house demanded to maintain it up to a certain ‘standard’ of cleanliness and upkeep.²⁵⁶ Further, the snippets we get of the life that they lead in their sophisticated flat are far from flattering. On the one hand, we are told of the immense effort that has gone into achieving that level and status. On the other hand, their family life, as one can gather from the brief glimpses one gets from the narrative, has been far from harmonious. The children, particularly the son, are petty and rebellious, with no interest whatsoever in following the middle class tenets of chasing education and career. The family friends who have taken the children on a holiday are not really ‘friendly’. Mohan was particularly keen on building at least a charade of friendship with them, for Ashok is the embodiment of both class and status: a bureaucrat from a family of Civil Servants. Jaya and the daughter Rati play along, and the two ladies meet regularly and follow common pursuits, but the son refuses to be a party to the farcical relationship.

²⁵²Loyd, Bonnie. “Women, Home, Status.” *Housing and Identity*. 1981. Pp 181.

²⁵³ Duncan, 1976, cited by Bernard, et al, ‘The Interior Use of Home: Behaviour Principles Across and Within European Cultures.’ Ernesto G.Arias, ed. *The Meaning and Use of Housing: International Perspectives, Approaches and their Applications*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1993. P 82. Also, Norma L. Newmark and Patricia J. Thompson. *Self, Space and Shelter: An Introduction to Housing*. San Fransisco: Canfield Press. Pp 12, 73-74, 400, 408. See also Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence Zuniga. *House Life: Space, Place and Family in Europe*. Oxford: Berg, 1999. Barbara Miller Lane. *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives on Modern Domestic Architecture*. London: Routledge 2007. Pp 149-195.

²⁵⁴Marcus, Clare Cooper. “House as Symbol of the Self.” *Environmental Psychology*, edited by Proshansky et al. Second edition. New York: Holt Rhiner Winstone. 1976. Pp 440.

²⁵⁵ Bhalla, Amrita.. “That Long Silence.” *Shashi Deshpande*. Horndon, Tavistock, Devon: Northcote House Publishers Ltd. 2006. Pp 36-37.

²⁵⁶Madigan, Ruth and Moira Munro. “House Beautiful’: Style and Consumption in the Home.’ *Sociology* 30(1)1996, Pp 54. “Women typically take the responsibility for setting and maintaining standards of housekeeping and bear the brunt of unfavourable judgements.”

Jaya's interaction with an inquisitive young neighbour again throws up different imaginaries of 'house' and 'home.' While their unusual presence in the Dadar flat has not gone unnoticed by the neighbours and the neighbourhood servants, most refrain from questioning them directly. It is only Nilima, the neighbour's precocious daughter, who asks Jaya point blank why they were here, not accepting Jaya's lame contention that this was also their house. In fact, Nilima is disarmingly sceptical and counters Jaya saying their 'home' was now the flat at Churchgate where they lived. She goes on to point out to Jaya that she could hardly call a place 'home' if she only visits it occasionally, then again by herself, when she had some work. Interestingly, if Mohan found the Dadar address not matching up to his status, the daughter Rati seems to have imbibed the same values in disassociating herself from the 'unfashionable neighbourhood', a patronising attitude the young neighbour has not missed. Thus, Nilima's observation exposes Jaya's feeble attempts at claiming the place as 'home,' pointing out that even her daughter Rati has turned too snooty and posh to visit Dadar ever since they moved to Churchgate.

Thus, the Dadar flat seems to be marked as a 'reject,' best used temporarily or in transit, at least from the point of view of Jaya's husband and children. To them, the house is only marked for its 'use value,' to borrow Lawrence's term. Using it as a dumping ground for the 'useless' or the 'undesirable' seems to be the best way to utilise it. By housing the family's rejects, be it Jaya's secrets, or her aunt's niece who has turned mad at Dadar seems to be the best way to keep the Churchgate home 'pristine.' For Jaya, however, it is the house she can seek refuge in, breath free, or even indulge in nostalgia, for the flat is a storehouse of memories. It was here that she came when she needed some peace and quiet, for she clearly felt a sense of ease here that she found lacking in the carefully cultivated Churchgate Flat. As a writer, it was to the upstairs Kamat she turned to when she needed to discuss her writing or examine the reasons for its failure. She knew her secrets were safe in this flat, whether it was her rejected manuscripts, or the fact about her covert abortion. This house for Jaya obviously holds both 'symbolic value' and 'sentimental value.'²⁵⁷ Used to her 'own space' this flat has allowed her, Jaya craves some relief from the burden of Mohan's constant presence now, finding it oppressive.

²⁵⁷Lawrence, R.J. "Public Collective and Private Space." *Domestic Architecture*. 1990. Pp 76..

Bhalla argues that Jaya's move to Dadar is akin to a retreat to her natal home.²⁵⁸ The move from Churchgate to the Dadar flat was not merely a matter of change in location, but also has symbolic ramifications that are manifested in the transformations that come about not just in the change of routine, but even their very personas. Ever since the scaffold of her upwardly mobile, formulaic existence has given way, it shakes the very foundations of Jaya's belief-systems, and she seems unable to continue living with all the lies and subterfuge she has, so far. Until now, she could create the 'Seeta Stories' stories from the 'certainties' she had built her life around, "...[b]ut suddenly 'Seeta had exploded,' and there seemed to be nothing left in its place.

Looking back on her past, she recalls with distaste her 'other' self, Suhasini, the name given to her when she got married, as distinct from Jaya: "A smiling, placid, motherly woman" who "lovingly nurtured her family," much like the Sparrow in the fable of the 'Crow and the Sparrow' (*TLS*, 15-16). A younger Jaya had formulated her notion of 'home' from this fable she often heard in her childhood. Like the Sparrow, she had believed that all one needed to do was to stay at home and look after the babies, locking the door to the dangers of the world outside. However, now Jaya knows better than to get taken in by any such certainty for the danger can lurk within. Her husband's culpability has forced them out of the cocoon they had constructed with such care and pride. With it, the 'Jaya,' or rather the 'Suhasini' who used to live there, seems to have gone as well. In a frantic attempt to 'search' for the lost self, she starts to go through her old diaries, unable to connect her present persona with the woman whose life is defined by her roles as wife and mother, confined to the realm of domesticity. Even as she marvels at the meticulous record of the facts and figures of daily life recorded in what she terms as "The Diaries of a Sane Housewife," she is also shocked by a life that was only made up of such trivialities. Any voice of despair that had asked if "this was all" had obviously been silenced/ suppressed, and questions of what to cook for the next meal became the "*liet motif*" of her life. It is only in coming away from this mundane world can she place her life in perspective, thus formulating new imaginaries of 'home.'²⁵⁹

A change of residence, ostensibly temporary, however, spawns changes in the protagonist, subtle and otherwise. Jaya, who had treated her husband as a 'profession,'

²⁵⁸Bhalla, Amrita.. "That Long Silence." *Shashi Deshpande*. 2006. Pp 67.

²⁵⁹ Numerous scholars substantiate this sexual division of labour that marks the house as a woman's place, with the woman being primarily responsible for housekeeping, rearing and caring. Abbott, Pamela et al. *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives*. 2008.; Therborn, Goran. *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World, 1900-2000*. London: Routledge, 2004.; Coltrane, Scott and Randall Collins. *Sociology of Marriage and the Family: Gender, Love, and Property*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.2001.

reading his every mood and anticipating every need, now seemed to be losing her capacity to 'read' him well, maybe because she had stopped caring so much about him ever since they moved to this flat. "Since we got married both of us had been scrupulous about playing out our allotted roles. But since coming here, I'd often fumbled, forgotten my lines, what it was I had to do next"(TLS, 75). Sent by Mohan to the Churchgate flat to collect the mail, she is taken aback by his petulant complaint for having made him wait for more than an hour, in a reversal of roles, for it was always Jaya who had to wait for him.

Yet, just being in the Dadar flat presents a Jaya who begins to transform from the 'dutiful wife' of the 'Churchgate house' to one who resents and questions the tradition of having to serve dinner and wait on her husband. It makes her not only miss their full time help at the Churchgate house, but also reflect back to her grandmother's home where it was always the women who cooked and cleaned for the men. However, it was at Mohan's family home that a well-defined 'woman's role' was first revealed to her.²⁶⁰ She had never come across such clarity of womanly and 'un-womanly' roles, and is fascinated by their skill in the respective areas. It had made her look back upon her own mother with contempt, critical of the gaps in her own upbringing. She was so taken up by this idea of 'womanly perfection,' that she had chosen to emulate the women in Mohan's family, lavishing all her time and energy into keeping the perfect home at Churchgate. It is in the fulfilment of her roles of 'wife' and 'mother' that the woman can make a 'home.'²⁶¹ It is Kamat who punctures her complacency about playing at being the 'ideal' wife and mother: "Making others dependent on you. It increases your sense of power. And that's what you really want, all you bloody looking-after-others, caring-for-others women"(TLS, 84). If Mohan's clinging to her is anything to go by, she has certainly been successful on this front. For instance, when Jaya tells him she has promised to go and meet her younger brother, he promptly begins to complain about being 'left alone' in the house, telling her in as many words that he 'feels lost' in that flat without her. Clearly, the Dadar house signifies completely opposite things to the husband and wife: if Jaya feels 'at home' here, Mohan only experiences a sense of alienation.

²⁶⁰ Sophie Bowlby, Susan Gregory, and Linda Mckie contend that "for most women.... The home and the "family" it encloses remains ideologically and materially the expected focus of their everyday lives." "Doing Home": Patriarchy, Caring, and Space." *Women's Studies International Forum*. 20 Issue 3 (May-Jun 1997) Pp 343-458..Pp 345.

²⁶¹ James S. Duncan and David Lambert contend that the "ideal home" as a site of domestic reproduction is organised by the "house wife." "Landscapes of Home." *A Companion to Cultural Geography* . Edited by J S Duncan, Nuala C Johnson, and H. Richard. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2004. Pp385.

An examination of Mohan's imaginaries of 'home' would be productive in establishing the context against which his wife Jaya seems to be reformulating her own notions of 'home.' Coming from a poverty-ridden deprived background, Mohan's first brush with a couple of middle-class women at the house of his benefactor leave an indelible impression. Perfumed and pretty in their "diaphanous saris floating around them with abandon", he is struck by not only their 'ethereal beauty,' but also by the fact that they could converse in the English language with such ease (*TLS*, 90). This experience marks a turning point for him, according to Jaya, because it was the first time that he saw the possibilities of alternative ways of existence, sans the poverty and shabbiness that he had grown up with. "They gave him a glimpse of another world, a world he then knew he longed to be in, to be a part of"(*TLS*, 90). In fact, he had decided to marry Jaya because she had sounded like one of them. This is where Mohan's journey of living the 'middle-class' life takes root, with the different houses he inhabits embodying the successive stages in his progress. The Churchgate flat is the epitome of his achievement in this trajectory where reverting to the Dadar flat could only be seen as a regression.²⁶²

If the deprivation of Mohan's childhood was redeemed by the largesse of a kind benefactor, Jaya's childhood was infused by a father's love that enveloped her in a fairytale world, only to have it come crashing down by his sudden demise. Thus, the only house young Jaya had felt completely 'at home' was her natal home at Saptagiri where she lived with a father who doted on his only daughter among three children. She is obviously devastated when he suddenly passed away, rendering her not only 'fatherless,' but also 'homeless.' The young Jaya rebels in her own way to hold on to her idea of 'home.' Her mother Ai chooses to move out of their house in Saptagiri, preferring to go back to her parental home in Ambegaon, never having felt like she 'belonged' to her mother-in-law's house at Saptagiri. Jaya, however, rebels against the move to Ambegaon, looking upon her paternal Grandmother's house as her 'home,' the house she used to frequent with her father on his daily visits to his mother. Proshansky, et al's observation on the attachment to the early childhood home and its related settings can adequately explain this sense of belongingness in Jaya: "Place-belongingness undoubtedly occurs in those individuals whose place-identity involves positively valenced cognitions of one or some combination of these settings which far

²⁶² Bonnie Loyd observes that the house is increasingly seen as a representation of social status in the context of the rise of the middle class. "Women, Home and Status." *Housing and Identity*. Ed by J.S. Duncan 1981Pp 181.

outweigh the number of negatively valenced cognitions.”²⁶³ Jaya has fond memories of frequenting her grandmother’s house with her father. Consequently, she goes back to the Saptagiri Aji’s house from the hostel, rebelliously declaring to her mother this was where she belonged, not the Ambegaon house. Yet, she is mortified to find that with both her father and grandmother gone, Saptagiri was no longer ‘home,’ despite her Uncles asking her to come anytime, reassuring her that “[t]his is your home” (*TLS*, 123). This feeling of being ‘homeless,’ of being in houses that do not feel like ‘home’ stays with her ever since her father passed away. Dispossessed first from her childhood home, estranged from her paternal family home, she could never feel ‘at home’ at the maternal grandmother’s house at Ambegaon that her mother turned to as a widow. Much later, Jaya shares this grudge with her friend Kamat, the latter is highly amused to hear the adult Jaya complain petulantly, “[m]y mother made me homeless” (*TLS*, 153).

If the adult Mohan invests all his efforts into fulfilling his dream of living a genteel life, far from the shabbiness and deprivation of his childhood, Jaya also, whether consciously or otherwise, has sought to get away from the stark and austere home she lived in as a child, ruled by a ‘ghoul-like’ grandmother, the Other Aji. The thought of her maternal grandmother’s house at Ambegaon brings up a whiff of the sickening smell of the room of the old invalid who lay dying gradually, whose eyes seem to control everything within sight, as she looks upon the world with malice and suspicion. Jaya doesn’t remember her talking pleasantly to or of anyone, yet her mother had always schooled her to “be nice to her... you never know...”(*TLS*, 112). It takes a long while for Jaya to connect the enigmatic ‘you never know’ to her grandmother’s jewels that were kept locked away in a steel box in cupboard, the keys to which were strung around her grandmother’s neck. Much to her mother’s disappointment, however, all the jewels are bequeathed by the Other Aji, not, to her only daughter, but to the son who has no progeny. If it was impossible to live in the Ambegaon house while the old matriarch was still alive, it becomes more unpleasant after her death. Her aunt Vanitamami’s pent up anger and resentment bursts forth, vitiating the atmosphere for everyone. Jaya’s younger brother Ravi’s latest updates from Ambegaon are alarming. He tells Jaya of the aunt stricken by cancer, and of their mother’s illness, impressing upon her that she is needed there. This is not a house Jaya would like to go back to, no ‘home’ that beckons.

²⁶³ Proshansky, H.M.,A.K. Fabian and R. Kaminoff. “Place-Identity: Physical World Socialisation of the Self.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3 Issue 1 (1983).Pp 76.

Shorn of the entrapments of his middle-class success, Mohan flails anchor-less as he accuses Jaya of being indifferent to his predicament. He claims to have taken risks only for the sake of her and the family, whether it meant taking favours for an out of turn allotment of a Type C flat in Lohanagar, or for a Bombay posting, all the special benefits they enjoyed. Reminded of their first home in Lohanagar, Jaya is swamped by unhappy memories and an inescapable feeling of being trapped that she had wanted to break free of. Mohan's accusations don't stop, however, as all the pent up guilt, anger and resentment are bandied around in the guise of all kinds of accusations and counter-accusations. Jaya, in turn, is only filled with an angry confusion, not sure exactly what it was she was being charged for.

As the words "my wife" run like a constant refrain through Mohan's outburst, Jaya imagines he is lamenting the 'loss' of the ideal wife 'Suhasini,' who was nothing but a fleeting mirror image. The 'loss' is all the more painful to the man who believes he has only been the 'ideal husband.' And now he feels he is despised by his wife because he has failed her, what with the imminent loss of his job and position. In vain she tries to reassure him she isn't the mercenary he makes her out to be. With his litany of complaints steeped in self-pity, Mohan's face expression reminds Jaya of her son, as an infant, outraged on being denied his feed. Unable to suppress her hysterical laughter, Jaya is soon left fumbling for words to explain to her inappropriate outburst. Mohan walks out in disgust, unable to take such mockery.

Mohan's abrupt departure leaves Jaya in shock, literally rooted to the spot. Jaya loses track of time as she stays glued to the sofa, dazed at the turn of events. When she does get up to move, she bangs into the furniture like a stranger in an unfamiliar place. She had had a similar experience earlier at her paternal grandmother's house in Saptagiri. Back then, defying her mother, she had gone to that house after her grandmother's death, and had fumbled about in the place she knew so well, like a stranger in an unfamiliar house. This experience of 'estrangement' in a once familiar and loved 'home' points to the significance of relationships to the meaning of 'home.'²⁶⁴ And now at the Dadar flat, which had always felt like home, she experiences the same alienation she had felt in the once familiar grandmother's house, after Mohan walks out on her. Delineating on 'place-identity' being a sub-set of self-

²⁶⁴ Judith Sixsmith contends that the 'social' function of home is defined as "the presence and relationships with other people that contribute towards the place being home." With the souring of relationships, she adds, the place no longer feels like home. In the novel, Jaya experiences a souring of relationships that have a direct impact on the definition of home, in both instances. "The Meaning of Home: An Exploratory Study of Environmental Experience." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* Vol 6 Issue 4 (1986) Pp281-298.. Pp291.

identity, Proshansky et al also contend that other people are as important in shaping the place-identity of a person, as they are for shaping the individual's subjectivity.²⁶⁵ Clearly, Jaya's affective ties with the house are intrinsically related with her affective bonds with the other people in the house. Thus, in her childhood, the Saptagiri Ajji's house had felt like home while she went there as her father's daughter. The Dadar flat generates a feeling of familiarity so long as she is 'sure' of her position as Mohan's wife. When he 'walks out' on her, she is left unsure of her status and position, prowling like an alien.

Jaya tries hard to get a grip on herself, telling herself Mohan has not abandoned her and is sure to be back. She keeps visualising his return, and the restoration of 'normality.' Yet, she knows they could not go on as before, after reaching this impasse. She looks upon it as retribution for the 'sins' she believes she has committed. She guiltily recalls abandoning a tearful Kusum to stay alone in the Dadar flat, or the foetus she aborted without her husband's knowledge. In an absolute state of despondency, trying to work her way backwards to when things started to go wrong for her, to the present when she had seemingly been abandoned by her husband, she puts the blame at her father's door. He had put her on a pedestal in the first place, making her believe she was special, and then dying on her, changing her life forever. Being by herself in the flat, suddenly feeling rudderless now that Mohan is gone, takes her back to her childhood days after her father died, in the hostel, when she had felt the same, lonely and abandoned. A person's association with place, to borrow from the thesis on place-identity propounded by Proshansky et al, revolves around their cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives. At the core of these physical environment-related cognitions, they argue, "is the 'environmental past' of the person; a past consisting of places, spaces and their properties which have served instrumentally in the satisfaction of the person's biological, psychological, social and cultural needs."²⁶⁶ It is in revisiting her 'environmental past' that Jaya can trace the seeds of sustenance and rancour, as she tries to recover her lost moorings.

Proshansky, et al, also make a strong case for the role played by the individual's "strong desire for and emotional attachment to his or her early childhood home..." in establishing place-identity.²⁶⁷ One of her constant quests was to revolve around questions of identity and location. Ever since she was rendered 'fatherless' and 'homeless,' she keeps trying to search

²⁶⁵ Proshansky, et al. "Place Identity: Physical World Socialisation of the Self." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. Vol3 Issue 1 (1983) Pp 57-83. .Pp 59-60.

²⁶⁶ Proshansky et al. "Place Identity" *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3 Issue 1 (1983) Pp 57-83.Pp. 59.

²⁶⁷ Proshansky, et al. "Place Identity." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 3 Issue 1 (1983), Pp 57-83. Pp 76.

for a place she feels she belongs to. Oblivious to her mother's predicament as a young widow with children, Jaya can only blame her mother for having made her 'homeless.' What stays in Jaya's memory is the aversion and resistance of the family's move to the maternal grandmother's house in Ambegaon, while she craves to recover the 'home' she has lost.²⁶⁸ Her own decision to marry Mohan was again an act of rebellion against her mother, though she could not fulfil her desire to have the marriage solemnised in the Saptagiri house, rather than the Ambegaon house. She is shocked to discover she does not feature anywhere in the nearly two hundred year long family tree her Paternal Uncle had drawn up. She is told brusquely she now 'belongs' to Mohan's family, and that she has no 'place' here.

Isolated and alone in the flat, she tries to deal with her own demons, real and imagined. She recollects having given up her writing because it had hurt Mohan, she can feel her anger rise against him. Like the 'dutiful wife,' she had always moulded herself according to his whims and desires, but now seems to be left with nothing but the silence and the emptiness. Stalking around the room, she begins to bang into the furniture, a stranger in her own house.²⁶⁹ This Jaya lets bits of fluff to swirl about in the un-swept room, a far cry from the 'house-proud' Jaya who was punctilious to a fault, fervent about keeping a spick and span house. To keep herself from drowning in the vortex of anger and self-pity she seeks relief by immersing herself with gusto in the most trivial of household chores.

But it's a brief respite as the silence engulfs her again and she broods over her failures. In the silence that ensues, she realises she could not go on blaming Mohan for having thwarted her career as a writer. She had continued to write even after her confrontation with him, but all her stories had simply been rejected. She had secretly stowed away those rejected stories in this house, hidden in a file amongst old books and magazines that she now sits and reads. Mohan had not even known about them, but she had shared them with Kamat because she needed his opinion about them. Non-committal until she forces him to respond, he finally advises her to be genuine, to let the anger that she felt show through her stories. Kamat's

²⁶⁸ Juhani Pallasmaa argues that it is through the houses and places one has lived in as a child that one remembers childhood, thus reiterating the significance of the childhood home. *Encounters 2- Architectural Essays*, edited by Peter MacKeith. Finland: Rakennustieto Publishing, 2012. Pp 25. Edward Relph also talks about the deep association with places one was born and grew up in. *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion Ltd., 1976. Pp 43.

²⁶⁹ Juhani Pallasmaa draws upon Freud's concepts of 'heimlich' and 'unheimlich' to explore the anxiety and fear that hides below the surface, a reading pertinent to Jaya's state of being: "The *Unheimlich* springs from the strangeness or otherness which penetrates the familiar and safe atmosphere of the home and which in fact is the projection of the anxious mind and feelings of guilt of the inhabitant." *Encounters 2- Architectural Essays*. 1976. Pp 208.

home-truths are too stark for Jaya to take: “Middle class. Bourgeoise. Upper-caste. Distanced from real life. Scared of writing. Scared of failing”(TLS, 148). In the words of Amrita Bhalla, “Kamat’s role is only to hold up a mirror to Jaya as a self and to the kind of writing she should be expressing that self in.”²⁷⁰

However, for all her self-realisation, she can only see herself in the role of Mohan’s wife, unable to deal with the probable loss of that status. Thus, she balks at any pointers to his absence, or the uncertainty of his return. The cleaning woman offers to make one of her granddaughters stay with her ‘until Saheb returns,’ but it leaves her cringing. To have the world acknowledge her husband is ‘away,’ is the greatest cause of shame to Jaya, as it unsettles the only role she identifies with, as ‘wife of Mohan.’ Her greatest fear is to face the world as an ‘abandoned wife’.

Yet, she immediately stifles the thought, sure that he would never leave her, and is struck by the possibility that he has perhaps gone back home. She rushes off to the Churchgate flat and check on him. However, the “desolate bang of the door,” and the “few letters lying at her feet” as she enters, confirm his absence (TLS, p167). She moves around the house like a stranger or an acquaintance, dispassionately taking in the book on the bedside table, the flowers rotting in the vase, the gods sans their divinity with no fresh flowers or a lighted lamp. What is significant is that she feels completely detached from her surroundings, as a stranger in someone else’s house. It was the same kind of detachment she had experienced earlier, in the Ambegaon house, after recovering from typhoid. Just as that illness had become a watershed in her life, so does her sojourn at the Dadar flat become a defining moment:

“There seemed to be nothing in common between the girl who had lived in Saptagiri with her parents and the girl who came out of that illness knowing she had lost both her father and her home.

And now nothing seemed to connect me to this place, nothing bridged the chasm between this prowling woman and the woman who had lived here” (TLS, 168).

Yet, she is acutely aware of being the one to have ‘painfully’ and ‘laboriously’ created that woman, wondering how the ‘creation’ could vanish so easily. Deshpande establishes, in no uncertain terms, how the significance and meaning of place (home, in this case), changes

²⁷⁰ Bhalla, Amrita. ”That Long Silence.” *Shashi Deshpande*. 2006.s Pp 44.

with an evolution in the persona of the protagonist. This is not the same Jaya who was the punctilious homemaker, one who derived her self-identity from being the ‘houseproud’ woman who presented a certain facade of respectability to the world.

Her reverie is soon broken by the door-bell as the neighbour’s servants come to inform her that the phone has been ringing incessantly for the past two days. If the ‘disappearance’ of her husband is not disturbing enough, the news of her son Rahul having run away unnerves her completely. The glossy picture of a ‘happy family’ she once visualised seems to have vanished into thin air. However, a call from her brother-in-law reassures her about her son’s wellbeing, though the latter avoids speaking to his mother. Feeling herself ill-equipped and unfit to be a mother, to take complete responsibility of another human being, she has a strong urge to relinquish the ‘halo’ of motherhood she had donned with so much enthusiasm. In fact, she had imagined she would find lifelong security under the mantel of ‘wife and mother.’

“Smugness fell from me, not in bits and pieces, but in mammoth, frightening chunks. It was like a house collapse during the monsoon. There was something desolating about the ease with which what had seemed so substantial fell away, almost contemptuously, leaving behind an embarrassing nakedness” (TLS, 174).

Taking her son’s rebellion and all the unanswered questions around it as a sign of her failure as a mother, she can only break down and cry, with her head on the window sill. As she gives vent to her anguish, she is horrified to see the next door servants watching her with a fascinated titillation. She picks up the jug to quench her thirst, but the discovery of the clump of dead ants floating on the water proves to be the last straw, and she flees from the house in terror, unable to stay there for another minute.²⁷¹ She wakes up groggily to the sound of her neighbour Mukta’s voice, too weak to get up on her own. She is grateful yet mortified to find she has been tended to by her kind neighbour. Once she comes to, she starts to panic at the thought of being alone again, yet is frantic that they go away before she lost control and pleaded with Mukta not to leave her alone. The irony of always having craved solitude, to be left alone amidst the demands of her family, is not lost on her as she is now terrified to get what she so fervently desired, to be left alone. The fable of the Sparrow and the Crow keeps surfacing like a recurring motif, and she reflects on how sure she had been, until recently, of

²⁷¹ Juhani Pallasmaa contends that “the architectonic horror evolves from the conflict between the public surface and the private secret.” The false pretences and middle-class ideals that were built into the edifice of the ‘home’ Jaya sets up at Churchgate come undone, turning it literally into a ‘house of horrors.’ *Encounters 2: Architectural Essays*.2012.Pp 208.

what she wanted: to shut out the darkness and for her family to be safe and secure, in their own space, the family home. But now she knows better, how does one shut out the darkness if it is not without but within? She knows something has changed irrevocably, between her and Mohan. They cannot go back to being as they were. Yet, she knows of no other life than the one she had.

Eventually, Rahul comes back home accompanied by his Uncle Vasant, and as he tiptoes around the house, Jaya doesn't resent his easy camaraderie with his Uncle. It is a less uptight and anxious Jaya, more confident, may be less possessive, who can now look upon her son's bonding with his Uncle without any feeling of jealousy or inadequacy. An evolved Jaya has now rid herself of her fears. One could turn to Clare Cooper-Marcus at this point, who in her essay "Home-As-Haven, Home-As-Trap" makes a relevant point about the disjunction between the material comfort of the house and the succour it can give to the dweller. Her findings suggest that to people for whom their home feels like the centre of their universe, it is not so much the level of comfort or the quality of dwelling that evokes such centredness or positivity; rather, "it's more to do with the state of mind of the dweller than the dwelling per se."²⁷² Clearly, the fancily furnished flat at Churhgate had not afforded any tranquillity, for all its riches and comfort. It's only when she breaks through the walls of her own peripheral existence can she begin to experience positivity about her dwelling. She is more at peace with herself, and, for instance, more accepting of, her son's elusive silences. Of course, a telegram from Mohan announcing his return has calmed her apprehension of 'losing' her husband and her family.

In her work on the issues of emotional attachments to the dwelling, Clare Cooper Marcus explores the deep feelings that people may have for their homes, and propounds that the home can either be a 'haven' or a 'trap'.²⁷³ The house may either feel like an oasis of serenity, or generate painful memories. In the present context, even as Jaya tries to search for the space she can call home, there are numerous instances of 'home-as-trap,' or characters trying to escape these traps. To begin with, Mohan feels trapped in the Dadar flat, not only due to his present predicament, but also because he doesn't find the place is quite in keeping with the image he wants to project. Jaya, in turn, had felt inexplicably trapped in their first house in Lohanagar, in the early days of their marriage. In the Dadar flat now, she feels

²⁷²Marcus, Clare Cooper. "Home-as-Haven Home-as-Trap: Explorations in the Experience of Dwelling" *The Spirit of Home*. Ed. by Q.Patrick and R. Benson. 2006. Pp 6.

²⁷³---. "Home-As-Haven, Home-As-Trap". *The Spirit of Home. The Spirit of Home*. d. by .Q. Patrick and R. Benson. 2006. Pp 1-21.

trapped by his needs and wants, as he follows her every move. Jaya recalls how her own father had felt trapped in his mother's house, finally choosing to leave home and settle down independently. The narrative also abounds in homes that characters want to get away from, be it Mohan who couldn't wait to distance himself from the parental home defined by penury and violence, or Jaya herself, who could never take to her maternal grandmother's house. In fact, both the grandparental homes are presented as stark and bare, and seem to lack any warmth or good cheer. The widowed matriarchs have vitiated the atmosphere so much that the respective progeny only seem to be wasting their lives away, in rebellion. Ironically, Jaya spent much of her childhood rejecting the maternal grandmother's home, and seeking acceptance in the paternal grandmother's home, to no avail. Yet, the house she would ultimately settle into, the idyllic 'home' she sets up in the Churchgate flat with her husband and children, doesn't feel like 'home' until she resolves her own prejudices and falsities.

Jaya's self-reflexivity about notions of self, home and belonging can also be attributed to what Proshansky, et al dismiss as a drawback of the phenomenological point of view on place-identity. Most theorists on place-identity, they argue, work on two common assumptions, viz, that the 'place' with the greatest value and meaning is the home, and that this sense of attachment with place is unselfconscious. Thus, it is only when an individual's sense of place is threatened does the person become aware of it.²⁷⁴ While the present writers highlight the inadequacy of the phenomenological approach that can only map out the sense of place when it is under peril, the phenomenologist's contention is, in fact, borne out in Jaya's explorations about self, home and belonging in that are triggered by her 'loss' of the Churchgate house. The hollowness of that carefully calibrated existence is exposed only when she is plucked out of that cocoon.

The two houses vary not only at the obvious material level of one being more 'well-appointed' than the other, in terms of their 'social value,' of one being admired while the other is reviled, but also differ in the value and meaning they hold for the central characters Jaya and Mohan. Giles Barbey, in a chapter entitled "Spatial Archetypes and the Experience of Time: Identifying the Dimensions of Home" contends that homes can be considered as "warehouse of human experience....it seems important to pursue those personal and affective ties which each individual has with his dwelling during his life time, in order to understand

²⁷⁴ Proshansky, et al. "Place Identity" *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 3 Issue 1 (1983) .Pp57-83. Pp 60-61.

how specific space acquire differential values for members of the same family.”²⁷⁵ Barbey also goes on to point out that the house is also the place one recollects memories associated with places lived in or experienced in the past. This explains the protagonists’ differential values toward the two houses. While Mohan values a house primarily in terms of its material and social standing, to Jaya, it is the experiences, memories and feelings attached to a place that lend it value. The status conscious Mohan, leaves no stone unturned in placing himself as far and as high as possible from his lowly beginnings. He comes to identify himself with the Churchgate house, and associates with the Dadar flat only under duress. Jaya, on the other hand, has a distinct sense of homecoming here, a feeling she has not experienced in the Churchgate flat. In fact, she has an immense sense of relief from the demonic drudgery all the paraphernalia of that house entailed.

In fact, as typical ‘social climbers,’ if one may call the couple thus, they look upon each house they inhabit in the initial years of Mohan’s career as but a stepping stone to reaching a desirable level of status and respectability. This ‘level,’ needless to add, can only be proclaimed to the world at large by the most visible accessory of middleclass success, the house. The wheel has come full circle for the couple as they literally flee into hiding to escape punishment for corruption at the opening of the narrative, yet neither one is willing to take the onus for their predicament. Jaya’s account gives us an insight into Mohan’s quest for material success, presenting it as a reaction to the shabbiness and penury he was born into. Thus, even as she explains his restless moves to a bigger and better house, she neatly absolves herself of having prompted such moves, merely following him as a ‘dutiful wife.’ Mohan, on the other hand, explains the out of turn favours that he traded in as the attempts of a concerned householder to provide his family with a better life. Thus, through the matrix of sins committed in omission or commission, the family seemingly arrives at its destination of desired address and location, epitomised by the Churchgate house.

Yet, it is only when Jaya finds herself literally ‘removed’ from that world of middle-class gentility that she begins to glean the inherent fault-lines in the life-style she worked so assiduously to maintain. It may have looked like the picture perfect home of the perfect family that were depicted in the glossies, but Jaya knows better. Spending time in the lowly Dadar flat that is a complete contrast to the polished and scintillating Churchgate apartment

²⁷⁵Barbey, Gilles. “Spatial Archetypes and the Experience of Time: Identifying the Dimensions of Home.” *The Meaning and Use of Housing: International Perspectives , Approaches and their Applications*. Ed. By E.G. Arias. Sydney, NSW: Avebury 1993. Pp 104.

allows her a perspective that not only opens her eyes to the drudgery of housework it entailed, but also to the futility of defining 'home' by such parameters. After all, shining brassware and glassware do not make a home, but it is the attachment and feelings that people bring to the place and those living there.²⁷⁶

If the narrative opened with the image of Jaya and Mohan 'yoked together,' she rejects that image, as it only smacked of a disbelief in them-selves. If earlier she thought 'life' just meant there were no second chances, now she thinks differently. Now she believes life always offers choices, when one is at the crossroad. She thinks of the words with which Krishna had concluded his sermon to Arjun, something she had come across in her late father's diary: "Do as you desire"(TLS, 192). She realises now she only has herself to blame for having just followed the stereotype, never really having engaged with her husband on a one to one level. Henceforth, however, she resolves to really listen to him and speak, rather than merely giving him responses he expects only to reinforce his authority. She is determined to erase the silence between them. Self-realisation helps shed her falsities, as Jaya is seemingly set to live an authentic life, all set to turn the Churchgate house into 'home' in the true sense of the word.

If Jaya of *That Long Silence* never felt 'at home' after she was circumstantially forced to leave her natal home on the death of her father, Mistry's protagonist in *Family Matters* could never feel 'at home' in his parent's house. If Deshpande's narrative closes at the cusp of finding a 'home' that is a true haven, Rohinton Mistry's novel narrates the unravelling of a 'happy home'. It is also about a home whose very walls seem to be seeped in unhappiness. As mentioned earlier, if Deshpande's narrative explores the idea of home through the various homes and houses the protagonist lived in or imagined, Mistry's narrative examines the 'making' and 'unmaking' of home, closely looking at the dynamics of space use. *Family Matters* in a story about an old widower Nariman Vakeel, who lives with his middle aged step children Jal and Coomy, in a large seven-room flat called Château Felicity. His own daughter, Roxana, now happily married, lives with her husband Yezad and their two sons, Murad and Jehangir, in a cozy two-room apartment in Pleasant Villa. Incidentally, the names of the two apartments are not adventitious, a reality that comes to the fore as the narrative unfolds. The

²⁷⁶ Ruth Madigan and Moira Munro argue that the idea of 'home' as an expression of identity is better achieved for most people by working on the interpersonal relationships both within and beyond the household, while it is only partially achieved through furnishings and décor, etc. 'House Beautiful': Style and Consumption in the Home.' *Sociology* 30 Issue 1 (1996.) Pp 41-57. Pp 53.

storyline revolves around the question of where old Nariman is to be housed, after he is rendered completely helpless and bedridden by an ankle-fracture, quite early in the story.

The step-children are soon at the end of their tether, unable to cope with even his basic needs. The only way out, it seems, is to relegate him to Roxana, and they hatch an elaborate plot to catch her unawares and deposit him in the little Pleasant Villa apartment. Even as Nariman's occasional hallucinatory rambling(s) reveal his unhappy past, the narrative subsequently deals with Coomy and Jal's efforts to keep Nariman out of Château Felicity, on one hand, and Roxana and Yezad's struggles to manage running the show despite the additional burden on not just their resources, but also the severe space constraints. While Jal and Coomy had found it nearly impossible to cope with a sick room in the house, Roxana and Yezad are left with no choice but to turn part of their living room into the sick room, dealing with all the complexities the situation demands.

Chateau Felicity, home to old Nariman and his middle aged step-children Jal and Coomy, exemplifies Gilles Barbey's thesis about the same dwelling place acquiring "differential values for members of the same family" with great clarity.²⁷⁷ Thus, for instance, as the opening quote suggests, Jal finds the building embodies a heavenly 'felicity.' He would simply lock the 'hell' of the world outside and gladly live indoors. But old Nariman presciently points out that 'hell' has ways of permeating 'heaven's' membrane. These words, coming as they do from a man who has spent a lifetime in that house, prove to be quite portentous. It is, indeed, intriguing that the same dwelling space can elicit reactions so obviously at complete variance from each other.

The novel opens on Nariman getting admonished by his step-children as he prepares to go out for a walk and some fresh air. His wards feel he is needlessly exposing himself to danger, drawing out Jal's enthusiastic comment about finding 'happiness' within the confines of Château Felicity. To Nariman, however, the very walls and ceiling of the flat, not to mention the furniture, seem encrusted with unhappiness. Only the impending visit of his daughter Roxana and her family makes the house seem welcoming and hospitable for a brief while. The 'brooding' pictures of the ancestors that 'grew cheerless' with each passing day begin to look comical when his daughter and her family come visiting. Sharing jokes and light banter, everyone settles down to spend a pleasant evening as Coomy busies herself in the kitchen, the

²⁷⁷Barbey, Gilles. "Spatial Archetypes and the Experience of Time". *The Meaning and Use of Housing*. Ed. By E.G. Arias. 1993.Pp 104.

sound of pots and pans reminding them of her presence. Their birthday present for Nariman, a beautifully carved walking stick, however, draws out a shocked response from Coomy, who's afraid it would encourage him to step out for a walk. Ever the alarmist, she tells Yezad and Roxana, in case Nariman has an accident, she would deliver him straight to Pleasant Villa, their two-room flat. Yezad jokingly replies the Chief is most welcome, provided he comes with a spare room. But the joyous get together almost ends in disaster, as the two energetic and curious boys veer towards the showcase which houses Jal and Coomy's precious toys and knick-knacks. To comprehend how an assortment of such objects amassed by the two are effectively akin to being their 'sacred icons', one can turn to Linda Donely-Reids' analysis of the valuation of objects. Drawing upon Giddens' theory of structuration, she elaborates: "Objects, too, derive meaning through daily household and ceremonial uses. Therefore, objects are not neutral or passive backdrops for life, they also actively participate in creating and maintaining power relations. (qtd. in Kent, 1990)²⁷⁸ Thus, the value of these knick-knacks can only be fathomed in terms of the meaning attached to them by Jal and Coomy.

In the event, as the parents watch with trepidation their sons move towards the show case, Coomy erupts in anger when she catches Murad trying to wind-up the monkey with a drum. Peace is restored only when Roxana begins to appreciate Coomy's new doll. Yezad, of course, cannot accept Coomy's reading of the children's desire to play with toys as 'misbehaviour'. Ironically, the same Yezad who mockingly dubs the showcase as their 'shrine', suggesting it just needs some flowers and incense sticks to complete the picture, will himself turn it into a real 'shrine.' His reaction to anyone who may get too close or threaten its sanctity will be even more extreme than Jal and Coomy here. However, for now, Coomy is quite relieved when the evening draws to a close, feeling exhausted as though a 'whirlwind had passed through'. To Nariman, in contrast, the family visit had felt as if fresh air had stirred the 'stale air' of the flat. It would be interesting to examine if it is just Nariman's jaundiced eye that casts a pall of gloom over the flat, or are there other factors that colour his response to the dwelling.

To unravel this conundrum, one could perhaps take a cue from the protagonist's lament for a life always constrained by rules imposed upon him. His parents, he recalls, destroyed his youth by controlling his freedom, and went on to mar his middle age by forcing him to give up the woman he loved and marry a Parsi widow with two children. And now, his step

²⁷⁸Kent, Susan. "Activity Areas and Architecture: An Interdisciplinary View of Relationship between Use of Space and Domestic Built Environments." *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S. Kent. 1990. Pp. 115.

children seemed determined to “ruin” his old age as well, by imposing rules for his meals, clothes, visit to the bathroom, etc. Essentially tactics to impose authority, such rules are manifested through the dynamics of space use, a contention proposed by Donley Reid’s argument to the same effect: “Architecture plays an active role in structuring social hierarchies and creating power strategies.” (qtd. in Kent, 1990)²⁷⁹ Coomy’s endless rules, for instance, prohibit him from locking doors, announcing his intention to use the WC, follow rules about his clothes, meals, etc. and last but not the least, she denies him the freedom to venture out for a little stroll. It was to deter him from stepping outdoors that Jal had helpfully suggested that he should ideally lock himself in a house that ostensibly holds the promise of ‘eternal happiness’. Nariman has thus always found himself in a situation when he is being controlled by others. In his youth, his parents never deemed it fit that his room should even have a lock, assuming as a matter of course they had the right of complete access to his room, as they had over his life, and now the step-children want to wrest control over his life.

Drawing upon Gidden’s theory of structuration, Donely Reid reiterates that individuals in power determine the use, symbolic meaning and form of domestic spaces.²⁸⁰ This contention is amply demonstrated in the instance when Nariman’s parents return home unexpectedly one evening, only to find their son and his girlfriend together in his room. To begin with, Nariman’s girlfriend Lucy had been quite apprehensive when she discovered that neither the front door, nor the door to Nariman’s room could be locked from inside. The security chain on the main door was all that ensured they could catch some moments of intimacy in his room, undisturbed. In the event, they are rudely interrupted by the incessant ringing of the door bell, signalling the unexpected return of his parents, as his mother had been taken ill. Riled at being unable to gain entry into the house because of the security chain, his father is positively livid on discovering that his son was not alone. Not only does he call his girlfriend names, but accuses him of having ‘defiled’ their home, turning it into a ‘whore house.’ Amos Rapoport suggests that the study of environment-behaviour interaction involves examining “[w]ho does what, where, when, including or excluding whom (and why).”²⁸¹ Thus, Nariman’s parents clearly exercise absolute control over their domestic environment, controlling who does what, where, when, including and excluding whom.

Kent, Susan. “Activity Areas and Architecture: An Interdisciplinary View of the Relationship between Use of Space and Domestic Built Environments.” *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S. Kent. 1990.. Pp 5.

²⁸⁰Donley-Reid, Linda W. “A Structuring Structure: The Swahili House.” *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S. Kent. 1990. .Pp 115.

²⁸¹ Rapoport, Amos. “System of Activities and System of Settings,” *Domestic Architecture*, Ed by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 9.

Richard R. Wilk in an essay entitled “The Built Environment and Consumer Decisions” discusses how space use is informed and constrained by cultural knowledge. Nariman’s parents follow orthodox and conservative cultural norms, and hence would never countenance their son dallying with a non-Parsi girlfriend at home. Analyzing norms of behaviour, Donald Sanders contends that as territorial animals, human beings “define spaces, mark them for specific uses, create visible and invisible boundaries and will defend the territory against unwanted intrusion”.²⁸² Human beings, he elaborates, establish visible and invisible boundaries as a means of marking personal space and territoriality. A social boundary would thus define membership criteria to a group. Denial of access to a non-Parsi girlfriend to the house is thus literally a form of boundary control. The Parsi community traditionally avoids alliance with non-Parsis, and Nariman’s parents are too orthodox to countenance a Christian girlfriend. Ironically, decades later, Nariman’s son-in-law, who starts as a liberal minded young man at the start of the narrative also goes on to follow a similar pattern of conventional behaviour as he raises objections to his son dallying with a non-Parsi girlfriend.

Returning to the narrative present, armed with the walking stick presented to him by Roxana on his seventy-ninth birthday, a gift Coomy had found ominously in bad taste, Nariman sets off for a walk, despite Coomy’s hectoring. Beset by Parkinson’s, taking a walk on ground freshly wet after rains spells his doom, as he slips and breaks his ankle. Rendered immobile and bed-ridden, he has no choice but to be at the mercy of his step children, who turn out to be incompetent and indifferent caregivers at best. As Coomy shops for the paraphernalia required for the sick room, she settles for a ‘commode’ as the more ‘decorous’ option to the bedpan. With one leg fully plastered, the commode only adds to his pain and discomfort. Bickering over the chores, the two siblings barely cope with Nariman’s secretions and excretions, as they oscillate between feelings of revulsion and anger, wondering if “this was their step-father’s ploy to harass them” (*FM*, 78). Can Coomy’s obvious aversion to giving personal care to her step-father be explained away by the hyphen in their relationship, or be written off as an individual idiosyncrasy or simply a lack of fellow-feeling? Reading the narrative through the prism of behaviour-environment studies throws up interesting insights, as one examines the interface of spatial organization of domestic built environment and behaviour. Elaborating on the properties of personal space, Donald Sanders first defines it as

²⁸² Sanders, Donald. “Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology: Methods for Analysis of Ancient Architecture.” *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 49.

“...invisible boundaries created in relation to each individual; the boundaries define a set of concentric zones of acceptable behaviour; the size of each zone changes as the behaviour setting changes... Stress is created if the zones are violated without warning or invitation; the zones and their boundary controls regulate information flow in relation to privacy.”²⁸³

Coomy's inhibitions are not just to do with undesirable proximity, but, as she tries to explain to Jal, she is disconcerted by Nariman's nakedness. Jal's commonsensical rejoinder that she would have seen the 'same' on their father doesn't hold any water to her (*FM*, p 64). Her stance can best be explained in terms of some kind a psychological boundary or barrier. Returning to Donald Sanders's study of behavioural conventions, he explicates how in the definitions of personal space and territoriality, humans establish visible and invisible boundaries and zones of interaction. Privacy mechanisms can be seen as a form of boundary control. He draws upon behavioural scientist Marjorie Lavin's identification of four kinds of boundaries: psychological, personal space, social and socio-physical.²⁸⁴ In the given instance, the concept of psychological boundary, which is related to the psyche or individual body, would be of relevance to explain Coomy's and later Yezad's aversion to giving personal care to Nariman.

There are other features of boundaries that Sanders presents, which again seems relevant to explicate Coomy and Yezad's inhibitions for tasks Roxana or even her younger son Jehangir don't seem to be averse to. Boundaries, according to Sanders, have special features such as permeability (to the senses or movement) and sharpness (the amount of discontinuity between entities on either side of the boundary....²⁸⁵ Thus one can see that Coomy and Yezad balk at looking after Nariman's bodily needs, as their boundaries are 'sharp', so there is a disconnect across the 'boundary'. Roxana's (and Jehangir's for that matter) boundary defining personal space, on the other hand, is best seen as permeable, and so they exhibit no hesitation in looking after the old man's needs.

²⁸³ Sanders, Donald. "Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology: Methods for the Analysis of Ancient Architecture". *Domestic Architecture*. Ed by S.Kent. 1990. .Pp 49.

²⁸⁴ Sanders, Donald, "Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology". *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S.Kent. 1990..Pp 51.

²⁸⁵ Sanders, Donald. "Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology". *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S. Kent. 1990.Pp 51.

Behavioural and built space studies elucidate on how cultural predispositions related to the meaning of binary oppositions organize the design and use of domestic activities, concepts that could help analyze Coomy's behaviour from another angle.

These binary oppositions include male / female, public / private, front / back, clean / dirty, symbolic and secular etc. This custom suggests that not only is it important for people to be able to subdivide a house into spaces and zones that enable the expression of these binary codes but also that the ordering of domestic activities and spaces ought to conform to prescribed cultural conventions.²⁸⁶

Since houses have distinctly marked spaces for 'clean and dirty' activities, all ablutions and excretions must naturally be taken care of discretely in spaces marked out for the purpose. Nariman's incapacitation due to his fractured limb acts as a literal barrier to using the toilet, and his step-children in turn, find it extremely disgusting to look after his bodily needs. Their palpable repugnance and reproach compounds his suffering and helplessness, and he soon begins to sink into depression. The doctor advises maintaining a cheerful atmosphere around him. Glum and cheerless themselves, they can barely manage to take care of his physical needs. Lifting his spirits is quite beyond them. Recalling the laughter and bonhomie Roxana and her family's visit had brought to him, Coomy suggests that Nariman can only be happy with them. While Jal finds the thought of handing over Nariman to the care of Yezad and Roxana in their two room flat as absurd, Coomy begins to build upon the idea with increasing vehemence, if only to escape the drudgery.

It takes some arguing on her part, but by the time she is done, she not only has Jal in complete support for the proposal, he is enthused enough to bring it up with Nariman. Jal casually suggests to him that a short visit to Pleasant Villa would do him good. As they breathlessly paint an idyllic picture of the 'visit' that was sure to speed up his recovery, Nariman can't help but observe that at least something got them smiling again. He knows better than to raise the objection that making out the flat in their name doesn't mean he has relinquished his right to live there. But when he does air the more practical problem of the lack of space in her two-room flat, Coomy is quick to brush it aside with how large it really is by Bombay's standards. Masking the glee of imminent relief from the burden of taking care of an invalid, "[I]ame humour and close attention to inconsequential matters kept the façade

²⁸⁶Lawrence, Roderick J. "Public Collective and Private Space: A Study of Urban Housing in Switzerland." *Domestic Architecture*. Ed by S. Kent.1990..Pp. 76.

from crumbling...” (FM, 87). And so Nariman is all set to be moved from Château Felicity to Pleasant Villa. From the “unhappy flat,” where the brooding portraits of his forefathers symbolized to Nariman, the very spirit of the cheerless house and its adventitious family, to Pleasant Villa, a house that is in sharp contrast both lively and joyous. If the move in Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence* triggers off the protagonist’s exploration of ideas of ‘home’ and belonging, the move in Mistry’s novel precipitates changes in the dynamics of both the houses, severely affecting the protagonists’ experiences of ‘home’ with far reaching ramifications.

At this point, it is interesting to note how Mistry builds up the changes that are affected in the dynamics of the Pleasant Villa house, by first presenting a detailed account of the day-to-day life in the Chenoy household. Having already been introduced to Roxana’s vivacious family on their visit to Château Felicity, the reader is introduced to the hustle and bustle of a routine week-day morning in their flat in Pleasant Villa. Contrary to the dreariness of Château Felicity, infected by Coomy’s petulance, is the animated rush of the morning in Pleasant Villa. Unlike Coomy, Roxana obviously revels in her role as homemaker as she goes about preparing to send off her children to school and Yezad for work. Far from the sombre silence of Nariman’s flat, Roxana’s house is a medley of colour and sound, ranging from her calls out to her younger one for his bath, to the sound of the kettle boiling, the whistle of the cooker counterpoised by the sweet notes of the violin wafting from the ground floor. Incidentally, the only sound that animates Château Felicity is Edul Munshi, the self appointed handyman’s hammer knocking away at some corner of the neighbouring flat: a sound that is portentous of the future. As Roxana rushes with a basin of hot water for Jehagir’s bath, he would rather spend the time deliberating over his jigsaw puzzle, or dream of having his own adventures in an idyllic world like the ‘Famous Five’ inhabit. A stern warning from Yezad, reinforcing Roxana’s command, or an affectionate hug to his wife that makes the boys happy, encompassing the children in the warmth of their love, are some of the vignettes of domesticity that make life fulfilling in Pleasant Villa.

In an article entitled “Identity and Environment: A Cross-Cultural Perspective”, Amos Rapoport discusses the significance of the house as a symbol of the self in contemporary society: “For most groups..., the dwelling is very central - most time is spent in it, it is one’s

most valuable possession, it has the highest effective meaning....”²⁸⁷ One can see Rapoport’s contention clearly manifested in the given narrative. The Pleasant Villa flat, doesn’t just ‘contain’ the family unit, but is also their haven from the world outside, a space that provides solace and succour, nurture and rejuvenation. For it is to the house that Yezad returns from his workday, bogged by anger and frustration. But, by the morning, he has regained his bounce and verve, joking and laughing, narrating stories to his children, while Roxana meticulously orchestrates the rituals of the morning he so revels in. That is why, Roxana is so anxious after the arrival of Nariman to ensure that “...not a hair of the routine that gave [Yezad] so much joy would be allowed to change” (*FM*, 119).

On this particular morning, alarmed by Jehangir’s frequent trips to the toilet, she makes him stay home from school, and gets busy with the rest of the household chores after Murad and her husband leave for the day. Little does she suspect that the ominous sight of the white ambulance that she had spied from the balcony was coming to rent the fabric of her domestic harmony. As they alight from the ambulance, Jal is again filled by doubt and misgiving about the ‘horrible deed’ they’re about to commit, but Coomy will let no compunction come in the way of disburdening herself. Rehearsing their strategy on the way upstairs, they surprise Roxana with their unexpected and unusual visit, filling her with a vague sense of disquiet. Even as she finds it hard to digest the shock of learning about her father’s incapacitation, she is quite stupefied when they suggest that she should keep him in her house for the three weeks he needs to have his leg in the plaster cast and stay bedridden. To speed up his recovery it is essential, they insist, that he stays in the “happy and homely” atmosphere of her house to ward off the depression he had begun to sink into. When Roxana expresses her inability to accommodate because of the obvious lack of space, Coomy ironically assures her she would find space if only she looks around carefully. Taking Coomy’s suggestion at face value, Roxana sets off ‘searching’ for the extra space in the two room flat that may have ‘escaped’ her notice, in all the years of living there.

Taking them around the house like tourists, “[s]he began pointing out the few items that filled up the small room, explaining their function as though they were arcane museum pieces” (*FM*, 103). Though Jal doesn’t want to continue with the charade of looking for space where there is none, Roxana insists on taking them to the bedroom she shares with Yezad, choc-a-block with some essential pieces of furniture apart from the bed. It is quite farcical

²⁸⁷ Rapoport, Amos. “Identity and Environment: A Cross-Cultural Perspective” in *Housing and Identity*. Ed. by James S. Duncan. London: Croom Helm. 1981. Pp 21.

when she checks out the kitchen, the passage, and even the toilet as probable alternatives. When Coomy reprimands her for being 'silly', Roxana unleashes her anger for concealing her father's mishap and making unreasonable demands, sneaking up on her when Yezad is away at work. Once Coomy begins to see that her strategy so far has not made much headway, she resorts to emotional blackmail. She claims that if their father dies of depression, it would be on "their laughing heads". Having exhausted all her disingenuous arguments, Coomy plays her trump card about resignedly turning the ambulance carrying Nariman back to Château Felicity. Unaware that Nariman lay in an ambulance all this while, a baffled Roxana rushes downstairs in great agitation to see her father, incarcerated in the ambulance all this while. Determined not to give up, Coomy loudly starts ordering for the vehicle to be reversed, as there is 'no place' for the patient in Pleasant Villa, embarrassing Roxana in front of the concerned neighbours gathered there. Her ploy works and in a rush of emotions, Roxana requests for him to be taken up to her flat.

Going back to Amos Rapoport's break-up of the components of a given environment, viz. fixed feature elements, semi-fixed feature elements and non-fixed feature elements, it would be interesting to analyze how the changing permutations and combinations of these elements engage with each other to effect varying dynamics of space use. In fact, Rapoport goes on to establish how the dynamic works: "Same space can [...] become a different setting through changes in the semi-fixed elements and varied activities of the occupants."²⁸⁸ One can effectively apply this theorem to mark the changes in setting and space use in Roxana's house, which in turn are manifested through activity and even behavioural changes. One could, in fact, identify two distinct settings of Roxana's front room in particular, that consequently allow the same space to have entirely different dynamics of space use. Thus, for instance, the front room usually serves a variety of functions, as the room to receive visitors, as a bed room for the boys at night, with the settee and a cot that can slide under it serving as the beds; as a dining area with the dining table, flush against the wall, being pulled out in the space where the cot had been placed for the night. However, the same space is now necessarily turned into a sickroom, effectively changing the dynamics of space use after the arrival of Nariman.

Thrust with the responsibility of taking care of Nariman, the farcical tour of the flat notwithstanding, Roxana is dismayed to be in no position to even offer Nariman a proper bed,

²⁸⁸ Rapoport, Amos. "Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings." *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 14. Print

let alone a room. Eventually, much to the children's delight, alternate sleeping arrangements are made for them as Nariman has been accommodated on the sette-bed. Yezad, like Roxana, is also furious at the manner in which Jal and Coomy had resorted to deceit and subterfuge to unceremoniously throw Nariman out of his own comfortable flat into the 'cramped space' of their house. Nariman's response to Yezad's comment, however, illustrates Proshansky, et al.'s contention that other people are important in conditioning an individual's identification with place.²⁸⁹ To Nariman, in comparison to the huge flat that had "felt empty as a Himalyan cave", their house feels like "a palace" (*FM*, 121). Clearly, it is not so much the material space that makes a house likeable and homely, but the dynamics of the people who use that space.

Thus, for the next three weeks at least, Nariman is willy-nilly a part of the Chenoy household, literally becoming a fixture in the front room. At this point, it would be interesting to mark the changes this 'addition' to the household brings about in the dynamics of space use as well as the changing interface of the relationships amongst the family members. To begin with, the children fight over the adventure of sleeping on the balcony, as the parents struggle to secure it against the elements. However, in the event, arranging for an alternate sleeping quarters for the *boys* is a relatively minor hurdle to cross for Roxana. Well aware of Yezad's fondness for the morning rituals at home, the breakfast hour, with the radio playing in the background, the call of the vendors, etc., Roxana is determined to preserve its rhythm for Yezad.²⁹⁰ With her hands full trying to juggle with the various morning chores even before Nariman's arrival, one can imagine how much more she has to struggle to preserve the façade. One morning for instance, Nariman seems more restless unlike other days, when he puts his own needs on hold for the others to get ready and leave for the day. Roxana has no choice but to give him the urinal, followed by his mouthwash, even as Yezad is having his breakfast. Nevertheless, the sight of a thread of saliva that hung from Nariman's lips, clinging to his chin, makes Yezad look away in disgust, trying to concentrate on the breakfast. However,

"[a]nother bite and he pushed the plate aside, the egg half eaten, while she rushed past with basin and wet towel. The dirty water swished and threatened to splash over the rim. He flinched, shrinking backwards in his chair" (*FM*, 147).

²⁸⁹ Proshansky, et al. "Place Identity." *Journal Of Environmental Psychology*. 3 Issue 1 (1983). .Pp 60.

²⁹⁰ Kimberly Dovey points out that 'home' is defined by the patterning of experience and behaviour. "Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*. Ed. by I Altman and Werner. 1985. Pp 38.

In this context, one can again take a cue from Roderick J Lawrence's conceptualization of cultural predispositions related to the meaning of binary oppositions that organize the design and use of domestic activities, mentioned earlier.²⁹¹ Thus, bodily excretions and secretions are meant to be managed in the spaces marked for the purpose, in opposition to spaces marked 'clean'. It is the adherence to such binary oppositions that makes Yezad, like Coomy earlier, 'flinch' from the basin of gargled water Roxana is rushing to drain off. Although Coomy and Yezad are placed in materially different circumstances, both are equally nauseated by Nariman's bodily functions. Till the time Nariman was under their care, Coomy and Jal had no choice but to attend to his needs in his room, often gagging in the process. Although Yezad doesn't himself need to look after Nariman, in fact, clearly draws the line at giving him personal care, he has no choice but to witness Nariman's ablutions at close quarters. In contrast to Coomy, Roxana singlehandedly and uncomplainingly incorporates tending to her father's needs along with all her household chores.

Yezad, however, doesn't take kindly to Roxana's siblings having thrust their responsibility onto him and his family. He gets increasingly annoyed with the changes, material and otherwise, that begin to surface in the house. He even begins to resent the bonding that begins to develop between his sons and their grandfather, as they get to spend more time with him. The children, on their part, love to listen to grandpa's stories, and look forward to the help that he gives them with their homework, etc. Also, it gives Jehangir great joy and a sense of responsibility to feed Nariman. The two often comfort each other by holding each other's hands, each time the other has a nightmare. But for his father's strictures, Jehangir would not mind even giving him the urinal. Such bonding, obviously naturally enhanced by the close proximity, however, feeds Yezad's resentment to Nariman's presence. He tells Roxana to take the washing to Château Felicity with its 'seven' rooms and gives a mock scolding to Nariman for making his children cry over a sad story, but the "...annoyance tinged with jealousy" is unmistakable (*FM*, p 166).

In the present instance, going by Marjorie Lavin's categorization of 'personal space' as "interpersonal boundaries, including territory", Yezad has clearly marked out his home, the abode of his family, as his 'personal space'.(qtd. in Sanders, 1990)²⁹² He resents Nariman's intrusion into that space, a resentment that manifests itself in his irritable behaviour and sharp

²⁹¹ Lawrence, R.J. "Public Collective and Private Space." *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 76.

²⁹² Sanders, David. "Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology" *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S.Kent. 1990..Pp 51.

comments, and worst of all, in his increasingly frequent arguments and fights with his wife. It is to the credit of the children, perturbed as they are over the increasing tension in the house that they try and bring tempers down with their joking and clowning. They succeed in averting a fight, for instance, on the day Dr. Tarapore is to come and pronounce a verdict on Nariman's recovery, and the latter's bowels don't hold while Yezad is still at the breakfast table.

If the addition of Nariman into the fold of Pleasant Villa is generating increasingly palpable strife, the scene in Château Felicity is not much different either, despite having relieved itself, albeit temporarily, of the 'burden' called Nariman. Far from being in a state of contentment during the three weeks of 'freedom' they commandeered for themselves, Jal and Coomy are, instead, wracked by guilt and confusion. Squabbling and arguing all through, Jal feels that the only thing left to be done is to bring Nariman back now that the three weeks they promised Roxana are over. Coomy, on the other hand, is terrified of the additional drudgery of nursing him especially when Parkinson's is sure to incapacitate him forever, sooner than later. Dreading the inevitable, they go to Pleasant Villa, making a show of how much they missed him. Nariman demands that he be taken back, despite the additional eight days with the cast, much to Coomy's dismay. Her protestations of the number of trips in the ambulance, predicated with the dire possibility of him suffering further during the transfer, find an unexpected support from Yezad. His declaration that its best for Nariman to stay on until the next hospital visit, is taken up with enthusiastic discussions about whether there are sufficient medicines, etc. for the time period.

After their widowed mother married Nariman, Jal and Coomy retained their father's name, and could not easily bring themselves to addressing Nariman as their father. Unfortunately, the marriage never really thrived because of the long shadow cast by Nariman's ex-girlfriend, Lucy, and in fact, ended in the accidental death of his wife and Lucy together. The tragic event only serves to widen the distance between Nariman and his step-children, over the years, especially with his step-daughter Coomy. This could perhaps explain Coomy's aloofness tinged with resentment towards Nariman that has been evident from the beginning of the narrative.

Spatial behaviour in human beings, according to Donald Sanders, can be understood in terms of a "..... quest for optimum privacy by controlling flow of information. Territoriality,

distancing and other proxemic devices are used ...to obtain the desired level of information flow in a given behaviour setting.”²⁹³

Coomy can be said to be putting the mechanism of ‘distancing’ literally to good effect, by pushing Nariman under Roxana’s care, and allowing herself freedom from the burden of nursing him, as well as ensuring her privacy from seemingly extraneous responsibilities. In fact, the extreme meticulousness with which she sets off to sanitize not just Nariman’s room, but practically the entire house, after ‘depositing’ him at Pleasant Villa, is symbolic not just of her neurotic behaviour, but also a manifestation of the complete disconnect with her step-father. One can find a parallel in Mohan, the protagonist’s husband in *That Long Silence* discussed earlier, who had also taken great pains to rid the Dadar flat of all signs of its original owner Makarand. The effort at ‘cleansing’ the house is nothing but a strategy to appropriate one’s territory, in this case the house, as one’s own.²⁹⁴

After Nariman has been packed off to Roxana’s house, the memory of her Mother’s unhappiness comes back even “more sharply” to Coomy. It is in retaliation for Nariman’s ‘sins’ against their mother that she uses every possible ruse or subterfuge to keep him from returning for as long as possible. Keeping him out of the house fulfils her desire to avenge her mother as she identifies Château Felicity as her ‘territory’ and marks it as her personal space by ‘excluding’ the ‘foe’ she does not take as part of the ‘family’ from the ‘home.’²⁹⁵ Thus, she would use any ploy to keep him from returning to the Chateau Felicity house.

Ironically, it is the bits of broken plaster from Nariman’s cast that gives her the idea of the broken ceiling. She damages the ceiling in Nariman’s room, so the necessary repair ensures he stays put at Roxana’s for an ever expandable length of time. Jal, however, finds it ‘abnormal’ that Coomy can still harbour so much anger: “And now she was using the past to justify keeping Papa away, unable to overcome her revulsion for the smelly, sick-room chores. Like himself” (*FM*, 176). Unable to staunch the force of Coomy’s malevolence, Jal

²⁹³ Sanders, Donald, ‘Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology’. YEAR.Pp 49.

²⁹⁴ Kimberly Dovey discusses the ‘dialectics of appropriation’, the dialectic between personal change and environmental change, as one of the processes through which the ‘home’ comes into being. It is by appropriating other people’s houses that Coomy and Mohan, respectively, establish their ‘home’. “Home and Homelessness”. *Home Environments*. Ed. by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985 p46.

²⁹⁵ Coomy’s actions that exclude Nariman from the ‘family’ circle by manipulating him out of ‘home’ essentially embody the tenet that conflates the notions of ‘home’ and ‘family.’ See Philippe Aries. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. Trans by Robert Baldick. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1962. *L’Enfant et la Vie Familiale Sous L’Ancien Regime*. Paris: Library Plon, 1960. Pp 404; also Graham Allan and Graham Crow. “Introduction.” *Home and Family: Creating the Domestic Sphere*. Ed. by G.Allan and G. Crow. Hampshire: The Macmillan Press. 1989. Pp 1.

becomes an unwilling accomplice as she goes about ‘arranging’ damaged ceilings of not just Nariman’s room, but most of the other rooms too, for good measure. Coomy’s use of deception and subterfuge so that she doesn’t need to share the same space with Nariman, cannot merely be ascribed to the quirky behaviour of a particular character alone. Apparently, studies of human behavioural patterns and space use have established that individuals are likely to resort to such means to determine and control how space is used.

The household is not undifferentiated in its use of domestic space. Members may contest with each other for the use of areas, they may negotiate, argue, fight, or use deception in acquiring access or claim to space, in excluding others from it, or in setting rules in its use.²⁹⁶

This time around, she marches off to the Chenoy residence with great confidence, armed with the story about the ‘leaking roof’ and the ‘broken ceiling’, laced with gratitude to Providence for that the ‘accident’ happened in Nariman’s absence and thus saved him. Eventually, she manages to convince Roxana and her family of their inability to take him back home until the same has been repaired. For Yezad, the turnaround in the circumstances now seem to stretch into an unknown eternity; the mornings in the flat he so revelled in have now given way to the “morning stress, the over-crowding, the smelly front room...” (*FM*, 186-7). The worst hit is of course, the household budget, already stretched as it were, even before Nariman’s arrival. To add to his resentment over Jal and Coomy’s machinations, Yezad is frustrated by his own inability to make up the shortfall in the household expenses, as he watches his children stifle their robust appetite. In fact, the fallout of the strained circumstances is best manifested in the uncharacteristic changes in his behaviour that have far reaching consequences for his family. As Roxana tries to make up for shortage of money for Nariman’s medicines from the household budget, the frugality soon begins to show. On confronting Coomy about the rest of Nariman’s pension, her step-siblings make a show of impressing the Chenoy’s of their magnanimity in subsidizing his expenses so far. However, what is worse is when Coomy blurts out that since the house is in their names, they will have the ceiling repaired at their convenience, so Nariman can return to his house only when they deem it fit. Jal reacts to Coomy’s naked malice with a rare outburst of anger after Roxana and

²⁹⁶ Wilk, Richard. R. “The Built Environment and Consumer Decisions.” *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by Susan Kent. 1990. Pp 41.

Yezad leave. Asking her to take a good look at what she has ‘accomplished’, bits of plaster strewn all over the place, he draws a direct parallel between the ‘ruined’ house and the ‘ruined’ relations with their only sister.

Now that the extent of Coomy’s machinations have become obvious, leaving Yezad and Roxana to shoulder the responsibility of looking after Nariman entirely by themselves, it begins to rent the façade of their happy home. Taking a cue from Roderick J Lawrence’s contention that “there is presumably a dynamic and changing relation between individual and societal forces”, one can chart the changes that take place in the individual and family dynamics through the narrative.²⁹⁷ For instance, feeling inexorably trapped by the situation, Yezad once slams the door and walks out, much to Roxana’s shock. It is the first time in fifteen years of their marriage that he had behaved like this. The arguments and fights between Roxana and Yezad begin with renewed vigour, as Yezad resents having to make up for Nariman’s lack of foresightedness as well as Jal and Coomy’s insensitivity. Despite his concern for the increasingly careworn Roxana, or the boys’ lack of sufficient nourishment, Yezad’s resentment with Roxana’s family manifests itself in constant fights with his wife. Not only does he begin to lose patience with his family, he also resorts to taking desperate measures such as gambling for extra gains, and unsuccessfully tries to steal from his employer. In sheer desperation, he wagers all the money in the house in his biggest gamble. Of course, the guilt and anxiety turns him secretive and aloof. Her husband’s peculiar behaviour makes poor Roxana wonder if it signals the end of their marriage, as even her touch seems to be repulsing him.

In his anxiety, Yezad no longer has the patience to help his children with their homework, yet resents it when Nariman pitches in, looking upon Nariman’s gestures as an encroachment into his territory. Unable to watch his son bond with his father-in-law, he goes into the back room and tries to shut himself up. Again, it is significant that he has to make a great effort to fasten the door “...that always stayed open, swollen from disuse, he had to wrestle with it to work the bolt” (*FM*, 260). Clearly, a door ‘swollen from disuse’ can only indicate how open and convivial the atmosphere of the home has been, until now. Shocked again by this completely uncharacteristic behaviour, Roxana starts banging on the door to ask him what was wrong, and Yezad rudely snaps at her. He has begun to behave, as she puts it, like a complete ‘stranger’. The sounds of laughter in a neighbouring flat become unbearable,

²⁹⁷ Lawrence, Roderick, J. “Public Collective and Private Space: A Study of Urban Housing in Switzerland.” *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S.Kent. 1990. .Pp 75.

as it reminds him of what is now missing from his own flat, once just as happy and loving. As he spends the night in frenzy, hoping to make a good amount on the wager, he has to eventually face the misfortune of losing the precious little money they had for the month's provisions.

Left with no choice but to reveal all to Roxana, a disillusioned and disheartened Yezad gets even more irritable and short tempered. He begins to view everything around him with a jaundiced eye. The very tent he had set up for the boys, that proved to be a great source of adventure to them, begins to seem like an annoying "jhopad patti" [a slum hutment] to Yezad. An impromptu visit to the Fire Temple not only brings back joyous childhood memories, but also seems like an oasis in the midst of a frenetic city. On his return home, he is again filled with anger and resentment against Coomy and Jal for having robbed him of the peace and contentment that his home was once filled with. What was once a welcome sanctuary from the outside world, has now turned into a far from welcome space marked by squalor and strife. For Yezad, his house no longer feels like 'home.'²⁹⁸

Faced with mounting expenses, and finding no alternatives, Yezad begins to feel increasingly cornered. Once home, all the troubles seem to come crowding with greater urgency. It is only his visit to the Fire Temple that helps to calm his tortured soul. The Temple soon becomes his only refuge from a house that has turned from a haven into a hell, beset by problems that seem to have no solutions, whether it is Nariman's leg that doesn't heal, the ceiling in Château Felicity that never gets repaired or mounting expenses that can only be met by literally cutting down on the bread and butter, not to mention the perpetual state of cramped squalor that he finds intolerable.

Though his regular visits to the Fire Temple seems to mellow him a bit, the real turning point in his behaviour comes when he loses his job after the murder of his employer. Finding himself at a loose end, its only when he begins to spend more time at home, that he begins to pay attention to Nariman's needs, instead of just taking him as an encumbrance imposed on him and his family. Much to Jal's and Roxana's surprise and gratitude, for instance, he helps to feed him, clips his nails, gives him a shave, etc. From an initial resentment to his presence, he begins to recall the early days when he enjoyed Nariman's wit and conversational vigour,

²⁹⁸ Kimberly Dovey defines the dialectics of home as the place that provides 'security' in an 'insecure world', 'certainty' within 'doubt', a place of 'familiarity' in a 'strange world'. Clearly, Yezad's 'home' could once be defined by just these parameters, but these values no longer obtain under the changed circumstances."Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*. Ed. by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985 Pp 46.

saddened by the nearly silent Nariman now. Yezad's transformation is complete the day he crosses the final hurdle of giving Nariman the bedpan, the one thing that he had always heretofore balked at. He had even laid down clear strictures to the boys against so much as even touching those things.

Finding it nearly impossible to cope with the basic expenses, Roxana pays a visit to her brother and sister, hoping to get some help to ease the burden. A chance encounter with Edul Munshi and his offer to repair the ceiling for free, gets her to try and convince her siblings of letting him repair the ceiling so Nariman can be back home as soon as possible. Initially both of them reject the idea outright, as he is only a self styled-handyman with no competence whatsoever. However, to a Coomy determined to use any trick to keep Nariman from returning for as long as possible, it suddenly strikes her as the best solution: Munshi's incompetence would automatically prolong repairs, and she wouldn't need to make up more excuses for the delay. That she is willing to go to inordinate lengths if only to keep Nariman out of Château Felicity is her way of creating 'boundaries' to mark her 'personal space,' making it impervious to 'undesirable interaction' with other family members. Full of bitterness about the past, this seems to be her way of punishing Nariman for being the cause of their mother's death. By literally keeping him out, she seems to be symbolically striking him off her family circle, or people she wishes to count as 'family'.²⁹⁹ At this point, it is interesting to note that Jal, her only surviving blood relative, is himself quite sick of all the anger and bitterness she has been harbouring. He feels that given a chance, he would himself move out of Château Felicity if he had a chance. Thus, Coomy, by her actions and behaviour, has not only evicted her step-father from the house, but has also alienated her own sibling in spirit, though he continues to live under the same roof for want of an alternative. This 'Chateau' clearly lacks all 'felicity.'

Edul Munshi, after making a mess of the sitting room, leaving the ceiling resembling the Moon's uneven surface, proceeds to tackle Nariman's room. The contrasting responses of Coomy and Jal to his subsequent 'discovery' of a rotten beam in the ceiling are symbolic of the difference in not just their respective temperaments, but also the extent to which one has no compunction in manipulating any eventuality to suit their own motives, even as the other finds it impossible to conceal the truth. Coomy typically seizes the opportunity as it clearly means a further delay in the repairs. The rotten beam that isn't really 'rotten,' seems to signify

²⁹⁹ Donald Sanders discusses 'boundaries' and 'personal space' at length. "Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology" *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S.Kent. 1990. Pp 47-51.

the artificially created 'rot' in the familial relationships that have, again been, needlessly generated. Ironically, the lie that she holds on to as the truth causes her accidental death, as the steel girder that never needed to be put up, comes crashing down on her, pulling the inadvertent accomplice Edul to his death too.

As the lone inhabitant of Chateau Felicity, Jal proposes to Yezad and Roxana that they move into the larger and nearly vacant flat, and live together as one family. Yezad takes a little time to digest the initiative Jal has taken to arrange for the sale of his Pleasant Villa apartment, but it is Nariman's reaction to the proposed move that is emblematic of the 'unhomely home' Château Felicity has always been to him. It is, indeed, significant that for all the hardship that his presence has caused to Roxana and her family, Nariman balks at the very idea of moving from the cramped quarters to the far more spacious house: to what has after all been his childhood home. Unable to express himself clearly, the old invalid keeps repeating 'do not-do not', showing obvious signs of distress on being told of the decision. All the efforts that Roxana makes to calm him are in vain. Yezad begins to pray with great aplomb, convinced that his chanting would sooth him. But it has the opposite effect: the longer and louder he prays, the more agitated Nariman gets. Finally, Roxana summons Daisy to play her father's favourite song on the Violin, and it finally works, but not before there is a comic clash between the notes of the violin and Yezad's incantations.

Yezad concurs with Jal's plans, and the family moves to Chateau Felicity. In the event, Roxana subsequently has cause to regret not having paid heed to her father's objection to the move. For the present, however, everyone looks forward with enthusiasm to shifting into Château Felicity, taking great care to choose the various furnishings and fittings. It is only young Jehangir who exhibits no interest or desire to shift into Jal Uncle's 'sad house.' When it is time to move from Pleasant Villa, Roxana gets nostalgic about how they had always been happy in that little flat, to which Yezad gives a scathing rejoinder, 'except the last year'. Roxana, however, is quite optimistic about the future as she assures him that they will now always be happy. The last image as they finally leave Pleasant Villa for Château Felicity, of the moth flying straight into the bird's beak, seems to portend a far from happy future than they envisage. With Nariman finally going back to his house he had once been unceremoniously shunted out of, it is an apt closure to the narrative.

What follows is an 'Epilogue', presented through the eyes of Jehangir, Roxana's younger son, who gives the reader a panoramic view of the life in Château Felicity, five years

hence. The opening statement is enough to belie the optimism that the family had set off for Château Felicity with. Yezad and Murad, the reader is told, have had another fight today; quarrelling seems to have become an almost every day affair. This time, it's Murad's new style of haircut that seems to have ignited Yezad's wrath. But the fight soon takes a different turn as Yezad panics when Murad walks too close to the corner of the drawing room he has designated as the 'prayer area,' frantically shouting at him to stop and move away. The 'panic' in his father's voice makes Murad freeze in his tracks, and brings out a worried Jal from his room. Murad is incredulous his father can make such a fuss over maintaining the 'purity' of his prayer corner and mocks at his outdated beliefs. Eager to make peace between the two, Jal, however, desists from intervening and silently withdraws to his room.

Yezad's prayer cabinet is the same showcase that once housed Jal and Coomy's toys and knick-knacks. He had then mockingly nicknamed it as the 'Shrine', finding it illogical that children should be kept from venturing near a cabinet that housed objects that would naturally be of eminent interest to young children. Ironically, he has now turned the showcase into a real 'shrine'. Defining properties of personal space as "...invisible boundaries in relation to each individual," Donald Sanders goes on to establish how "the boundaries define a set of concentric zones of acceptable behaviour... the degree of influence of each zone can be mitigated by the organisation and placement of semi-fixed objects; stress is created if the zones are violated without warning or invitation."³⁰⁰

It is pertinent to recall Nariman's birthday party at the beginning of the novel, when a crisis was precipitated because the two young boys had incurred Coomy's wrath for venturing too close to the showcase, having crossed a boundary they couldn't have been aware of, being invisible as it were, going by Sander's delineation. The latter day Yezad, on his part, is more categorical in defining the 'boundary' around his precious prayer area, encompassing the showcase, as we see in his confrontation with Murad. In fact, he takes this process of marking off the 'sacred territory', effectively his own 'personal space', to ridiculous lengths: for instance, by deploying the furniture to erect, what Murad mockingly refers to as the 'cordon sanitaire', as the conditional compromise to allow his son's non-Parsi girl-friend into the house as one of the guests for his eighteenth birthday dinner. It is, indeed, ironic that two generations later, Yezad repeats history by creating a ruckus over his son's non-Parsi

³⁰⁰ Sanders, Donald. "Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology." *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S.Kent. 1990 Pp 50.

girlfriend, the same way his own father-in-law's parents had done, practically ruining the lives of all concerned.

The Yezad introduced at the beginning of the novel seems to have undergone a drastic transformation, from being an indifferent Parsi to a dogmatic believer, as his latest confrontation with his teenage son illustrates. After her marriage, Roxana used to miss the religious observances and visits to the Fire Temple, because Yezad did not believe in rituals, and the sacred "...loban smoke was [to Yezad], merely one way to get rid of the mosquitoes" (*FM*, 25). In his younger days, he would always be making fun of people whose life seemed to revolve around the rituals, much to Roxana's dismay. Later on, however, stressed out by his inability to cope with the strained circumstances, a hapless Yezad's hesitant steps to the Fire Temple prove to be the only solace. The same Yezad who once scoffed at the practice of numerous rituals by Coomy begins to follow them in earnest. After the family finally settles down in Château Felicity, the remaining proceeds from the sale of Pleasant Villa, apart from what was used up in refurbishing the flat, leaves Yezad free to pursue his interests.

At this juncture, examining Giddens's theory of structuration, as applied by Linda Donley Reid, to explicate how values are created within the minds of individuals and have no independent existence, would be helpful in analyzing the trajectory of Yezad's religiosity. Thus, according to Giddens, "Changes in meaning occur through time, but only in relation to the existing culture. 'Structuration' can be seen as the process of attaching ideas to people, spaces (architecture), and objects."³⁰¹ Giddens's conceptualization can help us analyze the changes that come over Yezad. Rather than turning more tolerant he becomes almost dogmatic in his beliefs and practices. While it pleases Roxana that her husband has finally turned devout, it also vexes her that all that 'prayer' and 'religion' should lead to so much discord between father and son. Jehangir in fact, wishes this "non-stop praying stranger" that his father has turned into, would be replaced by the old, jovial father of his childhood (*FM*, p 500). Yezad's transformation into a devout Parsi has certainly vitiated the atmosphere of Chateau Felicity.

Elaborating on the gap between desired and actual levels of privacy that can be a source of interpersonal conflicts, Donald Sanders delineates the various mechanisms through which a proper balance can be achieved. They can be for instance, "... architectural barriers, rules to

³⁰¹ Donley-Reid, Linda W. "A Structuring Structure: the Swahili House." *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S.Kent. 1990. Pp 116.

make behaviour predictable, structuring the use of time, or verbal, non-verbal, decorative cultural norms and expectations.”³⁰² Thus, if it was Coomy earlier, whose innumerable strictures on Nariman essentially exemplify Sander’s aforementioned explication, it is Yezad in his later avatar that resorts to one or the other of the mechanisms Sanders mentions, effectively monopolizing other people in the household and restricting their freedoms. The radiogram, for instance, is only played when Yezad goes out, as music interferes with his prayers. If his older son Murad chooses to rebel against his father’s diktats, Jal prefers to keep to himself in his room, feeling ‘free’ enough to read the paper in the drawing room only when Yezad is out. Jal’s abstinence from the use of the common space of the house can be taken as an illustration of how Yezad’s “verbal and non-verbal” norms and expectations effectively create boundaries for Jal. Roxana’s step-brother may be living under the same roof, but he has clearly withdrawn himself from the family circle after having been pointedly accused by Yezad of driving a wedge between father and son, whenever Jal tried to make peace between him and Murad. It is, indeed, ironic, that the very person who magnanimously offered to not only share his large flat with Yezad and his family, and also gave them equal rights to the property as well, has been alienated within the family. Thus, it may be the ‘house’ where Jal lives and enjoys ownership rights, but with all the restrictions, it can hardly feel like ‘home’ to him.³⁰³ The other members of the household also experience a similar lack of autonomy, one of the key factors that ‘home’ endows its inhabitants. Thus, for instance, in his zeal to regulate space use by other members of the household, Yezad goes to the extremity of passing, what Murad mockingly terms as the ‘menstruation laws’. Not only are they meant to restrict Roxana’s access to the kitchen or the drawing room, but much to her embarrassment, she is also to monitor the maid’s periods and accordingly restrict her entry into the house.

Grandpa, Jehangir informs the reader, died after a year of moving to Château Felicity. His end perhaps came sooner than later, feels Jehangir, because he must have been lonely in his own room, though some one or the other would occasionally go and sit with him in his room. Despite Nariman’s strong objections to the arrangement, a hospital ayah was employed to look after him, and it proved to be an unwise move, as Nariman developed painful bedsores

³⁰² Sanders, Donald. “Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology.” *Domestic Architecture*. Ed. by S.Kent. 1990. Pp 50.

³⁰³ Peter Saunders defines home as the place “people feel in control of their environment, free from surveillance, free to be themselves and at ease, in the deepest psychological sense...” Quoted in Dupuis, Ann, and David C.Thorns. ”Home, Home Ownership and the Search for Ontological Security.”*The Sociological Review* 46 Issue 1-4. (1998).. Pp 24-47. Pp 25.

due to the ayah's callous carelessness. Jehangir is saddened when Grandfather's things are disposed off from the room after his death, removing all reminders of his presence.³⁰⁴

Gerry Pratt contends that “[o]bjectivation is considered to be anthropologically necessary and refers to the process by which man embodies his subjectivity in objects.”³⁰⁵ Thus, if objects can be taken as being expressive of one's identity, or are used to affirm one's identity, one can see this illustrated through Jal and Coomy's attachment to their toys and knick-knacks, for instance, or Yezad to his prayer things. The extent to which they identify with the objects of their choice, can be seen not only as the degree of their possessiveness. At some level, it reveals their inherent insecurities as well. They constantly seem to be going to great lengths to restrict other people's access to maintain the object's exclusivity or preserve its sanctity, as the case may be. In sharp contrast, Nariman would always exhort both Coomy and Roxana, to use the good china for dinner, service, and not 'waste' them by keeping them locked away. Unlike Coomy, and Yezad for that matter, who seem to valorise certain objects over and above people or relationships, Nariman poignantly declares: “Human beings break, and you cannot replace them either. Are dishes more important? All you can do is enjoy the memories” (*FM*, 186).

This saga of two families housed in dwellings designated as 'Château Felicity' and 'Pleasant-Villa', both the labels signifying 'happiness', seem to embody anything but that. If the Château Felicity flat has a gloomy past that casts a long shadow over its present and future, the space constraints along with the resource crunch that envelopes Pleasant Villa with the arrival of Nariman, begins to erode the 'happiness' that was the hallmark of Yezad and Roxana's abode. If the one definitive sound that marks Pleasant Villa are the harmonious notes of the violin, Château Felicity is ominously marked by the sound of Edul Munshi hammering away at something or the other. Interestingly, when the use of space in Pleasant Villa is affected more by a certain change in circumstances than by the members of the family, it causes a lot of stress, especially for the head of the family. Heretofore, everything

³⁰⁴ Janet Finch and Lynn Hayes find the clearing of a home akin to the funeral of the deceased, thus reiterating the symbolism of the way it is done as important. As mourners at a funeral, they argue, it is important that those who clear the home must also conduct themselves appropriately. Jehangir's attachment to his Grandfather is reflected in his sorrow to see his things go when his room is cleared up after his death. This is in sharp contrast to the haste and detachment with which Coomy had earlier cleared out Nariman's room after he had been 'unhomed.' "Inheritance, Death and the Concept of the Home." *Sociology* 28. No. 2 (May 1994), p 431.

³⁰⁵ Pratt, Gerry, "The House as an Expression of Social Worlds" *Housing and Identity*. Ed. by James S. Duncan. London: Croom Helm. 1981.Pp 137.

in the house had been structured practically around his needs and desires, with the needs of the other members of the family blending together in a harmonious whole.

Château Felicity, on the other hand, seems to embody the tenet that people in power determine the dynamics of space use.³⁰⁶ There is always someone who lays down the rules for the others. For instance, when Nariman lived with his parents, they controlled him completely, granting him no autonomy even when he became an adult. Later, as an old man, his movements and activities are directed and controlled by his step-children, especially Coomy. Always a prisoner, first of his parent's diktats, then of his step-children for their restrictions on him, he returns home eventually only to breathe his last. Although more figurative than literal, this 'incarceration' is nevertheless rooted in the family home, Chateau Felicity. Ironically, the only time he spends away from the confines of that house is to live in Pleasant Villa as an invalid patient, this time a 'prisoner' of his disabled body. As if these circumstantial fetters were not enough, he is also a prisoner of his past, haunted in his twilight years by his dreams and memories. Once Yezad moves into Château Felicity with his family, it is he who dons the role of dictator, laying down the rules for everyone, who can or cannot do, what, when, and where and how, to borrow from Rapoport.

At the end, Roxana is filled with regret for not having done enough for her father, for inadvertently speeding up his demise by relegating his care to strangers. However, what she regrets the most is not having paid heed to her father's caution against moving "into his house of unhappiness" (*FM*, 494). Strangely, Chateau Felicity seems to literally spawn tyranny, be it in the guise of Nariman's parents, a Coomy, or even a changed Yezad by the close of the narrative. True to its legacy, the house seems to only engender unhappiness, as the latter day Yezad is constantly at loggerheads with everyone in general, and his elder son in particular. Jehangir not only misses his dead grandfather, but also misses the loving father that he once had.

In sharp relief to this house that has only been 'home' to unhappy inhabitants, be it Nariman's parents, Nariman himself or his wife and step-children, is the character Roxana.

³⁰⁶ Effectively, Chateau Felicity exemplifies Peter Saunders and Peter Williams' definition of 'home' as the place where the meaning and experience of 'home' is contingent upon age and gender. "The Constitution of Home." *Housing Studies* 3 No. 2 Pp 81-93. Pp 85.

She was also born here, but is seen constantly striving to ensure the happiness of her family. “Are you happy” runs like a refrain throughout the novel, yet, ironically, the periodic questioning only establishes its ephemerality. For, as she asks it of Jehangir at the end, he can only look at the showcase, now the ‘prayer cabinet’, and wonder where can the ever-elusive ‘felicity’ be found. Once the cabinet had been filled with toys and knick-knacks, what Jehangir calls “the sad fragments of Uncle Jal and Aunt Coomy’s unhappy childhood.” “Now,” he muses, “it is filled with Daddy’s holy items. And he is just as unhappy” (*FM*, 499). If it were the ‘marriage makers’, Nariman’s parents, who, as Nariman had once observed, had sowed the seeds of misery, why does the house still reverberate with strife and melancholy, even after Nariman and Coomy are gone? It is as if the very walls of Chateau Felicity are steeped in discord and discontent. Thus, in the end, one can say that the characters dwell in a Pleasant Villa that ends up becoming rather ‘unpleasant’, or a Château Felicity that patently lacks ‘felicity’.

In their delineation on the connection between ‘self’ and ‘place-identity’, Proshansky et al suggest that a common theme among theorists in general is the sense of self is dynamic, and not static, rather, it evolves with a changing world.³⁰⁷ As this section on ‘moving home’ argues, the change of residence and location not only brings about an obvious change in the material circumstances, but can even bring about changes in the persona of the protagonists. Thus, a Jaya has managed to shed all her falsities and prejudices, embracing the return to the Churchgate flat on more even ground, determined to stand as an equal with Mohan, communicate with him more openly rather than simply living a stereotype. The Yezad who goes to live in Chateau Felicity is no longer the same jovial family man, an indifferent believer who we were introduced to at the opening of the novel. Living off the proceeds of the Pleasant Villa flat, he has now turned into a bigot, devoting himself completely to the pursuit of his newfound beliefs, enforcing bizarre rules, alienating his own family in the process.

In an essay appropriately titled “*Home is Where You Start From: Childhood Memory in Adult Interpretations of Home*,” Louise Chawla cites research that establishes a deep connection between home and childhood memory. Thus, she suggests that “childhood memories have proved an important part of adult relations to home.”³⁰⁸ It is Mohan’s memories of his childhood home that makes him so particular about the kind of home he

³⁰⁷ Proshansky, et al. “Place Identity.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 3 Issue 1(1983) Pp 57-83..., Pp 59.

³⁰⁸Chawla, Louise. “Home is Where You Start From: Childhood Memory in Adult Interpretations of Home.” *The Meaning and Use of Housing*. Ed. by Ernesto .G. Arias. 1993.Pp 481.

wants for himself, establish himself in house that proclaims his status and position far above the humble, impoverished beginnings. It is Jaya's childhood memory of having been rendered 'homeless' that subconsciously leaves her in a perpetual state of being unsettled, unsure of what she wants. It is only when she deals with her fears and insecurities that she can truly relate with her present and embrace her life in a more meaningful way. Nariman has been so traumatised by his experiences, that he is perpetually haunted by the ghosts from the past. It was not for nothing that he had tried to resist the move back to Chateau Felicity. Proshansky et al have also discussed the inherent need of the individual for an emotional attachment with the childhood home, and how place-belongingness can only occur when positively valenced cognitions of the settings outweigh the negative ones.³⁰⁹ Jaya was deeply attached to her childhood home, essentially due to her deep bonding with her father, and carries the ache of its loss far into adulthood. That is why she is shocked to see her carefully constructed world crumble so easily, the world epitomised by the Churchgate flat, for she hasn't yet recognised the emptiness she harbours within. She can only begin to develop a sense of belonging to the house she inhabits with her husband and family after she puts the past behind her, be it the loss of her childhood home, or what she thought were her unfulfilled desires. Though the narrative is peppered with 'unhappy homes,' past and present, it ends on a positive note as the protagonist is all set to go back to a 'happy home.' Nevertheless, posited in the narrative future, that idyllic home is left to the reader's imagination. Nariman, on the other hand, has had the opposite experience of his childhood home, in fact the negative valences have carried right through adulthood to his old age. Clearly, far from having a sense of belonging, he is extremely agitated at the prospect of having to go back to the same four walls where 'hell' can permeate surreptitiously, a possibility he had articulated at the beginning of the narrative.

One of the functions of 'place-identity' that Proshansky, et al discuss is nominated as 'mediating change function,' whereby, discrepancies in between a person's place-identity and the features of the immediate physical environment arouse interrelated cognitions and actions in the individual so as to reduce or eliminate such discrepancies.³¹⁰ These changes could work at the cognitive level, or the material level, ranging from changing the physical setting, to manipulating and, or controlling other people's use of space. One can find evidence of such changes in both the narratives. Thus, Jaya reworks her concepts of the significance of home at a cognitive level, while Coomy practically 'throws' Nariman out of the house to refashion her

³⁰⁹ Proshansky, et al. "Place Identity." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 3 Issue 1 (1983). Pp 57-83..Pp 76.

³¹⁰ ---. "Place Identity." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 3 Issue 1(1983) Pp 57-83..Pp 70.

own space. Yezad forsakes home and seeks refuge in the Fire Temple, as his home no longer matches with his place-identity. Eventually, he manipulates space use in Chateau Felicity such that it conforms to his imaginaries of home.

As Jaya can go back to a happier home, after having put to rest all the ghosts that had been haunting her, but a Nariman is denied such redemption, though he gets to go back home as well. He continues to be haunted by the ghosts of his past, finally dying a lonely death in the house that afforded individual rooms to all its inhabitants. Any lessons are left for young Jehangir and Roxana to glean, as they watch in horror history repeat itself. The cycle of pain and strife continues to inhabit Chateau Felicity, marring the relationship of the next generation of father and son.

The narratives of Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and Mistry's *Family Matters* have the protagonist move out of the house that has been their residence for long, and temporarily make home in a different abode. This 'relocation,' this thesis argues, brings to the surface various imaginaries of 'home' that obtain in the process. In Deshpande's text, it is presented as the protagonist Jaya's reminisces and ruminations as her subjectivity evolves through the course of the narrative. Mistry's novel, on the other hand, presents the many meanings of 'home' by not only presenting different homes and households, but also as the experience of 'home' changes and evolves over time, for the protagonists. Thus, throughout Deshpande's narrative, Jaya traces back the course of her life from childhood to the present, a trajectory where the move from one house to the next is effectively a quest for the 'home' she had 'lost' in childhood when her father had died. Subsequently, the feeling of being 'not-at-home' is a burden she carries right into her adulthood, even to the houses she moves into as Mohan's wife, if only subconsciously. The house she would ultimately settle into, the idyllic 'home' she sets up in the Churchgate flat with her husband and children, doesn't feel like 'home' until she resolves her own prejudices and falsities. Presumably, with her newfound self-realisation, she will now 'dwell' in the Heideggerian sense, as Gilles Barbey puts it: "To dwell is to be at home with one's own place, to live in a world where one feels comfortable and at ease."³¹¹ However, Deshpande has chosen to leave that ideal state to the reader's imagination, as the narrative closes before the family is back together again at Churchgate.

³¹¹Barbey, Gilles. "Spatial Archetypes and the Experience of Time: Identifying the Dimensions of Home." *The Meaning and Use of Housing*. Ed. by E. G. Arias. 1993. Pp 111.

The narrative of *Family Matters* opens on Nariman's 'home' at Chateau Felicity that is the opposite of Roxana's 'home' in Pleasant Villa, if 'home' is meant to exude the positive and affective bonds of the family. The old protagonist Nariman is not at ease in his sprawling apartment. Not only is he constantly hectored by his middle-aged step-children, the very walls and portraits seem to emanate an air of gloom. In sharp contrast to this sad and dismal home is the flat at Pleasant Villa that is home to his daughter Roxana and her family. Vivacious and lively, the bonhomie of the family literally resounds off the walls of the flat. Despite their limited means, it is a 'happy home' to the Chenoy family. Yet, the arrival of an incapacitated Nariman as a result of his step-daughter's devious ploys rent the fabric of happiness Roxana and her family have been wrapped in until then. Yezad begins to spend more time that is necessary in the very house that once felt like a haven he once sought refuge in a house that has turned into a cramped and squalid sick-room. When the family eventually moves into the large flat at Chateau Felicity, Yezad's newfound zeal for religiosity turns the house into a battle ground over the 'dos' and 'don'ts' for the family where one can no longer possibly feel 'at home.'

CHAPTER 3

DILAPIDATED HOMES: BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

“The house is called Vishwas, named not as one would imagine for the abstract quality of trust, but after an ancestor.... The name ...seems to be fading into itself.... And yet, the house proclaims the meaning of its name by its very presence, its solidity. It is obvious it was built by a man not just for himself, but for his sons and his son’s sons.”³¹²

“The house *was* the family. Only Shyamanad and Jamun had been bound to it. Get rid of the house, Burfi felt, cut lose, start anew, wondering all the time whether it would at all be possible. For once the house went, *home* would cease to exist; the few square meters of land called their own would vanish from the globe.”³¹³ (*italics mine*)

Simon Weil, in her seminal work *The Need For Roots* contends that private property is a ‘vital need for the soul.’ One would feel lost, she goes on to argue, if one were not surrounded by objects that felt like an extension of the body, things one used, for work, pleasure or necessities, over a long period of time.³¹⁴ Without going into the controversial issue of ‘ownership of property’ in an inequitable society, the need to have some space to call one’s own cannot be disputed. The debate over what makes a house a home is not only contentious, but also interminable. Yet it has drawn scholars across disciplines as diverse as Anthropology and Architecture, Psychology and Philosophy, Culture and Sociology, Gerontology and Archaeology to the discussion.³¹⁵ A house arguably becomes ‘home’ when it evokes a sense of belonging, attachment, a feeling of ‘being-at-home’.³¹⁶ However, it has also been pointed out that the feeling of ‘being-at-home’ is not restricted to the dwelling; one can feel at home

³¹²Deshpande, Shashi. *A Matter of Time*. New Delhi: Penguin. 1996. Pp 3. Subsequent references to the novel incorporated in the text as *MT*, with page nos.

³¹³Chatterji, Upamanyu. *Way To Go*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.2010. Pp 277. Further references to the novel incorporated in the text as *WTG*, with page nos.

³¹⁴Weil, Simone. *The Need For Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind*.1949. Trans. Arthur Wills. Second edition. London: Routledge Classics. 2003.Pp 112.

³¹⁵ Shelley Mallett discusses various approaches to the discussion of house and home. “Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature.”*The Sociological Review*. 52 Issue 1 (Feb 2004) Pp 62-89.

³¹⁶ Kimberly Dovey argues that ‘house’ symbolises the material aspect of the environment, while the ‘home’ symbolises the affective and meaningful relationship between the dweller and their environment. “Home and Homelessness.”*Home Environments, Human Behaviour and Environment: Advances in Theory and Research Series*.Vol. 8.1985.Pp 34.

in the workplace, on the road, or anywhere else.³¹⁷ On the other hand, living in a ‘house’ need not necessarily or automatically afford the experience of ‘home,’ though it is often meant to. The multifarious definitions of ‘home’ can alert one to the complexity of the concept, even as it remains a familiar experience to most of us. In their essay ‘Doing Home: Patriarchy, Caring and Space’, Sophie Bowlby, et al contend that the concepts of ‘home’ and ‘family’ overlap. According to them, ‘houses’ become ‘homes’ as they provide the place where close, private and intimate family relationships are located.³¹⁸ To get a mere glimpse of the range of descriptions and allusions that are used to define ‘home,’ one could turn to R.J.Lawrence’s introduction to the section on ‘*Meaning and Use of Home: Its Interiors*’ in E.G. Arias’ volume on housing. Lawrence points out that “[h]ome is a complex entity that defines and is defined by cultural, socio-demographic, psychological, political and economic factors.”³¹⁹ The notion of home arguably brings to mind the elements of attachment and refuge, warmth and security, as well as a place one can closely identify oneself with. Yet, it can also be a site for inequitable relationships, exposing one to violence and suppression. In fact, Giles Barbey lays stress on the need to examine personal and affective ties that would help us understand how “specific space acquires differential values for members of the same family.”³²⁰ Thus, it would be interesting to look at the different meanings of home that obtain for the various characters in the two narratives at hand. If one brother can only harbour distaste and antipathy for the family home, the other is filled with misgivings for his inability to preserve the father’s legacy. If one married daughter abandoned by her husband can find refuge in the family home, the other feels like an interloper when she is in a similar situation.

‘Vishwas,’ as the opening quotation suggests, signifies the ‘solidity’ it is supposed to impart to a lineage of sons. On the other hand is the house that symbolises the ‘family,’ but its destruction could mean the expurgation of the idea of ‘home,’ muses an anxious son. The title of this chapter alludes to old houses that have been ‘home’ to ageing protagonists, exploring both what the long term attachment to the domestic space entails, as well as, examine the future of houses that are materially dilapidated. It also engages with the notions

³¹⁷ ---. ”Home and Homelessness.”. *Home Environments, Human Behaviour and Environment: Advances in Theory and Research Series*, Vol. 8. 1985. Pp38-39.

³¹⁸ Bowlby, S., S.Gregory and L. McKie. “Doing Home: Patriarchy, Caring and Space”. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 20 Issue 3 (1997). Pp343-350.

³¹⁹ Lawrence, R.J. “The Meaning and Use of Home: Its Interiors”. *The Meaning and Use of Housing: International Perspectives, Approaches and Their Applications*, Ed. by E G Arias. Aldershot: Avebury. 1993. Pp74.

³²⁰ Barbey, Giles. “Spatial Archetypes and the Experience of Time: Identifying the Dimensions of Home”, *The Meaning and Use of Housing*. Ed. by E. G. Arias 1993. Pp 104.

of ‘beginnings’ and ‘endings.’ In case of the former, it examines how the house engenders a new beginning, or ensures continuity. In the narrative that tends towards an ‘ending,’ the chapter explores what is it that really comes to an end, with the destruction of the house. Shashi Deshpande’s 1996 novel *A Matter of Time* and Upamanyu Chatterjee’s 2002 novel *Way to Go* counterpoint each other neatly, though both revolve around the father’s legacy, the family home. If Chatterjee’s narrative revolves around the sons who are the recipients of that legacy, Deshpande’s narrative throws into relief the conundrum of inheritance in the absence of any son. Yet, ironically, the sons in *Way to Go* cannot ensure the preservation of their patrimony and the narrative ends in the obliteration of that inheritance, the family home. On the other hand, it is the daughters of the house who keep the paternal legacy alive in Deshpande’s *A Matter of Time*. It is only in letting go of the house their father had built that the sons in *Way to Go* fathom the value and significance of ‘home.’ On the other hand is Kalyani of *A Matter of Time* who keeps the spirit of home alive, despite being subjected to cruelty by her own kin, within the four walls of the house that is also her natal home.

Deshpande’s novel opens with a detailed description of the Big House, ‘*Vishwas*,’ establishing its centrality to the narrative. The front yard, the reader is informed, is bare and barren, as nothing has ever grown there. Its ‘hard and unyielding ground’ suggests a characteristic the reader is soon to find mirrored in the patriarch of the house. An unused front door, festooned with cobwebs embodies a life now lived from the margins. The family has used the side-entrance for long, as the worn out steps bear witness. Any signs of decrepitude, we are told, are not visible on its façade. The house ‘*Vishwas*,’ may be a symbol of stability, points out Jasbir Jain, but has become a symbol of instability to the family.³²¹ Space, she goes on to add, is one of the dominant concerns in the novel, as it is the house that governs inheritance, marriage and family relationships. The grandeur of the Big House is set off by the ‘Doll’s House’, the old Out-House renovated for a tenant. The miniature garden is a mere foil to the large garden at the back that is resplendent in its exuberance. Yet, it is the fourth side of the house that is evocative of the undercurrents embedded in the history of the house. It is clearly the wild side, no attempt has been made to tame or trim the growth to any order. It is in the description of trees that cling to each other in a deathly hold, yet flowering amicably high above, the trunk and scabrous bark that plays host to a horrifying mass of insects, the tangled web of the mango branches that have fanned out to protect the house, that it is

³²¹Jain, Jasbir. “Shashi Deshpande”. *A Companion to Indian English Fiction*, edited by Pier Paolo Piciuccio. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors. 2004. Pp 220.

impossible to miss the complexities harboured within the house. As if this were not suggestive enough, we are told, the surprise lies in the fact that this dense foliage does not host any bird-nests, and far from the sound of their chirping, all one gets to hear are the “ominous rustlings, sounds of unknown creatures of the night” (*MT*, 5). The schizophrenic character of the exterior is duly reflected in the interior as well, as a long passage divides the house into two, with great precision. The uninhabited left side is ‘dark, brooding and cavernous,’ while the other half gives a lived in look, too large to be cosy. The most baffling part is the staircase leading, not to another floor, but to just a room, that looks incongruously like an “excrescence perched on top of the house,” that takes away from “its main quality of integrity” (*MT*, 5). The daughter of the house, one is told, takes great pride in her father’s house.

To locate the signs of dilapidation in the old structure, one needs to be acquainted with the complex history of the house. It is home to an elderly couple who purportedly live under the same roof, but their curious living arrangement is a manifestation of their estranged relationship. Apparently, the old patriarch is not the rightful master of the house. As the original owner’s son-in-law, he is merely fulfilling the role as the former had died without a male heir. His position is both authoritative as the proclaimed head of the family, yet also marginal in the day to day life of the household is concerned, as he keeps himself aloof, literally and figuratively, from the rest of the family. As the narrative unravels, one can discern a disjunction in the house/family both horizontally as well as vertically. Thus, there is a vertical break in the family hierarchy across generations, as Vithalrao, Kalyani’s father, died without a male heir. On the horizontal level, the estranged relationship between the husband and wife, the present inhabitants, has generated a wide gulf between them. This disjunction at both the levels is reflected in the living arrangements of the husband and wife, who do not ‘co-habit,’ but live on different floors.

However, before the narrative introduces the old couple Kalyani and Shripati, the reader is introduced to their daughter Sumi, casually watching TV in a proverbial ‘calm before the storm’ moment. Making room as usual on the sofa for her husband Gopal who has just walked in, she is in for a jolt as he declines to join her. Out of the blue, he announces his decision to walk out on her and the family. The plot thus opens on the breaking up of a family/home that necessitates Sumi and her children seek refuge in the parental home, the Big House. After spending the night in shocked disbelief, Sumi is left with the unenviable task of disclosing the fact of their father’s desertion to their three daughters as well. What follows is the mother’s

valiant attempts at keeping the façade of normality, even as the daughters feel lost and confused. It is only on the arrival of their grandfather, in itself a rarity, and his decision to take them with him to the Big House, that they begin to have some inkling about extent to which their lives are about to change. Their uncertainty about how long they will stay at their grandparent's house is indicative of the close connection that exists between 'home' and 'family life'.³²² In an incisive essay entitled "Houses and Homecoming in the Fiction of Shashi Deshpande," Pier Paolo Piucciucco finds the trope of homecoming central to most of Deshpande's narratives.³²³ Thus, he contends, her protagonists identify a problem that is somehow connected to their past, and through introspection and self-analysis, arrive at a balance to their lives. However, it is pertinent, he points out, that this change comes about once they move house: "The homecoming theme becomes a symbolic instrument and a crucial process for Deshpande's protagonists to regain their inner balance,...."³²⁴ The house itself, he adds, plays a seminal role as an instrument of resolution, a significance reiterated by Deshpande herself in one of her interviews to Lakshmi Holmstrom that he quotes in support.³²⁵

In the event, they lose their family 'home,' though they find shelter in the the grandparents' house. All of them will be deeply affected by the move, and respond to the loss in their own ways. Sumi's eldest daughter Aru, to begin with, is reluctant to leave her 'home' for an indefinite period and a seemingly indeterminate reason. She follows her family only because no one can question grandfather. Interestingly, the 'Big House' is not prepared for their arrival either, as the grandmother Kalyani has so far been kept in the dark about the upheaval in her daughter Sumi's life. She is stupefied to see them arrive in that manner, not on one of their usual family visits to the Big House, but to stay for the night. She is as ill-equipped to deal with the unexpected 'guests' for the night, as the girls themselves are, to fathom the nature or implications of this move. The fact that her husband Shripati has not bothered to apprise her of the crisis that seems to have befallen their daughter before bringing them home is an obvious pointer to the deafening silence between them. It is in great

³²²Shelley Mallett points out how the notion of 'home' and 'family' has been widely researched, even as the meaning of the two terms remains contested. "Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature." *The Sociological Review* 52.Issue 1 (2004). Pp 62-89.

³²³ Piucciucco, Pier Paolo. "Houses and Homecoming in the Fiction of Shashi Deshpande". *The Journal of Indian Writing in English*. 29.Issue 2 (2001):Pp 34-41. PP35-36..

³²⁴ Piucciucco, Pier Paolo. "House and Homecoming in the Fiction of Shashi Deshpande". *The Journal of Indian Writing in English*. 2001.Pp 34-43. Pp 36.

³²⁵Holmstrom, Lakshmi. "Shashi Deshpande Talks to Lakshmi Holmstrom". *The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande*, edited by R.S Pathak. New Delhi: Creative. 1998.Pp. 243.

consternation and non-stop chatter that Kalyani gets in a flurry to arrange for their sheets and pillows as they prepare to bed for the night. It is only when the youngest grand-daughter blurts out the truth that Kalyani gets to know, and can only cry out in anguish at the possibility of history repeating itself. Years ago, the same Kalyani had once sought refuge in this very house, brought back by her father after she and her daughters had been abandoned by her husband Shripati. Brought into the open, Gopal's desertion assails everyone with a deep sense of loss, making Aru, for instance, feel like a dispossessed refugee, as she sits on the floor of her grandparent's house. It is in the unfortunate history of the house that the present crisis finds its resonance, not only making it more poignant, but also opening old wounds.

Kalyani takes great pride in narrating the history of the Big House, essentially woven with the family lineage, despite the gaps and fissures she would rather skim over. According to her, the history of the house begins with the ancestor Vishwasrao, after whom the house is named. He had come down south with Madhavrao Peshwa on one of his expeditions and had been left by the Peshwa as a guardian of a Ganesha idol that had proved to be a lucky charm. Kalyani's father Vithalrao, a few generations later, likewise providentially commissioned a Ganesha idol for the entrance to the house he was building. The educated city dweller Vithalrao uncharacteristically chooses to marry Manorama, a poor village Brahmin's daughter, whose confidence and intelligence shone through her shabby clothes. Manorama proves to be an equal collaborator to Vithalrao, partnering him in his public and social activities, and has great hopes of her progeny. Sharing the memories of their past, Kalyani and Goda, her cousin who was also brought up along with her in the house, their narrative flows thick and fast, as they wax eloquent on the wonderful man Vithalrao was. It is when they come to Manorama that their duet falters, as there seem to be a hint of dissonance, of some elisions and silences in their narrative. Though Manorama emerges like Goddess Lakshmi on the lotus, in her silks and diamonds, "the slime in which the lotus is anchored is not spoken of" (*MT*, 120). Moreover, the story of Kalyani's marriage to her own Uncle Shripati is also cloaked in silence, and, to the older granddaughters, there is nothing to explain the aloofness between them.

'Vishwas', the Big House, we have been told at the start, was built to endure; not just for the patriarch, but for his sons and the sons' sons. The glorious Manorama, rewriting her destiny as Vithalrao's wife, could not realise her dream of giving birth to a son. Although her daughter Kalyani was bright and her father had great hopes of making her an engineer,

Manorama was disappointed in her daughter. Manorama had hoped her daughter would turn out to be 'beautiful,' 'accomplished', and make a 'brilliant marriage,' qualities that would have marked the triumph of Manorama, treated with contempt for being a poor villager's daughter. But Kalyani failed her mother on all counts. With an only daughter, Manorama has to keep at bay the threat of a male relative taking over the property. The only way out, as she saw it, was to marry her daughter to her own brother, and keep the property within the family. When Kalyani gives birth to a son, it elevates her status amidst much rejoicing, but the boy turns out to be retarded. Subsequently, a hapless Kalyani, saddled by an infant daughter and an older girl, loses the young boy in the melee at the railway station. Her husband Shripati is livid at her 'carelessness', and Kalyani returns to her parents, with the daughters, abandoned by her husband who simply walked out on her. To her mother, it is a disgrace to have a married daughter come back home. Moreover, Manorama's ill-treatment of their daughter leads to a breach between Kalyani's parents as well, a rift for which Manorama blames Kalyani.

The mother who had made life miserable for Kalyani in her parental home while she was alive, ensured Kalyani could not live in peace after her death either. Unknown to her, Manorama had written to and summoned Kalyani's estranged husband and Uncle, Shripati, to come back and take over the house. Kalyani is horrified to learn from Goda about it, when she finds out about the extra room being built upstairs for him. And thus, after living in a house vitiated by her mother's antagonism, she has no choice but accept her mother's final cruelty and live in fear, in her own natal home, terrified to be seen or heard, clamping the mouth of her girls lest their noise incur the husband's wrath.³²⁶ Condemned for life as the rejected wife, history comes full circle now as her daughter has come home, also abandoned by her husband.

To begin with, Sumi and the girls come just for a night, armed only with a tooth brush and their night dress. The situation is inherently filled with ambiguity, as not even Sumi can accept the fact that her husband has left them for good. This indeterminacy is reflected in their piecemeal arrangements for staying in the Big House, living not out of suitcases, but polythene bags. They keep making endless trips between the two houses, weighed by the fear of having to 'extend' their stay, wondering how long they have to go on like this. "Aru, with her innate sense of order has to work hard at not becoming part of the house, putting things in

³²⁶ Nancy Duncan observes that "[p]ersonal freedoms of the male head of the household often impinge on, or in extreme cases, negate the rights, autonomy and safety of women and children who also occupy these spaces." "Renegotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces." *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, edited by Nancy Duncan. London: Routledge. 1996. Pp 131.

a kind of temporary order....” (MT,12). In effect, they live like the guests who are all set to take the train back home, their things packed and the mattresses rolled up and put away, a charade played out every day. Kalyani also plays along as she puts away the extra crockery into storage after every use. This initial response of maintaining an element of transience about the move is nothing but a denial and disbelief over the irrevocability of Gopal’s desertion. In fact, the extended family also keeps away, at the beginning, as everyone hesitates to proclaim Gopal’s abandonment as a tragedy, lest naming it makes it real. In the first few days, there is still hope every time the gate creaks open or the phone rings, of Gopal’s return. It is not just the children- even the usually unflustered Sumi has not given up hope, when she once runs out at the sound of his scooter, disappointed to find Aru riding it home.

Finally, it is Aru who breaks this state of limbo by calling up her Aunt Premi, Sumi’s sister, apprising her of the crisis. Premi’s hasty arrival is met with Sumi’s hostility, and it is left to the girls to speculate with Aunt Premi about the probable reasons for Gopal’s desertion. Though it’s easier to confabulate now, for Sumi has moved out of the room she was sharing with the girls and gone to the other wing, yet they speak in soft undertones. In fact, Premi has never been able to enjoy the warmth of sisterhood such as Sumi’s daughters enjoy, for all she remembers as a child is always trailing her elder sister, never being able to match up to her. Each time she comes back to her natal home, Premi, a successful doctor based in Bombay, is reduced to being the quivering adolescent she was in her younger days, forced to battle her old demons: “The moment I come home, all this dwindles to nothing and I can feel myself sliding back into adolescence, getting once again under the skin of that frightened child Premi who’s always waiting there for me” (MT,p17). Sumi’s imperious “why are you here” triggers a painful memory in her, making her recall the only words her father had ever spoken to her. As a ten year old child, she had once climbed the forbidden steps, in great fear, only to be stopped dead in her tracks by a blank stare and the same question, “why are you here”(MT, 18). Even though she is now successfully well settled in her life, Premi has clearly not been able to overcome the trauma of her stultified childhood, and merely coming back to her parental home is enough to bring her insecurities to the fore.³²⁷ The only time her father had

³²⁷ Edward Relph argues that experience of place is necessarily ‘time deepened’ and ‘memory-qualified.’ Clearly, Premi’s childhood memories of home have been far from pleasant and affected her so deeply that the memories of home-place condition her behaviour even as an adult. Relph, Edward. ”Geographical Experiences and Being-in-the World: The Phenomenological Origins of Geography.”*Dwelling Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World*, edited by David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer.. New York: Columbia University Press.1985.Pp 26.

really spoken to her, she once confessed to her husband Anil, was when he had summoned her to his room after her medical exams and intimated that she was to marry his friend's son.

Going upstairs to pay her respects to her father on every visit home is an unsavoury routine she has to follow, for the relationship was always tainted by her childhood experience. On this visit too, they only exchange pleasantries as he asks her about the well-being of her family, without any mention of Gopal and Sumi. Of course, as a husband who had once deserted his family, he is in no position to pass judgement on Gopal. Having failed to be of any help, Premi returns home after assuring them of her support and concern. Her visit opens the doors to the other family members, who converge as if to 'mourn' a 'death' sans a 'body.' As the girls discuss Gopal's probable whereabouts with Gopal's nephew Ramesh who has tried hard to locate him, Sumi's apparent indifference to his disappearance draws an anguished response from daughter Aru: "You don't care?... but I care...about Papa having left us.... I don't want to live like this, as if we're sitting on a railway platform, I want my *home* back, I want my father back..." (*MT*, 21) (italics mine). Not only have they been literally displaced, they have been figuratively displaced as well, as with her father, Aru cries over the loss of her 'home' too.

For all her calm demeanour, Sumi is no less distressed by the breakdown of her marriage, her state of unease finds manifestation in her constant moves and relocations within the house. Thus, after moving out from the room she first shared with her daughters, Sumi eventually chooses to shift into what used to be her grandfather's room, despite her mother Kalyani's reservations, as she claims not to want to 'lose sight of her loneliness.' In a move reminiscent of her father's withdrawal from the family, she wants to however, get used to living alone, as she had first got accustomed to cohabiting with Gopal. It is, however, hard to explain to her mother it is not loneliness that she is unable to deal with, but the sense of alienation. Her own daughters seemed to have ganged up together with sister Premi as an ally, looking upon her as the enemy, making her feel vulnerable. She is disconcerted by the possibility that her children blame her for Gopal's desertion, wondering why she can't open up with them. In fact, her moving away to another room is itself symbolic of her disconnect with her daughters, just as her father has kept himself aloof from his wife and family.³²⁸ By

³²⁸ Harold M. Proshansky, et. al. explore the connections between 'self-identity' and 'place-identity,' with the idea of 'self' as something that is particularly characterised by growth and change in response to a changing world. In the present instance, Sumi's evolution of 'self-identity' is arguably manifested in her moves and relocation within the house. By the end of the narrative, she will be all set to leave home and live independently

herself in her grandfather's room, she also recalls her first act of rebellion at eighteen, breaking out of her father's stronghold, when she had gone across for the night to Gopal's room in the Outhouse. Chancing upon her parents' wedding picture in the cupboard, she finds it incongruous, nearly obscene, to see them together, always having known them as two separate entities.

After a month of living in a limbo, Sumi knows it's time to take a decision, time to accept her singlehood, so to speak. Until now, holding on to her marital home was, if nothing else, a sign of hope in the possibility of their coming together as a family again. However, the span of a month was long enough a duration for the hope to be belied. If moving into her natal home was the first stage of dealing with the breakdown of her marriage, relinquishing the marital home is the next stage of accepting the reality of Gopal having walked out on the family. The reaction of the two older girls is indicative both of their attachment to the family home as well as their anxiety over the impending loss of a 'normal' family life.³²⁹ So long as the house they had lived in as a family with Gopal, Sumi and the children was theirs, it kept alive the hope that they could still go back to living as a family, but giving it up pronounced the death of that hope. Sumi, recovering after the first shock that seemed to have dulled her responses, awakens afresh to take charge of her life, and briskly goes about vacating the house.

James Krasner, in his book *Home Bodies: Tactile Experience in Domestic Space*(2010), defines 'home' as something more than a 'cultural formation' and a building; it is, he goes on to argue, a confluence of 'tactile sensations' and 'bodily positions' through which one experiences the emotional sustenance that the home endows us with. In a chapter devoted to the objects and possessions one collects over a period of time, Krasner alerts us to the pangs of cleaning out attics and basements. The challenge comes from being "disarmed by materialised memory."³³⁰In the event, on entering the house after a long gap, musty and coated all over with dust, for a few minutes they are unable to move, struck dumb by the impending loss of the only 'home' they have ever known. However, Sumi is determined not

as a working woman. "Place-Identity: Physical World Socialisation of the Self." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3.Issue 1 (1983): Pp 57-83..

³²⁹ Roberta M. Feldman explores the many terms researchers have used to denote people's deep attachment to their home environments, be it 'rootedness,' 'at-homeness,' 'spatial identity' or 'place-identity.' "Settlement-Identity: Psychological Bonds with Home Places in a Mobile Society." *Environment and Behaviour*.22.Issue 2 (1990): Pp 183-229..

³³⁰ Krasner, James. *Home Bodies: Tactile Experience in Domestic Space*.Columbus: Ohio State University Press.2010.Pp 5; 41.

to get bogged down by any ‘materialised memories.’ Thus, she doesn’t allow them the luxury of wallowing in any nostalgia or melancholy, briskly setting the pace for the task at hand. They are so business-like and clinical in relinquishing their home, that Devaki and Hrishi, who have come to help, are dismayed to find everything under control:

“[Devaki] finds the silence in which they work, chilling. No questions are asked, nor is there any sharing of memories; baby clothes and old nursery books are disposed off in the same way as an old wick stove...

By evening, most of it is done. It has been a swift dismemberment....When the door of the steel almirah is banged shut, the clang resounds with a hollow boom through the house and Aru’s heart throbs in a panic-filled response, as if she has received an ominous message: it’s over, it’s over” (*MT*, 29).

All of them sleep on the bare mattresses on the floor, and Sumi can’t help thinking it’s her last night in the house she shared with Gopal, as the house envelops her in countless memories.³³¹ To Aru, however, their belongings seem pathetic and vulnerable, all packed and bundled up and exposed to the neighbour’s intrusive stares.³³² She is overwhelmed by the blow of losing her ‘home,’ and collapses at the doorstep of the Big House, much to everybody’s shock.³³³

This formally marks the beginning, for Sumi and her daughters, of settling down in the Big House, making it their home, so to speak, having had to let go of their family home.³³⁴ To start with, the Big House has to make space for the new additions, more than in the literal sense. For instance, except the girls’ beds, all the extra furniture is piled up in the small room next to Sumi’s bedroom, and interestingly it becomes the girl’s corner for refuge. Not only does it substitute for the mother’s lap that is present next door, but not ‘available,’ it also is a

³³¹ Roderick J. Lawrence calls houses as “warehouses of personal experience.” “A More Humane History of Homes: Research Method and Application.” *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner..1985.Pp 118.

³³² Perla Korosec-Serafaty points to the ‘hidden’ and the ‘visible’ that the dwelling affords; it ensures secrecy (from prying eyes and visibility (to guests and family). Aru is discomfited because that which was ‘secret’ and ‘hidden’ behind closed doors and windows, in closets and drawers, now lies exposed to public scrutiny. “Experience and the Use of Dwelling.” *Home Environments* edited by I. Altman and C. Werner.1985. Pp 73.

³³³ Marc Fried makes a strong case about people grieving for a lost home. “Grieving for a Lost Home.” *The Urban Condition: People and Policy in the Metropolis*, edited by Leonard J. Duhl. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1963.Pp 151-171.

³³⁴ Perla Korosec-Serafaty elaborates on the process of ‘appropriation’ that is crucial to transforming the ‘house’ into ‘home.’ The ‘appropriation’ takes place not just in terms of the manner in which the dwelling is ‘arranged,’ ‘maintained’ or ‘modified,’ but is also at work in all the identification processes the dweller consents to: “This acceptance amounts to investment and, more particularly, bodily involvement.” “Experience and the Use of Dwelling.” *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner..1985. Pp 75-76.

kind of a 'recreation' of the home they have left behind.³³⁵ The boxes soon find their own niche in the storeroom, woven into belonging by the cobwebs and the dust. Sundry other objects too, mysteriously find a place, as the house finally makes things from the other house its own. If the objects needed a 'settling-down,' so do the new incumbents. Thus, "the girls, too, no longer have the air of being visitors living out of suitcases," as they pick up the threads of their life and carry on, keeping subdued any signs of grief (*MT*, 33). It is Sumi, however, who projects subtle but sure signs of being a misfit, out of place in her natal home.³³⁶ This is apparent in her extravagant gestures, and unusual activities, such as learning to ride the scooter.

With an additional four people added to the household, Kalayni finds it difficult to absorb them into her routine, yet is unaccustomed to allowing anyone to pitch in. Thus, the major issues of 'treachery' and 'desertion,' pain or anger are pushed on the backburner, as minor irritants about roles and responsibilities take centre stage. Used to her mother's inclusive style of housekeeping, Aru is disappointed that her overburdened grandmother resists her overtures to help. Both the older daughters, Aru and Charu, seem to have quietened down, bickering less and carrying on with their own lives. Aru's reserve has changed into secretiveness, and Charu seems to pursue her admission to medical college with frightening intensity. Seema, the youngest, seems to have distanced herself from her mother and sisters, preferring to trail Kalyani. Put together, the changes make Sumi uneasy.

What the Big House has silenced cannot be brought out in the open, and Aru engineers a trip to the local restaurant with her Aunt to learn more about the rift between her grandparents. Premi tells Aru about the son who had got lost at the railway station, of how Shripati had walked out on his family, blaming his wife for having lost the son. Aru was surprised the four year old didn't speak, until she was told that he was mentally retarded. All Kalyani had uttered by way of explanation was that the baby was crying. Aru finds it difficult to accept the injustice, wondering why her grandmother didn't speak out. However, the girls are still unaware of the reason for their marriage, of what made Kalyani accept an Uncle she

³³⁵ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton have reiterated the significance of household goods to people. According to them, 'home' is not just a material shelter, but also provides shelter for the 'things' that give meaning to life. Thus, given the significance of the objects, Sumi's daughters experience a feeling of 'homeliness' from the comfort that proximity to things that made up their 'home' brings them. *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1981. Pp 139.

³³⁶ Susan Kent draws upon various studies to reiterate the significant role culture plays in affecting use of space. As a married daughter, Sumi seems to feel rather 'out of place' in her natal home. "Activity Areas and Architecture: An Interdisciplinary view of the Relationship Between Use of Space and Domestic Built Environments." *Domestic Architecture*. Edited by S. Kent. 1990 Pp 2-3.

was scared of, as a husband. Looking for a way forward, Aru agonises over her grandmother still being meted out punishment after all these years, wondering why she doesn't break the silence. She tries to visualise her grandfather as a 'cruel husband', but can only see an old man, forlorn in his room upstairs, visibly cheered up each time she paid him a visit.³³⁷ "She thinks of the little arrangements in his room, which seem so pathetic to her, of how his fingers tremble when he folds his clothes and smoothens them down"(MT,144). Anger gives way to pity for the old man, reserving all anger for the other deserter, her father Gopal. Her feelings for Kalyani, however, are more ambiguous, unable to connect the wife abandoned at the railway station, and this Kalyani, indulging her grandchildren, teasing the maid, occasionally losing herself in her childhood memories.

With time, Sumi has an odd feeling that the Big House is now more accepting of them, just as it had once opened up to the abandoned mother and daughters a generation ago. She can observe subtle changes in her daughters' behaviour, for instance, as they keep their voices low, unknowingly or unconsciously. Yet, having spent a childhood marked by their mother muffling their sounds with her hand on their mouths, she doesn't want to bring up her children in the same restricted manner, in an all-female household. Moreover, Sumi is also discomfited by the fact that her eldest daughter Aru is now beginning to wonder about the unusual relationship between her grandparents. Shripati may have mellowed down with age, yet the oppressiveness of his 'unseen presence' cannot be ignored. Sumi has noticeably lost weight, and the resemblance between Sumi and Aru becomes more prominent, a resemblance that, in turn, connects them to their ancestor, Kalyani's mother Manorama. The resemblance across generations only goes to mark the continuity of their histories, a continuity embodied in the Big House. Manorama's daughter had long ago 'come back' with her daughters; now Manorama's granddaughter has also 'come back' with her daughters, seeking refuge again in the Big House as an 'abandoned wife'.

Despite the resemblance that should, in fact, give her a sense of belonging, of being part of the family, Sumi has increasingly begun to feel like an intruder in her parent's house. She feels like she and her daughters are "interlopers" who are merely "passing through" (MT, 70-71). Yet, she cannot pinpoint the basis of this unease, whether it was something that emerged

³³⁷ Peter Saunders and Peter Williams' thesis that gender and age are key determinants that affect meaning of home is played out ironically here. Thus, Kalyani spends a lifetime of living in fear, along with her daughters, under the towering presence of her husband Shripati. With age, however, Shripati's aura of power and cruelty seem to have diminished. "The Constitution of Home: Towards a Research Agenda." *Housing Studies* 3.Issue 2 (1988): Pp 81-93. Pp 85.

from what was left unsaid in Kalayni and her sister Goda's conversation, of the absence of sons, or perhaps from the very walls of the house that proclaimed they were raised to give shelter to a son. Thinking of the joyful songs sung at her nephew Nikhil's birth, she can't be dismissive of the adoration of the male child, as real in life, as it was celebrated in myth and legend. In fact, she confesses her sense of unease to her father as well, that she feels like a parasite, and has no right to be in the house.

Pier Piucciucco has pointed out that the parameters of time and space are blurred when the relationship between the female protagonist and the house is intimate and it is the sensory perception that dominates the experience.³³⁸ Thus, like her sister Premi, Sumi too seems to step back into her childhood the moment she enters her father's room upstairs.³³⁹ Nothing in the room has changed, in all those years, the only addition being the music system, a new acquisition. Yet, if Shripati plays the music to fill up his own emptiness, its strains mark his wife's movements, downstairs. Kalyani is always alert to sound of the music, and its abrupt cessation can fill her with trepidation, wondering what new ordeal is in store for her. To Sumi, the room seems to have, characteristically, taken on the personality of its resident.³⁴⁰ Like the man, the room has "an air of reserve" about it, even the light that streamed in came in very limited measure. More than being Shripati's personal space, the room also entombs the debris of his own failed ambitions, as well as his ambitions for his daughter Sumi. She was supposed to have fulfilled his dreams, become a distinguished lawyer, or even a judge; aspirations he himself had abandoned when he came back here on the summons from his dying sister. At first, the young Sumi had thought it an honour when her father let her come to his room, let her look at his books. But when she realised his motive behind getting her to engage with those books, "it became a prisoner's stone-breaking duty; she wanted none of it" (*MT*, 72). In marrying Gopal, she had walked out on everything.

The offers of help from her father, sister and other relatives, she tells him, makes her feel like a parasite, taking the easier option of sponging on other people's goodwill. Her father rubbishes her fears, reiterating her right to be there, "this is your home" (*MT*, 71). Sumi,

³³⁸ Piucciucco, Pier Paolo. "Houses and Homecoming in the Fiction of Shashi Deshpande." *The Journal of Indian Writing in English*. 29 No 2 (2001).. Pp 34-43..Pp 41.

³³⁹ Edward Relph's notion of 'topophilia' and 'topophobia' are relevant to an understanding of the negative feelings evoked by Shripati's room in his daughters. "Geographical Experiences and Being- in -the- World". *Dwelling Place and Environment*, edited by R. Mugerauer and D. Seamon. New York: Columbia University Press. 1985. Pp 27.

³⁴⁰ Shripati has clearly made it his own through the processes of 'personalisation' and 'appropriation' of the space that is reflective of his 'identity,' to borrow from Kimberly Dovey's definition of 'home.' "Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner.1985. Pp 33-64.

however, has so deeply internalised the angst of not being a son, of having failed him, that she cannot accept her father's reassurance to her right of being and belonging. She is nonplussed when he shares with her his fear and vulnerability about old age and death. Closing the door of his room softly, reflexively remembering he doesn't like noise, she recalls a vision, like an apparition, from childhood: that of her mother banging on her father's closed door, shrieking and eventually collapsing on the floor, until her sister Goda helped her, bent and huddled, downstairs. It is only now that Sumi accepts the reality of what she had seen, having spent her entire childhood in denial, unwilling and unable to take in the brutality of her parent's relationship. This moment of revelation signifies the acceptance of her past, as once Gopal had tried to make her understand: "How can you disclaim the past?" (*MT*, 75). She now acknowledges that her mother's past, despite Kalyani's best efforts to contain within herself, had, to some degrees, seeped into Premi and her, and tainted their bones. It makes her wonder anxiously, in turn, if her daughters too would be burdened by that past. She is so disturbed by the possibility she decides to look for another house, not wanting her daughters to live in a house haunted by her parent's history.

Sumi engages an estate agent to help her locate a suitable house for rent, but can find nothing acceptable. Almost giving up on her after showing her around, his attitude, however, undergoes a marked change when he gathers that the Big House belongs to her parents, looking upon her as the future mistress. Interestingly, when he tells her in exasperation she should make her own house if she is so particular about the right one, the house she unconsciously doodles is none other than the Big House. She may be planning to leave her natal home and live elsewhere, but it is obviously ingrained in her subconscious mind. After several rounds of looking at houses to take on rent she finds nothing suitable, Sumi gives up on the idea of moving out and setting up an independent home. Having decided to settle down in the Big House, she soon takes up gardening, literally striking roots into the ground. Clearly, her notions about 'time' have evolved, no longer the impatient girl her mother Kalyani knew, who is shocked to find her planting bulbs that would take months to flower.³⁴¹ She soon takes up a job at a local school, immersing herself with great enthusiasm in the new endeavour. She gets engrossed in composing a play for an inter-school competition, and almost loses herself

³⁴¹ Mark Bhatti and Andrew Church contend that the domestic garden gives meaning and value to the home. By involving herself in the act of gardening, Sumi is clearly finding newer ways to connect with and find meaning in her experience of 'home' at the Big House. "Home, the Culture of Nature and Meanings of Gardens in Late Modernity." *Housing Studies* 19.Issue1 (2004):Pp 37-51..

in her work. While her two elder daughters are by now leading their own lives, she is inadvertently distanced from the youngest one, increasingly at odds with her daughter.

To be able to carry on with her life without Gopal, it has been important for Sumi to keep her emotions and feelings about Gopal's 'desertion' and 'betrayal' under check. By not allowing herself be overwhelmed that she can present a picture to the world of "grace and courage, to be admired rather than pitied"(MT, 172). Nevertheless, those who knew her well could sense something missing in her. To her credit, she seemed to be getting back some of her old vivacity with her new job. Aru offers to drive her to a friend's house for an errand, and they meet with an accident on the way back. Aru eventually recovers from the accident, but it is Sumi who carries the scars. She can never recover from the memory of the two menacing faces looking down on them, and the fear that things could have gone very wrong for her daughter. She cannot shake off the feeling of being abandoned, the knowledge that had come to her on the night of the accident, when she was at Ramesh's house: "we are, all of us, always strangers to one another," and henceforth, she lives with that thought (MT, 180).

The accident marks a watershed moment in her life, as she consciously works on her fears and moves on. Her evolution is literally marked by her change of location yet again, as she moves out of the big bedroom she had been using so far, into the small corner room. She had begun to find it inexplicably hot and stifling, getting nightmares about the fan falling down on her, filled with the same sense of impending doom she had felt after the birth of the youngest Seema, akin to what she had felt after Aru's accident as well. However, Sumi feels she has left behind all her nightmares and apprehensions in the room she has moved out of. "There are no shadows in this, the 'corner room'. No ghosts either. Dispossessed of everything by her in-laws on her widowhood, perhaps Kalyani's aunt, whose room this had been, had had nothing to leave behind, not even sorrow or anger" (MT, 190). This move to a room bare of any encumbrances, material or otherwise, also symbolises Sumi's evolution, as she leaves all her baggage behind to start afresh. After all, it is not for nothing her daughter Aru feels as if her mother has gone back in time to an earlier stage of her life, as a student, happily ensconced in a room that is reminiscent of a hostel.³⁴² That impression is given not just by the arrangement of the room, but also the manner of disarray Aru finds the room in, as her mother is deeply engrossed in her work. However, if Sumi has managed to move on, at

³⁴² According to Harold M. Proshansky et al., the 'expressive-requirement function' of place-identity allows the freedom to personalise space to suit one's taste and preferences. The changes in Sumi's physical settings, in this instance her choice of settings is reflective of the evolution in her self-identity. "Place Identity: Physical World Socialisation of the Self." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3.Issue 1 (1983): Pp 57-83. Pp 68-70..

the moment quite caught up in the thrill of creative self-expression as she fine tunes the play she had written earlier, the same can't be said for her daughters. Finding Charu, for instance, stressed out by her frantic preparations for Medical School, she takes her out for a stroll in a park nearby. Charu confesses to her mother how much she misses their old life, when the entire family was together, unhappy now with the change of circumstances. In fact, Sumi's second daughter hopes her father would come back and things would get back to the usual, though she's not sure if their mother would 'take' him back. Sumi can only deflect Charu by pointing out that things could never be the same, even if Gopal was to come back. She also tries to remind her daughter that Aru and Charu would soon move away to college, leaving the parents behind, reiterating the inevitability of change.³⁴³

In the meanwhile, Sumi is soon going to be out of a job, worried about the future, though she tries not to let her anxiety show. She finds it easier to deal with the 'certainties' of loneliness or money-troubles, than with the earlier inexplicable but haunting fears. It is the estate agent Nagaraj who unexpectedly gives a new spin to her future prospects. He commends her on her prudent decision of staying on with her parents, if only in the best interest of her daughters, instead of moving out to a new house. Giving it an appreciative look, he observes it is a valuable property, adding that he would be glad to help developing it, if they were ever to decide to do so. When Sumi protests it is not for her to decide, as it does not belong to her, his rejoinder sets her thinking: "...but some day it will be yours. And then..." (*MT*, 195) The thought of that possibility gives her a new sense of attachment to the house, as she tries to visualise a future as the owner of the house, of she and her sister Premi inheriting the property.³⁴⁴ Simone Weil's contention about the value of private property rings a bell here³⁴⁵. However, Sumi is soon caught up in the complexities of inheritance, wondering if they would ever be the beneficiaries as daughters. She can't ignore her mother Kalyani's rights to the house that was actually built by her father, unable to fathom the injustice of it all, but eventually gives up on delving into the conundrum.

³⁴³ In a discussion of residential histories of men and women, Jamie Horwitz and Jerome Tognoli document the environmental and psychological changes people experience after leaving their parental home. The participants reported experiencing an initial phase of feeling "not at home," and an initial need for 'home.' Sumi's daughters too, in the narrative, experience similar feelings of missing 'home' and the desire to recover the lost 'home' is ever-present. "Role of Home in Adult Development: Women and Men Living Alone Describe their Residential Histories." *Family Relations* 31.Issue3 (1982): Pp 335-341.

³⁴⁴ Ann Dupuis and David C. Thorns have explored the connections between home ownership and ontological security. "Home, Home Ownership and The Search for Ontological Security." *Sociological Review* 46. Issue 1 (1998): Pp 24-47.

³⁴⁵ Weil, S. contends that private property is a vital need for the soul. *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind*. Trsl by Arthur Wills. Preface by T.S. Eliot. London: Routledge Classics. Rpt 2003. Frst published as *L'Enracinement*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1949. Pp 112.

It was a shared preoccupation with the past that had brought Kalyani and Gopal together, though their view of the past differed from each other. Kalyani's family document seemed to be one of the points of conjunction, and Sumi was convinced her family's history was one of the reasons he had married her. It was in Gopal, and later her granddaughter Aru, that Kalyani finds an eager audience she could regale with an animated account of the family history. "Yet the part of her life that she has edited out is there, the dark looming cloud of its absence making itself felt, even to Aru, who knows nothing about it" (*MT*, p 121). The history of the house is deeply entwined with her own history, inheriting not the house but a marriage that tied her to a lifetime of pain. Nevertheless, despite a lifelong experience of restriction and suppression, she continues to harbour immense pride in her father's legacy, keen to recreate the history for anyone eager to listen.

Like Gopal earlier, another young man Rohit is fascinated by the house and is drawn to the family. The arrival and acceptance of Rohit, a descendant of Narasikaka into the family fold in a way resolves a long family feud. It was Narasikaka, Kalyani's paternal Uncle, who had sown the seeds of insecurity in her mother Manorama's mind that set in motion the story of Kalyani's tragic life, entwining her history with that of the Big House. Nevertheless, Kalyani's feelings for her natal home are best exemplified in the way she comes alive when she begins to tell the story of the house to Rohit, an architect. Rohit cannot help noticing Kalyani's deep bonding with the house that shows up in

...how each time they enter a room, she lifts her feet to the exact height required to cross the high wooden threshold. He sees the way her hand brushes a wall, a door, as if communicating through them with the house, he hears the inflection in her voice when she speaks of her father and something comes through...: this house is a living presence for Kalyani (*MT*, 126).

It takes an outsider or a newcomer, who was both interested in the house, yet not 'tainted' by its history, to have been able to make such an observation. But what is extremely perplexing to Rohit is how this animated tour of the house is abruptly cut short at the base of the magnificent staircase. Yet, if the Big House indisputably evokes fervent pride in Kalyani, as reflected in her narrative, the 'upstairs section' is 'unspeakable,' for it symbolises her shame and humiliation. Rohit finds her dismissive 'there is nothing upstairs' hard to digest. Thwarted from ascending the stairs, he goes outside to take a look, and his comment on the additional room is revealing: he found it "[u]gly and incongruous. Like a stopper on further

growth” (*MT*, 126). Pier Paolo Piucciucco has also pointed out that the architectural oddities effectively reflect the ‘grotesqueness’ inside the family.³⁴⁶

It is Aru’s eighteenth birthday, and for different reasons, both Sumi and Kalyani want a proper celebration, something that has not been done for long. The ‘family life’ as they knew it was poised for change, as Sumi was about to take up a job at a residential school and Charu was going to embark on her medical studies. Until now, it was only Gopal who had been ‘missing’ from the family, and his return would make the family ‘whole’ again, but with Sumi and Seema moving out, that hope was lost forever. At the end, Aru can only see the glow of a promising future that shines on Sumi’s face, like the diamonds her Grandmother has just given her. All Aru remembers is a ‘fuzzy cloud of happiness,’ and the only thing she remembers with clarity was her conversation with her Grandmother. Kalyani presented her eldest granddaughter with her mother Manorama’s diamond earrings, something she could never bring herself to wear, for she felt her mother would have been proud of Aru, while she herself had been a disappointment to her. For years, confesses Kalyani, she felt she had got nothing out of life. Her mother had not loved her or her children. But when her grandchildren were born, Kalyani felt she was luckier than her mother, for Manorama had missed out on the joy that grandchildren can bring, something Kalyani had learnt to savour to the fullest. The party gets noisy, and Goda, out of habit, asks them to quieten down.

In contrast to the moments of celebration and bonhomie Kalyani gets to enjoy with her ‘family,’ however disjunct or patchy as it may be, her husband Shripati only has his solitary self for company upstairs. Having chosen to keep his interaction with the family at the minimal level, all we get to know of him is through the brief glimpses of his room we get occasionally. It is not for nothing that Pier Paolo Piucciucco has pointed out that “[s]paces inside the [house] symbolise characters, behaviours, relationships and personalities.”³⁴⁷ On what turns out to be the last time she goes up to meet her grandfather in his room, Aru can’t help notice the unusual state of disarray in the room that heightens the loneliness and the vulnerability of an old man. Shripati chose to be a husband whose door never opened for his wife, preferring to communicate only through the ring of a bell. He was a father who had great hopes in his elder daughter Sumi, trying to mould her to follow his dreams. To Premi, he was the father who stayed in his room, never came out and never spoke. It was to avoid

³⁴⁶ Piucciucco, Pier Paolo. “Houses and Homecoming.” *The Journal of Indian Writing In English*. 29 No. 2 (2001). Pp 34-43. Pp 40..

³⁴⁷ Piucciucco, Pier Paolo. “Houses and Homecoming .” *The Journal of Indian Writing In English*. 29 No. 2 (2001). Pp 34-43., p 41.

incurring his displeasure that Kalyani would clamp her hand on the daughter's mouth so they did not cry out loud. He could not be seen, but his oppressive presence could not be forgotten, especially as it came alive in his daughter's dark memories.³⁴⁸

It is only Nikhil, Premi's eight year old son, whose affections can liven up the entire family. Even Shripati is not immune to the charms of his only grandson, and doesn't find his frequent trips up to his room intrusive. In fact, it is in the boy's free run of the house, including the 'dreaded upstairs section,' that they are literally united as a family, if only in passing. The elaborate spatial and behavioural barriers Shripati has assiduously maintained crumble in the face of the child's infectious exuberance. Going back to the opening description of the house, one cannot help but recall that the same parasitical roots and branches intent on strangulating each other down below were flowering amicably at the top:

“The bougainvillea has become a monster parasite clinging passionately to its neighbour, the akash mallige, cutting deep grooves in its trunk, as if intent on strangulating it. But high above, the two flower together amicably, as if the cruelty below is an event of the past, wholly forgotten” (*MT*, 4).

The cruelty of the earlier generations is an event of the past. If a Manorama ill-treated her daughter for having returned as a deserted wife, after coercing her into marrying her own Uncle, a Kalyani can only commiserate with her own daughter suffering the same fate. In fact, she bestows all her love and affection on her granddaughters, a privilege and pleasure Manorama shuns. If Shripati, as husband and father, has only antipathy and estrangement in reserve for his family, as a grandfather he takes pleasure and pride in his grandchildren. He is concerned not only for their future, but also the wellbeing of his daughter, now fending for herself, sans husband. If he had once abandoned his family, leaving a wife and two daughters with no choice but to live as unwanted 'parasites,' a disgrace to the family, he atones for that wrong by bringing home his daughter and her girls, giving them refuge in the parental home. He has mellowed down over time, and old age effectively pares down his antagonism. Calling himself a 'stupid old man' he is quite taken aback to see signs of old age in himself, and his daughter Sumi is even more surprised he can lay bare his own vulnerability in front of her. Having finally heard out the story of her grandparents, Aru is despondent that even after

³⁴⁸ Donald Sander's discussion of the use of 'privacy mechanisms' as a form of 'boundary control' help explain Shripati's behaviour as he employs physical and psychological barriers to exercise his authority. "Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology: Methods for the Analysis of Ancient Architecture." *Domestic Architecture*. Edited by S.Kent. 1990.Pp 51.

all these years they haven't yet resolved their animosity. She tries to visualise her grandfather as a cruel man, but can only see an old and lonely man. The little arrangements in his room seem pathetic to her, recollecting the tremor in his fingers as he folds his clothes.

Spotting her father at the gate, looking unusually undecided, Sumi offers him a lift to the bank on the scooter. He accepts the offer, surprising her by addressing her by her full name Sumitra, and goes on to take the name of his other children, even of the lost son Madhav. It's a moment of epiphany, Sumi is shocked to hear the name and turns back to look at her father's face, taking in the brooding tenderness. But the moment in which the 'veil of darkness' has lifted, is also the moment that darkness descends forever, as Sumi and Shripati meet with a deadly accident.

Aru holds her own grief in balance, and is the pillar of strength to a devastated Kalyani, reassuring her, telling her she was now her daughter as well as her son. At night, Kalyani can be heard calling her husband by the name she used to call him as a child, as if she could only mourn him by going back to that childhood relationship. Interestingly, even the Big House can sense the end of an era, a long and painful past that is now relegated to history, with the passing away of Shripati: "... there is a strange sound, as if the house has exhaled its breath and shaken itself before settling down into a different rhythm of breathing" (*MT*, 236). This personification of the Big House lends credence to the argument that it has been as much a part of the family as any of its members.

The land sharks mentioned at the beginning of the narrative seem to be converging on the house now, and the house returns cavernous echoes. It feels as if it is not the dead who are ephemeral, but they, the living, who seem to have lost substance. As she sits in her mother's room, Aru can hear, just as, unknown to her, her mother once did, her grandfather's slow steps climbing the stairs. She can almost hear her mother's quick steps, her voice calling out to them, or speaking on the phone. She reads through the play her mother had written, trying hard to fathom what she had tried to convey through her writing, yet too much in grief to read between the lines. What she does realise is how wrong she was about Sumi's indifference to Gopal's desertion, feeling sorry for having said nasty things to her. She is now filled with regret for not having spoken to her earlier, having missed the chance, and now lost it forever with her death. All of them, in fact, carry their respective burdens of guilt, for having been obtuse and difficult, or insensitive. Gopal feels he has forfeited his right as a parent to comfort his daughters, having abdicated his responsibilities. Premi has been spending a long time in

her father's room, ostensibly cleaning up, but she has her own ghosts to exorcise. Beginning with great energy, the first thing she does is get rid of the bell and the wires, all that remains are the marks on the wall.³⁴⁹ She also opens up the door and windows, and the light flooding in seems to link the upstairs with the rest of the house, for the first time. Yet, she is unable to find what she has been searching for in the room, for it was in her father's mind, lost forever when his skull had cracked open.³⁵⁰ Sitting there silently, she sinks in the abyss of losing the two people she had always measured herself against: "It is here, in this room, that Premi can see so clearly the face of death, it is here that she is beginning to realise what it means: an emptiness, a monumental disruption of the universe" (*MT*, 243). Kalyani is worried for Premi who seems to be losing herself in her sorrow, wilfully entombing herself in the very room that once filled her with dread.

Aru makes good her promise of standing by her grandmother, as if to fill in for all she has ever lost. Not sure whose loss she was lamenting when she cried "I lost my child," Aru finally realises it doesn't matter. It is acceptance, and not forgiveness her grandmother seeks in life. With the rest of the family away at Devaki's house, Gopal takes the opportune moment to bid adieu to Kalyani and Aru, with a promise to return. He needs to go and immerse Sumi's ashes in the Alaknanda, with a faint hope he can banish some of his own ghosts of the past. Kalyani realises he needs to deal with his grief too, tells him to carry on, assuring him they, especially she, would always be there in the Big House. Finally, it is Kalyani's house. Her husband had willed it not to his 'wife,' but to the 'daughter' of Vithalrao and Manorama. Goda is worried Kalyani would be hurt by the legacy that derecognised her marital status, but it was quite the opposite: "...the words [had] given her something more than the house, restored something she had lost; they seem, in fact, to have strengthened her" (*MT*, 245). Unable to hold on any longer, Aru breaks finally down, and Gopal is left holding her, pierced by the very pain he had hoped to avoid when he had uncoupled himself from his family. The

³⁴⁹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton contend that household objects "are chosen and could be freely discarded if they produced too much conflict within the self." The bell and the connecting wires were nothing but tyrannical for Shripati's family, symbolising the vast gulf that lay between them. Obviously, it is the first thing Premi wants to rid the house of, to reclaim an acceptable idea of 'home.' "People and Things." *The Meaning of Things*. 1981. Pp 17.

³⁵⁰ Premi's actions as she forages in her father's room for something that existed in his mind is emblematic of Clare Cooper's proposition that the house [in this case Shripati's room, the only space he inhabited], is a symbol of the self. Drawing upon Jung's concepts of the collective unconscious, Cooper finds a link between the house and the psyche. "The House as Symbol of the Self." *Environmental Psychology: People and their Physical Settings*, edited by Harold M. Proshansky, W. H. Ittleson and L. G. Rivlin. Second edition, New York: Rinehart & Winston, Inc. 1976. Pp 435-448. Also, Robert C. Meurant draws an analogy between the 'house and the body' and the 'home and the soul.' "The Place of the Sacred in the Home." *Spirit of Home*. edited by P. Quinn and R. Benson. 2006. .Pp342.

last image he has is of the two faces, one very old and the other too young, framed in the doorway, joined in their look of concern and encouragement.

In a house that was built to last for generations of sons, the daughter abandoned by her husband feels like an interloper. The house whose “very walls” seem to cry out that the “reason for their existence was a son,” actually flourishes because of its daughters (*MT*, 71). At the end, “...the real miracle is Kalyani herself, Kalyani who has survived intact, inspite of what Shripati did to her, Kalyani who has survived Manorama’s myriad acts of cruelty” (*MT*, 151). Aru, Sumi and Gopal’s eldest daughter, had been deeply attached to her natal home, and found it very hard to give up the idea of ‘home,’ despite being forced by circumstances to let go of it. However, she soon begins to get into the rhythm of the Big House, by helping out her grandmother Kalyani, involving herself with routine household activities and so on. In contrast to her sister Charu, who disengages herself from the circumstances and focuses on her admission to Medical School, Aru blends in gradually. By the end of the narrative, she is truly ‘at home’ in the Big House, as she stands by her bereaved grandmother. Tragic as the circumstances are, it is a new beginning nevertheless, as the Big House stands witness to the daughter claim it for her own, with the promise of perpetuity embodied in the young granddaughter. After all, it was not for nothing that Aru’s resemblance with her great grandmother is so striking.

Turning to Chatterjee’s novel *Way to Go*, one is again lead to an old and dilapidated house, one that was both a ‘dream realised’ and an idea of the ‘family idealised’ in its very edifice, as the narrative points out, for the patriarch Shyamanand. Yet, the vision that took shape drawing on the blood and tears of Shyamanand and his wife Urmila, soon resembles merely a ‘corpse being ventilated,’ sheltering none of the three generations of the family it once housed. When the narrative opens, there is already an air of desolation about the place, so much so that the only family member residing there, Shyamanad’s younger son Jamun, defers entering the ‘gloom’ right away, choosing to take a walk in the neighbourhood. He has just returned from a visit to the police station, having gone there to lodge a ‘missing person’ report of his father. As one absorbs the farcical enumeration of the stock questions raised for filing a missing person’s report, it is tinged with elements of irony and mystery, for the son has also stated that his father hadn’t stepped out anywhere alone in the last two decades, since his stroke.

The details that stumble out through this ‘fact-finding’ interrogation present a rather bleak picture of “the grandest material remains of the family,” the house that Shyamanad took such pride in. (*WTG*, 200). At the police station, when asked about the visitors to the house, he can only respond in the negative, for there have been none save the vendors and a builder Monga, who has his eyes on the property. The ‘atmosphere’ of the house, Jamun reports, is “not sunny”, a complexion that could describe both, the ‘house’ and its residents. “All are moody by temperament....” They lived together “quietly and unhappily,” Jamun goes on to reveal (*WTG*, 10-11).

It is through Jamun’s eyes that we are first introduced to the house, and the description could only have come from one who has known it intimately: “The two storey house, grey, dusty... looked bottled up, as though in captivity” (*WTG*, 15). If the structure has been gloomy and dismal with the father and son living there together, it is no surprise it feels even more desolate now to Jamun, who finds it difficult to enter the empty and lonely house. The family home holds a special import to Jamun, as everything of significance in his life, happened in this house. It was also within its four walls that his mother had spent her last days, and where his father had been paralysed. Four years ago, he had come back to the house after a gap of six years, and found much had changed in and around the house. The trees that Shyamanand had planted had grown bigger, making the ground floor darker and more depressing. The older houses in the neighbourhood have been converted to multi-storeyed apartments, hemmed in by high walls and barbed wires. Depending on his mood, his father had alternatively felt secure, or incarcerated in a housing estate of which the ‘escape routes’ were being cut off gradually.

The landscape around the house has also undergone changes over time. For instance, there had been no hillock and temple thirty-five, even twenty years ago. However, he remembered his first sight of the mangrove marshes, back then, “torpid, fecund and fetid, constantly decomposing, perennially rejuvenating,” revolted by the idea of choosing to make a house and live amidst such decay. As it turns out, the words ‘torpid’ and ‘fetid’ could well have described the atmosphere of the house, even when it had the entire family in residence. Recent research on the atmosphere of the home and the filial relationships suggests that the atmosphere of home is reflective of the quality of filial relationships therein. According to Paul J.J. Pennartz, who examines the interaction between the architectural and socio-

psychological factors in the atmosphere of home observes that: “Negative orientation of people toward each other evidently has a detrimental effect on the atmosphere.”³⁵¹

We find corroboration of this in Jamun’s reminiscences. Twenty years ago, Jamun’s musings tell us, when their mother was still alive, “they had all lived together under one roof as one large, unhappy family...” (*WTG*, 29). With his elder brother Burfi living upstairs with his wife and family, the house had then felt too small and claustrophobic. Now, on his return to the ‘city of his mother’s death’ as he defined it, father and son find the house too large and moreover, haunted by

...the discomposing phantoms of memory- such as the imagined sounds of Urmila, Jamun’s mother clearing her throat in another room, and of the infant Doom bawling and bleating against his elder brother to an unheeding Joyce (*WTG*, 29).

To fill up the house, Jamun manages to find a tenant for the front portion of the upstairs section, although with some difficulty. For himself he has retained the rear portion of the first floor, the section that holds all his special memories. It was here he had once cohabited with Kasturi, who had later begotten his only child. Also, these walls that had provided him some refuge, the ‘getaway’ place when he wanted to ‘escape’ his parents. His sister-in-law Joyce had meanwhile changed the colour of the walls and brought in new furniture, when she lived there. Jamun doesn’t mind, however, for it keeps his forays into the past in check. Fiercely possessive about his space, he keeps the bedroom under lock and key, allowing it to be cleaned only under his supervision. Interestingly, his mother had often felt the urge to get away from her husband. It galled her to have to climb one flight of stairs when she wanted to get away from him, and to know she would need to climb two flights of stairs if she ever felt desperate enough to end her “damned life” (*WTG*, 277). The home, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton remind us, “is a craft cultivated by all its members.”³⁵² In the event, their argument that individuals in a household may exercise preference for certain rooms, objects or activities, and thus create many symbolic ‘homes’ within one household rings true. Jamun has his favourite room, while his mother would often feel the need to ‘escape’ to the terrace. Joyce, the daughter-in-law, personalises the space by making the changes she desires.

³⁵¹ Pennartz, P.J.J. “The Experience of Atmosphere.” *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*, edited by Irene Cieraad. Second edition. New York: Syracuse University Press. 2006. Pp99.

³⁵² Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Eugene Rochberg-Halton. “The Home as Symbolic Environment.” *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. 1981. Pp 138.

After their mother's death, Shyamanand's son pays him only as much attention in an everyday sense as one would pay to the waning sun. Shyamanand had then moved to Jamun's house, a thousand kilometres away from home. However, it had been an "unsettled and dislocating" five years that he had spent with his son Jamun, the son's cook-cum-trollop Kasibai, and her son Vaman. Unable to tolerate the equation between his son and the servants, his irritability ensures that the servant walks out on Jamun. Initially, the old man missed his house and his wife, and was appalled by the 'neighbour's ninety-five year old father-in-law's informality, but soon began to come out of his depression and take interest in his life. Having grown rather fond of the old man, his death had deeply affected both father and son. In fact, father and son bonded quite well over the topic of death, debating whether it was better to commit suicide, or wait for death to come. Shaymanad, however, starts to sink into depression after the nonagenarian's death, and begins to drop hints of wanting to go back to the house that he had built.

Yet, there is no place for him in the house. The years that the elder sibling Burfi had spent in his father's house, sharing it with his wife and children, had also not particularly been pleasant or peaceful. Just as his parent's marriage was marked by the bitterness, Burfi's family life was nothing but acrimonious. His sons, for instance, never failed to welcome their mother every evening when she got home from work. However, his return from work was barely acknowledged, as they got on with their other activities behind closed doors. Their behaviour, perhaps, is but a reflection of his own callousness, as he lived like an alien in his own house. In any case, Joyce hated the house, and the children shared her aversion to it as well. Burfi's dislike for the house was partially due to a show of solidarity with them. Five years after their mother's death, when the father expressed his desire to return to the family home, Burfi was not too forthcoming in his welcome. He had turned the downstairs bedroom that had belonged to his father, into his own private den, setting up his gym and music there.

Six years later, Jamun was asked by his brother to come and physically take over his filial responsibility, one that a reclusive Jamun felt he had fulfilled in spirit all this while by not dying on his father. Burfi has been transferred to Noida, and his wife having decided to move far away from her abusive husband, Jamun is needed to come back home to look after his father. Apparently, Burfi, stressed out by his discordant family life, and overwhelmed by a cantankerous and invalid father, had sought relief from his frustrations by battering his wife. Burfi's wife Joyce had complained to the police, and though Burfi had tried to bribe them, they demanded a lakh when they saw the size of the house. On his return, Jamun was deeply

shocked to learn about his brother, unable to comprehend or visualise such savagery. Jamun could never recover from the knowledge of his brother's barbarity, that someone he shared his genes with, could harbour so much violence within himself. On the other hand, he could not even visualise the beautiful and poised Joyce being buffeted by her husband. Jamun feels he is a saint in comparison to Burfi, or perhaps too cold blooded like his father to be a saint: "dead even when alive... the brute of the family was its creation, its fault made flesh... if only they had been warmer in their relationships" (*WTG*, 221). He finds it disgraceful that the brother's marital discord is an 'open dark secret' known to the entire neighbourhood. He looks upon Burfi as the 'family's shame,' imagining that the marital conflict was but a warped mirror image of their father's cold disdain for their mother. Had he been living in the house, Jamun imagines, he was sure he could not have turned a deaf ear to the sounds of their quarrel upstairs, what with all the 'bickering' and the 'bashing'. His father, he believed, was too old and too edgy to take a stand, and in fact, must have been

...apprehensive of his place in his own home,... jolted by there being within the four walls of his house a savagery and sorrow more immediately demanding of his attention than the coldness of the death that waited at his very doorstep; defeated, he had sensed that it was time to go (*WTG*, 223).

Back in the family home, Jamun would occasionally escort his father on his evening walks, contrite that he didn't accompany him often enough. Even the neighbourhood slum now looked good in the twilight, as the lights began to sparkle. In a chapter entitled "The Home as Symbolic Environment," Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton contend that for men, "the house... becomes a concrete embodiment of all the psychic energy they have invested in it," It represents, they go on to add, "the accomplishments of the owner's self."³⁵³ His father's sense of contentment was impossible to miss, Jamun observed, attributing it to being where he belonged, "in the house that he had built, on his own crumb of earth" (*WTG*, 27). Moreover, he was living, not alone and abandoned, like most of his contemporaries, but "with a son of his blood" (*WTG*, 27). Shyamanand's sense of satisfaction finds corroboration in an empirical study entitled "Home, Home Ownership and the Search for Ontological Security" by Ann Dupuis and David C. Thorns. They draw upon P. Saunderson's reading of Giddens' concept of ontological security and postulate that the home is the "...key

³⁵³Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Eugene Rochberg-Halton. "The Home as Symbolic Environment" *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*. 1981. Pp 130.

locale in modern society where ontological security can be sought.”³⁵⁴ Shyamanad’s ground-floor bedroom overlooks the front gate and the lawn, and Shyamanand had used that vantage position to watch over the entrance for decades, secure in his location. The cordon of trees that he had planted didn’t let much light in, rendering the ground floor ‘cheerless’ in the summer and ‘funereal’ in the winter, “accounting in part for the inhabitant’s disposition” (*WTG*, 46-47). In a household of three, there was much that Shyamanand liked to keep secret from the other two, if only to keep a flagging interest in life going.

Thus, the legacy that his brother leaves behind for Jamun are a house, a father, and a builder who seemed to be bent upon co-opting both. Lobhesh Rajkumar Monga, the builder, has successfully made inroads into Shyamanad’s defences, to add to Jamun’s discontent. Masking his criminal intentions, Monga has ingratiated himself into Shyamanad’s good books, quite deviously but certainly. By temperament, both father and son were the kinds who avoided visitors, and it was very rare that they invited someone over. Yet, surprisingly, Shyamanad takes to the builder and his girlfriend Naina Kapoor. Jamun, in fact, was nonplussed to find his father refer to Monga, nothing if not a criminal, as his ‘third son’. Perhaps Shyamanand came to look upon him as a son because his own sons kept shunting their filial responsibility to the other, or perhaps, ironically, Monga professes more interest in the house than his own sons ever have. Jamun would frequently come upon the three of them, Monga in his trademark black, huddling together over the ‘House-Building’ files. On days he was in a dark mood, Jamun would acerbically ask his father if he was signing the house away. Shyamanand, however, would only be discussing the addition of a third floor and servant’s quarters to the house.

Dr. Mukherjee, the solitary tenant at Shyamanand’s house is also an alienated figure, who keeps, apart from a collection of old, unused things like a human skull with the cranium sawed off. An on-the-run chemist practicing as a ‘doctor,’ he keeps himself amused by indulging in voyeuristic pleasures. As leisure activity, he peeps into Naina Kapoor’s bathroom, or proposes to Jamun they should peer at prostitutes ‘at work’ through a hole in the ceiling of the slum next door, while imbibing hooch for intoxication. Yet, the vicarious indulgences only leave him increasingly depressed, until he reaches a point where he has nothing to look forward to and commits suicide. Completely unexpected, the suicide leaves both Shyamanand and Jamun deeply disturbed. They had to face a great deal of trouble before

³⁵⁴ Dupuis, Ann and David Thorns. “Home, Home Ownership and the Search for Ontological Security.” *Sociological Review* 46. Issue 1. (1998). Pp28.

they could find another tenant. That Jamun can be so deeply affected by the death of a tenant alerts us to the dismal state of his personal life that adds nothing to his sense of self-worth or belonging. In a chapter ironically entitled “For Not Having Loved One’s Dead Father Enough,” Jamun tries to bond with his biological daughter to make up for having neglected the ostensibly missing father. The irony, however, is that his efforts will be of no avail, for neither is with him any longer. His father is dead, and his daughter has a step-father, so he cannot bond with either in any substantial way.

In a review for *Mid Day* entitled “The Unbearable Bengaliness of Being,” Daipayan Halder observes that “Jamun’s unremarkable life changes after his father goes missing, refusing to meet death in the expected way, calm and accepting and lying down.”³⁵⁵ It is the trope of ‘disappearance’ rather than the finality of death that allows the relationships to unravel in slow motion, and for the skeletons to tumble out. The disappearance/ death of the patriarch is only one of the many ‘endings’ in the novel, as it presents death in various hues, not only of the living, of the various relationships, but also of the very structure that once housed them.

It is in the backdrop of houses being usurped, demolished, or threatened that the narrative presents its anti-hero protagonists. With Jamun’s father gone, the threat that the developer Monga poses is very real and practically at their door-step, in the shape of the ominous bangs and thuds of the house being demolished next door. Its resident Naina Kapoor, the builder’s ‘girlfriend-passed-off-as-a-cousin’, seeks refuge in Jamun’s bedroom, to get away from the alarming sounds of her house being destroyed. Monga’s arrival makes Jamun very uneasy, making him feel as if both he and the house have first been ‘emptied’, and then ‘invaded’ (*WTG*, 54-55).³⁵⁶ The sound of the hammer bringing down the house next door, to Jamun, presages the annihilation of his own abode, reverberating like drumbeats that jabbed through his heart.³⁵⁷ Even though only the muffled sounds reached him, they sounded all the

³⁵⁵ Halder, Daipayan. “The Unbearable Bengaliness of Being.” Rev. of *Way to Go*, by Upamanyu Chatterjee. *Mid Day*. 5th March 2010. Web. 22nd Jan 2012. Mid-Day Infomedia, Jagran Prakashan Ltd. URL: <http://www.mid-day.com/lifestyle/2010/mar/050310-Bengaliness-Upamanyu-Chatterjee-Kolkata.html> Accessed 17th January 2016.

³⁵⁶ Jamun’s close identification with the house is reflected in the way he has a feeling of being invaded as the threat that Monga poses begins to get more real. Kimberly Dovey contends that the concept of home as identity is “primarily affective and emotional.” It suggests a certain “bonding of person and place.” “Home and Homelessness.” *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985. Pp 40.

³⁵⁷ Kimberly Dovey has pointed out that the house is commonly experienced as a symbolic body. Further, he contends just as the ‘body boundary’ defines the distinction between self and the other, the house or ‘metaphoric

more ominous, as if the very core of the house was being destroyed. Observing the family home from a distance, Jamun wondered what the builder Monga can see in it. Its 'fading' and 'self-effacing tint' perhaps reassured Monga that the house, like its neighbour, would get 'pulverised' out of existence, and public memory, in a short time. "It would remain standing only in the private spaces of Jamun's heart, whitened by regret, shored up only by the obstinacy of memory" (*WTG*, p 45).

The death presented as a 'going away,' as a 'disappearance' has a deep impact on his sons, particularly Jamun, as well as on the house. Both 'grieve' for the dead patriarch. Bereaved of his father, Jamun's recurrent death-wish again surfaces, as he fantasises about soaring high above the earth. The house to which Shyamanand had given his life-blood to erect, and where he eventually returned to spend his last days in peace and contentment, on his 'own corner of the world', cannot remain impervious to his demise. In fact, it will be eventually annihilated out of existence. Jamun calls up his brother Burfi to inform him about his 'disappearance', but as usual, Burfi is too busy to pay attention. Both the brothers had felt equally burdened each time it fell upon one to take care of their father, certain of having been 'duped' by the other brother into taking the responsibility. They would take turns to periodically toss him to the other, to relieve themselves of the filial burden. Not that Shyamanand found it easy to live with either one of his sons. And now, with his father gone, Jamun comes unhinged, and drifts through the empty rooms filled with regret, for 'not having loved one's father enough.' At office, he can't put his mind to the work, trying to mourn him by growing a beard like his father's. He takes a round of the morgue, ostensibly to look for his 'missing' father, in a vain effort to make up for not paying him enough attention earlier. His mind mulls on death and renunciation, swinging between repentance and guilt.

Jamun finds it very dreary to come back to an empty house after work, only to be haunted by the ghosts of a dismal past.³⁵⁸ Desperate to get out for some fresh air and conversation, he can ironically seek the same only in the fetid slum adjoining the house, amidst its impoverished denizens. His mind keeps going back to his father, wondering where he could have 'gone,' compulsively visualising him taking a walk on his usual path. He tries different things to distract himself, to not dwell on the emptiness that hit him when he was

body' marks the boundary between 'home' and 'away from home.' This can explain Jamun's feeling of personal violation. "Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. Pp 41.

³⁵⁸ Despite his dysfunctional family, the house doesn't feel like 'home' sans family. Many researchers have pointed out the link between home and family. G. Jones (2000), Finch and Hayes (1994), and Bowlby et al (1997).

home,³⁵⁹ even locking himself in his room to lose himself in some loud music, but to no avail. Yet he feels guilty for trying to distract himself, for he is convinced that far from trying to take his mind away, he should focus on trying to envisage where he was, and bring him back, so to speak. Denial of his father's death is nothing but Jamun's expression of grief at the loss, and in imagining that he can locate him and bring him back are but his vain attempts at making up for the earlier neglect of his parent. The death of his father also takes him back to the gut-wrenching devastation he had felt on his mother's death, as he ponders over notions of 'death', 'loss' and 'disappearance'. Reflecting on the difference in his response to the loss of both his parents, he wonders whether one had a more elemental connection with one's mother and therefore had felt far more desolate than this time around.

Jamun is sleepless for weeks on end, wondering where his father could have 'gone,' wracked by the guilt of not having paid him the attention he deserved. He wonders whether Shyamanad's 'walking out' was his way of expressing his displeasure, not sure if he was annoyed with only one of them, or merely sulking. Espying the builder Monga return from his 'pilgrimage' reminds him of the obeisance the developer paid their father, pitching himself as the 'good son' in contrast to Shyamanand's rather apathetic sons. For years, a younger Jamun had day-dreamed about the freedom of a life unhindered by the presence of his father, conveniently fantasising of packing him off to some far away land. However, now that his dream has been fulfilled, instead of the 'freedom,' he can only experience a cold emptiness. He takes to donning his father's clothes, and grows a beard like his father's, as if it was not 'Jamun' but 'Shyamanand' living in the house. Ironically, it is only after the loss of his father does he apprehend the meaning and value of that relationship.

Jamun finds it increasingly difficult to live in the family home just by himself, and is relieved to have Madhumati, their Czechoslovakian tenant, return to the house after her travels. In his typical brand of humour, the novelist juxtaposes Madhumati's anxiety over the disappearance of her pet cat to the anxiety Jamun is beset by, over his 'missing father.' Of course, searching for a stray cat is as nonsensical as imagining an invalid old man to have gone away on his own, vanished without a trace. With the loss of his father, Jamun is plagued by a sense of emptiness that keeps him awake at night. In fact, he feels that the insomnia proof that he has been deeply affected by his father's death. Of course, the many ways in

³⁵⁹ Janet Finch and Lynn Hayes define home as an "embodiment of the modern domestic ideal, a suitable place to be occupied by 'a family.'" With the demise of his father, Jamun no longer has any 'family' at home. He begins to lose his bearings. "Inheritance, Death and the Concept of the Home." *Sociology* 28 Issue.2 (1994):Pp 417-433. Pp 417-418.

which Jamun's grief on the death of his father is manifest is undermined by irony, for all the love and affection are now wasted on a deceased father. Jamun even goes to the extent of willing himself to have a stroke, if only to simulate his father's suffering. He muses about heredity and suffering, wondering if sixty years from now his daughter too would be twisted and crippled by a wasted life. He recalls his mother blaming her husband for having suffered a stroke only to 'spite' her.³⁶⁰ His father, in turn, had occasionally suggested that she was the 'cause' of his thrombosis. With the parents trying to hold each other responsible for their own suffering, and a son trying to suffer a stroke to atone for his father's affliction, Jamun ruminates on the possibility of misery being passed on to the next generation. He wonders if that is all that families can saddle each other with. It is only with reluctance that he agrees to the servant's suggestion of putting up the customary garlanded picture of the deceased progenitor, in the living room, as that gesture would proclaim the irrevocability of death.

Shyamanad's house has not just been a 'roof over his head,' but also a repository of his life, concretised in his array of possessions. If Jamun is depicted as a character who is incapable of forming meaningful relationships, Shyamanand seems to have made up for his lack of interest in meaningful familial relationships by investing all his psychic energies into hoarding sundry objects, from the significant to the banal, in his cupboards. In an empirical study of the significance of domestic objects, based on the interviews of a socio-economically stratified sample of residents across three generations of two suburbs of Chicago, Ciskszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton give valuable insight into the way we identify with our possessions and draw meaning from them. Thus, in their book entitled *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* they contend that it is in our choice of objects and possessions in the home that allows us to express our individuality, even as it is the guardian of our history: "The household objectively represents what the self is in terms of what things psychic energy has been invested in – what we consider significant to possess."³⁶¹ Also, Jean Baudrillard's formulation in *A System of Objects* is central to our understanding of the way objects mirror one's identity. Baudrillard writes how "[the object's] absolute singularity [...] arises from the fact of being possessed by me- and this allows me, in turn, to recognise myself

³⁶⁰ Judith Sixsmith argues that a house that harbours an "atmosphere of friction" cannot be described as 'home.' "The Meaning of Home: An Exploratory Study of Environmental Experience." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 6.Issue 4 (1986):Pp 281-298. Pp 291..

³⁶¹ Ciskszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Eugene Rochberg-Halton."The Transactions Between Persons and Things." *The Meaning of Things*. 1981.Pp 184-185.

in the object as an absolutely singular being [,] [...].”³⁶²Baudrillard denotes objects as the ‘finest of domestic animals,’ whose being can ever and only ‘exalt’ rather than limit the possessor. One can endlessly stare at the ‘object,’ Baudrillard goes on to argue, without fear of any retaliation, making it easy to ‘invest’ in them. Everything that cannot be invested in human relationships, Shyamanad has invested in the objects he has amassed over the years.³⁶³ It is interesting that the dead patriarch around whom the narrative revolves, comes alive through the house and the objects that he has left behind, as he seems to have been more possessive and attached to the them than to his family. Shyamanand is as ‘alive’ in his house, one could argue, as Jamun could feel his dead mother “... still hovering in the dust of her bedroom, amongst her “analgesics and antacids, as invisible as [her] memories.” (WTG, 32)

Interestingly, the two brothers have entirely opposite feelings about the house. Apart from Shyamanand, it was only Jamun, amongst the rest of the family members, who harbours any sense of attachment to the house. If the house is valuable to Jamun as the repository of his most significant memories, to his brother Burfi, it only evokes repugnance. In fact, after their father’s death, his brother Burfi finally feels free to openly declare his hatred for a house that had been their father’s ‘lifework.’ Ascribing it to bad ‘vaastu,’ Burfi contends that it is not for nothing that all its inmates have always been unhappy. Now that Shyamanand is gone, the two set about clearing their father’s cupboards, ostensibly to look for a ‘Will’ or a ‘Power of Attorney’ that would be instrumental in negotiating a deal with the builder Monga. The enormous cupboards with their concrete slabs and ‘ugly’ laminated doors that Shyamanad had commissioned had been derisively termed by the brothers as ‘lower middle-class.’ Shyamanand had, however, “...liked the idea of those large cupboards not because he had secrets to hide but because he had memories to store” (WTG, 145).³⁶⁴

In the event, Shyamanand collects and stows away just about anything and everything he could, in a systematic arrangement that his family is unable fathom the value or material worth of most of the collection. To them, it was at best an expression of his inherent miserliness. The sons find articles as diverse as a yellowed receipt of petrol bought in 1979, to a grandson’s discarded slipper strap, Jamun’s first fountain pen, now without a nib, to rusted

³⁶² Baudrillard, Jean.”The Non-Functional System, or Subjective Discourse.” *The System of Objects*.Trans. James Benedict. New Delhi: Navayana Publishing. 2008.Pp 95.

³⁶³ As a mirror, Baudrillard argues, the object is perfect, because “it sends back not real images, but desired ones....*everything that cannot be invested in human relationships is invested in objects.*”(italics mine)*The System of Objects*. 2008. Pp 96.

³⁶⁴Roderick J. Lawrence has called the house as a warehouse of personal experience. “A More Humane History of Homes.” *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985. Pp118. .

sewing needles, clippings from newspaper and magazines, etc. The array of objects collected was as eclectic as it was random, or so it seemed: “The open cupboards presented to his sons a visual encapsulation –ordered, un-dramatic, unsettling- of the dry matter of his life, of how little it conveyed the meaning of its warm pith” (*WTG*, 146). James Krasner, in a chapter on the process of ‘material self-representation’ in the homes of the elderly, entitled “Mess and Memory,” examines the role of tactility in domestic memory.³⁶⁵ He points out to two models of embodied memory, ‘memory palace’ and ‘memory mirror.’ The former is mnemonic, and comes about, Krasner points out, in the ‘habitual engagement’ with home. This is exemplified in the work of scholars who have studied the home life of the elderly, variously pointing out how the self is ‘embodied’ in the home, and of the blending of oneself with the home. The latter, however, comes through what he terms as the “symbolic power of objects.”³⁶⁶ Thus, Krasner points out, the self as present body and as past history exist simultaneously, brought together by one’s possessions in one’s home. Shyamanad lives, if only in the all the things that he had made his own, whether having created them (the house), or curated them (his collection).

According to Ciskszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, “Homes in which objects are signs of warm, symbolic ties between family members are different from homes in which such meanings are absent.”³⁶⁷ In the absence of such shared emotional valence, the family only lives in a ‘barren symbolic environment’ whereby the house they live in and the objects therein are merely things to be used or consumed. In a house practically teeming with all kinds of artefacts and possessions, the environment can only be desolate, for any positive and emotional meanings the objects may have symbolised are obviously not shared by the family. It was only to Shyamanand that the objects embodied any value and meaning. Moreover, by stowing them away in closed cupboards, he excluded the family from relating to them in any manner. The bleak environment that his singular actions created in the house are both reflexive of, and reflect, in turn, the dismal and enervating family life that emerges through the narrative. Jean Baudrillard’s delineation of the ‘accumulator’ versus the ‘collector’ again directs our attention to this inwardness that is characteristic of Shyamanand. Baudrillard distinguishes between two ways of gathering objects, ‘collection’ and ‘accumulation.’³⁶⁸ The

³⁶⁵ Krasner, James. “Mess and Memory”. *Home Bodies: Tactile Experience in Domestic Space*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2010. Pp 41-61.

³⁶⁶ ---. “Mess and Memory”. *Home Bodies*. 2010. Pp 45.

³⁶⁷ Ciskszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Eugene Rochberg-Halton. “Meaning and Survival”. *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985. .Pp 242.

³⁶⁸ Baudrillard, Jean. *The System of Objects*. 2008. .Pp 111.

distinction is crucial to our understanding of the goods hoarded in Shyamanand's cupboards. Thus, Baudrillard argues, the purpose of collection is for 'preservation,' 'trade' or 'exhibition,' efforts generally directed outwards to connect with society. The accumulator, on the other hand, has "regress[ed] to the ultimate abstraction of a delusional state..."³⁶⁹[106]. Accumulations, Krasner argues, block any messages they may hold about their owner's lives.³⁷⁰ Thus, it is not for nothing that Shyamanad's sons are flummoxed by the range of objects he has stacked tightly into his huge cupboards.

Faced with the unenviable task of sifting through large cupboards heaving with the debris of a long life, the two brothers feel daunted by the sheer variety and amount of things they need to sift through. Moreover, it is not merely tedium of the task that they find intimidating, but the feelings and emotions that are raked up in the process which prove quite unsettling. Krasner refers to this challenge one faces when cleaning attics and basements "as one of being disarmed by materialised memory."³⁷¹To begin with, both the brothers are reluctant to disturb the order, hoping that the other sibling would call off the exercise. However, more than Burfi, it is Jamun who finds it impossible to carry on, feeling tired and depressed, thinking they were committing a grave error: "But what if Baba...comes limping back...and finds his house gone? And in its place some four-storey concrete condom? And no trace of his cupboards of junk?" (*WTG*, 147). Jamun feels ill equipped to countenance the probable 'loss' of the house, or even Shyamand's vast array of possessions, were his father to come back. What Jamun had, in those 'rudderless days' ACimmediately after Shaymanand's 'departure', really wanted to do, was to seal off his room and 'contain his spirit,' to fill up the 'void of his absence'.

In about half an hour, however reluctantly, they are soon wading through the swamp of memory. They are accosted by files upon files of newspaper clippings, to old letters and the sons' primary school report cards, captivated by his sheer will to collect and store such things. In 'squirreling away' such a variety of things over the years, they are amazed at the pains he had taken "to infuse the ephemeral with essence" (*WTG*, 153). The fact that both his sons have been generally ignorant about this aspect of their father's life is but a reflection on their disaffection. Yet, it is clear that his sons do not remain dispassionate observers, when

³⁶⁹---. *The System of Objects*. 2008. Pp114.

³⁷⁰ Krasner, J. *Home Bodies: Tactile Experience in Domestic Space*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press. 2010. Pp 48.

³⁷¹ ___. *Home Bodies*. 2010. Pp41.

accosted by the array of their father's collection. It is almost as if a new and unknown facet of their deceased father has come alive to surprise them.

As they move from one shelf to another, they are amazed by the 'variety of junk' that he has collected. They felt like they were on a voyage of discovery, not sure what they will come upon next. At one point, Burfi chances upon a bed pan without a cover, and suggests it could be seen as a 'metaphor for their lives', but he is completely nonplussed when he fishes out Shyamanand's walking stick, his 'indispensable fifth limb.' A Burfi who had so far been very composed about 'clearing up' the house, far more dispassionate about the task than Jamun, is now engulfed in a welter of emotions. He can only gaze at the 'handsome' and 'pale' 'smooth-like-the-smile-of-a-beloved-shyster, bamboo walking stick,' with shock and an uncomprehending sorrow. The 'appearance' of the walking stick calls into question the premise about Shyamanad's mysterious 'disappearance'. Jamun, on his part, is struck again by his old impotence. Since his father 'disappeared' when under his care, Jamun until now believed he stood accused by the walls of the house, even the flowers outside, for having caused, by his very being, his father to 'go away'. To add to it was his 'complicity' in not having made enough effort to 'locate' him. With the discovery of his paralytic parent's walking stick, Jamun now stands accused of having "thrust deep the evidence into the recesses of the family's forgettable history." (WTG, 155)

Surfacing through the clouds of his insomnia, a 'guilty' Jamun wonders if he could/should have consigned Shaymanand's walking stick to the flames of Monga's mammoth Holi bonfire that had been lighted eight weeks ago. Yet he knows it was too precious an object of remembrance to have been reduced to ashes. His mind goes back to the bonfire that had raged majestically, consuming all that had been fed to it. Jamun had thrown into it objects ranging from the trivial to some of what was the iconic memorabilia of the family. Thus, 'Burfi's wedding album' had burnt alongside the 'powdery remains' of the clay biscuits his mother used to nibble at, with her pacemaker thrown in for good measure. Jamun had trembled when he handled the pacemaker that had been preserved for a decade and a half, sentimental enough about it to find remnants of his mother's warmth in it after all these years. Yet, he felt it was time to let it go, time for it to burn, the metal heart that had turned out to be as feeble as her own. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton observe that "...the home is not

only a material shelter but also a shelter for those things that make life meaningful.”³⁷² It is interesting that Jamun, as will Burfi later, relinquishes some of the most meaningful symbols of the family, and thus effectively letting go of the material memories of the family that they were once a part of.

In the meantime, the threat to Shyamanad’s house in the figure of Monga the builder is quite real, as the house next door has already been razed to the ground with its tenant Naina Kapoor mysteriously gone ‘missing’. To go back to the opening of the narrative, the demolition was already underway after Shyamanad had ‘vanished’, for Naina Kapoor had taken refuge in Jamun’s bedroom from the unpleasant sounds of her house being broken down. Jamun himself is filled with dread when he confronts the demolition practically eating into his territory too. Thus, the hole in the rear wall seemed to be like ‘an exploded wound,’ hitting him like a ‘sledgehammer,’ as he stepped across it; the rubble that was Naina Kapoor’s house looks like a ‘war zone.’ The reverberations of the demolition next door were rather muffled within the house, but more ‘disquieting’ because they seemed to issue from the ‘building’s innards.’ It seemed as if not some outer limb but the very core of the house was being destroyed. The reverberations suggest to him “...the slow exhausted heartbeat of the house itself as it silently bore the assaults of some grunting, foul-mouthed giant” (*WTG*, p 460). Monga in his shiny black, overseeing the demolition, with his sinister henchman Bahadur hovering around only completes the picture. It is a mark of his ingenuity that the land shark Monga masterminds a socio-religious community event that doubles up as a ‘housewarming’ cum an inauguration of his new construction scheme, even as the move surreptitiously finds favour from the local officials as well. Quite the master of ceremonies, Monga skilfully plays a gracious host to the neighbourhood at the Holi bonfire, even as he genuflects to the local dignitaries, effectively deploying his power and pelf to be able to go ahead with his nefarious plans. It is into this bonfire that remnants of the family’s possessions, from the significant to the superfluous, are consigned. The bonfire symbolises the ending of the ‘home’ Shyamanad had created, and all that he held dear, even as it marks a new beginning for Monga, the builder.³⁷³

³⁷² Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Eugene Rochberg-Halton. “The Home as Symbolic Environment.” *The Meaning of Things*. 1981. Pp 139.

³⁷³ Janet Finch and Lynn Hayes contend that the essential feature of ‘home’ is that it is the personal creation of its owner. “The act of effectively clearing a home effectively dismantles that creativity by taking apart those things which together made the house into ‘home’ for its owner. “Inheritance, Death and the Concept of the Home.” *Sociology* . 28 No. 2 (May 1994) Pp 417-433. .Pp 430

With his father 'gone,' Jamun begins to feel that the house is disintegrating, as there is no one to hold it together any longer. He begins to suffer from nightmares, hounded by a pounding that occasionally goes on in his head and at times somewhere in the house itself. Either ways, it feels the same: "...like a brute battering its foundations with a sledgehammer" (WTG, 193). Moreover, it is not merely Jamun's hallucinations about the impending disintegration of the house; the maid Budi Kadombini also notices the signs and points them out. Apparently, there are two visible cracks that are hard to miss, one a three foot long 'fissure of jagged lightening,' and the other that was less dramatic but more sinister, running between the windows of the ground and the first floor. The second crack was like a "...hairline fracture on a concrete skull" (WTG, 196). It is pertinent to note that not only does Chatterjee personify the description of the fissure in the wall and make it more poignant to the reader, Jamun reacts to it almost as if he has received a body blow: "...Jamun had felt a huge fist slowly squeeze the life out of his heart" (WTG, 196). The extent of Jamun's sense of devastation at the gradual disintegration of his patrimony is reflective of the elemental bonding he has with the house that his father built. As the passage further reveals, it is not merely a physical crack in the structure that would ordinarily allow one a peek into the other side; what the crack exposes is the rot deep within the house and, correspondingly, the family it housed. Peering into the crack, he can see "...an icy primeval darkness ... the effluvium... of the nothingness into which Shyamanad had escaped and which waited with open arms to welcome him, too..." (WTG, 196). In an exploratory study entitled "Towards an Analysis of Mental Representations of Attachment to the Home," Maria Vittoria Giuliani posits that the concern over preservation is a mark of rootedness in the relationship to home.³⁷⁴ The place becomes unique and irreplaceable, she goes on to add, if events that are salient to the individual have taken place there. Some of the most significant experiences in Jamun's life, such as his first love, his father's stroke, etc, had taken place in that house. Clearly, Jamun's elemental fear at losing the house exemplifies Giuliani's contention in reverse.

Alarmed by the signs of damage to the house due to the destruction happening next door, Jamun frantically tries to contact an elusive Monga and have him stop his labour from causing further damage to the house. The wily builder, however, deflects the blame, impressing upon Jamun it is not the pounding that has caused the damage, but the big trees that Shyamanad had planted. To add insult to injury, he offers to help him get rid of the problem literally from its roots by pouring acid into them. Monga grabs the opportunity to

³⁷⁴ Giuliani, Maria V. "Towards an Analysis of Mental Representations of Attachment to the Home." *The Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*. 8 Issue 2 (1991): Pp 133-146.

persuade an unsettled Jamun into disposing off the house instead of arranging for expensive repairs. Even as Monga builds his spiel, Jamun notices a fine ‘tracery’ of cracks forming on the floor, as insidiously as the builder is looking to ensnare Jamun in his web. Jamun tries to ward off the builder by telling him they should at least wait until his father ‘returns’ before taking any action. He tries to sternly admonish him for making his labour pound away late into the night, finding it a crude method to push him into leaving the house. Far from paying any heed to Jamun’s strictures, Monga merely asks him to look for the affidavits and other relevant papers of the house that Shyamanand had signed. Monga’s nonchalance points to the stranglehold he already has on Shyamanand’s house. This is again another parody of the earlier father-son tussle over the rights to exercise control over the house. In his father’s lifetime, Jamun had never succeeded in winning the argument with Shyamanand regarding the right to exercise control over the house. The latter would never brook any suggestions to changes made in the house except over his dead body. And now, ironically, even with his father dead, Jamun can exercise no control, his authority being as tenuous as before. Apparently, his father had, before his death, signed over the rights of the house to Monga. There remains just the matter of locating the documents which, paradoxically, may have been obliterated in the famous bonfire.

Filled with self-deprecation, unable to do the right thing by his father or the house, Jamun’s thoughts frequently turn suicidal. In any case, Jamun is perturbed when his colleague Chagla and Monga the builder begin to discuss the market value of the house, appalled by the idea of looking upon the family home as a commodity that could fetch ‘big money.’ To him, it is ‘unethical’ to even contemplate disposing off the parental home, anxious, if nothing else, by the refrain, ‘what if father comes back one day?’ With his brother’s indifference complemented by his own incompetence, Jamun was sure they would end up losing their father’s legacy. Jamun’s discomfort over the idea of selling the house comes from a subconscious resistance to reducing a ‘home’ to a ‘house’ by commodifying it.³⁷⁵

Convinced of having failed in his duty towards his patrimony, he rebukes himself for allowing cracks to appear in the house even while he was living in it. How could he let go of something his parents had given their life blood to. He castigates himself for having contemplated letting Monga take away such a ‘lovely’ house for a song, wondering how best

³⁷⁵ Kimberly Dovey argues that the ‘house’ as property is distinct from ‘home’ as ‘appropriated territory. If the former demands a commitment of money, the latter requires a commitment not of money, but of time and emotion. Jamun balks at trading one for the other. “Home and Homelessness.” *Home Environments*, edited by I. Altman and C. Werner..1985. Pp 53-54.

to preserve it. It was, after all, “the grandest material remains of the family...” (*WTG*, 201). Having spent another sleepless night prowling around the house, watching the break of dawn from the terrace fills him with a renewed sense of purpose, as he decides to conserve what is left as best as he can. “So what if the house had become a shell and the family dispersed like pollen.” (*WTG*, 201)

Faced with the prospect of dealing with complicated and threatening notices issued for property tax, a witless Jamun frantically tries to contact Monga, his late father’s ‘go-to’ man for all property-related matters. Monga had ingratiated himself into Shyamanand’s good books, and the old man had progressively entrusted him with all matters related to the house, while the former smoothly got his signatures on various cheques and documents. After the completion of each task he had been set by ‘Uncleji,’ Monga was duly thanked for the efforts, affectionately addressed as the ‘third son,’ and he “...departed with a little more of the house in his grasp” (*WTG*, 229). Jamun is surprised to discover that none of his father’s ‘meticulously kept files’ seemed to have the more recent papers. Trying to locate Monga becomes a near impossible task, as his office address turns out to be a fake too. At the end of his tether, Jamun mulls on the ease of just disappearing in a country of a billion people. One could, he imagines, choose the ‘way to go,’ as Shyamanad had gone, just as he wished to ‘go’ too. A Mukherjee had ‘jumped into oblivion,’ while a Naina Kapoor seemed to have ‘slipped into oblivion.’ Monga seems to have done the disappearing act too, until Jamun manages to locate him at the Asiatic Tennis Club. However, locating Monga doesn’t really resolve his travails, and he is at the point of collapsing, weighed down as he is by depression:

“He felt extremely low, paralysed- like his father, virtually- by the weight of woe, of purposeless mediocrity and- unable to discipline himself-wondered yet again whatever happened to the sorrow of the loved ones who disappeared one by one. Perhaps that sadness...could be bequeathed like a house and he was the proud inheritor of both Urmila’s and Shyamanand’s. As a man of inaction, [Jamun] needed someone else’s arms to carry things through for him.” (*WTG*, 245)

Overwhelmed by his sorrow and inadequacy, Jamun ‘vanishes’ from the house and the narrative, and there is yet another enactment of the scene at the Police Station where a ‘Missing Person Report’ is being filed. If the earlier two instances revolved around Jamun filing the ‘Missing Person’s Report’ at the Police Station, first for his father and subsequently for Naina Kapoor, this time it is Jamun who is to be reported missing. Interestingly, one of the stock questions that are asked from the catechistic list routinely drummed up at each reporting

is about the 'atmosphere of the house' from where the person reportedly went missing. Thus, earlier when Jamun had gone to report Shyamanad as missing, he had described it as 'not sunny,' going on to reiterate that all of them, not only himself and his father, but even the 'house' had been 'moody by temperament.' In the present instance, the two interlocutors who have gone to file the report, Burfi and his estranged wife Joyce, have a history of abuse and violence behind them, enacted in the house they had inhabited as a couple, causing the 'atmosphere' to be extremely vitiated. Now, with a past that rankled, there was no way that Joyce would even visit the house, let alone stay in it. The only reason Joyce was here at all was because she really liked her brother-in-law and was concerned about his 'disappearance'. Burfi, on the other hand, was struck by the sense of desolation the house presented soon as he entered. It was as if it had "bled its core through invisible orifices" (*WTG*, 253).

If one part of the narrative is devoted to one of the son's engagement with the house as its solitary resident following the demise of the father, the rest of the narrative brings the other son to the foreground. Unlike his brother, the latter has always been less enamoured and involved with the house or his natal family. The house seen through Barfi's eyes appears even more desolate than before. The trees lining the boundary wall, that Shyamanand had planted, turn 'droopy' and 'silent,' like 'grey sentinel ghosts guarding nothing.' The dust that coated each surface seemed to transform the entire house into a 'desert.' The vacant but reposeful rooms had once harboured Burfi's entire family, "three generations of it, of which he now had none to claim as his own" (*WTG*, 254). Recalling the words of his comatose mother's cardiologist who had anointed her as merely 'a corpse being ventilated,' Burfi finds the phrase an apt description for the significant markers of his life. Thus, it rang true for his supine and perpetually grumpy father, or his marriage or even that of his parents; "ditto the house that they had virtually destroyed themselves to build," his relationship with his sons or his younger brother, they could all be depicted as "near-corpses being ventilated" (*WTG*, p 254). Burfi had always concurred with his mother's interpretation of 'families', that they came together only in unkindness. After Urmila's death, the family had begun to disintegrate, and continued to do so subsequently. They had become 'deader' and 'more distant' with each other, but also more 'gentler,' he felt. His wife, however, as the only extant female in the house, made his blood boil.

At the police station, facing the barrage of questions makes a guilt-laden Burfi anxious lest some uncomfortable facts of the wife-bashing may tumble out during the interrogation. The tenant finds the house too large and eerie without Shyamanad or Jamun and leaves because she feels 'unwelcome' in the house in Burfi's presence. The neighbourhood soon

learns to remember how much easier it had been to deal with Shyamanand or Jamun. Burfi has the minions and servants scurrying out, forbidden to take liberties they had become used to until then. Not inclined to look upon him with kindness, the neighbours mark him as a 'wife-beater,' who had from a distance of two thousand kilometres, got rid of his entire family to become the sole master of the house.

With the family gone, and the only living member eager to rid himself of the edifice, the estate agents descend like 'vultures' on the house, only differing "in size and degree of dishonesty" (*WTG*, 270). They had their eye on the house and the adjacent plot, eerily connected through a shared history that included a suicide, a murder, and two 'disappearances.' It was only because he was relentlessly pestered throughout the day by the builders that prevented him, Burfi felt, from losing himself in the same haze his father and brother had lost themselves in, the 'dim dust' that every living creature in the house inhaled. He hated the 'dismal' and 'enervating' aura of the house that had got his father and his brother.³⁷⁶ He "attributed to its aura its mood, to the succession of its unhappy inhabitants the growth of his own miserable brutality" (*WTG*, 273). For years he had dreamt of getting rid of the house he hated so much, and make money in the bargain. Yet, he was also afraid buyers would be put off by the 'dejection' that its 'walls exuded,' and not take up the offer. However, lest he be fooled into parting with the house for a pittance, he wards off the prospective buyers with the ruse that he needs to get his brother's consent for the same. In fact, he suggests that his brother has 'disappeared' only to safeguard the house, as it can't be disposed in his absence.

In the meantime, Naina Kapoor's remains are discovered by the police in the plot behind the house, done in by none other than Monga, the devious builder. It was to camouflage the murder that the latter had arranged for the huge Holi bonfire over the very ground where she lay buried. And now Burfi is besieged in his house, cordoned off by the police and hounded by the builders and the TV cameras, scared that all that 'poking' and 'prying' would unearth his own inglorious past that could be leveraged to their advantage. He takes out his anger and frustration on the servants and the helpers, and even on the 'house'. The rooms make him recollect his family life, and he missed his sons, scared of the unsavoury reality of his solitary existence in the future. He recalled how he harboured a dislike for the

³⁷⁶ Kimberly Dovey posits that home is the place where one's identity is evoked continually through connections with the past. "Home and Homelessness". *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner..1985 Pp 42.

house, if only as a show of solidarity to his family, specially his wife, who hated the house.³⁷⁷ It was only Shaymanand and Jamun who had been attached to the house, his mother had also found it ‘cold,’ and he had always dreamt of getting rid of the house. Yet, he could not ignore the fact that “[t]he house *was* the family” (*WTG*, 277)[italics in original]. He wonders if it is at all possible to ‘cut lose’ and ‘begin afresh’: “For once the house went, home would cease to exist, the few square meters of land that they could call their own would vanish from the globe” (*WTG*, 277). As Burfi mulls over the possibility of parting with the house, the visceral analogy he draws between the self and the house is unmistakable.³⁷⁸ Thus, we are told, he knew that the moment they handed over the keys to a builder and walked out, “the guts of the house, as entwined and bloody as their own, would begin to ooze out of the door, thickly and steadily, leaving behind in the abdomen a hollowness never to be filled” (*WTG*, 277). That such a deep attachment to the house can find expression even in the son who has always professed a hatred for the abode only goes to reiterate the elemental bonding one has with one’s roots, the family home.

The time period he spends in the house, by himself, trying to set things in order now that the last residing family member is ‘gone,’ seems to be a ‘purgatorial’ time for Burfi, as he awaits the “past to decant out of him” (*WTG*, 277-278). He feels as if he has been abandoned by the entire family, given a kind of a pause in his life meant to be spent on finding himself, rather than searching for his missing brother. Unlike his father, or even his brother, he has no interest in the tokens of the past, whether they are remnants of the family’s past, those of the tenants, or even his own. Yet, he chooses to stay in his old room, sleeping on Jamun’s bed. Rather than allow the past ride rough shod over him, Burfi briefly plays with the idea of ‘letting loose’ the ‘ghosts’ and ‘corpses’ of the past on to the builder, and sail into the sunset, living his boyhood fantasy.

Of the two progeny Shyamanand has left behind, it is the one who had always harboured aversion and a sense of detachment to the house who eventually manages to ‘cut loose’, as it were, and dispose-off the family home. The other one, Jamun, was arguably too

³⁷⁷ Kimberly Dovey argues that the physical environment plays a very important but little recognised role wherby it enables us to concretize the memory through association.” In the present instance, Burfi’s stance is substantiated by Dovey’s proposition. “Home and Homelessness.” *Home Environments*. Edited by .I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985.Pp 42.

³⁷⁸ James S. Duncan’s collection of essays draws the connection between the house, its relation to the self and the social order to establish the link between house and self-identity. *Housing and Identity: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, edited by J.S. Duncan. London: Croom and Helm. 1981.Elsewhere, Dovey also reiterates the dialectic relationship between ‘home’ and ‘identity.’ “Home and Homelessness.” *Home Environments..* edited by I Altman and C. Werner. 1985.Pp 41.

attached to the house to have been able to let it 'go'. To him, it was his father's legacy, the very walls of which seemed to glare at him accusingly when he had let his father 'go.' He would not have been able to 'cut loose', as the narrative demands, a task left to his brother Burfi. However, for all his disengagement with his inheritance, even for Burfi the disposal is not accomplished without evoking a sense of pain and loss in him. One of the means of measuring one's attachment to home, as propounded by Giuliani, would be to map the response to the real or hypothetical, loss of home. The intensity, the quality, and the duration of the affect or suffering associated with the loss are a good reflection of the degree and kind of attachment.³⁷⁹ Jamun's affection for the house was never in question, even by this count. He displays all the signs of intense suffering at the impending loss of his father's home-space, so much so that he withdraws himself completely as he could not stand witness to its annihilation. Burfi's case, however, is more interesting. He is unaware of his bonding with the house that was home until the material structure is gone and there is nothing left to bond with.

Early in April, the narrative establishes, Burfi permanently got rid of, 'through the back door,' the edifice his parents exhausted all their savings and spirits for. Though he is not entirely unhappy to see it go, he feels 'dried up' like a raisin. The buyer demanded to be handed over an empty house, and Burfi takes two weeks to strip the house both of its "personalty" and "personality" (*WTG*, 318). With the help of all the minions, he clears out from the boxes, lofts and cupboards, the belongings of three generations of his family that were "stumbled on, and connected memories unlocked and wallowed in..." (*WTG*, 318). He imagined he enjoyed the 'wrenches' and 'pangs' of 'dispossession'.³⁸⁰ He sold the expensive furniture and other large items for a token amount. Every evening, one of his helpers would carry home some of the discarded material, so it could be reused, 'traded' or 'refurbished' or in some manner circulate in the 'tight' economy of the slum. In clearing out and vacating the house, to Burfi, it seems as if he was effectively getting rid of all that defined, represented, or even remained of the family:

"When the time came for him to regret his decision to sell out, to add his parents' house to the list of all the things in his life that he had lost, ... forsaken,

³⁷⁹ Giuliani, M.V. "Towards an Anlysis of Mental Representations of Attachment to the Home." *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*. 8 No.2 (Summer, 1991). Pp 133-146.. Pp 142.

³⁸⁰ Janet Finch and Lynn Hayes persuasively argue that the 'home' dies with the person only in one sense. It is the process of "clearing out the home" that "involves a further dismantling of one's relationship with the deceased, who 'lives on' in the home which they have created until that home is broken up." Thus the home, they argue, does not die with the person but "has to be disposed of through an appropriately conducted burial." *Inheritance, Death and the Concept of Home*. " *Sociology*. 28 No. 2 (May 1994). Pp 417-433...Pp 431-2.

almost as acutely as a man without a country, forsaken, ... even the *idea* of home, of sanctuary, he wondered whether then, in a ridiculous attempt to reclaim that idea, he would trudge across to Tekla's shack in the slums to see and experience again some bits and pieces of his parents' patrimony suitably downgraded and rearranged- but not beyond recognition; he could sit beside a lumpen customer...and watch his forearms ...on the washable tablecloth Joyce twenty years ago had bought for Urmila from Kuala Lumpur (*WTG*, 321).

His only consolation, Burfi felt, for having sold the house was that since he was the first one to propose it, he was the last one to abandon the house, and, having let go, he suffered the most. Clearly, for all his proclaimed indifference to his patrimony, Burfi has not been able to stay unaffected by the loss of home. His subsequent actions are couched in terms that reiterate the sense of loss. Thus, the final handing over of keys in exchange for some black money is not merely a mundane activity, but is loaded with significance. The handing over of the keys is also the closing of the door on the only substantial legacy: it signified the loss of 'control,' forever, "of the last concrete evidence of Urmila's and Shymanand's existence upon earth..." (*WTG*, 322)

Burfi buys himself a new flat from the money he received for the sale of the house and secretly moves into it as part of a bizarre plan to avenge Naina Kapoor's murder. He smears his shaved body, from top to toe, with the remains of Naina Kapoor and some unknown persons, and allows the goons to lead him to the villainous builder Monga, at the Bhavli Beach festival. However, before he can accomplish his task of 'punishing' Monga for taking the life of an innocent victim Naina Kapoor, he is himself in for a jolt as he walks around his house, or where his house once stood, to get to the beach. All he can see is an 'enormous pall of dust', and when he looks up to see the windows of the room where he and Joyce had experienced so much unhappiness, it takes him a while to grasp that there is no window or room, as there is no house that stands there any longer. He is utterly shocked and befuddled, and as the hatchet men prod him on with the tip of a knife, he walks on in a daze, feeling as if life has been literally squeezed out of him. All that remains of the house, ironically, is the boundary wall and the gate with the name plate in red emblazoned with their names and possibly their incomes. Visualising the demolition, Burfi's thoughts go to his father, the man who built the house, who would have been devastated to see it razed to the ground: "He saw each buffet of the sledgehammer as a pounding on Shyamanand's dying body, as though all of them had conspired, by pulverising the one last magnet that could have drawn him back, to

annihilate his father's chances of returning to rest at the one spot on earth that he'd call his own." (WTG, 332) In a 1963 study of the impact of forced dislocation from an urban slum entitled 'Grieving for a Lost Home,' Marc Fried contends that the loss of home is an extremely 'disruptive' experience that can evoke feelings of painful loss, depression and helplessness, response akin to mourning for a lost person.³⁸¹ Foreshadowing the fate of Shyamanand's house are a number of other houses in the neighbourhood that have been brought down to only to be replaced by multi-storeyed 'gaudy shoe-boxes,' edifices raised for greed. Eventually, the 'builder' and 'destroyer' of houses meet with a violent end at the hands of Burfi, an end suggestive of poetic justice.

In a novel revolving around endings, the narrative is peppered by death and the dead. The novel ends, not with the obliteration of the house, but with a 'topic' that 'bonds together' fathers and sons. With some of the dead/ bodies accounted for, Jamun now resurfaces in the narrative to unravel the mystery of the father he had reported 'missing' at the opening of the narrative. Jamun, like his father, loved to dwell on 'death', the 'dead' and the 'dying.' Given their poor self-esteem, both father and son are naturally filled with 'melancholy' and 'regret.' On what turned out to be his father's last day, Jamun recalls, as the father-son duo quibble over choosing the moment of death and the 'way to go,' he is startled by an unwelcome visitor at the gate. There was a scruffy worker with a new name plate his father had ordered, emblazoned with, to Jamun's shock, in large crimson lettering, not just their names, but practically highlighting their bio-data. Jamun was appalled that his father could proclaim and celebrate his sons' mediocrity:

"That his father considered his sons to be his life's achievements...to blazon in crimson the wretched qualifications and designations of his wretched sons, alongside the gate of the *house-his other triumph on earth*-for the entire world to marvel at in passing-that Shyamanand had acted so made his son feel ridiculous and humiliated..." (WTG, p 340) (italics mine).

For years, especially after their mother's death, their father had just been a mundane, unremarkable reality, like a waning sun. Jamun imagined Shyamanand was past the stage of causing them pain, but he was mistaken. Rather than wasting his sense of pride in his sons, they felt he should have been more caring of his wife. Angry with his father, he first quarrels

³⁸¹ Fried, Marc. "Grieving for a Lost Home." *The Urban Condition: People and Policy in the Metropolis*, edited by L J Duhl. New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers. 1963. Pp 151.

with him over everything, and stalks out. After a while, Jamun goes to his father's room to make up, holding a conversation across a closed toilet door. It is only late at night when he goes again to check on his father that he finds him lying on the bed, dead and icy cold. Jamun tries to imagine what his father's last thoughts must have been, as he must have tried to reach out for the bell or call for help, in vain, even as he must have been stuck by the futility of seeking help. At the foot of his father's bed, Jamun is struck by the acute sense of loneliness his father must have felt, and muses over the inherent loneliness of all human beings. The son who always traced his self-hatred to the curse of his personality his father has bequeathed on him, practically gets under the skin of his dead father, to re-live his dying moments. Imagining himself in his father's shoes, Jamun bids a farewell to the house, as he was sure his father would have liked to do. For the sake of his father, and on his behalf, in Shyamanand's clothes and with his walking stick, Jamun takes a last walk around the house. At this point, Jamun identifies completely with his father and would like to think of himself also as dead. Guarding the memory of that long night, he chooses to 'go away' in the quiet of the early morning, to the ghats of Varanasi, the land of the dead and the dying, endlessly looking for his departed father. That is the reason Jamun 'disappears' from the narrative, until the end. By presenting the patriarch's death as 'disappearance' as reported by Jamun, the narrative plays on the possibility of 'return.' And it is that 'possibility' that literally keeps the house 'alive.' It gives Jamun, Shyamanand's only progeny who has a deep bond with the house, the space and the opportunity to unravel that bonding, to turn the 'home' back into 'a house plus possession.'³⁸² The yarn about Shyamanand being 'alive but missing' is maintained until his indispensable walking aid is discovered in the recesses of his humongous cupboard. That moment really marks the beginning of the end when the family, the home and the house will exist only in memory..

In the novel, the two brothers seem to be grieving, in their own ways, not only the father, but also the family, the filial bonding, and most of all, the 'house' that brought it all together, the family home. "The words "family" and "familiar" both derive from Latin "familia," meaning the combination of kin and household possessions," points out Clare Cooper Marcus.³⁸³ In grieving for a 'lost home,' they grieve also for the loss of the 'family' and the 'familiar'. A filial relationship Jamun only lives to mourn and regret for having

³⁸²Janet Finch and Lynn Hayes."Inheritance, Death and the Concept of Home." *Sociology*. 28. No. 2. (May 1994). Pp 417-433.. Pp 433..

³⁸³ Marcus, Clare Cooper."Home-As-Haven, Home-As-Trap: Explorations in the Experience of Dwelling." *The Spirit of Home*, edited by P. Quinn and R. Benson. 2006. .Pp 17.

missed an opportunity, a parental bond with his daughter that that has no name or recognition, filled with self – loathing that is only concretised in a TV serial, reduced to seeking pleasure in the most dismal of relationships, rejected by the most dreary of lovers, Jamun is hit by an acute sense of loneliness after Shyamanad’s death, the existential loneliness of man. He ends up roaming the streets of Benaras, impossibly seeking his lost father in the land of the dead. Like his brother, Burfi also feels he has reached a dead end, for his marriage was long over, and his sons have grown out of his reach.

In their article “Place Identity: Physical World Socialisation of the Self,” Proshansky et al draw upon the importance of not just significant others, but also of objects and the places and spaces they are located in, while tracing the evolution of self-identity. Based on their reading of the work of humanist geographers such as Tuan, Relph and Buttimer, etc., the writers single out two assumptions shared by most of these geographers. To begin with, although their definition of ‘place’ varies, Proshansky et al argue, they posit that every individual is closely attached to a material location that provides a sense of rootedness and meaning to one’s life. Further, without exception, the geographers identify ‘home’ as the place of greatest personal significance in one’s life. The second assumption that is basic to their work is that this sense of ‘rootedness’ is an unselfconscious state.³⁸⁴ This sense of rootedness is evident in the character of Kalyani in Deshpande’s *A Matter of Time*, and, true to the theorist’s contention, it is unselfconscious. Far from any self-reflexivity, there is no awareness about it either, in Kalyani, although her sense of ‘belonging’ to the ‘Big House’ is unmistakable. Despite being subjected to her mother’s as well as her husband’s tyranny, the Big House has always felt like ‘home.’ It is in this house that she finds her own rhythm, and can lead a life as full as can be, surrounded by the rest of her family. She can communicate with its very walls, the reader is told, for it is a living presence for her.

Shyamanand has already gone ‘missing’ from the house at the opening of *Way to Go*. We get to know of his attachment to his house through his son Jamun. In fact, one of the possibilities that the trope of ‘disappearance’ rather than death keeps open until nearly the end of the narrative is the probable return of the patriarch to his ‘beloved corner of the earth’. In fact, whether it is an anxious Jamun worried that his father will return to find his treasured house the worse for his departure, or even a heedless Burfi who feels the pain his father would undergo at the loss of home, Shyamanand’s elemental bonding with the house is a motif that

³⁸⁴ Proshansky, H.M et al. "Place-Identity." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.3 Issue 1.(1983): Pp 57-83.. Pp 60-61.

recurs throughout the narrative. “An affront to his house was an assault on his soul,” for instance, is just one of the many ways in which his attachment is reiterated (*WTG*, 147). Jamun himself has been deeply attached to the house that his father built, for everything of significance in his life happened there, we have been told early on in the narrative. Despite having argued with his dying father over new nameplate that loudly proclaimed Shyamanand’s ‘achievements,’ Jamun agonises deeply over his inability to preserve his father’s legacy, and seemingly vanishes into oblivion, once it is certain that the house and family it once symbolised were sure to ‘go.’

Yet, it is in loss that the true meaning of ‘home’ emerges. What is exemplified at a small scale in *A Matter of Time* is dwelt upon at length in *Way to Go*. Sophie Bowlby, et al in “Doing Home: Patriarchy, Caring, And Space” contend that though non-family households also have homes, a crucial understanding of home is of a place where children are or will be reared. Thus, it would be “a place of origin,” “a place of belonging” and a “place to which to return.”³⁸⁵ One of the most poignant moments in Deshpande’s novel is when Sumi and her children briskly go about emptying/ vacating what had been, until then, their family home. To Devaki, Sumi’s cousin, for instance, the silence in which they work is ‘chilling,’ as baby clothes and an old wick stove are summarily discarded as of a piece. After spending days hopeful of her father Gopal’s return, Aru, the oldest daughter, overwhelmed by the eventual loss of home, practically collapses. Shyamanand’s sons in Chatterjee’s novel are rather dismissive of the remnants of their childhood that their father seems to have lovingly preserved for posterity. Yet, Burfi, if not Jamun, fails to appreciate and value that repository of their childhood, their family home, until it is gone.³⁸⁶ Having always professed a hatred for his father’s home, Burfi was eager to ‘cut loose’ and ‘start afresh’. Yet, with the loss of home comes the realisation “once the house went, home would cease to exist...” (*WTG*, 277). Interestingly, Proshansky et al, in the afore-mentioned article on ‘Place Identity,’ find fault with the phenomenological approach to ‘place identity’ as it is difficult to communicate its full meaning for it emerges only in loss. That is, it is only when that phenomenological sense of belonging is under threat does one become aware of it.³⁸⁷ However, it proves a valuable tool to read Chatterjee’s novel, especially the character of Burfi, the son who had no love lost

³⁸⁵ Bowlby, S. et al. “Doing Home: Patriarchy, Caring, And Space.” *Women’s Study International Forum*. 20. Issue 3 (1997): Pp 343-350. Pp 344.

³⁸⁶ Patricia L. Price posits that memories of the house lived in childhood help stabilise the sense of self in adulthood. “Place.” *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*. Edited by Nuala C. Johnson., R.H. Schein, and J. Winders. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell . 2013. pp 118-129. Pp 126.

³⁸⁷ Proshansky, et al, “Place Identity.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3 Issue 1 (1983). , Pp 57-83. Pp 61.

for the father, or the house that he had left behind. He begins to fathom the value of home, especially as a symbol of the family, only after it is gone. Eventually, he can only lament its loss.

Both the novels have narratives revolving around old houses, 'home' to families that are marked by dissonance, if not outright dysfunctionality. Some signs of dilapidation may be visible in the respective edifices, but what gives them resonance is the engagement of the respective protagonists over a long period of time that lends each house a character of its own. Home, as Kimberly Dovey points out, "is an emotionally based and meaningful relationship between dwellers and their dwelling places."³⁸⁸ For both Kalyani and Shyamanand, the respective protagonists of the two narratives in question, the house they dwell in or have dwelt in are more than mere shelters. It is as much a part of them as they have been a part of it. It is in their experience and their relationship with their dwelling place that the meaning of home emerges. Susan Saegert contends that 'dwelling' in its fullest sense is what distinguishes a 'house' from 'home', pointing to a "spiritual and symbolic connection between the self and the physical world."³⁸⁹ Both the protagonists, as we have seen, exemplify Saegert's notion of 'home.' For Kalyani, it is a new beginning, even though it comes to her at the fag end of her life. The legacy of her father that she had inherited in spirit, is now hers in deed as well, and in the same stroke, disburdened of an alien master history had yoked her and the house with. There is also continuity ascertained in the granddaughter by her side, whose lineage has been reiterated not only through the filial connection, but also in the manner she has made it her 'home.'

Shyamanand's house, presented only after his death, remains his creation through and through. Having given his lifeblood to give it form and substance, he has literally stood like a shield over it all his life. After his death, the son is deeply concerned about preserving his father's legacy, not so much for his own advantage, but because that is all that is left of his father.³⁹⁰ It is only as the house begins to disintegrate, that the sons, especially the one who

³⁸⁸ Dovey, K. "Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985...Pp34.

³⁸⁹ Saegert, Susan. "The Role of Housing in the Experience of Dwelling." *Home Environments*. edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985. .Pp287.

³⁹⁰ Janet Finch and Lynn Hayes argue that the 'home' cannot live on after the death of its creator. In fact, they contend that, "the death of the home is a process which begins with the death of the occupant and ends when it is finally cleared of the contents which together made it into that person's home, and which symbolise its owner." "Inheritance, Death and the Concept of Home." *Sociology*. 28 No. 2 (May 1994). Pp 417-433. Pp 431.

had always turned his back on home and family, begins to realise the true value and meaning of home. Ironically, it is an end to the idea of home.

In *A Matter of Time*, three generations of women are practically rendered 'homeless' due to social and familial circumstances. The history of the Big House embodies the history of a home that could never be 'home' in the true sense of the word, to its respective protagonists. Manorama, the embittered matriarch, could never find peace and happiness in the house because she had no son to bequeath her legacy to, and her only daughter fails to live up to her expectations. If a Kalyani has been denied the right to her marital home, her mother Manorama never lets her forget she doesn't 'belong' to her natal home either. By decreeing her brother, also Kalyani's estranged husband, take over as head of the Big House after her demise, Manorama ensures Kalyani can never experience a sense of peace and quiet in the house that should have been hers, by right. Growing up under the shadow of a silent but oppressive father, Kalyani's daughters can never experience a joyful childhood in a house where their lasting childhood memory is of a mother clamping their mouth shut. A Premi may be a successful doctor in Mumbai, but homecoming reduces her to the quivering and fearful teenager she used to be as a youngster. Forced by circumstances to seek refuge in her parental home, Sumi as a 'deserted wife' is constantly plagued by doubts over her right to be there, never quite 'at home' despite her father's reassurance. It is her sense of alienation that even propels her to briefly toy with the idea of looking another place to live in, with her daughters. In fact, when the estate agent points out that she would one day inherit the Big House, she is plagued by the fear of losing out because she is a daughter, not a son. Before the close of the narrative and her accidental death, she decides to set up her own home independently at a residential school she has taken up a job in. Sumi's three daughters are also deeply affected by the loss of 'home' and 'family' that their father's desertion brings upon them. While Seema, the youngest, seems to have shed her childhood overnight; Charu, the second daughter channelizes her pain by immersing herself completely in her preparations for Medical School. It is Aru, the eldest finds it extremely difficult to accept the loss. For a long time, not only is she unable to accept the Big House as 'home', she keeps trying in her own way to bring the family back together so they could go back 'home.' Eventually, however, she begins to relate to her grandmother, grows more accepting of her situation, feeling at home in the Big House. This evolution is reflected in the final moments of the narrative, as she stands steadfast by her grandmother, united in grief, rooted to the house that finally belongs to Kalyani. Strangely, the latter has always looked upon the Big House as 'home,' despite the hostility she

experienced in the house almost throughout the time she lived there. In fact, the strength of her bonding with the house seems to be too elemental to be affected by such circumstances. However, to all intents and purposes, at no stage of its history could one describe the Big House as a 'happy home', except perhaps the end when the source of all strife and conflict is literally dead and gone. But that is in the narrative future.

Upamanyu Chatterjee's novel opens on a desolate house and a solitary protagonist who has just lodged a 'missing person's report' for his old father. He finds it very difficult inhabit the house sans his father. Yet, until recently, the two brothers had taken turns to fob their responsibility of taking care of a near invalid father by moving out of the house when they could. Home to a dysfunctional family, the house that Shyamanad gave his lifeblood to has been mired in the gloom of estranged relationships. Thus, we are told, twenty years ago when Shyamanand's wife was still alive, they had all lived together as 'one large unhappy family.' His long suffering wife often curbed the desire to jump from the roof of the house she disliked. Their unhappy marriage almost sets the tone for the less than fulfilling relationships in their son's lives. The elder son Burfi has an aversion to the house because his wife and children hate it. Yet, despite this show of 'solidarity,' his wife and children walk out on him because he turns out to be a violent and abusive husband. In the face of the elder son's brutality, Jamun imagines their old father must have been apprehensive of his position in his own house, unable to ignore the 'quarrels' and the 'thumps'. The only meaningful relationship his brother Jamun had been involved in also ends in failure, leaving him seek solace from servants and trollops. Even though Jamun is deeply attached to the house if only because the most important events of his life had happened there, but he has now nothing but memories to live with. It was in this house that his mother had died, and he was so traumatised by the loss that he chose to move to another city far away. It was in the rooms of this house that he had experienced intimacy with his lover, but she walked out on him despite being the mother of his only child. He seeks solace from trollops, but there can't be any meaningful relationships. When he returns to look after his old and cantankerous father, in a house described as alternately 'cheerless' and 'funereal,' they are haunted by the 'discomposing phantoms of memory.' Jamun may have taken on the love for the house from his father, but it seems to be no 'happy' and 'loving home' for anyone. In fact, it is interesting that the only time the family stayed in the house together is in the narrative past. In the narrative present, the old parents are dead, the only married son's family is estranged from him and lives far away. Even the two siblings, the only surviving descendants of the patriarch, never stay there together at

home, in the narrative present. The only other inhabitants are two successive tenants, one of whom has a dubious professional and social standing, ends up committing suicide. The other tenant is an inveterate traveller, traversing the length and breadth of India in search of 'Nirvana'. Shyamanad built the house for his family, but was more concerned about jealously guarding the material traces of the family rather than nurturing filial bonds. To his wife, the house was just the trap matrimony had bound her to. Growing up in its vitiated atmosphere, the sons seem to be incapable of forging meaningful or successful relationships in their adult life. To Joyce, the lone daughter-in-law of the family, the house where she faced such violence and abuse could hardly be 'home.'

It is when the house begins to come apart that the notion of 'home' that literally lay buried in the recesses of its nooks and corners begins to surface. Revelation of the traces of a long lost childhood painstakingly preserved by their paternal progenitor awakens bonds with the home that had, until now, just been the 'house' their father built. It is only in its loss, when the house itself has been annihilated by the wily builder, that the notion and value of 'home' dawns on the progeny. If Chatterjee's narrative closes with the end of the idea of 'home,' Deshpande's narrative ends with a new beginning for the idea of 'home' Kalyani can now realise, free at last from the tyrannies of home she had to contend with, all her life.

CHAPTER 4

HOME AS PRISON: THREAT AND CONFLICT

“Violence against women in the home is a unique phenomenon in the world of violence. Only in a prison or similar total institution would an individual be likely to encounter such persistent abuse, violence and terror.”³⁹¹

“The rooms in his house exuded coldness. I felt like an intruder as I had nothing to do with the running of the household. It did not feel like home, let alone my home.”³⁹²

“Suddenly Anita was in the doorway... For a second I panicked. All I was doing was touching her [daughter], and without Asha knowing, I couldn't be doing something wrong. Anita couldn't see... I wondered whether she remembered. How could she remember after decades of silence?”³⁹³

“I can't go anywhere. I have no other home.” (*OF*, p 122)

The two novels being dealt with in this chapter have homes that effectively function as threatening and restrictive spaces, like veritable prisons. The protagonist of Shakti Niranjhana's novel *The Web of Silk and Gold* (2001) is trapped in an out and out abusive marriage that she survives only because she manages to escape. The old protagonist of Akhil Sharma's *An Obedient Father* (2000) has a history of incest behind him, yet is brazen enough to have a go at his hapless granddaughter. Forced by widowhood to share the roof with her father, an anxious Anita can eventually think of no other way to safeguard her daughter but to incarcerate him at home. Akhil Sharma's novel complicates the notion of 'home' as 'haven.' If the family abode didn't prove to be a 'safe haven' for the old protagonist's daughter in the narrative past, as events unfold, it is no longer 'haven' for the old father either, however despicable his actions may be. Niranjhana and Sharma's respective narratives revolve around sexual violence within the home, experiences that negate the idea of 'home' as 'haven'

³⁹¹ Dobash, R. and Dobash, E. *Women, Violence and Social Change*. London: Routledge. 1992. Pp 269.

³⁹² Niranjhana, Shakti. *The Web of Silk and Gold*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. 2001., Pp. 51. Subsequent references incorporated in text with page numbers as *WSG*.

³⁹³ Sharma, Akhil. *An Obedient Father*. Second edition .New Delhi: Penguin. 2000., Pp 37-38. Subsequent references incorporated in text with page numbers as *AOF*.

or 'refuge.' To the respective protagonists, 'home' is a far cry from being a 'haven' or 'refuge' that it is projected as, not only in popular imagination, but also in scholarly discourse.³⁹⁴

Ashish Gupta, in a 2015 article "Reporting and Incidence of Violence Against Women in India" using data from the National Crime Records Bureau and National Family Health Surveys, conservatively estimates the underreporting of sexual and physical violence against women in India. According to him, the number of women who experienced sexual violence by husbands was forty times the violence faced by women from strangers.³⁹⁵ Substantial documentation and research on the widespread incidence of domestic violence establishes that domestic space is arguably a rather unsafe place for women and children in particular.³⁹⁶ Numerous scholars, including feminist scholars, have questioned the romanticised and idolised conception of 'home' as 'haven,' both in popular imagination and in academic discourse. Clare Cooper Marcus, for instance, in her explorations of the experience of home, finds that home can be both, a 'haven,' or a 'trap.'³⁹⁷ As Lynne C. Manzo points out, feminist research best exposes the myths surrounding home as the idyllic place for domestic bliss. It is the public-private division, she contends, that perpetuates the myth, as home can be the place for both joy and strife.³⁹⁸ Linda McDowell, for instance, goes into the crux of the debate in her cogently titled work *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. She begins by defining 'home' as one of the most 'loaded words' in English or any language. She goes on to demystify the notion of 'home' as the centre of 'spiritual unity,' as propounded

³⁹⁴ Ann Dupuis and David C. Thorns contend that home provides 'ontological security' in a world that may be experienced as threatening and uncontrollable. "Home, Home Ownership and the Search for Ontological Security." *Sociological Review* 46. Issue 1 (1998) Pp 24-47. Pp 25; Patricia L. Price also observes that it provides "refuge from the outside world." "Place" *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*, edited by Nuala C. Johnson, R.H. Schein, and J. Winders.. West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons. 2013. Pp 118-129. Pp 126; Sophie Bowlby, et. al, argue that the "notion of home is often a positive one of warmth, security, and a haven... from public life." "Doing Home": Patriarchy, Caring and Space." *Women's Studies International Forum* 20 No. 3 (1997) . Pp 343-350. Pp 343.

³⁹⁵ Gupta, Ashish. "Reporting and Incidence of Violence Against Women in India." riceinstitute.org. September 25, 2014. n.d. Web. Accessed on April 14th, 2016.

³⁹⁶ Nancy Duncan has established that the 'freedom' of the male head of the household can compromise the rights, safety and autonomy of women and children. "Renegotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces" *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*. Edited by Nancy Duncan. London: Routledge 1996. Pp 127-145. Pp 131.. See also Dobash, R.E. and R. Dobash. *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against Patriarchy*. Second edition. London: Open Books. 1980. Pp 7.

³⁹⁷ Marcus, Clare Cooper. "Home-As-Haven, Home-As-Trap" *The Spirit of Home*. edited by P. Quinn and R. Benson. 2006. Pp 2-21. Pp 4..

³⁹⁸ Manzo, L.C. "Beyond House and Haven: Toward a Revisioning of Emotional Relationship with Places." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 23. Issue 1 (2003) Pp 47-61. Pp 50-51.

in the writings of Heidegger, on whose work the geographer David Harvey draws upon.³⁹⁹ After delineating on the romanticised notions of theorists such as Bachelard and Bourdieu, McDowell goes on to map the origins of domesticity and its spatial separation in industrial societies. The idyllic notion of home and its association with the feminine, she argues, climaxed in the Victorian model of the ‘Angel in the house.’ Citing a critique of the ‘home as haven’ published as early as 1825 that described it as “the eternal prison house of the wife,” she goes on to explore the ideas of home as ‘haven’ as well as ‘prison.’⁴⁰⁰ Thus, she argues, the Englishman’s home, as his proverbial castle, was seen as a ‘private space’ for personal relations, even as it was a site for domestic labour as well as possible violence. It was the popular notion of home as ‘private space,’ she crucially argues, that “led to official tolerance by the state of unacceptable forms of male power over women.”⁴⁰¹ Feminist scholars variously examine the home as a site for inequitable relations across the gender, class and generation divide.

For instance, Shelley Mallet in “Understanding Home: A Critical review of the Literature,” enumerates the work of many critics who focus on the insecure and violent space ‘home’ can be in the experience of women and children.⁴⁰² Also, Gill Jones (1995) and Julia Wardhaugh (1999) argue that a significant percentage of women, children and youngsters are subjected to violence and abuse at home. Gill Jones argues that the home may not be the ‘sanctuary’ or retreat it is made out to be, as they may experience unhappiness and abuse.⁴⁰³ Instead of categorising ‘home as haven,’ Wardaugh suggests counterposing “inside space” with “outside space.” Thus, comfort and refuge may be found beyond the home, rather than within it. Also, danger and fear may lie within, rather than outside the home.⁴⁰⁴ David Sibley also critiques the trope of ‘house as haven’ not only in popular culture, but also in academic discourse that celebrates the same, overlooking the other facet of home as space of conflict. While the home can certainly provide positive symbolic qualities, he finds the view “too cosy,” arguing instead that it can also provide the context for violence and abuse: “What is

³⁹⁹ McDowell, Linda. *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1999. Pp 71.

⁴⁰⁰ ---. *Gender, Identity, and Place*. 1999. Pp 88.

⁴⁰¹ ---. *Gender, Identity, and Place*. 1999. Pp 88.

⁴⁰² Mallet, Shelley. “Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature.” *The Sociological Review*. 52. Issue 1 (2004); Pp62-89.

⁴⁰³ Jones, Gill Jones. “Experimenting With Households and Inventing “Home.” *International Social Science Journal*. 52. Issue 2 (2000): Pp 183-194.

⁴⁰⁴ Wardhaugh, J. “The Unaccommodated Woman: Home, Homelessness and Identity.” *Sociological Review*. 47. Issue 1 (1990): Pp 91-109.

missing from the 'house as haven' thesis is a recognition of the polar tensions surrounding the use of domestic space, tensions which become a part of the problem of domination within families."⁴⁰⁵ Gill Valentine exposes the irony that women perceive themselves to be at risk from strange men in public places, whereas statistically they face greater danger from familiar men within supposedly the safest of places, the home.⁴⁰⁶

In a recent book entitled *Space, Place and Violence: Violence and the Embodied Geographies of Race, Sex and Gender*, James A. Tyner seeks to demonstrate the efficacy of geographical perspectives on understanding interpersonal violence. He contends that violence is a 'social' and 'spatial' practice that regulates people through the disciplining of space. His argument is based on the thesis that not only does violence work in a particular place, but it also 'produces' place. In his study, he explores how the tropes such as capitalism, patriarchy, and heterosexuality discipline the domestic space. In the chapter on 'Home,' he begins by examining the assumption of 'home' as a safe place: "It is both tragic and ironic that for many women and children, violence is most often experienced at 'home'."⁴⁰⁷ The reality of violence at home has largely been hidden, he argues, behind the dominant representations of home as 'haven.' Tyner's revisionist reading of 'home' begins by calling into account the highly 'uncritical' and 'masculinist', commonsensical understanding of the term. Tyner reiterates that such a 'myopic' and 'overly benign' reading of home is no longer tenable, especially in the light of recent feminist interpretations. Moreover, another reason to revise such masculinist readings, he contends, is that they tend to underscore the "prevalence and justification of 'domestic' violence and contributed to a situation whereby law enforcement agencies maintained a hands off view of this violence."⁴⁰⁸ While discussing the construction of 'home,' Tyner begins by reiterating how 'home' like any other space, becomes a 'place' through lived social relations. Since places always have diverse conceptions and uses, which may generate conflict or contest, home also becomes a 'contested' and 'disciplined' space. In their book length study of women, violence and social change in Britain and the United States, Dobash and Dobash examine police and court records as well as historical documentation at length and point to the asymmetrical pattern of male violence directed at females in the home. They categorically refute the arguments put forth by the advocates of

⁴⁰⁵Sibley, David. *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*. London: Routledge. 1995.Pp94.

⁴⁰⁶Valentine, Gill: "Images of Danger: Women's Sources of Information About the Spatial Distribution of Male Violence." *Area*.24.1 (1992):Pp 22-29;

⁴⁰⁷Tyner, James A. *Space, Place and Violence: Violence and the Embodied Geographies of Race, Sex and Gender*. New York: Routledge. 2012.Pp 27.

⁴⁰⁸---. *Space, Place and Violence*. New York: Routledge.2012.Pp 27.

‘Family Violence’ who contend more men to be at the receiving end of partner violence, reiterating that it is women who are at greater risk of intimate partner violence than the other way around.⁴⁰⁹

Nancy Duncan clearly points out that the personal freedom accorded to the male head of the household tends to co-opt, if not negate, the freedoms of the other members of the household. “The private space of the home can also be a place where aggressive forms of misogynous masculinity are often exercised with impunity.”⁴¹⁰ Isolating the victim is one of the spatial strategies the abuser puts into use to keep them under control, contends Duncan. If ‘privacy’ is one of the features of the private home that has been valorised, it has also been questioned for typically being accorded unequally to the male over the female, the adult over the child - across the matrix of contested hierarchies. Nancy Duncan and Judith Squires, among others, point to this asymmetry. The notions of ‘private’ and ‘public’ do not apply in the same manner to all individuals, they argue. Despite laws meant to protect women within home, Squires tells us, “for many women... their home, despite all the talk of its privacy, may be the most dangerous place of all.”⁴¹¹ One of the reasons that the domestic violence remains hidden from public awareness, Duncan argues, is that it has generally been a ‘private’ and ‘hidden’ problem. In fact, she contends that it only explicates Edward Soja’s dictum that space hides more consequences from us than time.⁴¹² Holmes as well as Mignon, Larson and Holmes in their respective articles also point out that it is the male supremacy that patriarchy engenders, that allows violence towards women.⁴¹³

Drawing upon the literature on violence at home, this chapter, as the title suggests, explores homes that can be spaces of conflict and brutality that can turn the home into a veritable a prison. Turning to novels, the narrative entailing intimate partner violence will be analysed first, followed by the one around incest and child abuse. Shakti Niranjhana’s novel *The Web of Silk and Gold* revolves around the trials and tribulations of Aradhana, whose marriage takes her out of the safe cocoon of her childhood home and into a marital home that

⁴⁰⁹ Dobash, R. and E. Dobash. *Women, Violence and Social Change*. London: Routledge. 1992.

⁴¹⁰ Duncan, Nancy. “Renegotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces.” *Bodyspace: Destabilising Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*. London: Routledge. Pp 131.

⁴¹¹ Squires, Judith. “Private Lives, Secluded Places: Privacy as a Political Possibility.” *Environment and Planning, D Society and Space*. 12.Issue 4 (1994): Pp 387-401.

⁴¹² Duncan, Nancy. “Renegotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces.” *Bodyspace*. 1996. Pp 132.

⁴¹³ Holmes, Mary. “Gendered Relations and Everyday Life.” *Gender and Everyday Life*. London: Routledge. 2009. Pp 69. And ;Mignon, S. L., C.J. Larson and M. Holmes. “Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, and Deviancy: Theoretical Interpretations.” *Family Abuse: Consequences and Theories*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. 2002. Pp 115-116.

is marked by violence and abuse. The narrative is recounted in flashback after she has made good her 'escape' from the 'gilded prison' that was her marital home. It begins with a recollection of her happy childhood, going on to recount the many futile attempts she makes to escape through five years of an abusive marriage, and ends with the long battle she has to wage before she can gain freedom. The opening memories of her childhood and youth continue to haunt her present, even across a span of continents and the passage of decades.

The youngest of three daughters, the protagonist starts her narrative by referring to the 'sweeping shame' her parents had to live with for not having sired a son. What is apparently lamented is the lack of a male heir to inherit her father's immense fortune and carry on the family name. Thus, right at the outset, it is obvious that the narrative is located in an upper-class but orthodox, patriarchal milieu. The parental home was like a "palace, rambling and beautiful," embellished with the choicest Italian marble, Kashmiri carpets and handcrafted furniture (WSG, p 5). One of Aradhana's earliest memories is of lazing on the sandalwood swing in the porch, lost in her daydreams. The joyous perch also accords her a glimpse of the hot and dusty world outside, an absolute contrast to the luxurious and air-conditioned world that she inhabits. As the youngest daughter, she leads a pampered and secluded life. Her father's position and donations allow her special privileges at school, and after school, all her time is spent at home. Her parents were not demonstrative, and she missed listening to bedtime stories from her mother, or getting a 'good-night kiss' from her father.

Aradhana's mother was always around the house and she could trail her whenever she so desired. It was her father, however, who was hard to come by, in the house. A distant figure, he took his role as the patriarch very seriously.⁴¹⁴ One couldn't imagine, for instance, him giving a piggy-back ride to his daughters, or letting them sit on his lap. She misses a warm father-daughter relationship, the kinds her other cousins shared with their fathers.⁴¹⁵ She had never seen her parents converse with each other on a one-to-one level; her mother simply concurred with everything her father said. The only family outings were on Sundays, the day they visited the Meenakshi Temple. The mother and older sisters went bedecked in silk and gold, in keeping with their status and tradition. They rarely socialised, except with close family, mistrustful of less prosperous relatives and favour-seekers. Clearly, the

⁴¹⁴ Aradhana's father maintains strict control of his 'boundaries' to keep his personal space as sacrosanct and thus reiterate his authority..

⁴¹⁵ A.K. Srivastava reports that the father does not usually provide emotional support to the children; it is the mother who fulfils that role. *Social Class and Family Life in India*. Allahabad: Chugh Publications. 1986.Pp81.

boundary of their house strictly demarcated their home-space.⁴¹⁶ In any case, because of the family wealth, they were always wary of the evil-eye, to ward off which numerous charms were stung all over the house.

Yet, for all the riches and material abundance, Aradhana had a secluded and restricted childhood. Though the family fortunes sheltered her from the harsh realities of life, they also came in the way of her freedom to make friends and play with the children in her neighbourhood. At school, she had lots of friends to play with. At home, the only people she saw were her family, but she didn't spend much time with them. Most of her time was spent in her room playing make-believe games. She spent her evenings watching the neighbourhood children at their boisterous games, filled with longing to join them in their fun and laughter. However, she had no choice but to seek solace in the imaginary friends that she created. Moreover, she was quite aware of the preferential treatment accorded to boys and men in the family. The girls were only supposed to be groomed for marriage. The older sisters, for instance, were soon made to take classes in cooking and housekeeping, to prepare them for these roles. The upbringing and socialisation of daughters depicted here is quite in tune with Dobash and Dobash's elaboration of how the little girl is socialised. Thus, the little girl, they argue, is prepared gently but persuasively, how to become a 'good wife', being subjected to selective and discriminative training. Unlike boys, who are encouraged to explore the world, girls are restricted largely to the home, and a bit of the outer world. If the boys can practically run free, they argue, the girl's movements are always restricted and supervised.⁴¹⁷

It was her memories of the long and lazy summer vacations that Aradhana held dear and missed the most after marriage.⁴¹⁸ Summer was Aradhana's favourite season, as her parental household was the busiest during that time. The maids would get busy making preserves and pickles, drying fish for the monsoon, and frying delectable snacks. It was also the season for applying mehendi on the hands and flying kites. It was these summer fragrances of lime and mangoes and the chatter of servants that she would come to miss the most in the cold of her marital home in far away Darjeeling. The visit to her grandmother's house, along with her

⁴¹⁶ H.M. Proshansky, et al argue that strong affective ties to 'house and home' may as well include the neighbourhood and community. "Place Identity." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 3 Issue 1.(1983). Pp 57-83.. Pp 61.

⁴¹⁷ Dobash, R.Emerson Dobash and Russel Dobash. *Violence Against Wives*. London: Open Books. 1980.Pp 77.

⁴¹⁸ Patricia L. Price argues that "[t]he houses of childhood are familiar territory, one to which we return in our memories as adults as we seek to stabilize our sense of self." "Place". *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*. Edited by N.C. Johnson, et. al. .2013.Pp 126. Aradhana's mother too comes into her own each time she revisits her childhood home.

mother, was the high point of her summer vacations. She loved the large ancient brick house, with its many secret corners. Her mother and grandmother spent hours chatting together, and this was the only time she saw her mother relaxed. She would go to sleep listening to her grandmother's stories of her mother's childhood. Her mother had been very bright, but had been married off early by the maternal Uncles, to shrug off the responsibility for a fatherless child.

In a traditional household, the beginning of menarche for a woman can control her freedom and movements within the house, as it calls for subjecting her to certain restrictions.⁴¹⁹ The onset of Aradhana's puberty called for a special ceremony conducted to mark the occasion that involved elaborate rituals to be followed. She was relegated to the room that was the furthest from the Puja room, for ten days. All the furniture from that room had been moved out, and she was to sit on the floor and eat out of a separate plate. Subsequently, every month, for five days, she follows these rituals to keep away from the household in her 'unclean state.'

The age gap between Aradhana and her sisters ensures that she was generally left to her own devices. However, when her eldest sister Neela goes away after marriage, Aradhana misses her a lot. Despite their age gap, she had been very gentle and caring. Aradhana would often go into her sister's room and snuggle in her bed, revelling in her sister's smells. Her second sister Maya, on the other hand, was completely different. "[T]oo clever for a girl," according to their mother, Maya brought home many awards and trophies (WSG, 17). She would engage with her father in hot debates and discussions, disregarding her parent's rebukes. A born rebel, she refuses to be subjected to the cooking-housekeeping training, and goes to Medical School, instead. Meanwhile, the elder sister's marital bliss is tragically cut short as she loses her husband in an accident, and suffers a miscarriage. As a young widow, she is alienated in her marital home, reduced to a 'lonely recluse,' as Aradhana puts it (WSG 27). If the protagonist's eldest sister's world has been reduced to a neglected corner of the house, her second sister literally flies out of the cocoon and widens her horizons.

⁴¹⁹ Susan Kent argues that some aspect of culture is the most important variable that conditions the interface between architecture and space use. "Activity areas and architecture: an interdisciplinary view of the relationship between use of space and domestic built environments." *Activity Areas and Architecture: An Interdisciplinary View of the Relationship Between Use of Space and Domestic Built Environments*. Edited by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 2.

Maya leaves for the States to pursue a specialisation in surgery, against her parent's wishes. She transgresses all boundaries in experiencing and experimenting with the American culture, much to the shock of her orthodox Brahmin parents. Clearly, Maya's imaginaries of 'home' are contrary to all that her natal home and family stand for, as she explores new ways of being. Her father reacts by closing the doors of the house on her forever, literally and metaphorically. The outcome is that Aradhana is made to bear the brunt of her sister Maya's rebellion. Since he has completely failed in his attempts at making his second daughter conform to tradition, Krishnamoorthy Nadar immediately fixes up the marriage of his youngest daughter Aradhana. As the family gets full swing into preparing for a lavish wedding scheduled for three months later, a nervous Aradhana tries to savour the last few weeks of her life as she knew it until then, in the parental home.

"This was a period of innocence. I walked through the house looking at all the familiar things and the places that held special meaning: the little corner where I sat and read stories to my dolls, the backyard and the sweet smelling kitchen. I felt I had to imprint these things in my memory for I would never have them again" (WSG, 38).

She knows she is on the threshold of change, and things will never be the same again for her when she comes back as Divakar's wife, no longer just the youngest daughter of the house. She tries to look forward to her wedding, but she can't shake off a sense of foreboding that keeps nagging her.

Dressed in an intricately spun web of silk and gold, her first sight of the groom is not promising at all. In fact, the very title of the novel portends the trap that marriage becomes to her, symbolically encased in the bridal silk and gold. She finds no "emotion" or "warmth" in a face that looks "unattractive" with "a hint of cruelty" in it (WSG, 41). After the wedding, she is taken to the ancestral home of the in-laws, where she has to sleep in her mother-in-law's bedroom until the priest can announce an auspicious date for the consummation of the marriage. Finally, the 'first night' dawns seven days later, during which period the groom has barely exchanged more than a few words with his bride. The bridal room has been arranged quite 'romantically' according to Aradhana, with satin pillows and the silver pot of sweetened milk, replete with the aroma of flowers and incense, but Aradhana can only feel fear. Suitably bathed and attired, as she nervously awaits her husband in the bedroom, she suddenly feels very lonely and longs to be back in the security of her natal home. There, although she would largely be left to herself, it wasn't loneliness but solitude that she had experienced in the midst

of her family, secure in an inalienable sense of belonging. At her in-law's house, however, no one has bothered to make the new bride feel at home.⁴²⁰ Once her husband arrives, all her fears come true for he treats her with the utmost callousness and contempt, abusing her verbally and sexually. She is left feeling defiled, crouching in a corner on the floor afterwards. This was just the beginning of an extremely violent relationship.

Interestingly, the narrative presents a contrast between the grandeur of her marital residence in Darjeeling, the White House, and her 'experience of 'home' therein. She is awed by her first sight of the marital home in Darjeeling, an impressive 'White House' with its huge granite pillars. Nevertheless, except the servants there are no friends or family to welcome them. Clearly, as she gathers from the tour of the house conducted by the housekeeper, no expense had been spared to decorate the house. Yet, to Aradhana, all the money poured in imparts no taste to the arrangements.⁴²¹ The master bedroom, for instance, looked 'monstrously large,' dominated by a huge bed that only evoked distaste in her. On her first evening in the house, and she desperately looks forward to getting rid of the fatigue and anxiety after the long journey by soaking in the tub. Her husband, however, is infuriated to find her 'indulge' herself, and inflicts himself on her. Aradhana is abused and beaten up on her first night in her marital home. She is too shocked and horrified to cry. In a suitably titled essay "The Marriage License as a Hitting License: A Comparison of Assaults in Dating, Cohabiting and Married Couples," Jan Stets and Murray A. Straus state that "Gelles and Straus coined the term 'the marriage license as a hitting license' in the early 1970s in response to the discovery that the assault rate among married couples was many times greater than the assault rate between strangers."⁴²² They point out that the traditional norm subscribed to by patriarchal cultures, that allows men to physically discipline their wife continues to be subscribed to despite laws to the contrary. Verma and Pandey also point out how the home

⁴²⁰ Irwin Altman's concepts of 'desired' and 'achieved' levels of privacy are useful in understanding Aradhana's experience of loneliness at the in-law's place. In her natal home, her 'desired' and 'achieved' levels of privacy matched, as she was free to be by herself, or seek the company of her family as she pleased. In her in-law's house, however, she experiences greater privacy than she desires, as no one makes an effort to make her comfortable. She naturally ends up experiencing "boredom, loneliness and social isolation." "Privacy: A Conceptual Analysis." *Environment and Behaviour* 8 Issue 1 (March 1976):Pp 7-29 Pp 14..

⁴²¹ Robyn Dowling and Emma R. Power contend that "[h]omemaking is not a one-way relation where people appropriate objects, furnishings, colors and textures to achieve feelings of homeyness." "Domesticities." *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*. edited by N.C. Johnson et al. .2013.Pp 294.

⁴²² Gelles, R. J. and M. A. Strauss. "Determinants of violence in the Family: Toward a Theoretical Integration." *Contemporary Theories About the Family*. New York: Free Press. 1979. Pp 549-581. Qtd in Stets, Jan E. and Murray A. Straus. "The Marriage License as a Hitting License: A Comparison of Assaults in Dating, Cohabiting, and Married Couples." *The Journal of Family Violence* .4.Issue 2 (1989): Pp 161-180. Pp 161...

can be a very unsafe place for women.⁴²³ Aradhana, it turns out, is just another victim among countless others who are married to an abusive husband. She soon begins to feel trapped in the violent and abusive marriage.

It is but natural that a house where she is only subjected to abuse and brutality cannot feel like a 'home,' least of all, her home. The rooms exuded 'coldness,' where she only felt like an 'intruder.' 'Home' has generally been considered as a 'feminine' and 'nurturing' space created by women themselves, but Divakar's 'home' is quite the opposite.⁴²⁴ As per her husband's instructions, she was not supposed to interact with the servants, or get involved with the running of the house. James A. Tyner has traced the 'reconfigured spatiality of everyday life' that placed woman firmly at the centre of the home, with the rise of industrial capitalism in Europe. Given the "gendered ideology of *familialism*," that "centred on women's responsibility of the home," including constructs such as 'nurturance' and 'maternalism,' it is natural Aradhana feels alienated in the marital home.⁴²⁵ The kitchen, that was central to her mother's household activities, for instance, was again out of bounds to her. McHugh and Frieze echo Nancy Duncan's argument and contend that the physically abusive partner often follows the pattern of isolating his victim, both socially and spatially.⁴²⁶ She had no one to talk to, only a husband who abused her and beat her until she had learnt to give the right response. He had no qualms in subjecting her to physical as well as sexual violence, practically at whim. The first few months in Darjeeling are sheer torture to her. She wonders at the futility of the lavish wedding, if it were only to lead to a slave-like existence for her. However, the beauty of the surroundings and the bungalow practically offset the ugliness of her married life. Not only was Darjeeling a beautiful place, the house itself was surrounded by a huge, well maintained garden. She was, in her own words, imprisoned in a 'charming

⁴²³Pandey, Madhu and Jyoti Verma. "Violence in Everyday Life." *Women and Violence*, edited by Niroj Sinha. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House. 1989. Pp 54-55.

⁴²⁴Mallett, Shelley. "Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature." *The Sociological Review* 52. Issue 1 (2004). Pp 62-89. Pp 75.

⁴²⁵Tyner, James A.. *Space, Place and Violence*. 2012. Pp 20. Other scholars such as Robyn Dowling and Emma R. Power in "Domesticities" (2013) and N. Gregson and M. Lowe in "'Home' Making: On the Spatiality of Daily Social Reproduction in Contemporary Middle-Class Britain" (1995) also point to the ideology that posits 'home' as identified with certain representations of Woman as 'home-maker.' Dowling and Power. "Domesticities." *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geographies*. Edited by N.C. Johnson et al 2013. Pp 294; Gregson and Lowe. "Home-making." *Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers)* 20 No. 2 (1995) pp 224-235. Pp 226-227. Bonnie Loyd argues that "girls undergo subtle but intensive training to convince them their appropriate locale is within the home." "Women, Home and Status." *Housing and Identity*. Edited by J. S. Duncan 1981 Pp 182. Aradhana has been 'socialised' and groomed only for one role, that of a wife and home-maker.

⁴²⁶Frieze, Irene Hanson, and Maureen C. McHugh. "Intimate Partner Violence: New Directions." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*. 1087.1 (2006): Pp: 121-141. Pp 129..

prison.’ Molly Warrington’s words ring true for the protagonist: “Being married was like being in prison.”⁴²⁷

The only person she spoke with in the early days was the gardener Ramdin. He tells her about the first owner of the house, an old British lady Mrs. Simmons. He talks about the great love and care with which every tree in the garden had been planted and tended to by the two of them together.⁴²⁸ Mrs. Simmons was a very warm person and the house was full of joy and laughter, with her friends always around to add to the good cheer. Not only did Mrs. Simmons teach him good English, she also infused in him an abiding love for the garden that they created, and he had promised to nurture it to his last breath. Aradhana forms a deep bonding with this simple and straightforward person who was literally rooted to the place. The vibrant picture Ramdin paints of the house under Mrs. Simmons only serves to throw its dark present in sharp relief.

Gradually, she also begins to interact with the other servants, despite Divakar’s strictures, for he was away from home quite often. She often dreams of running away, of breaking free of the visible fetters of marriage, the finery and the jewellery, and running wild in the open fields. Though she had been brought up to expect marriage as the ultimate goal, she couldn’t fit into the conventional role of an ‘obedient’ wife. In the presence of her husband, she performs all the duties as submissively as possible, so as not to incur his wrath, though her heart is not in it. Even though she has adapted herself to her new life, she couldn’t come to terms with the harsh reality. In the initial stages when she was still rebellious about her fate, she had written to her mother about her traumatic life. However, she gets no response whatsoever from her mother. She had been desperately hoping for her mother to reassure her and tell her it was not her mistake, and is grieved by her mother’s silence. At that point, Aradhana feels betrayed by her mother. It is only in hindsight that she realises her mother’s silence was but an expression of her own lack of agency. The same system that engendered the violence against her, has denied any voice or freedom to her mother either.

However, a greater shock awaits her on her first visit to her parents’ house after marriage. She had been looking forward to the trip, having gone to attend a religious

⁴²⁷Warrington, Molly. “I Must Get Out: The Geographies of Domestic Violence.” *Transaction of the Institute of British Geographers*. 26. Issue 3 (2001); Pp 365-382. Pp 372.

⁴²⁸Mark Bhatti and Andrew Church contend that the garden can be seen as a distinct domestic space that gives meaning and value to the home. Mrs. Simmons home and garden are clearly an extension of her warm and social personality, reflected in the care she has bestowed on it. “Home, the Culture of Nature and Meanings of Gardens in Late Modernity.” *Housing Studies*. 19. Issue 1 (2004): Pp 37-51. Pp 39.

ceremony. Relieved and happy to be back in a much loved and what to her, had always been, 'a safe haven,' she soon loses herself among the guests and the aroma of a feast being prepared. As a new bride, her expensive clothes and jewellery create an impression of her being 'well settled' in a 'good marriage.' Spotting some of her school friends, she gets so engrossed reliving their childhood memories that it's a while before she realises her husband has been calling out to her. By the time she turns to him and begins to apologise, he is so angry for having been ignored that he gives her a resounding slap right there and then, amidst all the guests. For a second she expects her father to admonish Divakar, but to her utter shock, he merely resumes his conversation, even as her husband drags her roughly to the guest room. Once inside, he curses and thrashes her ruthlessly. The sounds of her family and friends enjoying the good food and conversation coming through the closed door to heighten the irony:

"I felt so miserable that I was in my father's home where I should feel protected and safe, but nobody loved me enough to speak up for me. This sense of being unwanted settled into me with a heavy silence and left me feeling very alone."(WSG, . 57)

It was with a sense of unreality that she looked out of the window to the very familiar sights in her childhood home, but it was no longer the 'home' where she had felt loved and protected.⁴²⁹ Her experience of home undergoes a tragic transformation with the change in her status. The house that had once been the centre of her joyful existence to the girl Aradhana was no longer the same 'home.' It seemed to have transformed into an alien space for the woman whose identity now as Divakar's wife was paramount. In her parent's home, she was now treated as just a guest. On the other hand, the house that was hers through marriage was tragically filled with 'blood and tears,' a far cry from what 'home' was meant to be.

The realisation that dawns on her about the chasm in her idea and experience of 'home' is deeply shocking, to say the least. Her parent's house was no longer the 'home' she had known, that gave her love and succour, her refuge from the big bad world, so to speak. Besides, this alienation of a once familiar space is all the more cruel, for until now, she had braved all the abuse in Darjeeling with the certainty that she would find a 'safe haven' at

⁴²⁹ L. C. Manzo has discussed the dynamic nature of the attachment to places that can be as fluid as 'place-identity'. With the change of her experience of 'home' at Madurai, Aradhana naturally feels alone and alienated. "Beyond House and Haven: Toward a Revisioning of Emotional Relationships with Places." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 23. Issue 1 (2003): Pp 47-61.

home. She imagined her parents would not allow such impunity in their house, least of all allow him the ‘freedom’ to batter her right under their noses. This time when she returns to Darjeeling, she goes as a prisoner condemned, knowing that her only hope for escape is foreclosed. Conditioned by dominant patriarchal mores, her parents’ concern for her wellbeing is subsumed by their refusal to come in the way of their son-in-law’s ‘rights’ over Aradhana’s personhood. The parent’s reticence is again brought to the fore with tragic results, when they come to Darjeeling on the first anniversary of her wedding. Her mother-in-law notices her long fingernails and expresses surprise that Divakar ‘permits’ her such vanity. Divakar promptly gets a nail cutter and callously chops off her nails at the dining table, leaving her bruised and bleeding, while the mother-in-law slurps the desert and her parents watch in silence. In discussing intimate partner violence, James A. Tyner cautions against looking upon patriarchy as the singular cause of violence against women, though it is the major cause. A focus on patriarchy, he argues, maybe tantamount to disregarding “the salience of other social and cultural factors and thus risks overlooking other contexts that enable violence to continue.”⁴³⁰ In the present instance, a culture that demands the son-in-law be revered as a deity does not leave any scope to be reprimanded by his in-laws over his conduct. On the other hand, the parents only see their son’s actions as a sign of his dominance and control over his wife just the way it should be, thus encouraging the perpetuation of such violence. In a review of recent Anglo-American research on violence against women, Dobash and Dobash also map the asymmetrical violence against women that is not only a result of power play across hierarchical relationships, but also contend that the tacit support and indifference of society ensures its perpetuation.⁴³¹

Thus, with no hope of escape or even protest, the freezing cold of Darjeeling is only too well reflected in her ‘cold and eerie home.’ The beauty of the town was rendered bleak by the emptiness she felt in her life. She often dreamed of running away from the ‘house of horror,’ but knew her parents wouldn’t take her back (WSG, 59). She dreams of the warmth of her home in Madurai, remembering the sounds and smells of her mother’s house, the dhobi beating clothes in his corner or the sound of her mother’s feet across the house. Needless to say, any feeling of ‘warmth’ in a house or the lack of it, are quite unrelated to the ambient atmosphere. It is not so much the furnishing or the material arrangement of a house alone that lends warmth, but the tenderness that is generated by a feeling of love and bonding within the

⁴³⁰Tyner, James A. “Home”. *Space, Place, and Violence*. 2012. Pp 40.

⁴³¹ Dobash, R.P. and R.E.Dobash. “Violence Against Women: A Review of Recent Anglo-American Research.” *Journal of Conflict and Violence Research*. Vol 3 .Issue 2 (2001): Pp 5-22.

family.⁴³² Thus, as she lies on her 'cold' marital bed, Aradhana misses the smell of the eucalyptus that the bed-linen in her maternal home used to be infused with. In fact, the 'cacophony of the crows' in Madurai is recalled as music to her ears, while even the birdsong in Darjeeling grates on them.

Aradhana's week is generally filled with the novels that she read, or the soaps on television she tries to while away the time with. It is only on Thursdays and Saturdays that there is a break in the routine. Thursday is the only day she gets to work in the kitchen, for it is the cook's day off. She enjoys spending the day cooking a meal and feeding the entire staff. Her husband entertained at home on Saturdays, though she is only expected to be well dressed and silent. Saturday mornings are reserved for the weekly trips to the market with the house keeper, trips that she enjoyed immensely for that was her only contact with the outside world. She also enjoyed strolling around the large estate, though it left her more aware of her loneliness. Her husband had obviously not married her for any companionship, but because she fitted into the façade of his life: the 'beautiful wife' that went well with the 'handcrafted furniture' and 'immaculate house.'

Two years into the marriage, she could not take the malevolence any longer and one day just decides to run away, sure her parents would give her refuge when they realised the extent of her suffering. Aradhana's mother is shocked to see her- incredulous that she could have taken such a step that was sure to bring them 'disrepute'. She is aghast to find her imperious father grovelling over the phone to Divakar, pleading with him to take her back. Extremely displeased at Aradhana's act of rebellion, her husband asks his father-in-law to negotiate with his parents the 'terms' on which they would let her return. However, she gets a month of respite, as the in-laws stipulate they have to await an auspicious time before the 'process' of taking her back can begin. Aradhana tries to live to the utmost that one month of respite she has been allowed, unfettered by the marital restraints: "It felt wonderful to sleep on a bed that Divakar could not invade..." (WSG, . 67). She had always enjoyed the monsoon at home, and now exults in sleeping to the sound of rain, waking up with the feeling of being secure in body and mind, if only temporarily. The month is over too soon, and the day her in-laws arrive, she feels just like an 'escaped convict' who will shortly be sent back to prison.

⁴³² Robyn Dowling and Emma R. Power posit 'home as both 'affective' and 'material' space'; "feeling of homeyness and familial connection," they argue, "emerge not just from the appearance and style of objects but through everyday practices that take place around these object." Aradhana's experience of 'home' in the White House lacks any such involvement with the house or its master. "Domesticities." *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*. Edited by N. C. Johnson et al. 2013.Pp 294.

Her mother-in-law's angry voice booms incongruously as the delicious smells of food waft across the house. In a stricture meant to humiliate her, she is asked to fall at the feet of her in-laws and beg for forgiveness, apart from having to visit five temples decreed by them, as penance for her sin. To her, it feels like she is now on 'death-row,' after her reprieve is over. Gwen Hunnicutt in her article "Varieties of Patriarchy and Violence Against Women: Resurrecting "Patriarchy" as a Theoretical Tool" contends that there may be a whole ideology at work in instances of domestic abuse that both promotes such violence and discourages them from escaping.⁴³³ Her parents escort her back to Darjeeling, and she dreads the fate in store for her. That evening, after everyone has left, her husband beats her all through the night. The widespread incidence of intimate partner violence cannot be ascribed to individual pathology alone, according to Maureen McHugh and Irene Hanson Frieze. There is likelihood that the violence finds structural or societal support for such behaviour.⁴³⁴ Aradhana is so shaken up that she is convinced there is no escape, except in death. She writes a farewell note to her mother, stating that she is too frightened to live in this house and has nowhere else to go. In an attempt to bring an end to her misery, she takes an overdose of sleeping pills, but, unfortunately discovers she has been unsuccessful in her attempt when she wakes up in the hospital.

Eventually, she stops looking for escape, and only growing more passive and silent as the years pass by, knowing that resistance only made things worse. She no longer enjoys music or even the bounties of nature. The only satisfaction, if any, was that her husband had not been able to touch her inner core, however much he may have battered her externally. The marriage has not been consummated even after five years, and knowing she was in a sense 'insulated' from her 'predator' keeps her going. It is the arrival of one of Divakar's business associate that marks a turning point in Aradhana's life. Mark Stratton, a Canadian professional, is an important contact whom Divakar wants to cultivate to advance his own business interests. It is to this end, he tells his wife to take special care of Mark at their Saturday evening get-together. Surprisingly, she finds him friendly and easy to talk to, and begins to look forward to meeting him again. After years of despondency, she could discern a change in her outlook towards life, a shift that could be ascribed to her new-found friendship with Mark.

⁴³³Hunnicutt, Gwen. "Varieties of Patriarchy and Violence Against Women: Resurrecting "Patriarchy" as a Theoretical Tool." *Violence Against Women*. 15.Issue 5 (2009): Pp 553-73.. Pp 562.

⁴³⁴Frieze, Irene Hanson and Maureen C. McHugh. "Intimate Partner Violence" *Annals of the New York Academy of C=Sciences* 1087. Issue 1.. 2006. Pp 121-141.Pp 124.

Aradhana harbours a strange sense of ‘pride’ that the miserable years with Divakar had not made her lose her capacity to forge a friendship. Soon, the marriage itself begins to seem unreal to her, in comparison to the warmth and love she has started to feel for Mark. This free choice to love seemed to be the first independent decision she has taken in her life, and makes her look forward to new possibilities for the future. Their burgeoning friendship is in sharp contrast to her deadening marital relationship. Interestingly, the narrative builds up the contrast in terms of the contrary ways in which she relates to her husband’s and her lover’s homes. With her husband having gone away on a business trip, Aradhana goes to meet Mark to gift him a painting she made for him. A visibly touched Mark takes her home, and her complete sense of ease with Mark is reflected in the feeling of peace that she experiences in walking into his house. When she looks around at the things in Mark’s home, they are not mere ‘objects,’ but “...a part of his life” (WSG, 93). Household objects, according to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, “constitute an ecology of signs that reflect as well as *shape* the pattern of the owner’s self. [italics in original]”⁴³⁵ As a clue to the self, they also help one relate to the owner in a more meaningful way, as is exemplified in the way Aradhana associates with everything in Mark’s house. Unlike her inability to relate with any object in her marital home, and least of all with Divakar, she feels drawn to Mark’s house. Apparently, a meaningful relationship can lend significance to everything around the person, and vice-versa. Looking upon them as things that he had gathered, she feels that by knowing them, she can get to know him better: “Everything was unique because it belonged to him. [She] *felt instantly at home, and very comfortable*” (WSG, 93) [italics mine]. She spends a memorable evening with him, ending with a supper he cooks for her. Elsewhere, Rocheberg-Halton also suggests that the artefacts and the space of home not only provide aesthetic experiences, altogether forming a ‘*gestalt*’, even as it reveals the individuality of the people who live there.[italics in original]⁴³⁶

On his return, Divakar confronts her about her visit to Mark, telling her menacingly that his servants act as his spies in his absence. Aradhana deflects his anger by telling him she had only gone over to give the painting she had done for him, reassuring him of her ‘pristine’ character as she has been ‘brought up’ well by her parents. Noticing her nervousness, he tells her he has no faith in her, but is sure of Mark who is too much of a ‘decent’ man to want a

⁴³⁵Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Eugene Rochberg-Halton. “People and Things.” *The Meaning of Things*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1981.Pp 17.

⁴³⁶Rocheberg-Halton, Eugene. “Object Relations, Role Models and the Cultivation of the Self.” *Environment and Behavior*. 16.Issue 3 (1984): Pp335-368. Pp352.

‘whore’ like her. However, just to terrorise her and keep her subdued, he beats her up and burns her foot with his cigarette so she doesn’t think of ‘running away’. James Tyner draws from Barrie Levy’s explanation of micro-regulation as the principal technique used in intimate partner violence to establish control. This technique is practiced to discipline stereotypical female roles and expectations right from their dress and behaviour to how they conduct themselves in bed.⁴³⁷ With more faith in the Canadian than his own wife, Aradhana’s probable transgression unleashes Divakar’s wrath.

Aradhana and Mark’s friendship and understanding deepen despite Divakar’s restrictions. They speak regularly over the phone, though they are unable to meet as often as they would have liked to. Meanwhile, Aradhana is shocked to discover she is pregnant with Divakar’s child, despite their incomplete relationship. She feels more entrapped just when she was beginning to see a glimmer of hope for freedom, as a child would tie her down completely. Eventually, she does give birth to baby girl, and to her relief, Divakar goes out for a long trip right after the birth. It is Mark who is there by her side, though she initially feels she has let him down by having Divakar’s baby. He reassures her that his feelings for her are still the same.

Motherhood changes her life completely. The monotony and the emptiness that had marked her life in Darjeeling so far, except the brief period of the friendship with Mark, are now relegated to memory. Her days are now spent in taking care of the baby and dreaming for her future. Divakar, in the meantime, is aware she talks to Mark regularly, but flares up one day when she takes a call from Mark in his presence. Divakar had not touched her or slept with her since she had announced her pregnancy, and Aradhana had begun to hope the physical abuse wouldn’t start again. But Divakar again vents his anger by beating her mercilessly, even as the baby keeps crying. Someone who can’t preserve the integrity of her own body can hardly ensure the wellbeing of a child entirely dependent on her, feels Aradhana. She feels more miserable and helpless than ever before, like a caged animal. Judith Squires has cogently argued for the need to be able to have control over one’s bodily integrity and control the access to it as the basic condition for free social interaction.⁴³⁸ The complete disregard Divakar exhibits for Aradhana’s personal autonomy only marks her subjugated status. She cries helplessly for having brought a daughter into such a dreadful world. Yet, it

⁴³⁷Tyner, James A. “Home”. *Space, Place, and Violence*. 2012. Pp 35-36.

⁴³⁸Squires, Judith. “Private Lives, Secluded Places”. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 12 Issue 4. 1994. Pp 387-401. Pp399.

also fills her with a resolve to find a better world for her daughter to live and grow up in, to create a different 'home' for her, far away from the cruelty and brutality that defined her present. Mark is concerned, but she doesn't want him to be saddled with a married woman and her baby.

A visit to her parents' house at Madurai for her daughter's ear-piercing ceremony allows her a respite for a week, before Divakar joins them. She buys a farewell gift for Mark, having decided to move out of his life. However, Mark is quite angry by her unilateral decision, opening Aradhana's eyes to the honesty and depth of his feelings for her, feelings that are mutual. Her life settles into a relatively peaceful routine, especially as Divakar seems convinced she was now entirely under his thumb. He does not feel the need to exercise his power as often or as brutally. Aradhana immerses herself completely in motherhood, making all efforts possible to give her daughter a happy childhood.

However one fine day Divakar comes home inexplicably furious and silently strips her bare and keeps staring at her. As she cowers in shock and tries to shield herself by covering up with her long hair, he takes a pair of scissors and ruthlessly chops off her hair in clumps, leaving her bleeding and in shock. It is with a sense of triumph he tells her he is going away on a trip, leaving her looking ugly like a 'hag' that was sure to put off her 'lily-livered lover' Mark, and keep him away. Mark is understandably horrified to see her disfigured, but doesn't take long to recover and hold her close and reassure her she is still beautiful. Feeling as he does for her, he declares to Aradhana he cannot let her continue to suffer at the hands of Divakar, asking her to come away with him to Canada. On her part, finally experiencing what it felt like to be truly loved and wanted, Aradhana can only detest Divakar for having filled her life with so much violence and repugnance. Aradhana's friend and confidante Gayatri also encourages her to break free from Divakar and walk out of the marriage.

In her article "The Unaccommodated Woman: Home, Homelessness and Identity," Julia Wardhaugh examines the popular binaries of rest and journey, private retreat and public world, the familiar and secure versus the strange and insecure that the meaning of home evokes. Her focus is to examine the meaning of home for the members who may feel 'homeless at home' as their experience of trauma and distress at home belies these binaries:

An understanding of home as a 'haven in a heartless world' relies on a rigid separation of inside and outside, with safety and security to be found

inside, and fear and danger remaining outside. Such a definition of home can be said to contribute to the creation of homelessness, in that those who are abused and violated within the family are likely to feel 'homeless at home', and many subsequently become homeless in an objective sense, in that they escape- or are ejected from- their violent homes.⁴³⁹

Battered and traumatised beyond imagination, Aradhana is clearly in the classic situation of being 'homeless at home' as Wardaugh defines it. She can no longer continue to live in Divakar's house as his wife, and decides to escape once and for all. Having failed in her earlier attempts at escape, she finally finds an ally in Mark who is a pillar of strength and helps her take the first step to freedom from her abusive husband. However, as Wardaugh further points out, any such victims who choose to break free from the parameters of sexuality, class and gender that one is to conform to and be accepted as members of a conventional household, soon find that they are literally and symbolically excluded from the idea of home.

There are, of course, practical issues to be dealt with, before Aradhana can breathe free. Her daughter Tanya's passport, for instance, cannot be made without Divakar's signature, and Aradhana can file for divorce only after a year of separation. Meanwhile, she needs to stay in a safe place, far away from the clutches of Divakar. Accompanied by Mark, Aradhana and Tanya travel under assumed names to Chennai, a city where she could seek the support of Ramola, a family friend and an able lawyer. Now effectively 'homeless,' Aradhana faces even greater challenges in trying to set up a home by herself, a predicament Wardaugh has elaborated on quite pertinently. Wardaugh's explorations of the plight of the victim who has either been thrown out, or chosen to step out of the abusive home poignantly explicates Aradhana's subsequent experience as well. In the event, Wardaugh portentously argues, when the survivor, who has either been thrown out, or chosen to step out of the abusive home, finds that she is literally and symbolically excluded from the idea of 'home' as she no longer falls within the predictable parameters of sexuality, class and gender norms that allows one to fit into the idea of a socially acceptable 'family,' and 'home'.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹Wardaugh, Julia. "The Unaccommodated Woman: Home, Homelessness and Identity." *The Sociological Review*. 47.Issue 1 (1999): Pp 91-109.. Pp 96-97.

⁴⁴⁰Julia Wardaugh argues that "those who are not able, or choose not to, conform to the gender, class and sexuality deals inherent in establishing a conventional household, find themselves symbolically (and often

Aradhana's experience of house-hunting in Chennai turns out to be a bitter experience, as she faces the kind of social ostracism Wardaugh has warned about. Accompanied by Mark, the two go about looking for a suitable apartment to take on rent, but soon run into a dead end as the orthodox landlords are unwilling to lease to a woman of 'uncertain status.' To all appearances, she is a married woman with a child, accompanied not by her husband but a foreigner, and certainly does not seem to fit into the idea of a conventional 'family.' On the contrary, she evokes much moral opprobrium, for instance, being told it's a 'respectable *building*' [italics mine] where they follow 'certain principles,' that they certainly do not lease homes to a woman who is not a widow, yet travels unaccompanied by a husband. Some landlords go to the extent of passing value judgement in no uncertain terms. Thus, Aradhana and Mark are informed that as 'religious people,' they don't lease out to 'fallen women,' and only want 'pure women' to stay in their houses. At another address they are told that no 'decent building' will rent to a single woman, especially one who comes with her 'boy-friend' (WSG, 132-133). It is ironic that 'buildings' can be deemed more 'respectable' or 'decent' than people, making it more important to preserve the sanctity of the buildings than open it up to someone in need. Aradhana is obviously distraught by the covert character-assassination, and eventually Mark goes forth by himself to lease an apartment in his name. Aradhana falls in love with the flat by the sea that Mark takes on lease for her, and they spend the next couple of days cheerfully doing up the apartment. To Aradhana, those days were magical for the two had so much in common, and doing up the home together was literally a manifestation of their love for each other, a culmination of all that they shared and savoured, come together (Gorman-Murray qtd. in E R Power, 2013).⁴⁴¹ This experience of creating a home with her lover is a new experience to Aradhana, quite in contrast to the marital home she had stepped into, where she had only fitted into the slot marked for her by Divakar, into his structured and rigid idea of home.

This reverie of togetherness is however broken a few days later and they are rudely brought down to earth, when Aradhana comes across a 'Missing Person's Advertisement' published for her on the front page. The notice, put up by her husband, gives her particulars,

literally) excluded from any notion or semblance of home." "The Unaccommodated Woman." *The Sociological Review*. 1999: Pp 91-109.. pp 97

⁴⁴¹"In cohabiting households, the process of combining possessions and sharing decisions about the design and decoration of the house is an important way that houses are made into shared home." Gorman-Murray, A. "Gay and Lesbian Couples at Home: Identity work in Domestic Space." *Home Cultures*. 3 Issue 2 (2006) Pp 145-168. Qtd in Dowling, R. and E.R.Power. "Domesticities". *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*. Edited by N.C. Johnson et al.. 2013. Pp 294..

claims that she is mentally deranged and a threat to their child; also, there is a little note at the bottom, addressed to Aradhana herself. The note displays a clear change of tone as it appeals to Aradhana to 'come back home', ending with a profession of love for his wife and daughter, signed off by a 'pining' husband, Divakar. Spotting the advertisement makes her feel like a 'hounded animal,' pursued by a 'blood-thirsty predator' (WSG, 135). She meets Ramola who gives her a patient and sympathetic hearing and calms her fears. Ramola then calls the Editor of the paper, who promises not to publish the Advertisement again. He also divulges a disturbing piece of information about Divakar, that he has the tacit backing of the Chief Minister, by virtue of being friends with his son Vinay Kumar. Soon it is time for Mark to return to Darjeeling, leaving Aradhana alone with Tanya. Aradhana cooks him a meal the night before he is to leave. Enveloped in the warmth of his love, she had never realised cooking could be such a pleasurable activity. "Eating the meal [they] had prepared together felt so intimate..." (WSG, 140). Aradhana's experience of 'home-making' now coincides with her idyllic imaginaries of home. Before leaving, Mark gives her a lovely surprise by slipping a diamond ring on her finger, as a token of his eternal love for her.

A despondent yet brave Aradhana sees him off the next morning. Ramola calls her a few days later and asks her to come to her office. Ensnared in the Chief Minister's residence, a wily Devakar has engineered Ramola's dismissal if she fails to furnish Aradhana's whereabouts, by threatening her boss. Ramola's services are duly terminated; Ramola and her husband Ahmed ask Aradhana to stay with them until the crisis blows over. Ramola gets Aradhana to use the same weapon Divakar is using and turn it against him. She arranges for a Press Conference at which Aradhana talks about her traumatic and abusive marriage, speaking out not just for her own self but countless other women who suffer the same fate. There is a positive impact of the Lawyer's strike against Ramola's ouster, as well as the Press Conference. Ramola is reinstated and files for the custody of Tanya.

At this point, the narrative takes the shape of a thriller revolving around violence and retribution.. Even as things begin to settle down, Aradhana is shaken up by a telephonic threat, followed up by a parcel delivered to her door step that contained a mutilated picture of Tanya and some of her frocks that had been blood-stained. The next time the phone rings, she is too scared to take the call, but is relieved to find it is only Mark calling to inform her he is on his way to Chennai. Ramola calls her over to discuss their next move, and offers to drop her home. On the way, their car stalls, and the two are kidnapped. Ramola is brutally raped

and killed in her presence, while she is beaten up and left unconscious. Shockingly, Ramola's husband Ahmed is charged with her murder and the police refuse to lodge an F.I.R. against Divakar. As the only eye-witness, Aradhana decides to give a statement to the police. Her father calls her up and asks her to withdraw herself from the case, as he had been threatened against her speaking up. Aradhana, however, is determined to get justice for Ramola, and refuses to listen to her father. After the Press Conference, an F.I.R is finally lodged, and an arrest warrant is issued for Ganapathy, one of Divakar's employees. Also, Divakar is questioned for his connections with Ganapathy.

Having Mark by her side is a great relief and support to Aradhana. She finds it hard to accept even simple gestures like waking up to a cup of coffee ready for her. Traumatized by her estranged husband's machinations that led to the horrific death of Ramola, the only place she enjoyed visiting was the Aurat Mandir, having taken up Ramola's role to keep it going. Her parents' surprise visit to her in the Chennai house gives a jolt to the traditional norms her parents had lived by. They are shocked to find her ostensibly cohabiting with an unrelated stranger, and a foreigner at that. Her father's face turns 'stony' and her mother begins to stare at the floor. Aradhana walks into the kitchen to avoid the tension, and her mother follows her to question her accusingly if the man was living with her. However, Aradhana deflects her by saying he is only visiting. Her mother reveals the purpose of their visit, telling her that her father has promised the Chief Minister that she will not testify in court, as he has been threatened over the issue. She advises Aradhana to drop everything and come and live with them, and taking the matter as settled, proceeds to prepare the coffee and snacks. It's an old strategy her mother has always practiced in times of conflict at home, remembers Aradhana. As a child, she recalls, whenever there was a tense situation at home, usually between her father and his brother, Amma would start cooking.⁴⁴² She would run to the kitchen and start chopping vegetables and preparing the chicken for cooking. Soon the sounds and smells of frying filled the house, and the argument would die by the time she announced the meal was ready. So her mother always believed that food, especially her cooking, always resolved arguments. However, Aradhana was not disputing over harvesting the paddy crop, but fighting to secure justice for Ramola, and for all the women in general. Her father realises she has no intention of backing off, and he decides to leave. Her mother, however, extends her

⁴⁴² Sandra Buckley states: "The hum of the kitchen reverberates across woman's time- past, time -present, and time-future: the source of comfort and potential site of contestation." (qtd. in Domosh, 1998); Domosh, Mona.. "Geography and Gender: Home, Again?" *Progress in Human Geography*. 22.Issue 2 (1998). Pp 276-282. :Pp 277.

tacit support to her daughter, if only in the privacy of the bedroom. Also, much to Aradhana's surprise, her mother offers an oblique 'approval' for her companion Mark: "He seems a very nice man,... [h]e will take care of you" (*WSG*, 177). It made her think of the life her mother must have led, married at the young age of twelve, burdened by the responsibility of motherhood even before her childhood was over. Gaining her mother's support is the most valuable gift she could have asked for, and it certainly gives her strength to face the long battle ahead with her chin up.

Once the trial begins, the next unexpected visitor is her mother-in-law, the same woman who had always used her position to patronise her and had encouraged her son to intimidate his wife. Quite contrary to her usual domineering self, whose word Divakar had demanded be taken as law, was reduced to weeping loudly and cursing the Gods. She pleads with Aradhana to set her son 'free,' as she couldn't live without him. It was an ironic turn of events, that the woman who presided over the brutal incarceration of Aradhana in her marital home, has now come to seek 'freedom' from her for her tormentor. Divakar, on his part, leaves no stone unturned, from using his powerful contacts to intimidating Aradhana, to evade the trial, but to no avail. After a lot of turns and twists in the trial, the court eventually hands down a death sentence to Divakar and his accomplices. As Aradhana watches him being escorted to his windowless van that would take him to his prison quarters, she recalls "...the day some seven years ago when he had taken her as a new bride to Darjeeling, [she] had walked to what she had thought was [her] life sentence, just as he was walking today to his" (*WSG*, 193).

Aradhana finally walks free from the marriage that had nearly ruined her in body and mind, and she marvels at having survived the ordeal with her dreams intact. Mark finally goes back to Canada, and she longs to be with him again. She fills the emptiness in her life by plunging into the work at Aurat Mandir, carrying on with the work Ramola had begun. In fact, Aradhana and the deceased Ramola's husband manage to implement all the plans that Ramola had made, for the success and publicity of her case had garnered sufficient funds. On the second anniversary of Ramola's death, Ramola's husband Ahmed suggests to her that she should not miss the opportunity of being with Mark. Aradhana decides to visit Mark in Canada. "Going to Mark was like going home" (*WSG*, 200).

If the narrative of Shakti Niranjachana's novel revolves around the violence and abuse meted to a wife, Akhil Sharma's novel deals with incestuous violence involving a father and daughter. Molly Warrington points out that despite the social construction of home as a place

for safety and support, it can prove to be contrary in the experience of women and children. In fact, there is a real likelihood of them being abused or even killed in this 'safe haven.'⁴⁴³ In the present instance, the home is presented as a threatening space for the child, but Akhil Sharma manages to twist the dynamics by pushing the incidence of the rape into the narrative past. The child-victim is an adult woman in the narrative present, herself the mother of a vulnerable eight year old daughter. As a widow with no resources, she is as much a prisoner now to his largesse, as he turns prisoner to her anger and retribution later in the narrative. The focus is not so much on the rape itself, though it is always hovering in the background, but on the deep scars it leaves on the psyche of the victim, inherently marking her for life. However, it is the Ram Karan's proclivity for sexual misadventure that unleashes the daughter's pent up anger for the abuse she suffered, despite Ram Karan's hope that decades of silence should have erased the event from her memory. With so much of anger and repugnance spilling over, the home turns out to be a far cry from the 'haven' or 'refuge' it is meant to be.

The narrative of *An Obedient Father* opens on the insipid and venal protagonist Ram Karan who mulls over ways to extort money from a local school Principal for the Congress Party, being the moneyman for a small time Party boss. As a junior officer in the Physical Education Department, he has already taken a favour from the Principal by having his granddaughter admitted to the school, and is not sure how the Principal will react to the demand. A failure at higher secondary, he has a tendency to become nervous during negotiations. It was a wonder Mr. Gupta had chosen him as his moneyman, despite his incompetence and laziness. Nevertheless, Ram Karan has managed to build some contacts and generate money for Mr. Gupta.

The previous year had been long and sorrowful for the protagonist as his ailing wife finally succumbed to cancer, he had had a heart attack, and his daughter Anita lost her husband in a scooter accident, forcing her to go and live with him, along with her daughter Asha. His son Rajesh couldn't find a job despite a PhD in History, and had eventually taken to run a chain of restaurants called Burger King. The only member of the family who has done them proud by her achievements, in a family otherwise marked by its failure and mediocrity, is the younger daughter Kusum. A bright scientist who had gone abroad on a Government grant, she now works in America, settled with her American husband and daughter.

⁴⁴³Warrington, Molly. "I Must Get Out": The Geographies of Domestic Violence." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 26 Issue 3 (2001) Pp. 365-382. Pp 369.

Interestingly, Ram Karan credits her success to her having stayed beyond the range of his ‘influence.’

It’s an early morning in the cramped and dingy flat, and the first hint of Ram Karan’s decadent character comes across as one finds him eyeing a little girl prancing around naked as her mother tries to bathe her on a terrace across their flat. As he goes in to wake up his granddaughter dozing on his cot while she waited to use the bathroom, he is suddenly struck by her ‘innocent beauty,’ and is sexually aroused by the mere thought of having found his granddaughter attractive. He sits as usual with his legs splayed out, but a latent guilt makes him awkwardly draw in his legs, as he was dressed only in his underclothes. Nevertheless, from now on his eight year old granddaughter seems to have caught his eye, and he begins to be extra nice to her gain her attention. Thus, he arranges for things she likes, from yoghurt to candy and board games, or even demanding extra badminton rackets at the schools he goes to inspect. Incestuous fathers, as Jean Renvoize explores in his study, tend to single out the subject of their attention, the child, by treating her differently and being extra nice.⁴⁴⁴ The same pattern can be observed in the character of Ram Karan in the novel, as he tries to win over his granddaughter Asha, just as he had successfully lured a young Anita earlier, to disastrous consequences.

As Ram Karan prepares to leave for office, he finds Anita engaged in a mundane and arguably unremarkable activity, mopping the floor with her head covered, an obvious tableau of servility. His first reaction is to feel sorry that he has not been able to provide a better life to his family. However, he soon bursts out in anger as he objects to her keeping her head covered, a formality one adheres to only amidst in-laws. Engaged in a mundane and arguably unremarkable activity, what draws one’s attention to Anita’s positioning is Ram Karan’s reaction to finding her in that abject position, infuriated that it may get people to think she was ‘afraid of him.’ Erving Goffman’s observation on the presentation of the self is pertinent here: “...I assume that when an individual appears before others he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation.”⁴⁴⁵ Anita, one might contend, may not necessarily have presented herself thus in a self-conscious manner as Goffman suggests, but the writer clearly ensures her position does not pass unnoticed, as is evidenced from Ram Karan’s flare-up. It is almost as if their respective histories are personified in their

⁴⁴⁴Renvoize, Jean. *Incest: A Family Pattern*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1982. Pp 8.

⁴⁴⁵Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. New York: The Overlook Press. 1973. Pp 15.

body positions, emblematic of the father-daughter dynamics. Ram Karan's irritation suggests he wants to present a façade of egalitarianism, where there has been none.

With his newfound interest in Asha, he begins to look for opportunities to spend time with her, especially when he can be far from Anita's suspicious eyes. It is interesting that a watchful Anita makes the house 'risky' for his dalliance with Asha; whereas, with a careless Radha, Anita's mother, Ram Karan could merrily indulge himself under her very nose, at home. Thus, on one occasion, he takes Asha along with him to the wedding reception of Mr. Gupta's son, luring her with the chance of gorging on as much ice cream and colas she wanted. At the reception, as Asha overindulges herself, Ram Karan can't resist the temptation of free liquor, bribing the waiter for an extra share. In his inebriated state, he makes a fool of himself in front of some of Mr. Gupta's important guests, who lose no time in rebuffing him. Asha is frightened by the brusque exchange, and Ram Karan's uses the opportunity give her more than grandfatherly caresses as he tries to reassure her. He strokes her hair and kisses her on the neck and her cheeks. On the way back in the auto, he gets her to sit on his lap, hugs her close and promises to buy her ice-cream. Not only does he try to win over her affections, he also tries to gain her sympathy: "Our house is so sad. We should be happy. I don't know why your mother wants to be so unhappy, but you and I can be happy" (*AOF*, 36). Projecting himself as a 'weak' and a 'bad' man who has tried to do his best, he espouses his love for her, 'praising' the child for being the only one to bestow her love on him. Plying upon her affections, he attempts to manipulate the child's innocent love for her grandfather into a means of satiating his own carnal instincts, just as he had once done with his daughter all those years ago.

Once home, he is still tipsy and aroused, and attempts to molest her surreptitiously. He strips down to his underclothes in preparation for bed, and asks his granddaughter for a glass of water as a ruse to get her close. Making her turn away from him, he rubs his erection against an unsuspecting child, all the while licking her earlobe, murmuring endearments into her ears. He even uses the same terms he had once used with his daughter, for instance, calling her his 'sun ripened mango.' It is only Anita's wary arrival in the doorway that makes him stop guiltily. After an initial bout of panic, he tries to bolster his confidence by repeatedly telling himself Anita couldn't have 'seen' anything. Moreover, as the child is too young to understand what he was trying to do, he takes Asha's 'ignorance' about the import of his actions as proof of his 'innocence'. Even as Anita stands staring, trying to fathom what her

father has been up to, he takes the cover of his drunkenness to gloss over his own culpability. He worries if Anita remembers the 'past', even as he reassures himself she couldn't possibly recall anything after decades of silence. At the present instance, he puts Anita off guard by reminding her that he is drunk. The anxiety and the guilt will henceforth make him vacillate between 'home' and 'away' throughout the narrative, as he attempts to escape exposure or accept his guilt.⁴⁴⁶

It is in the wake of Ram Karan's anxiety over being discovered by his daughter Anita for having molested her eight year old daughter that he harps on an event in the past, not yet revealed in the narrative. The 'silence' over it in the ensuing decades suggests not only a 'muffling' but also an incomplete erasure. The incident may have been buried under the sands of time, or as Ram Karan wishes it were so, but it is never far from the surface. In any case, Ram Karan's hope that Anita couldn't have retained anything in her memory after that long silence are belied, as her actions suggest she is on constant guard when it comes to her daughter. Eventually, it is the old father's irresponsible behaviour that leads to an obvious denouement unveiled in the second chapter. Thus, the first chapter closes with the protagonist's optimism that Anita couldn't possibly have remembered after 'decades of silence,' and the next chapter ominously opens with the disclosure of 'Pitaji's' death, the culmination of a reprisal perpetrated and recounted by his daughter Anita. The narrative is thus 'housed' in a 'home' that comprises an incestuous father, a daughter who survived the trauma of childhood abuse but remains apprehensive of the father, and a 'sad' child caught between the two.⁴⁴⁷

To begin with, the chapter pans the image of the dead man, an image seemingly 'glued' to Anita's eyelids. Having died, as his wife had bitterly predicted, an unnatural death, the vision is horrific: "...blood covers his chin from biting his tongue; one arm is buried under him; the other is draped over the cot" (*AOF*, 39). It was a few months ago that she had first noticed her father's ankles turning dark for lack of blood. It had made her happy then to see him inch closer to death, but now she is grief-stricken when she recalls those darkened ankles. There is, however, a hint of regret for having engineered his death. Anita wishes she had the

⁴⁴⁶ Ram Karan's frequent bouts of 'disappearing' or staying away from home for long periods of time not only reflect his inner turmoil, but also exemplify L. C. Manzo's contention that 'place identity' and the 'attachment' to places are both dynamic phenomenon. The protagonist's past guilt and fear of exposure for present misdemeanours makes him completely ill at ease. He does not feel 'at home.' "Beyond House and Haven". *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 23 Issue 1.(2003). Pp 47-61.Pp 52.

⁴⁴⁷ Early in the narrative, Ram Karan thinks of taking his granddaughter out for social gatherings to "take her out of the sadness of her life." (*AOF*, 27).

same capacity as her dead husband to clear off any detritus from the mind. Then she wouldn't have given in to the desire for revenge when her father broke his agreement with her. He would still be alive.

Having come face to face with a dead-end, so to speak, Anita's mind flits back in time. It is not for nothing that Anita goes over the past, for it is the seeds sown then that have come to bear fruit in the present. The gulf between the trajectory of her life and that of her sister Kusum, a successful scientist settled abroad, is huge, despite the inherent commonalities. One was academically brilliant and made a career in science, while the other barely managed to complete her graduation, with marriage and family as her only future. However, she believes her life has been ruined not by a lack of ambition or achievement as compared to her sister, but by her father's recklessness that had led to the bleak present. Her marriage to Rajinder, though not exactly brimming with love, was also not marked by neglect and abuse as her parents' marriage was. His accidental death, however, leaves her with no option but to seek refuge in her father's house.

The 'past' that looms large over the present yet remains undefined, though fleeting instances of Ram Karan's proclivity to seek titillation gives the reader some hints to the sexual nature of his perversion. Having been alerted to the unspoken bitterness between the father and daughter, Anita's reminiscences also reveal the animosity in the mother-daughter relationship due to that 'past'. Anita felt her mother, back then, believed that she had partially seduced her father, and her "aimless anger came from having to sacrifice herself for someone like [Anita]" (*AOF*, 45). She believed her mother had got her married off early only because she was worried about her safety at home.⁴⁴⁸ Her father's subsequent illness and hospitalisation had left her mother anxious and in tears. In fact, it is at the hospital as she watches over her ailing father, that Ram Karan's crime is first spelt out. To her, he appeared threatening even in his drugged and supine state. Her father's attempts at self-recrimination makes Anita realise for the first time that her father need not have raped her. She had been raped by her father only because of his absolute self-absorption: "...for Pitaji no one was as real as he was, so nothing he did to others had substance" (*AOF*, 55). This awareness fills her with a murderous rage against her father that does not go away. Once Ram Karan gets back home from the hospital, Anita is irritated by the way he keeps acting weak and pitiable,

⁴⁴⁸Patricia L Price's definition of 'home' as the place that provides 'refuge' and 'respite' reflects the most commonly held notion of 'home.' Yet, one can see that Anita's experience of 'home' with her natal family has been quite the contrary. "Place.." *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*. 2013. Pp 126.

lamenting that his wife had not forgiven him for what he did long ago. It just gets Anita wondering at the possibility that her mother had forgiven him what he did to his daughter, but not forgiven him for making her unhappy. Jean Renvoize also documents the bitterness the victim of incest harbours for the non-participating parent.⁴⁴⁹ Brimming with hatred for both her parents, Anita is just glad she has her own 'home' of her own to escape to, and get away from a parental home and family that reminds her of the horrific past.⁴⁵⁰

Coming back to the narrative present, Ram Karan continues to agonise over nearly getting caught red handed for having touched his granddaughter inappropriately. His guilty conscience keeps him from sleeping, as he hallucinates about Anita and Asha. He spends the night in denial, trying to convince himself that Anita couldn't suspect him of repeating a wrong that possibly no longer even 'exists' in her memory. As his 'certainties' keep changing, he oscillates between moments of 'complete calm' and 'overwhelming terror.' He castigates himself for having learnt neither 'decency' nor 'caution' in the fifty-seven years that he has lived:

“The recklessness of caressing Asha while Anita was in the common room was the same as when [he] had fondled Anita in the storeroom on the roof while Radha and the other children could be heard moving about downstairs....There was something fatal in repeating my crime so exactly” (AOF, p 69).

He takes comfort in weeping, certain that God saw it as a sign of penitence on his part, and was sure to 'save' him from the risk of exposure. In any case, he reasons slyly, no purpose would be served by his exposure, for his widowed daughter now has no one else except him to turn to for support. His self-recrimination is all the more sinister because any remorse of wrong-doing is offset by a repetition of his crime even as he keeps whitewashing his actions. “Incestuous fathers,” argues Jean Renvoize, “are as adept as rationalising their behaviour as the rest of us.”⁴⁵¹ Nonetheless, he is still suffused with an element of shame and tries to find ways to mitigate his guilt. More than the 'black' and 'white,' it is the shades of 'grey' that the writer paints Ram Karan in that add to the complexity of characterisation. He

⁴⁴⁹Renvoize, Jean. “The Family.” *Incest: A Family Pattern*. 1982. Pp 114..

⁴⁵⁰ Kimberly Dovey defines 'home' as “an emotionally based and meaningful relationship between dwellers and their dwelling places.” This definition of home is relevant to an understanding of the protagonist Anita's abhorrence for her natal home. The family may have changed residence to physically distance themselves from the house where Anita had been abused, but the 'dwellers' and their 'relationships' that make up the 'home' are still the same. “Home and Homelessness.” *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985. Pp 34.

⁴⁵¹Renvoize, Jean. “The Fathers.” *Incest: A Family Pattern*. 1982. Pp 70.

decides to leave for his village, ostensibly to arrange for the family priest to preside over the prayers for his wife's first death anniversary. It is just a ruse to avoid Anita at least for the day. In fact, the guilt and fear will continue to drive his actions in the future, as he will keep finding ways and means to avoid Anita as and when possible, by either staying out of the house on some pretext, or not crossing her path in the house.⁴⁵²

After he wakes up clear headed from a nap on the bus, the long journey to his village Beri accords him the opportunity to ruminate over his past and present. He can no longer deny the horror and shame of the rape of his daughter, visualising his monstrous figure towering over the helpless girl. However, he still believed his subsequent conduct should be enough to mitigate the enormity of his crime, as he had not touched another child again after that; as for Asha, he believed himself 'innocent' because he had not really 'done' anything. Ram Karan's appeal for not being guilty of any wrongdoing in Asha's case can be seen as an inverse of the stance women usually take to invalidate their experience of sexual violence, as Liz Kelly and Jill Radford put it, by claiming 'nothing really happened.'⁴⁵³ Nevertheless, despite all his self-justifications, he cannot shake off the heaviness from his chest. He recalls his childhood, remembering that the only person he loved was his mother. Growing up in an atmosphere where violence was the norm, he had masked his inherent loneliness by terrorising and bullying other children. He imagined that all the things that might mark him as unusual and explain what he did to Anita were present in other people. In fact, Renvoize goes on to suggest that it is their own feelings of powerlessness and frustrations as a child, combined with anger, that can be seen as the driving force behind the actions of abusive fathers.⁴⁵⁴

At fifteen his father sent him to the Arya Samaj School, but he balked at its rigid discipline, and diverted his energies into wrestling. He proved to be adept at the sport and started to win championships, but his mother's death devastated him so deeply that he developed a fear of pain and lost his edge in the game. The only thing that gave him a high was his first brush with a prostitute. Pooling money with two friends, who 'paid' to satiate

⁴⁵² Roderick Kemsley and Christopher Platt suggest that "[h]ouses are buildings in which we must invest our vulnerability and expect in return, physical and emotional security from what the world can throw at us." In the narrative, this distinction between the 'outside' and the 'inside' worlds are nullified as it is not the storms thrown by the world outside that the protagonist would seek refuge from in his house, but from those brewing within. Moreover, his actions have skewed the moral compass, and laying bare his 'vulnerabilities,' in this instance his guilt, would tantamount to taking the onus for his actions. That is why he tries to get away on some pretext or the other. "Dwelling and Houses" *Dwelling With Architecture*. London: Routledge. 2012. Pp 86.

⁴⁵³ Kelly, Liz and Jill Radford. "'Nothing Really Happened': The Invalidation of Women's Experiences of Sexual Violence." *Critical Social Policy*. 10. Issue 30 (1991): Pp 39-53.

⁴⁵⁴ Renvoize, Jean. "The Fathers." *Incest: A Family Pattern*. 1982. Pp 82.

their adolescent fantasies as voyeurs, the sense of power that he experienced as a man was unforgettable: “No matter what I felt about myself, this was the actual world. We were only bodies and I had more power than this woman” (*AOF*, 82). Thrilled by the easy sense of power that paid sex gave him, he frequented the prostitute without any sense of guilt. His mother’s death seemed to have cut him loose from his conscience, and he revelled in this path to happiness that came without any worldly responsibilities. Ram Karan’s experience of ‘home’ during his growing up years are marked by dysfunctional relationships, drifting off track after the loss of his mother, arguably the pivot around whom notions of ‘home’ and ‘family’ are constructed.⁴⁵⁵ However, his failure in class eleven made him lose even the remnants of self-confidence he had, and he left school to join the Navy. It gave him an opportunity to travel and experience other cultures, but it was also the time he gave in to debauchery, including visits to a child prostitute. Three years later, he resigned from the Navy and joined a school as a Physical Training instructor.

His subsequent marriage also turns meaningless within a few years. The wife seeks solace from a spiritual guru, while the husband takes to drinking and visiting prostitutes. Ram Karan proved to be an indifferent husband and father, looking upon his wife and the three children as just a reminder of everything that had gone wrong with his life. Given the dismal family life, we are told, it was no wonder the children grow up as oddities, tongue tied to the point of appearing retarded to strangers, only speaking softly, if at all. Professionally, he moves up from teaching to Administration by providing the Principal and his supervisors with crates of mango. He has no qualms in indulging in immoral or dishonest practices.

The ‘past’ that has been ominously lurking on the margins of the narrative is finally revealed. It is nothing but the close proximity ‘home’ and ‘family’ accords to a morally corrupt father and an innocent and unsuspecting twelve year old daughter, an indifferent mother who is always ‘elsewhere’ in a household that remains obtuse to the growing intimacy between father and daughter that Anita gets raped by her father in their own house. Events that lead to Anita’s trauma begin innocuously enough. Sleeping in her father’s cot, the twelve year old Anita accidentally puts her hand on his penis. At thirty-eight, though he was obsessed by sex and fantasised about having sex with everyone, even school children, Ram Karan had never looked at his daughter in that manner. However, he soon begins to get Anita to touch him during games of ‘tag’ and ‘hide-and-seek.’ In a study of child sexual abuse, Jean La

⁴⁵⁵ Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling assert that “ideal homes embody familial-based gender relations,” that position women as mothers primarily responsible for the domestic sphere. *Home*. 2006. Pp 110.

Fontaine remarks that sexual abuse tends to start with relatively 'mild touching,' by a 'familiar adult' such that the child experiences no distress initially.⁴⁵⁶ Anita participates as an enthusiastic, though credulous accomplice. The games were played on the roof, sometimes with people watching, or the family joining in, while they talked, read together or played games. Under the guise of the playing games, Ram Karan brazenly touched her body, and the fact that he was doing it in full public view was 'evidence' to him that he was doing no wrong. Quite caught up with this new avenue of titillation, Ram Karan begins to actively win over Anita's 'love' by buying her colouring books and teaching her magic tricks. Also, to keep the family in good humour, he begins to take everyone out for movies and dinners.

Initially, he experiences no sense of shame or wrongdoing, but as the games became more obvious and daring, he couldn't deny an element of shame that was settling down somewhere deep within him. If the family was downstairs, he would begin the game on the roof and move to the storage shed, with the door closing 'on itself'. He made out as if there was no difference between being in the 'open,' in full sight, to being inside the shed. Not only does he position himself so she would end up touching him, he also sought opportunities to 'touch' her. Thus, by deviously manipulating his actions and location, he managed to grope his daughter without being checked or caught. He kept telling himself he would stop if she ever appeared to understand what he was doing, but she seemed to be playing along innocently. In fact, he is emboldened by her seeming participation, justifying his actions by telling himself it was alright as he wasn't causing her any physical harm. As for any 'harm' to her mind, he believed, he couldn't take responsibility for how she interpreted his actions. In fact, Ram Karan doesn't find much difference between his actions and a father who made his children sing for the guests. Jean La Fontaine is categorical in establishing that the argument about children 'consenting' to sexual activity is specious, for it is advanced by adults, not children.⁴⁵⁷ It suits Ram Karan to offer excuses that allow him to carry on, unhindered by any objections raised by a near defunct conscience.

Ironically, Anita seems to be coming into her own, with the undivided attention her father has started to pay her. "Radha's and my neglect must have stunted Anita to such an extent that even my tainted attention was relatively benign" (*AOF*, 100). To keep her from squealing, he makes her feel important by telling her that no one loved him, except her. The whole family seemed to be happier than ever before, with the regular rounds of picnics and

⁴⁵⁶La Fontaine, Jean .*Child Sexual Abuse*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 1990. Pp 73.

⁴⁵⁷La Fontaine, Jean . "The Victims." .*Child Sexual Abuse*. 1990. Pp 74.

banter, movies and dinners. Even Radha, who had withdrawn herself from the family, begins to take more interest in the children. However, this surge of bonhomie stopped once Anita started sleeping in Ram Karan's room. He had once suggested it casually during dinner, and brought Anita's cot into his own room. He had been dreaming about this for a long time, so he could shed the fearful and furtive fondling he had restricted himself to, so far. Nancy Duncan, as mentioned earlier, has argued that the privilege accorded to the male head of the household by way of personal freedom tends to not only impinge upon, but at times override the freedom and autonomy of the women and children who occupy the same space, that is, the family home.⁴⁵⁸ Essentially, going by La Fontaine's argument, it is not surprising that father-daughter incest is the most common form of incest, because the daughter is doubly vulnerable across the matrix of generation and gender that structures the family.⁴⁵⁹ To add to the structural inequality is the spatial proximity, for the family usually resides together in the family home. Ram Karan has clearly exploited his authority as parent, as La Fontaine contends, for children are extremely vulnerable to the whims of the adults they are dependent on and share the house with.⁴⁶⁰ Anita's relocation to her father's room renders her position extremely defenceless, a situation that an unscrupulous Ram Karan exploits to the fullest. The abuser uses spatial strategy to isolate his victim by bringing her to his room for the night, so he has her entirely under his control when everyone else is asleep.⁴⁶¹

Of the two months that he made Anita sleep in his room, she stayed on her bed only for the first night. He just shut the door, though he couldn't lock it as he would have liked to, for it could only be bolted from outside.⁴⁶² After that, he makes her lie next to him, making her masturbate him, all the while pretending to be asleep. Now that he was actually onto something sexual, his fear of getting caught only increased, for all it needed was for Radha to come downstairs for a visit to the toilet and open the door. But he was even more frightened of the possibility of Anita betraying him to Radha, to pre-empt which he makes her stand guilty of wrongdoing, scares her into silence by telling her she would be stoned by people if

⁴⁵⁸Duncan, Nancy. "Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces.." *Bodyspace*. edited by Nancy Duncan. 1996..Pp 131.

⁴⁵⁹La Fontaine, Jean. "Sexual Abuse at Home." *Child Sexual Abuse*. Year. Pp 190.

⁴⁶⁰---. "The Victims." *Child Sexual Abuse*. 1990. Pp 96

⁴⁶¹ Richard R.Wilk argues that members of a household contest with each other over use of space and may use various strategies such as negotiation, argument or even deception to have their way. Ram Karan employs all possible strategies to manipulate Anita's movements and even emplacement to achieve his motives. 'The built environment and consumer decisions.' "The Built Environment and Consumer Decisions." *Domestic Architecture*. Edited by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 41.

⁴⁶² It is another sign of a defunct marriage that the husband and wife are no longer intimate and sleep in different rooms. Moreover, a door that cannot be bolted from inside structurally denies the space for any intimacy or privacy to a cohabiting couple.

they ever got to know. Thus, Ram Karan manipulates Anita into acquiescence through coercion and silencing, the strategies La Fontaine finds are put into practice by abusers in his empirical study of abuse. “A very common threat,” he argues, “is to tell the child what will happen if the sexual abuse is disclosed, making it seem that the consequences are the result of the telling rather than of the abuse.”⁴⁶³ Meanwhile, sly as ever, Ram Karan even disarms his wife lest she suspect anything, gaining her sympathy by posturing as a ‘useless, shameful, good-for-nothing’ husband and father. He starts visiting the temple out of a lopsided sense of guilt and shame.

When Anita falls sick, he sends her back upstairs, feeling guilty for her, but has her back in his room two weeks later. Her fearfulness arouses him so much that this time around, he literally forces himself on her and rapes her. The next morning, Anita looks obviously shattered, but he covers up on her distress by telling his wife she had been sick all night. Since the events are recounted by the protagonist much after their occurrence, they come filtered through his interpretations of his subsequent actions. Thus, he passes the rape as a probable a combination of his ‘lust’ and ‘inevitable doom’ that made him ask Anita to sleep in his room again. Or he apparently believed he could never be caught, if only because he couldn’t visualise surviving the aftermath of exposure. The memory of what followed is, as he put it, ‘morbid,’ like the bloodied newspapers lining the bed to keep the sheets clean. The ‘horror’ is repeated for four to five nights, until he is finally caught by Radha, who abruptly opens the door one night on his ghastly secret. Jean Renvoize contends that incestuous behaviour tends to carry on until a specific even stops it, such as exposure, or the victim managing to raise an objection.⁴⁶⁴ Shocked and revolted, she sends Anita upstairs, and starts hitting her husband in anger. Even as a part of him wished to die, another part of him tries his best to escape the blame, telling his wife it was only the first time, and that God had been ‘kind’ in having him caught. In the first instance, Radha worries less for the wellbeing of her daughter as her overriding concern is about finding a man willing to marry a daughter who has been violated. Radha repeatedly impresses upon Anita to ‘empty her head,’ and not tell anyone about it. Radha admits that what her father had done was wrong, but reassures her that he was ashamed of it and would never repeat it. “All three of us understood, though, that what actually

⁴⁶³La Fontaine, Jean. . “The Victims.” *Child Sexual Abuse*. 1990.. Pp 78.

⁴⁶⁴Renvoize, Jean. *Incest: A Family Pattern*. 1982. Pp 28.

mattered was Anita's silence" (*AOF*, 110). True to form, incestuous families, Renvoize argues, tend to bind together and clam up to contain the secret.⁴⁶⁵

Radha and Anita start to sleep in the same room, and after a while, Radha sends her other daughter Kusum to be brought up at her mother's place. As a young girl, Anita has no option but continue to inhabit the same house where she was violated. For the first few years after being caught, Ram Karan behaves himself and keeps a low profile, lest he incur his wife's wrath. Anita outwardly behaved as if she had no memory of what he had done, or so it seemed to Ram Karan. Moreover, he was glad when they moved out of the house where it had all occurred, as he was certain it would only "hasten the process of erasure" (*AOF*, 110).⁴⁶⁶ However, two or three years later, he is back to his old vices, though he stayed away from children and never touched Anita again. Twenty years later, Ram Karan tells us, Radha had lost her faith in God and grows thin and turned bitter. Ram Karan, in turn, flourishes with the rise in corruption, adding immensely to his girth and his riches.

After his return from the trip to the village, he quietly goes into his room to sleep, still worried if his actions of the previous night had aroused Anita's suspicions. As she begins to berate him for getting drunk, he begins to blabber nonsensically, if only to keep Anita from uttering something 'that could not be taken back.' Even as he begins to make promises about never taking to drink again, she interrupts his protestations with an ominous threat: "I would kill Asha...." And, with a finger pointed at him, "I would kill you" (*AOF*, 122). Despite the absolute helplessness of knowing she has no other 'home', nowhere else she can take refuge, Anita's motherly instinct of safeguarding her daughter comes to the fore at the mere possibility of her father even trying to touch her daughter. The alacrity of her response is in sharp contrast to her own mother Radha, who had missed on catching any cues, to begin with, and had subsequently given her no support beyond perfunctorily telling her to 'empty her head.' Meanwhile, Asha, clueless about what has caused the tension between her mother and

⁴⁶⁵---. *Incest: A Family Pattern*. 1982. Pp 100.

⁴⁶⁶ Sarah Menin contends that "[b]oundaries between phenomenon of the people and phenomenon of the place are crossed; both negatively and positively." The connection between place and its meaning and experience is thus indisputable. The probable impact on Anita of continuing to live in the same 'house' where she faced abuse is left to the reader's imagination. The family's decision to move out of the house is not out of any concern for Anita, but conveyed as an incidental event.. Yet, even to Ram Karan, the association between 'place,' 'experience' and 'memory' is quite obvious. Rather than projecting concern that the move may facilitate Anita's recovery from the trauma on moving away from the site of abuse, he is hopeful the move will erase the 'bad memories.' "Introduction." *Constructing Place: Mind and Matter*, edited by. Sarah Menin. .London: Routledge. 2003.Pp 9. Kimberly Dovey also foregrounds the significant role the physical environment plays in concretising memory through association. "Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments..* Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985.Pp 42.

grandfather, tries to catch his eye for a hint. Her gesture however, makes Ram Karan even more anxious. He is afraid that Anita might interpret the silent exchange as a sign of complicity, for she has been watching them. Anita's care and concern for the wellbeing of her daughter are in sharp contrast to her mother's callous neglect of her daughter in general, and after the rape, in particular.

An anxious Ram Karan fantasises about running far away with all the money that he has collected for the Congress Party. Unable to face a belligerent Anita, his guilt pushes him to visit the Temple, to pray for some guidance. He realises that the only way forward would be to come clear and confess all his crimes to Anita, beg for her forgiveness, something he had never attempted until now. In a moment of uncharacteristic perspicacity, he admits to himself it would be far better to be forthright and own up his crimes, rather than discount Anita's memories as confused. Only then, he reasons, over a year or two, would it be possible to come to terms with the past. However, for all his good intentions, his courage deserts him when he returns home and finds his son Rajesh talking to Anita. He is relieved to hear them exchange obligatory pleasantries, scared of the possibility of being exposed by Anita. The irony of the situation is that the probability of exposure generates more fear in Ram Karan, than his response to the actual exposure that takes place subsequently. Anita's accusations have taken the lid off his pretensions with a certainty leaving him with no choice but to deal with them. Going in to bathe in the dark and mouldy bathroom, he hopes his ablutions will revoke his courage sufficiently to lay himself bare. His conscience and his courage seem as mouldy as the bathroom. He can't imagine what the world would be like after the admission: "To say words which admitted my guilt was like speaking a spell that brought a monster into the world" (*AOF*, 131). Clearly, the enormity of the crime lay not so much in having executed it, but in acknowledging and admitting it.

For a while, the heat is off Ram Karan, as all the relatives have gathered for the prayers for his wife's first death anniversary. He prays to God to never let Radha, Anita and Asha 'meet him' after this life. Everyone leaves after the Puja, and with Asha also out, there is just Anita and Ram Karan in the house. This is the moment when he knows he just has to speak the truth else everything would spin out of control. However, it is Anita who takes the plunge by confronting her father head-on. To lessen his guilt, Ram Karan had always believed he would have stopped molesting Anita if she had shown any signs of comprehending what was happening. But Anita shatters the presumption of her 'ignorance' by telling him straight away

that she always knew. Mincing no words, she tells him categorically that she knew just what was going on, every time he touched her, or made her touch him. "I look at twelve-year olds and think I was like that. Who could do that to a twelve-year old? You and Ma! What kind of a mother was she?" (AOF, 142-143). As she goes on recounting the horror in graphic detail-again, giving lie to his hope that after all these years, she wouldn't remember, she keeps demanding some response from him. Recounting the trauma gets her understandably agitated, and she doesn't spare even her-self for having 'participated' in the sordid affair. "I knew it was your fault, but once I started touching you, I was helping you be wrong. I thought I was the worst person in the world" (AOF, 143). Nevertheless, for all his intentions of accepting his crime and coming clean, he is unable to speak for himself, and stays silent.

Eventually, Anita gets so agitated with his refusal to speak, that she starts to scream. Ram Karan's only reaction is to quickly shut all the doors and windows, anxious lest the truth about his shameful conduct go beyond the four walls of the house.⁴⁶⁷ Just hearing it loud and clear from Anita makes it sound like a fresh crime, making him feel ashamed. Now that the 'monster' of his crime is 'out' at large, he feels he can no longer face Anita, and begins to find ways to avoid her, literally maintaining as much distance from her as possible. It was the day of Rajiv Gandhi's funeral, and he could not step out of the house to avoid Anita, as he would have liked to do. He decides to stay put in his room instead, until the office opened. Once work resumed, he planned to go to the office, and eat out before returning home, making do with any leftovers in the fridge for the night. A guilt-ridden Ram Karan does not deem it fit to participate in routine family activities, under the circumstances. Thus, by 'time zoning,' he plans to use the space in such a way as to preclude the need have a meal or a conversation together, or interact with them in any manner.⁴⁶⁸ The dynamics of space use amongst family members can clearly change with time, guided by the need for proximity or distance, as the case may be. It is this flexibility that lends complexity to the notions of 'home' and 'family' that are constantly negotiated even as they are posited as 'stable' entities in theory. In any case, various scholars have pointed out that the two concepts tend to be conflated whereby

⁴⁶⁷ Scholars of 'home' identify privacy as a significant attribute that it affords its inhabitants. Ram Karan would like to keep his private life, especially his private wrongs, contained within the four walls of home, than be exposed and ridiculed by his neighbours. See Mallett, Shelley. "Understanding Home." *Sociological Review*. 52. Issue 1..(2004).Pp 62-89. Pp 71; Moore, Jeanne. "Placing Home in Context." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 20 Issue 3. (September 2000). Pp 207-217.Pp 209. .. Subsequently, the narrative will also present the aftermath of the exposure of Ram Karan's transgression that will ironically turn against Anita and her daughter.

⁴⁶⁸Munro, Moira and Ruth Madigan. "Negotiating Space in the Family Home." *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space* edited by Irene Cieraad. New York: Syracuse University Press. Pp113.

home is seen as the locale where a composite family life is lived.⁴⁶⁹ Thus, at this point in time, Ram Karan may continue to reside in the same house, but by withdrawing himself from any participation in routine activities that are a part of 'family- life', and concomitantly, what make a house a home, he pulls out from the family circle and practically renders himself 'homeless at home,' to borrow a phrase from Julia Wardaugh. Interestingly, later in the narrative, he will move in reverse, that is, virtually force himself into the 'family circle,' so to speak. His spatial machinations not only exemplify the dynamic nature of the concepts of 'home' and 'family,' but also that the individual's relationship with his or her environment can never be static.⁴⁷⁰ In the event, he plans to keep him-self to his room, and pray to God, asking for deliverance. Nevertheless, he isn't quite sure just what he is seeking deliverance from. Unable to gather the courage and square up with Anita, he simply wished that everything would be erased.

Once office reopens, he delays going back home, filled with the dread of facing a 'sullen Anita' and a 'silent Asha,' who has probably been 'warned' against him. He had not spoken to her since that afternoon when Anita had confronted him. He bathed much before they were up, and left for office quietly. However, when he finally returns home, he finds that a clay water pot and his glasses have been kept under the bed, precluding any need to step out of his room at all. Like young Anita had once been caught in his clutches, she has turned the tables and now he is the one who is practically held captive. Dropping his clothes on the floor in anguish, the fear he had been harbouring within all these days now takes root as despair. He listens to music and reads old magazines, marking the passage of time by the line of sun beneath his door that 'changed colours' and 'receded.' Lying in bed in his dark room and listening to the sounds of Anita and Asha as they chat up or have dinner, makes him "feel buried alive" (*AOF*, 159). He has literally been incarcerated in his own house.

Ram Karan mulls over the goings on of the last few days, contemplates confessing everything to Anita and asking her forgiveness. However, he feels as incapable of making a confession now, as the last time when he had rushed to shut the doors and windows to keep Anita's screams from being heard by the neighbours. In any case, he was convinced Anita had no interest in pardoning him now, for he had heard her feed Asha with what seemed to him

⁴⁶⁹ Jones, Gill. "Experimenting with Households and Inventing 'Home,'" *International Social Science Journal*.52.Issue 164 (2000): Pp 183-194. See also Bowlby, Sophie et al. "Doing Home" *Women's Studies International Forum*. 20. No. 3. (1997). Pp 343-350. , who discuss the overlap of home and family.

⁴⁷⁰Dovey, Kimberly."Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985. Pp44. Dovey argues for 'home' as a 'dynamic process'.

like exaggerated lies that implied an “indifference to the future” (*OF*, 160). Anita had been ‘poisoning’ the child’s mind against him, by telling her in a loud voice how her grandfather suffered a sickness that came from ‘bad things’ that he had done, and hated her because he found her a burden. Listening to the funeral of Rajiv Gandhi on the radio, he is overwhelmed by the sense of an ending, and can no longer stay confined to the room. Asha touches her mother to draw her attention to her grandfather who has just stepped out, but Anita screams and pinches her so hard that the girl begins to cry. Ram Karan finds her reactions so extreme, he wonders if it’s because Anita is so high-strung, or that she wants to discipline Asha into obeying her indubitably and stay away from the ‘contagion’ her grandfather is.

As a weeping Asha runs off to the other room, Ram Karan hesitantly begins his confession. Every time he fumbles over spelling out the extent of his dissoluteness, Anita prompts him. She doesn’t let him gloss over anything in the telling and acceptance of his sins. She dramatically ‘forgives’ him, making sure he doesn’t miss the sarcasm by also calling him a ‘snake.’ To Ram Karan, admitting his sins does not bring him the relief he was expecting, except filling him with self-pity. He tries to plead innocence for having done any harm to Asha, and what he had done to her happened twenty years ago. “Women’s inability, or unwillingness,” argues Tyner, “to name violence when it is experienced is, in fact, a part of patriarchy.”⁴⁷¹ As a victim of abuse, the child- Anita had obviously been co-opted, with the collusion of her mother, by the norms of patriarchy. Now, however, provoked by his latest act of depravity, she finally rebels and turns the tables on her persecutor. Not only does she spell out the acts of violation by her father, she also compels him to acknowledge his misdeeds as the first step towards acknowledging his crime.

At home, he is anxious to resolve the stalemate with Anita, as things still haven’t normalised between them, despite his ‘confession.’ He gathers courage to talk to her, knowing it would become harder the more he delayed it. He starts by giving her the assurance he wouldn’t hurt her, though he knows it was a foolish thing to say under the circumstances. However, he resolutely carries on by telling her that since he doesn’t have too long to live, it seemed pointless to hate him, and that he was willing to change. At the beginning, Anita ignores him, but soon slams the tray she was picking lentils in, with a clang on the floor and walks off into the kitchen. The home, as many feminist geographers and sociologists have

⁴⁷¹Tyner, James A. “Home.” *Space, Place, and Violence*. . 2012. Pp 40.

pointed out, is a radically gendered space.⁴⁷² While it has been seen in its entirety as a ‘feminine space,’ even specific areas and rooms within the house are marked as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine,’ so to speak. Winifred Gallagher, for instance, contends that George Bernard Shaw’s remark about the home being a girl’s prison and a woman’s workhouse, surely holds true for the kitchen.⁴⁷³ The domestic kitchen, across cultures, has arguably been marked as *the* woman’s space, as she executes her role of caring and nurturing from the hearth.⁴⁷⁴ To Anita, the kitchen is not just the place she where she fulfils her traditional role as the woman of the house, it is also the space she has literally marked as her own. Early in the narrative, we have been told by Ram Karan, she spends most of her days there, despite being cramped, “even reading the newspaper while crouched on the floor” (*AOF*, 8). Ram Karan believes she prefers that space because she ‘fills it completely’ and she feels ‘safe.’ These references to her search for ‘safety’ even in her parental home, are both ironic and tragic. That she feels ‘safe’ in the kitchen not only reiterates the gendered structuring of space in popular imagination as well as dominant discourse, but also allow her to take its exclusivity for granted, knowing that it is not likely to be ‘invaded’ by the Other, in this case, the man. Also, the dimensions of the kitchen that allow her to fill it must give her a sense of being ‘cradled’ or ensconced in a ‘womb,’ to borrow from Bachelard. It is the kind of ‘shielding’ she must have missed in her childhood experience of ‘home’ after the rape. In a section devoted to ‘domesticity’ as a somatosensory boundary definition, James Krasner explores how domestic anxieties, heightened in the case of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders, could occasionally make all of us hide under covers or closets, to get away from the pressures of the world, family or home: “While we all want our homes to enfold and nurture our bodies, people who suffer from boundary anxieties consider such a supportive embrace its main function.⁴⁷⁵ It is not surprising that she runs to the kitchen, when she feels she is being hounded by Ram Karan. She crouches under the kitchen counter with her back to the wall and her knees pulled to her chest. Ram Karan “... cringed at this wretchedness” (*AOF*, 176). Anita’s positioning embodies the dynamics between the hunter and the hunted, with her classic ‘crouching-with-the-back-

⁴⁷²Townsend, Paula. “Gendered Space? An Exploration of the Gendered Meaning and Experience of ‘Home’ in Contemporary British Society.” *Forum*, Research Paper, *Gender and Home*. research.nci.ac.uk/forum.gendered.space .n.d. Pp 40-46. 26th April 2016.

⁴⁷³Gallagher, Winifred. *House Thinking: A Room-By-Room Look at How We Live*. New York: Harper Perennial. 2006. Pp76.

⁴⁷⁴Bowlby, Sophie, et al. “Doing Home.” *Women’s Studies International Forum*. 20 Issue 3 (1997) Pp 343-350.. Pp 345.; McDowell, Linda. “Home, Place and Identity.” *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Geographies*. Cambridge: Polity Press (1999). Pp 75-6; Oakley, Ann. *The Sociology of Housework..* rpt. 1990. Pp 58-9.;

⁴⁷⁵Krasner, James. *Home Bodies: Tactile Experience in Domestic Space*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press. 2010. Pp141.

to-the-wall' pose obviously symbolic of her wretched vulnerability. This was exactly her position twenty years ago as a child, when she was helpless against the father who molested her. Ram Karan can only 'cringe' at the enactment of this victimization, for it is another pointer to his guilt. Even now, there isn't much change in Anita's situation. Though she is an adult, as a widow with a young daughter, it is but a measure of her compulsion that she has to seek refuge in her father's house, from the man who had scarred her for life by exploiting her vulnerability.

Ram Karan squats at the kitchen door, trying to resume the dialogue. Asking her what 'they' should do, he changes the question to what would she want him to do, having just got a moan in response from her. Her response is a stark: "Die. That's what I want" (*AOF*, 176). Demanding that he should now pay for his misdeeds, she asks for money for Asha's expenses, as well as the house bequeathed to her. Ram Karan agrees to give her money and the house, though he is fleetingly anxious about Rajesh's claim to the property. After the agreement, a semblance of normality returns to the house. To establish that he has stuck to his part of the bargain, and has reformed himself, he moves out of his room to sit in the centre of the common room, in full 'public' view, listening to the radio and read the Gita.⁴⁷⁶ Furthermore, to avoid calling attention to his crotch, he desists from sitting in his underclothes as he used to do earlier, and wears pyjamas instead. "A distant but distinct satisfaction came through the anxiety of being in open sight, as if I was managing to move through a difficult and dangerous labour" (*AOF*, p 178). As earlier, the dynamics of his space-use reflect the changes in his situation and position. However, in the present instance, he places himself in 'full view,' rather than in the secret and unseen space of his own room, to prove to Anita he is not crossing the boundaries of good conduct. It gives him the opportunity to engage in casual chatter with his granddaughter after a long time: "Having a home again made me want to talk and talk. In my loneliness, any detail- whether Asha turned left or right at a street corner would have been comforting" (*AOF*, 180). Interestingly, out of a feeling of guilt he had earlier chosen to withdraw himself from the family circle of his own accord. However, when Anita

⁴⁷⁶Perla Korosec-Serfaty draws upon Goffman's distinction between stage and backstage to partially explain the distinction between the hidden and the visible in the dwelling. She contends that the home both 'conceals' and presents a visible façade. But this distinction is drawn at the level of public and private, in terms of the world outside and the family. However, taking on from R.J Lawrence's contention that "specific spaces acquire differential values for members of the same household," and that "these spaces are appropriated in diverse ways" this thesis argues that Korosec-Serfaty's distinction between the hidden and the visible holds good amongst members of the same household or family as well. Thus, a Ram Karan has much to hide, but in the present instance, comes out in the 'open' to establish that he has given up on his bad ways. Korosec-Serfaty. "Experience and the Use of Dwelling." *Home Environments*, edited by I. Altman and C. Werner.. 1985.Pp 73; R. J. Lawrence. "A More Humane History of Homes.." *Home Environments* 1985.Pp 118..

had enforces the same by confining him to his room, he finds it hard to live like a prisoner. Now, having given in to her demands, he feels he has regained his position in the family, a change manifest in the manner in which he literally reclaims the space of his house by positioning him-self centre-stage. From a situation of having been rendered 'homeless-at-home' when he was denied the freedom to interact or move around in the house, he now places himself centre-stage, literally in command.

It is not easy for Anita, however, to let her guard down entirely, as she is never sure she can trust him completely. Not impressed by Ram Karan's display of 'good behaviour,' she would rather err on the side of caution. She monitors Asha constantly, keeping her under strict control, punishing her for the smallest of infractions.⁴⁷⁷ Anita was doing this, Ram Karan believed, so as to be able to exact instant obedience from Asha and thus guard against him. Not only is any natural exuberance of the child restricted due to the animosity of the adults, even her movements in the house are under control. Trapped between two warring adults, the child has the most 'unhomely' of homes to grow up in.⁴⁷⁸ If Anita refuses to play with her, Ram Karan has no other option but to refuse, as well. Anita could never forget how her father had misused her childhood pastime and trapped her in his game of deceit. On his part, Ram Karan is unwilling to give up the "freedom to be anywhere in the flat", and continues to read the Gita in the living room (*AOF*, 180). At night in bed, he muses over the possible topics that are appropriately neutral to bring up at dinner. He imagined, for instance, the news of Mr. Gupta running for Parliament could be stretched over a couple of dinners. Clearly, his efforts at maintaining some level of interaction with the other members of the family are geared towards keeping the notion of 'home' and 'family' alive.⁴⁷⁹ If Anita's 'punishment' for his offence was to silence and marginalise him, by keeping him confined to his room, he now literally works towards countering her actions on both fronts, first by physically re-locating himself at the centre of the house, so to speak, and constantly engaging in some manner of conversation, however desultory it may be.

⁴⁷⁷ Susan Saegert argues that children learn much from about 'appropriate relational behaviour' through their use of space as well as the way others make use of it, in the 'home' that they grow up in. The 'home' Asha is growing up in is hardly exemplary. "The Role of Housing in the Experience of Dwelling." *Home Environments*. edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985.Pp 293.

⁴⁷⁸ The child Asha's experience of 'home' is quite contrary to the idyllic homes of childhood eulogised by Bachelard. See Price, Patricia L. "Place." *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*. Edited by N.C. Johnson et al. 2012. Pp 126.

⁴⁷⁹ Sophie Bowlby, et al point out that 'home' is particularly "engendered... through the activities conducted collectively and individually within the home." By this definition, neither Ram Karan's house in *AOF* nor Aradhana's marital house in *WSG* can be classified as 'home' to the protagonists. "Doing Home." *Women's Studies International Forum*. 20 No. 3.. 1997. Pp 343-350. Pp 346.

However, when he reveals Mr. Gupta's plan of using the Congress money to contest the election for BJP to Anita, she is disgusted by the mess he has involved himself in, accusing him of being weak willed. His guilt again makes him blabber about his old crime, and begins to talk about the newspapers he had lined under her to soak the bleeding. A horrified Anita rushes Asha out of the room, asking him to stop talking about it in the child's hearing. She was sure Asha would be shocked to learn about it, and would always be scared around him. While Ram Karan compulsively keeps going back into the past, Anita is concerned more about the present, as the safety of her daughter is foremost on her mind. She is very clear about the difference between the past and the present: "I am not angry about back then. This is about today.... You are bringing danger now" (*AOF*, 192). Even as Ram Karan tries to reassure her that he would never touch Asha inappropriately or harm her, Anita ironically asks him if she expects her to rely on his 'non-existent' self-control.

Ram Karan realises that merely confessing his crimes to Anita was not sufficient evidence of honouring the bargain, and changes his will. The flat is turned over to Anita, and all other assets are to be divided equally between Anita and her brother Rajesh. 'Home,' in Anita's experience, had never been a 'safe haven' it is popularly expected to be, but having it willed in her name certainly lends her a sense of security it never could, otherwise. Ann Dupuis and David C. Thorns have pertinently argued that home ownership can give a sense of ontological security in a world that could prove to be 'threatening' and 'uncontrollable.'⁴⁸⁰ While she may be relieved in having succeeded in wrangling material security from her father, she disapproves of his professional wheeling-dealings, such as illegally selling Government land.

He visits Asha at school, the first time when he happens to be passing by, believing she may feel protected if she sees his proximity to the Principal, Father Joseph. The Principal tells him she is a very serious child, wondering if she has turned serious after her father's death.⁴⁸¹ Moreover, he tells Ram Karan, she often starts to cry during school, suggesting that she should "leave her sadness at home" (*AOF*, 203). Ram Karan covers up by saying that she is a very sensitive child and takes her to a restaurant outside the school to treat her to a cola and ice-cream. Asha, in her innocence, requests her grandfather to keep the visit a secret from her mother, else she is sure to incur her mother's wrath. Concerned about the obvious signs of

⁴⁸⁰Dupuis, Ann and David C. Thorns. "Home, Home Ownership and the Search for Ontological Security." *The Sociological Review* 46. Issue 1 (1998): Pp 22-47.

⁴⁸¹ Recall Susan Saegert's observation on the impact of dwelling on children. "The Role of Housing in the Experience of Dwelling." *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. Pp 293.

unhappiness he perceives in his granddaughter, convinced he would never harm her as his intentions were pure, he starts to visit Asha regularly at the school during her lunch hour. Yet, as he awaits her in the Principal's office, he feels ashamed of his secret rendezvous, certain that Anita would never approve of such overtures. He would chat with her and try to make her laugh. Occasionally, he bought ice-creams and colas for her school mates as well in the hope that Asha gains some popularity at school. The poor girl believes that her mother kept a watch on her because she suspected her to be a thief, though Ram Karan knows why Anita always tracked them. Asha even confesses she doesn't like her mother and wouldn't mind becoming an orphan. One particular week he goes to see her four times, and then feels guilty thinking of his eagerness to see her as well as remembering how he had rubbed himself against her.

At home, he begins chatting more with Anita, confessing his political sins, anything to deflect her lurking anger. This way, he believed he could give her cause to vent her anger at something other than the rape. He keeps wondering what makes Asha keep the lunch meetings a secret from her mother, though is wary of being accused of wrongs he has not committed. Meanwhile, Anita's all-encompassing anger has her complain about everything around her. At times, he would keep sitting with Anita even after Asha had gone to bed, as he didn't want to leave her alone when she was full of anger. He also finds that money always helps cool her down. For instance, when she had been angry too long, he would give her extra money, or just leave his wallet lying around. To have her steal from him was 'comforting,' for it took the edge off her moral censure. Ram Karan's strategy was to have her exhaust her anger, channelizing it by presenting himself as the punching bag. His constant confessions keep the ball rolling, so to speak. After her anger was diffused, he would suggest an outing. Also, despite her loathing for her father, she occasionally gave him sound advice. After all, she was the one person whose aims almost matched with his own, for his staying clear of the authorities was essential to her survival as well.⁴⁸²

In the flat, he made sure he steered clear of Asha.⁴⁸³ Sometimes, when Asha offered a suggestion for an outing, Ram Karan would present it as his own idea. It worried him to give

⁴⁸² Richard R. Wilk contends that the household "emerges as a complex social group in which each member has different interests, power bases and goals, which are reconciled through various processes. Ram Karan's efforts at engaging with his daughter are clearly geared towards affecting some level of normality in the house. "The Built Environment and Consumer Decisions." *Domestic Architecture*. . 1990. Pp 36.

⁴⁸³ Recall Lawrence's argument about different spaces that may hold 'differential values' to members of the household, and may be used or appropriated differently. "A More Humane History of Homes." *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985.Pp. 118.. Also, Richard R. Wilk's observation that "the

any semblance of collusion with his granddaughter, even for something harmless as a family outing. When Asha shares some story about the school, he always feigned surprise, as if he was hearing it for the first time. His conversations and the rounds of his confessions seemed to give his world some order. Despite his show of reformation, Anita continued to stay paranoid, occasionally waking up Asha in the middle of the night to check on what she had been dreaming of. Her concern may border on the extreme, but her own mother's neglect of the child Anita, this thesis suggests, had been equally extreme.

The murder of Mr. Gupta marks the end of his own political machinations, and his life now settles into a kind of routine. Ram Karan hands over the two thousand rupees regularly to Anita that he had promised her, and visits Asha several times a week at school. When he comes home in the evening, he starts telling Asha about his childhood, as he has run out of 'confessions'. Asha, in fact, finds her mother insipid because she doesn't have any 'stories' to share with her. Or, as Ram Karan put it, she seemed to resent the difference between his 'gregariousness' on the one hand, and Anita's 'reticence,' on the other. Moreover, his observation of Anita is surprisingly poignant: "Now that her anger was gone, she often appeared unguarded, crumpled, an abandoned house dissolving into the ground" (*AOF.*, 257). It was only occasionally that she seemed to be happily involved with Asha, but such instances were quite rare. Occasionally, she took her daughter along to visit relatives, but she was barely welcomed, as they had always been jealous of her husband's initial success. Anita's sister and brother don't care about her. A venal old man who isn't beyond having secret rendezvous with his grand-daughter, a widowed daughter who neither has any place to call her own, nor any meaningful relationships even with her birth family, and a child who is surrounded by adults who are marked for their corrupt and cunning on the one hand, and an impotent rage on the other, make up the household. The atmosphere is far from 'homely.'⁴⁸⁴

It takes Anita a month before she eventually learns about Ram Karan's secret visits to Asha at school. Because he had anticipated and prepared for this confrontation so many times, sure of his 'virtuousness' because he has not done anything 'wrong,' he has the feeling

household is not 'undifferentiated in the use of space' is pertinent. "The Built Environment and Consumer Decisions." *Domestic Architecture*. Edited by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 41.

⁴⁸⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton contend that "the atmosphere of the home becomes a powerful medium for sharing emotional states within the family and for shaping the selves of those who are exposed to it." "The Home as Symbolic Environment." *The Meaning of Things*. 1981. Pp 128. By the end of this narrative, the old man has been 'overfed to death' by his daughter, the granddaughter is molested by the neighbourhood boys after the secret about her mother's sexual abuse is brought into the open, and has to be sent away. The daughter ends up living on the largesse of her brother.

of being ‘falsely accused’. He tries to plead innocence by reiterating he has not touched her, but Anita brushes his pleas aside by telling him she has already checked, and would have taken Asha to a doctor had she found anything amiss. Against the force of Anita’s anger, all his explanations come out as rehearsed, and sound unconvincing even to him. With no suitable defence left to him, he offers to relinquish his freedom, willing to be a prisoner to her. Anita is far from impressed by the offer, for she had once held him captive, and yet he had managed to surreptitiously co-opt her daughter. Having reached a stalemate, Ram Karan can offer no other solution, and Anita just wishes he would just die, that would bring her anxieties to an end. Ideally, she adds, she would like to tell everyone so that the whole world can keep watch over him.

Ram Karan is wary of a public exposure, and tries to mitigate her anger by telling her she isn’t angry because of Asha, but because of what he had done to her. To stall her from going public, he threatens to turn her out, or even disinherit her, if she were to go ahead with her plan. Anita tries to show as if his threats are immaterial, as she could always find elsewhere to live, and sell her jewellery, if the need arose. Ram Karan, in turn, points out the hollowness of her claims, and mocks at the futility of exploring alternatives, as even the police don’t work without a bribe.⁴⁸⁵ Ram Karan clearly plays on Anita’s “financial dependency on the male provider,” and the “dearth of safety nets” to foreground her lack of bargaining power.⁴⁸⁶ He warns her against calling her bluff, and with surprising prescience, tells her that the power lies in the threat of public exposure, rather than the exposure itself. The moment the threat is gone, she would lose the only power she has over him, for shameless as he is, he would suffer no loss of face.

Disgusted with his trite arguments, a desperate Anita systematically begins to expose his deeds, beginning by giving an explicit warning to her daughter. She reveals the danger to Asha, telling her that her grandfather may try to give her a ‘bad’ touch, even as Ram Karan tries to tell her not to bring Asha into their quarrel. However, Anita is determined to tell Asha of what had happened to her as a child, so that she would be clear about the danger her grandfather posed to her. After she tells Asha everything, she warns her against letting it

⁴⁸⁵ Molly Warrington cites women’s economic dependence on their male partner as one of the reasons that they continue to inhabit the ‘home’ that is the site they experience violence and abuse. In the present instance, it is the lack of alternatives and resources that forces Anita to seek shelter in her father’s home after losing her husband. Of course, having been subjected to sexual abuse by his as a child, she is always on tenterhooks for the safety of her daughter. ”I Must Get Out: The Geographies of Domestic Violence.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 26.Issue 3 (2001): Pp 369.

⁴⁸⁶Tyner, James A. .*Space, Place, and Violence*. 2012.Pp 34.

happen to her, threatening to kill her if she allowed something like that to happen, adding she would also kill herself. Anita advises her to scream for help if her grandfather ever tried anything with her. Anita's words of warning are rooted in her fear and anxiety for the well-being of her daughter, forced as they are by circumstances to share the roof with her molester. Also, in her warning lies the stark reality of her own trauma and silencing, not only by the molester, but also by her mother, the only person who could have protected her. It is indeed, the 'geography' of 'home' and 'fear,' to borrow from Molly Warrington that is being played out.

Subsequently, Anita makes good her threat of exposing Ram Karan and goes around telling her family and relatives about the rape. None of the relatives offer any alternatives to Anita. After being exposed by Anita, Ram Karan finds it unbelievable that he is home again, none the worse for the exposure. Unfortunately for Anita, her father's prophecy is horribly coming true. He had tried to warn her against calling the bluff, and the 'triumph of telling' had indeed 'faded' in her maternal Uncle's house itself. Anita is doubly disadvantaged. A patriarchal society that slots the woman ideally as 'wife' and 'mother' in the marital home, has no 'place' for a 'widow.'⁴⁸⁷ Further, given the dominant position of men in a patriarchal society that prioritises the role of husband and father is not likely to show any inclination towards reigning in deviant fathers, as Anita discovers.⁴⁸⁸ Now that she is back from her futile venture, she begins to clean up the flat with great earnestness, in an effort to stake claim of a proprietorship that she felt was equivalent to her father's. She now begins to dread the future, as she has nothing left that could be used as a weapon against her father: "To be angry without power is to be ridiculous" (*AOF*, 277). Ironically, she had tried to use the threat of exposure to keep her father from abusing her daughter, but her visit to the relatives only brings her face to face with the extent of her helplessness and vulnerability not only inside the home, but beyond as well.⁴⁸⁹ She had been banking on the moral support of the relatives, if nothing else, to keep Ram Karan in check and ensure their wellbeing, but in vain. Unsettled

⁴⁸⁷ Sophie Bowlby et al contend that the concept of 'home' is often seen as "a bounded and demarcated space for safeguarding "family life"... in this context, the haven of 'home' is space from which "undesirables are excluded." "Doing Home." *Women's Studies International Forum*. 20. Issue 3 (1997) .Pp 343. An 'abused' daughter, and a widow at that, has no takers amongst her relatives.

⁴⁸⁸Duncan, Nancy. "Renegotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces." *Bodyspace* 1996. Pp 131. Also, Judith Lewis Herman argues that male supremacy creates the social conditions that may engender father-daughter incest and that sexual division of labour creates the psychological conditions that lead to such incidents. (qtd. in S. L. Mignon et al's *Family Abuse: Consequences, Theories and Responses*. 2002.,Pp 115-6).

⁴⁸⁹Sophie Bowlby et. al contend that the 'home' where patriarchal relations are created, reproduced and maintained acts as a 'smokescreen' to camouflage the inequalities of power between men, women and children."Doing Home." *Women's Studies International Forum*. 20 Issue 3 (1997)..Pp 345.

by the experience, she tries to stake her claim over the 'house' for some sense of security: "This flat is mine. We are going to live here forever" (AOF, 278). Yet, even as she speaks, she knows it is only a hollow security that she can offer her daughter.⁴⁹⁰

As she has exposed her father, she worries lest he turn her out in retaliation. There is nowhere else that she can go, no one else who has offered her shelter or succour. She rules out marriage because she has no desire to again take a man as master, for that is what effectively marriage would turn out to be. Recalling how difficult it was to spend even a month as a widow in her in-laws' house, she knows no relative would keep her for long. "Even to think of being homeless, of remembering to put back in your suitcase everything you take out, is exhausting" (AOF, p 278).⁴⁹¹ Taking the 'family secret' out of the family home seems to have undone the idea of 'home' the household created and shared, however dismal or unhomey it may have been.⁴⁹² This is why Anita is now desperate to appropriate the 'house,' to retain the 'shell' that will provide her shelter and security from the dangers of the world outside.⁴⁹³ Worried about her father's reaction to the exposure, she prepares to shout and tell the neighbourhood of his crimes, lest he decide to turn them out. She begins to keep a hammer beside her for safety. Ram Karan, meanwhile, stays confined to his room all night. In fact, Anita doesn't get to see him for two weeks. He just emerges from his room at night as they sleep, foraging the refrigerator for food and water, even taking his bath at night. Again, as

⁴⁹⁰ Roderick J. Lawrence posits that the "tenure status of housing, with its implications of personal control is the critical variable that defines "what makes a house a home." "What Makes a House a Home?" *Environment and Behaviour*. 19. Issue 2 (1987): Pp 154-168.

⁴⁹¹ Julia Wardhaugh's notion of 'homeless at home' pertains to what women who experience abuse at home feel. In the present instance, Anita, as a victim of child abuse, feels insecure of her position at home after she has publically exposed him. "The Unacomodated Woman." *The Sociological Review*. 47 Issue 1 (1999). Pp 91-109. Pp 96-97.

⁴⁹² Sophie Bowlby, et al argue that 'houses' become 'homes' when they provide and become the environment within which relationships that are 'close,' 'personal' and 'private' are located. "Doing Home." *Women's Studies International Forum* 20 Issue 3 (1997) Pp 343-348. Pp 344. Also, in an article on Stately Homes, Lawrence Stone elaborates on the notion of privacy in the context of 'home': 'group privacy' and 'personal privacy.' The group privacy is the withdrawal of the members of the family or household as a group from contact with all others, as the 'home' effects. ("The Public and the Private in the Stately Homes of England." *Social Research: An International Quarterly of the Social Sciences*. 58 No.1 (1991): Pp227-251). Anita's revelations have made the 'private' public.

⁴⁹³ Roderick J Lawrence posits that the house provides 'shelter' and 'protection for domestic activities.' Anita needs that 'security' from the outside world. After she reveals the sordid truth about Ram Karan to her neighbours, rather than sympathising, they subject her and her daughter to shame and ridicule. The neighbourhood turns even more inhospitable than it was. "What Makes a House a Home?" *Environment and Behaviour*. 19 Issue 2 (1987). Pp 154-168.

earlier, Ram Karan time-zones his space use to avoid interacting with Anita, or even Asha, for that matter.⁴⁹⁴

Anita panics at smallest of sounds when she is alone in the flat.

When Asha is at school and Pitaji is behind his blue door, the idea that there is no one to help makes me feel so lonely and afraid that I begin boiling sheets or washing all the walls with soap. By working hard I can prove the flat is mine (*AOF*, 278).

The sense of not ‘belonging,’ of not feeling ‘at home’ is acute, indeed.⁴⁹⁵ She only breathes easy once Asha is home from school, though they hardly speak. The knowledge and fear that she has failed to keep in check her father’s propensity for malevolence magnifies her sense of insecurity. As a widow with a young daughter she needs the sanctuary that only a roof over her head can give, and her father’s house is the only option she is left with, despite the peril it embodies. In a house rife with the antagonism of the two adults, the child can hardly stay unaffected. All the three members, in fact, try to keep to themselves and stay away from each other, if only to minimise the chance of an open confrontation.⁴⁹⁶ Asha remains uncharacteristically silent about her grandfather, and prefers to go up to the roof with her school books. Anita counts the money she has, including the amount she has stolen from him to work out how long it would last. She knows that he can’t stay confined to his room forever, and will emerge one day. On her part, she imagines if she keeps him happy with food, he will stay confined to his room for longer. Thus, she begins to cook good, rich food and stock the refrigerator before going to bed at night, and even slips in the newspaper under his door. After following this strategy for a few weeks, she changes tack. She imagines it would be prudent to diminish his antagonism so that ultimately they can begin to live together as before. The fear of being turned out on the street always lurks in her subconscious mind.

⁴⁹⁴Munro, M and R. Madigan, R.. “Negotiating Space in the Family Home.” *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space* edited by Irene Cieraad. ,New York: Syracuse University Press. Pp113.

⁴⁹⁵ Botond Bognar draws upon Heidegger’s concept of ‘dwelling’ and contends that it is the innate wish to ‘belong’ to the environment, the need to “feel inside a place and to be at home” that is fulfilled by the place people inhabit, the place called ‘home.’ “A Phenomenological Approach to Architecture and its Teaching in the Design Studio.”*Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World*, edited by David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer. New York: Columbia University Press Morningside Edition. 1985.Pp 189.

⁴⁹⁶ Paul J. J. Pennartz suggests that “[p]oor relationships are ...expressed in observable spatial behaviour,” and correlates the detrimental impact on the environment with negative relationships amongst co-residents. “Home: The Experience of Atmosphere.” *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*. Edited by. Irene Cieraad. 1999. Pp 99.

The morning that he does emerge, however, fills Anita with an elemental fear that makes her literally run up to the roof to just get away from him. Until she had seen him, she had imagined living together again. After she takes a look at him, however, she is unable to face him. She is sure he is quite capable of repeating his crimes. He is all dressed to go out. She had imagined that shaming him would keep him confined to the house, and under her control. However, his stepping out is not only a sign of her failure, but it is also evidence of the fact that he has no shame. He again protests his innocence, saying he has done no wrong to Asha. To Anita, however, it was bad enough that he had touched her at all.

The fear of what Ram Karan is capable of makes Anita bolt his room when he goes back inside, the only way she imagines she can keep him in check. She also throws away all his blood pressure medicines from the fridge. She opens the door for him to use the toilet, and for the night. Asha is disgusted with both of them. Roxana Waterson posits that the built environment is imbued with meaning that may be produced through the positioning and manipulation of both objects, and the human body. Thus, she argues, it is through the movement, placement or exclusion of the human body from particular spaces or actions, as well as their spatial interactions with each other in the house that in turn shape the relations of those who inhabit the space.⁴⁹⁷ The familial relationships have irrevocably soured. The decline in his condition in turn emboldens Anita, sure she can physically restrain or fight him, if the need arises. Without his regular medication, Ram Karan has begun to look weak and older. He visits his doctor, but Anita calls him up too, and tells him about her father. After she bolts him in again, she throws away the fresh set of medicine he had just got for himself. Once Asha attempts to let him come out by unlocking the door, but Anita rebuts her swiftly and bolts him in again. When his office calls about him, she just reports that he is sick. Her Aunts pay a visit, expressing their concern about her, suggesting a match, or even that Asha should be taken away, but Anita again expresses her disinterest. She is, of course sceptical and disappointed in her Aunts for having taken so long to show their concern. Nevertheless, as she doesn't want to call their attention to the way she keeps her father confined, she ensures a semblance of cordiality in her exchanges with them.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁷Waterson, Roxana. *The Living House: An Anthropology of Architecture in South-East Asia*. Second edition. Singapore: Thames and Hudson. 1997. Pp 167.

⁴⁹⁸ Nancy Duncan has elaborated on the spatial strategies male abusers employ to isolate his partner from the extended family and the social networks by confining her in private spaces. In an ironic twist, it is Anita, a survivor of father-daughter incest who now applies the same strategies to keep the incestuous father under control. "Negotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces." *Bodyspace*. 1996. Pp 133.

Anita's revenge is physically wearing him down. Not only has she deprived him of his medicine, she has also been feeding him with rich, unhealthy food, a diet that is sure to kill him sooner or later. Lying inert on bed, he appears less dangerous to her. It is his potential to repeat a crime that Anita finds impossible to come to terms with. Thus, even as he ceases to be a real threat, thanks to her tactic, she cannot visualise life with him in the future:

Yet nothing in his soft round face or his swollen stomach demands the death I wish him. When I close his door that afternoon it is not to cage him, as it has been before, but to remove him from sight so I can forget (*AOF*, p 286).

With all her options exhausted, she has no choice but to literally disarm and confine him, to safeguard herself and her daughter. If Anita was unsuccessful in garnering opprobrium for the father who committed incest from the community whose censure could have kept him under check, she manages to manipulate his 'freedom' within the house to ensure he does not make a wrong move.⁴⁹⁹ In the face of his depravity, Anita feels she can be counted as a 'good woman,' alone in the world, with no one who can understand her suffering. Having confined him to his room, keeping him effectively out of sight, she now focuses her energies on blocking him out of her mind, as far as possible.

The night he has a heart attack, he tells his granddaughter that her mother is wilfully killing him, what with depriving him of his medication and forcing him to have bad food. This time around he doesn't let Anita bolt the door, and creates a racket when she does so. In fact, he tells her that he wouldn't mind the door shut to avoid having to see her 'unlucky face,' but he doesn't want it bolted as he is no 'animal' who needs to be caged in. Initially Anita is relieved her father may stop her from ruining his health, but he continues to eat the oil-rich food, and does not even demand the medicines. It is like a macabre ballet that the father-daughter play out, as the ailing old man refuses to stay confined and in fact is constantly all over the flat.⁵⁰⁰ If he had earlier been shut out of their lives, he now tries to 'enter' every part of their lives, literally and figuratively. For instance, he sits next to them as

⁴⁹⁹ Richard Wilk's contention about members of a household using a variety of strategies such as force and deception to manipulate space use is pertinent here. "Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology." *Domestic Architecture*. edited by S.Kent.1990. Pp 41.

⁵⁰⁰ Roderick J. Lawrence propounds the following theorem as crucial to analysing domestic space, and, this thesis contends, proves enlightening in mapping the dynamics in Ram Karan's household: "the relationship between habitat and inhabitant is changeable, and it includes factors that may remain unresolved over a relatively long period of time." Thus, Anita has tried to diffuse the potential threat her father poses to her daughter by keeping him locked in a room, but beyond a point he refuses to be incarcerated. Moreover, he reasserts himself by literally moving around the whole flat. "A More Humane History of Homes.." *Home Environments*. edited by I. Altman and C. Werner. 1985. Pp 118.

they eat their food, occasionally even dipping into their plates to grab a bite. Anita, however, cannot touch the food once he has dipped into her plate. They just more or less ignore him.⁵⁰¹

Sometimes, Anita is moved by his suffering, but then she just looks the other way. After she notices his bloodless ankles, can't help crying at all the unhappiness. Ram Karan begins to venture out of the flat, telling his neighbours his daughter is killing him for his money. Fed up of the treatment meted out to him by Anita, Ram Karan steps out of the house one last time before his death to change his will. Anita notices her daughter looking older than her years, but she's afraid to confront the reality.⁵⁰² Deprived of his medicines and forced to eat a rich and unhealthy diet, Ram Karan dies soon after. Anita moves in with her brother Rajesh after Ram Karan's death, and they sell the flat. He is infuriated with his sister for having exposed their father after all these years. They fight over her contribution towards her upkeep for staying under his roof. Far from garnering any sympathy amongst the neighbourhood for having been abused as a child, she is frowned upon as a 'fallen woman.' In fact, the 'family history' of abuse turns upon her daughter, who is molested and harassed by the local boys. Anita's sister Kusum, the narrative elaborates, feels guilty for having had the freedom to lead her life and fulfil her dreams while her sister was shackled to a life of abuse and misfortune. She adopts Anita's daughter Asha and takes her away to the States to atone for her indifference. At the end of the narrative, none of the protagonists are 'at home,' or even have a home. Ram Karan doesn't survive his wanton behaviour, Anita has to move in with an insensitive brother,⁵⁰³ and a rather unwilling Asha is made to relocate to the States.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰¹ Taking on from Lawrence Stone's notion of 'personal privacy' from outsiders that the house affords the inhabitant, this thesis argues that unlike 'group privacy' pitching the family against the rest of the world which is rather simple to enforce, 'personal privacy' is rather contentious. Privacy as defined by Donald Sanders as the "control of unwanted interaction and communication" is hard to enforce within filial relationships, particularly those marked by inequality of power. Stress is created, Sanders argues, if the achieved level of privacy does not match the desired level of privacy. It is only through the creation of 'boundaries' that the autonomy of personal space can be maintained. Thus, Sanders continues, people establish visible and invisible boundaries and zones of interaction to define and demarcate their personal space. Whether by locking doors, excluding Ram Karan from the household rituals, or even not having the meal together are ways in which Anita creates boundaries between them. Ram Karan's act of dipping into their plate of food as they eat is a clear example of undesired interaction that evokes revulsion in Anita. Lawrence Stone. "The Public and the Private in the Stately Homes of England, 1500- 1990." *Social Research*. 58. No. 1 (Spring 1991). Pp227-251. Pp 228. Doald Sanders. "Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology: Methods for the Analysis of Ancient Architecture." *Domestic Architecture*. edited by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 49-51.

⁵⁰² Gill Jones explores different connotations that the idea of 'home' may hold for different people and posits that young people in unhappy homes may be housed but feel emotionally 'homeless.' "Experimenting with Households and Inventing 'Home.'" *International Social Science Journal*. 52 Issue 164(2000). Pp 183-194.

⁵⁰³ Anita is rendered 'homeless at home,' to borrow from Julia Wardhaugh, for having exposed her incestuous father. Her brother resents having to share his house with her. "The Unaccommodated Woman." *The Sociological Review*. 47 Issue 1 (1999). Pp 91-109.

Bachelard eulogises the house one is born in as an ‘inhabited house’, one that is inscribed in the bones. It is an embodiment not only of ‘home’ but also of one’s ‘dreams.’⁵⁰⁵ Patricia Price also celebrates the childhood home as a repository of memories that one can revisit to reaffirm one’s subjectivity.⁵⁰⁶ Aradhana, the protagonist of *The Web of Silk and Gold*, as the youngest daughter, is cosseted by older sisters and a loving mother, grows up in an idyllic childhood home. It is ‘inscribed in her bones, and embodies her dreams and memories. As a child, the only thing she feels deprived of is her father’s love, who, as the typical patriarch, is anything but demonstrative. To Anita, the protagonist of *An Obedient Father* however, the childhood home has been a site of abuse, and her adult life is marred by the memories that haunt rather than rejuvenate her. As the victim of incest, ‘home’ to the young Anita had only been a place of suffering and repression.⁵⁰⁷ In any case, a house that nurtured no loving relationships could hardly have been a ‘happy home’ to the family that was made up of one parent who was callous and the other indifferent, and siblings who naturally takes after their parents. The husband and wife go their separate ways, one lost in the world of deceit and debauchery, and the other devoted to seeking salvation from spiritual gurus. Of the three siblings, Anita’s sister escapes the enervating circumstances at home and settles abroad, while their brother distances himself from the family and becomes a successful businessman.

The narratives can be read through Cooper’s notion of ‘home as haven’ and ‘home as trap.’⁵⁰⁸ ‘Home as trap’ is an experience shared by other protagonists as well, such as Jaya in Deshpande’s *That Long Silence* discussed earlier. Of course, homes can feel like ‘traps’ for a variety of reasons. Aradhana’s marital home in *A Web of Silk and Gold* turns out to be a nightmarish place, as she finds herself trapped in marriage to a man who is violent and abusive. The novel opens at a point when she has managed to escape from the marital home,

⁵⁰⁴ Gill Jones explores different connotations that the idea of ‘home’ may hold for different people and posits that young people in unhappy homes may be housed but feel emotionally ‘homeless.’ “Experimenting with Households and Inventing ‘Home.’” *International Social Science Journal* 52 Issue 164 (June 2000) pp 183-194, p184.

⁵⁰⁵ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. 1994.. Pp 51-52.

⁵⁰⁶ Price, Patricia L. ”Place.” *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*. Edited by N. C. Johnson et al. .2013.Pp 126.

⁵⁰⁷ H. M. Proshansky et al stress upon the strong desire for an emotional attachment to the childhood home and its related environment, that are obvious in Aradhana’s feelings as discussed above. Yet, Proshansky et al also posit that place-belongingness can only occur when the positive cognition of place-identity outweighs the negative. This argument is exemplified in the case of Sharma’s protagonist Anita, whose memories of the childhood home are only traumatic. “Place Identity.” *Journal Of Environmental Psychology*. 3 Issue 1 (1983). Pp 57-83.

⁵⁰⁸ Marcus, Clare Cooper. ”Home-as –Haven, Home-as-Trap.” *The Spirit of Home*, edited by Q. Patrick and R. Benson. 2006..Pp 2-21..

and it is through flashback and reminisces that the contrast is built up between her childhood experience of home and the marital home where she was entrapped. Thus, the ‘cold’ of the marital home in Darjeeling reminds her of the ‘warmth’ of her childhood home in Madurai. The abusive relationship mars the beauty of both the house and its surroundings, forcing her to seek ways to ‘escape’ from the house that is her prison. Interestingly, while she could never feel ‘at home’ in Darjeeling where she suffered so much trauma and abuse, her childhood home turns out to be an ‘alien space’ for her as well when she goes there as a ‘married’ daughter. It is the deep socio-cultural conditioning that closes the doors of the parental home to the married daughter, as she seeks refuge from the ‘prison’ that her marital home has been. It is only when she finds love and care in her relationship with Mark that she can feel ‘at home’ again, in the lodgings that they take up temporarily in Chennai. By the end of the narrative, she leaves for Canada to be with Mark, finally ‘going home’ to him.

In the narrative present, the widowed daughter Anita in *An Obedient Father* has to share the roof with her father, as she has no one else to turn to. Forced by circumstances to live in close proximity with the father who had victimised/ abused her as a child, she can only feel ‘trapped.’ Moreover, she can never let her guard down because she fears for the safety of her daughter Asha. The moment she realises her fears may be coming true, the mother’s instinct to safeguard her daughter takes over. Her pent up fury is unleashed and she systematically goes about punishing him in every way possible. This time, it is she who ‘traps’ her father, as there seems to be no other way to keep him in check. As the battle lines are drawn between a belligerent daughter and a brazen father, the atmosphere of the house is vitiated completely, a house that can be ‘home’ to no one in the family.

Roderick J. Lawrence’s concept of ‘boundary’ is another fruitful way to approach the narratives through an exploration of its significance to domestic space. It is both as spatial and psychological barriers that boundaries can play a crucial role in distinguishing artefacts and activities: “In general, it is the quality of the markers of boundaries which is a source of personal conflict or anxiety, because they are ambiguous and may remain in a state of flux over an extended period of time.”⁵⁰⁹ An Aradhana in Niranjhana’s novel is not safe from her husband, either in her marital home, or from him in her parental home. The privilege of dissolution of all barriers and boundaries that matrimony occasions, is abused by her husband. In Sharma’s novel, Ram Karan breaks the norms of not only the father-daughter relationship,

⁵⁰⁹Lawrence, Roderick J. “Public Collective and Private Space: A Study of Urban Housing in Switzerland.” *Domestic Architecture*. ,edited by Susan Kent. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 76-77.

but also violated the boundaries of her personal space. If Anita was unsafe in her father's house as a child, her daughter is also in a vulnerable position, forced by circumstances to seek refuge under his roof. Anita can only retaliate by 'caging' him into oblivion. To face violence of any kind, physical, sexual or even psychological, is a denial of freedom and autonomy that is only exacerbated when experienced in the home, the place one should ideally be free from the cares of the world. "Home is a place of security within an insecure world, a place of certainty within doubt..." contends Dovey. (qtd. in Dovey, 1985)⁵¹⁰ The 'homes' inhabited by the protagonists of these narratives belie Dovey's formulation. Unless they can experience complete autonomy, they can't truly feel at home.

⁵¹⁰Dovey, Kimberly. "Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*. Edited by I. Altman and C. Werner.. 1985. Pp 46.

CHAPTER 5:

BACK TO ROOTS: HOME IS BELONGING

The house in the picture is afloat on a river the innocuous colour of darkening sepia. The house is a folly, a Roman-looking affair with tapering pillars soaring to its arched roof.⁵¹¹

The house Amulya built in Songarh looked out of place: a tall, many windowed town house in the middle of scrubland and fields that were sparsely built upon at the time. The house was to look southward, turning its face from the road. (*Atlas*, 13).

(Kannan) had never felt so much a part of Doraipuram. It was quite extraordinary, he reflected, how from age to age, this piece of land by the river pulled people into its embrace – his grandfather, his father, his brother, himself.... At moments like this, any doubts that he might have felt about returning were stilled.⁵¹²

This chapter explores narratives that trace the protagonists' quest for belonging in a move that ultimately takes them back home, arguably back to their roots. The two novels discussed here are Anuradha Roy's *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* (2008) and David Davidar's *The House of Blue Mangoes* (2002). What both novels have in common is an innate need in the protagonists to 'reclaim' home, particularly impelled to go back to their roots to reignite the sense of belonging they had either once forsaken, or been denied. In an article drawing out a distinction between 'rootedness' and 'sense of belonging,' the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan contends that 'rootedness' comes with 'long habitation,' citing examples of peoples such as the Pygmies of the Congo forest or the Tasaday of Mindanao in the Philippines. In fact, based on this definition of 'rootedness,' he goes on to argue that the experience of 'rootedness' in the true sense is not possible for people living in contemporary Western societies. Nevertheless, he redefines 'rootedness' for the contemporary world as a psychological state of being: "To acquire a sense of extended time and genealogical depth, it may be necessary only

⁵¹¹Roy, Anuradha Roy. *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*. Second edition. Gurgaon: Hachette India, 2011. Pp 1. Subsequent references to the novel incorporated in the text, with page numbers, as *Atlas*.

⁵¹²Davidar, David. *The House of Blue Mangoes*. Second edition. London: Phoenix Paperbacks. 2003. Pp 469.. Subsequent references to the text incorporated in the chapter as *THBM*, with page numbers.

to live in a house that one's grandfather had built."⁵¹³ It is pertinent that the protagonists of both the novels discussed in this section were born in, and go back to, the houses built by their grandfathers.

The house by the river in Manoharpur delineated in the opening quote is an incongruous relic of past glory. Not only does it have the power to cloud over the fate of the house in Songarh, but will live on in the post-narratorial future, at the end of the novel. Clearly, 'old houses,' to borrow the words of a character in the novel who was born homeless, don't 'go away'. That the narrative opens on a fading 'image' of a house washed away in the river, before leading to a description of the house the protagonist inhabits should alert the reader to its significance. After this seemingly false start, the reader is introduced to the house in Songarh where the narrative is centred, but the description is far from promising. Apparently, it looked 'out of place' amidst the scrubland on the outskirts of the town. Even more incongruously, despite its numerous windows and balconies, the reader is told, it is an inward looking house, as it faces 'away from the road.' On the other hand is David Davidar's novel that also sweeps across generations as it narrates the life and times of the Dorai clan, its fortunes intertwined with the fate of the Big House, the house that marks the family's position and status in the community. Exiled by circumstances, the son Daniel vows to come back and re-establish the glory of the Dorais by building a house that would be a fitting testament to its lineage. And there is his son Kannan, forced into exile by a father unwilling to concede to his desires, finally come home again, no longer in any doubts about his identity or location. Davidar's narrative takes us through the gamut of movement between home and away, an oft repeated cycle that runs across generations, to eventually end with a final homecoming.

In Roy's novel, the house that the patriarch Amulya built on 3, Dulganj Road provides the locale where his family tries to make a 'home', though arguably without much success, as the reader soon discovers. Apparently, it is not only the location, but the very structure of the house that seems to be at odds, hindering the fruition of the house into a 'home,' so to speak. Shirley Chew, in a review of the novel also points out not only to Amulya's yearning for isolation in constructing that house, but also to Kananbala seeking solace in talking to herself, trapped in that silent and 'secretive' house.⁵¹⁴ Further, each of the three sections open with reference to Mukunda, a character who is not part of the family, yet is instrumental in

⁵¹³Tuan, Yi-Fu, "Rootedness versus Sense of Place." *Landscape*. 24. Issue 1 (1980): Pp 3-8. (())

⁵¹⁴Chow, Shirley. "A History at Risk as the Waters Rise." Rev. of *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* by Anuradha Roy. www.independent.co.uk. Independent Print Ltd. 4th July 2008. Accessed 18th August 2016..

bringing the diverse strands together. Part One, *'The Drowned House,'* opens with an introduction to a tribal girl who will soon give birth to the illegitimate child Mukunda. The child's fortunes are steered by Amulya, who takes pity on the tribal girl's plight and arranges for his upbringing at an orphanage. However, he does not enter the house until section two, when he is brought home by Amulya's younger son. Part Two, *'The Ruined Fort,'* establishes the orphan's liminal status in the house of his now deceased benefactor Amulya, and Part Three, *'The Water's Edge,'* is a first person account of the grown up Mukunda. Roy's narrative explores various facets of 'house,' 'home,' 'belonging' and 'alienation' of a house that spells serendipity to the husband, but stifles the wife, a house that provided a semblance of 'home' and 'family' to the orphan Mukunda until his adolescence, only to be cruelly deprived of the cocoon and thrown out. If Amulya's younger son once found it the perfect home he couldn't wait to get back to, whether to be with his mother, or later to be with his new bride, events take such a turn that it takes him years of wandering all over the country, ostensibly on work, before he can bear to come home again.⁵¹⁵ The second section of the novel revolves around the goings on in the house identified not by a name, as is usual, but the number '3,' Amulya's nod to the father and sons trio. Yet, the section is not titled after the house, but the ruined fort that lies in the vicinity, for it is the fort that provides a welcome relief to the characters seeking 'refuge' from the house they inhabit.⁵¹⁶ A lifetime later, the third section takes us full circle to 'the water's edge,' to the 'sepia toned' house that was 'afloat on a river' in the picture. Ironically, the orphan who had been thrown out of the house as an unwanted outsider, is the one who proves saviour to the only 'home' he has ever known.

The narrative opens on the protagonist Amulya attending a harvest festival celebrated by the tribal community, a mute spectator to the lively dancing and merrymaking. Obligated to attend because they were a part of his workforce, he keeps trying to identify the dancers in the firelight as they whirl to the music. An attractive, young and vivacious tribal girl comes forward to engage him in the dance, but Amulya only has eyes for the exotic flower she wears in her hair, and she is gracious enough to gift it to him promptly. His brush with the young

⁵¹⁵ Scholars have explored notions of 'home' and 'away' or 'home' and 'journey' in terms of discovering new facets of home' when away, or even forming new attachments to other places as examples of the dynamic relationship with 'place' as L.C.Manzo puts it. However, Amulya's younger son effectively stays away from home for long periods of time because of the loss and emotional upheaval he goes through. It did not feel like 'home' to him. Manzo, L. "Beyond Haven and House." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 23 Issue 1 (2003) Pp 47-61., p52.

⁵¹⁶ H.M. Proshandsky et al stress upon the significance of the physical settings beyond the home that undoubtedly contribute to a person's 'place- identity,' an important sub component of 'self-identity.' "Place Identity." *Journal of Enviromental Psychology*. 3 Issue 1 (1983).Pp 57-83. Pp 61.

girl, however, is to propel the narrative forward, as he will shortly be beseeched for help to take charge of her illegitimate progeny. For now, however, the scene shifts to the house on 3, Dulganj road, where his silently suffering wife awaits him late into the night, as always. Kananbala bids her time, her ears tuned to the distant sound of the drumbeats far away, mixed with the sounds of the crows close by who seem to be confused whether its day or night. Yet, when her husband arrives, she only treats him to silence, pretending to be deeply immersed in the Ramayana she is reading. It is the flower he has brought back from the festivities, that evokes a barrage of questions from her. She has always wondered if there are other women at the get-togethers that her husband goes to attend from time to time, wondering why she too can't be taken along. Amulya, as always, ignores her prattle, engrossed in trying to identify the provenance of the exotic flower. The husband lost in his own world, one in which there is no space for his wife.

Originally from Calcutta, Amulya had been captivated by the little town of Songarh on his first visit itself, deciding to settle down in the sleepy town. With the aid of the tribals, he had set up a factory that made potions and perfumes from the large variety of flora that grew in the forest. He knew he was an anomaly amongst the Songarh society, having given up after some initial efforts to fit in. On their part, they were disappointed in Amulya, who neither 'danced' nor 'gossiped', having expected a 'Metropolitan Dandy' from Calcutta. Instead, he is a man who loves his solitude, having chosen to build his house on the outskirts of the town, much to the disappointment of his wife, who sorely missed the bustle of a thriving city, where she had lived amidst a large and lively family. The house, we are told, looks 'out of place' in the midst of scrubland and fields, with little habitation, barring an Englishman's house across the road. A large house with verandahs and balconies, courtyards and a huge garden that feels empty and cavernous to Kananbala, as it turns its gaze inwards. Interestingly, it's very structure makes it unwelcome to visitors: "The Northern side that faced the road, with its rows of shuttered windows, seemed to tell visitors that it would be nicer to stand upstairs and watch them go rather than welcome them in" (*Atlas*, 13).⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁷ Elizabeth Shove argues that "(t)he location, shape, and form of our homes impinge directly on the smallest details of our daily lives. 'Constructing Home: A Crossroads of Choices.'" *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*, edited by Irene Cieraad...1999. Pp 130.; Gerry Pratt also problematises notions of 'individuality' and 'self-actualisation' that are imbricated with the idea of house as 'commodity.' The house on 3, Dulganj Road can certainly be seen as an outcome of Amulya's expression of 'individuality' and 'self-actualisation.' "The House as an Expression of Social Worlds.." *Housing and Identity*, edited by J.S. Duncan. 1981. Pp 144.

If Amulya eagerly seeks the peace and quiet that the house affords him, his wife finds the same features oppressive. Amulya looked forward to the ‘miraculous moment’ when the cacophony of the town would be left behind as he rode home, only to be replaced by the ‘tall trees’ and the ‘echoing stillness,’ interspersed by the birdsong from the forest. Kananbala had disliked the house from the start, a complete contrast to the childhood home she grew up in, the rambling family house in Calcutta, brimming with the chatter of aunts and cousins. Initially, the unaccustomed silence turns her garrulous, but there is an acute shortage of company. The only neighbours are an English family she does not share the language with. She resorts to chatting with the maids, until she chances upon them smirking over something she had said, leaving Amulya as her sole interlocutor. However, Amulya too can’t take her non-stop prattle from the moment he returns home from work, until the day sheer exasperation makes him ask to be left alone for a while. Her husband’s snub stuns her into silence and marks a turning point as it transforms her forever. Until now, she had held on to the keys of her unused rooms in Calcutta, keeping alive a faint hope of returning to the life she loved. The irrevocable disposal of the old keys that Kananbala now throws into the well marks the end of her garrulous self. It is only much later, after she loses her mental balance, will her husband spare her a thought and wonder when or why his wife lost her vivacity. “The silence that to Amulya meant repletion locked Kananbala within a bell jar she felt she could not prise open for air” (*Atlas*, 16).⁵¹⁸

The narrative jumps forward to twenty years later, with the older son Kamal married and the younger son Nirmal at college. Amulya stays at the factory longer and longer, and when Kananbala complains of loneliness, he chides her for being unconcerned about the efforts he needs to put in to earn more to fulfil their growing needs. Her husband’s choice of a house on the outskirts of a town far from any relatives still rankles with Kananbala. The very sounds from the jungle that resonate like music to Amulya’s ears, add to the feeling of eeriness and fear for Kananabala. In her lonely and wakeful hours she thinks she can hear the lion roar, but it’s a secret she can share with no one. In fact, the ‘roar of the lion’ reverberates like a *leit-motif* throughout the narrative, symbolising her entrapment in a house that, to her, feels empty as the wilderness, bereft as it is, of a kindred soul. In sharp contrast is the picture of Amulya, exulting in the sensation of being completely ‘at home’ in his abode, both literally and figuratively. He revels in every moment and experience that his house and its

⁵¹⁸ Clare Cooper Marcus’s analogy of ‘home as trap’ is pertinent here, and the protagonist’s experience of feeling ‘trapped’ will surface again and again. “Home-as-Haven, Home-as-Trap.” *The Spirit of Home*, edited by Q. Patrick and R. Benson. 2006. Pp 2.

surrounding countryside has to offer, be it the lush garden that he cultivates with great care at home, with every tree and bush that is to take root there carefully handpicked, or his daily walk in the forest, at the break of dawn, when “the forest, the cool air, the purple sky, all of it was his alone” (*Atlas*, 20). David Seamon in his work entitled *A Geography of the Lifeworld* (1979) writes about the attachment to home that is associated with the experience of ‘at-homeness’. The protagonist Amulya’s life and routine exemplifies Seamon’s definition of ‘rootedness’ as the “power of home to organise the habitual, bodily stratum of the person’s lived space. Literally, home roots the person spatially, providing a physical centre for departure and return.”⁵¹⁹ Concomitantly, Amulya follows a fixed routine that accounts for his every waking minute. It is only natural that he doesn’t have a minute to spare for his wife, let alone the patience to lend her an ear, for he is completely absorbed in his pursuits both within the house and outside it, be it the factory, the forest, or the garden at home.

Interestingly, if the feeling of ‘being alone’ drives the wife to despair, the husband literally exults in being ‘alone,’ building a ring of solitude around him wherever he goes, be it the jungle at the break of dawn, his factory where he goes an hour earlier, or his house and garden, where he brooks no interference to his routine. In a chapter on the domestic garden as a recreational space, Stephen Williams delineates on the significance and value of gardens that goes beyond the formal qualities and the patterns of use. He draws upon an extensive study of the meaning of gardens by Francis and Hester, to offer a number of perspectives from which gardens may be viewed. Thus, it can be seen as a reflection of the human tendency to impose order “on nature, on people, on events and on environments...” (qtd. in Williams, 1995)⁵²⁰ Another interesting facet Williams draws out from Francis and Hester’s study is how the activity of gardening facilitates direct and indirect benefits such as “relaxation, education, exercise and interpersonal contact with family and friends...”⁵²¹ Thus, while one can see Amulya’s efforts at imposing order in his world in tandem with Williams’ postulation, any benefits that accrue from the activity, however, are Amulya’s alone. There is never any instance in the novel of the family members partaking pleasure from the carefully tended garden. One evening, for instance, Kananbala breaks with her usual practice of watching her husband from the upstairs balcony, inexplicably impelled to walk up to him in the garden and

⁵¹⁹ Seamon, David. *A Geography of the Lifeworld: Movement, Rest, Encounter*. London: Croom and Helm. 1979. Pp 79.

⁵²⁰ Mark, Francis and and Randolph T. Hester, eds. *The Meaning of Gardens: Idea, Place and Action*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1990. Qtd in Williams, Stephen. *Outdoor Recreation and the Urban Environment*. London: Routledge. 1995. Pp 76.

⁵²¹ _____. *The Meaning of Gardens: Idea, Place and Action*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1990. Qtd in Williams, Stephen. *Outdoor Recreation and the Urban Environment*. London: Routledge. 1995. Pp 76.

break into his reverie. Preoccupied with the financial arrangements for the orphan entrusted to him, Amulya hasn't seen her come and almost doesn't recognise her. Wordlessly she turns to go, understandably finding him 'wooden' and unresponsive as a 'tree'. Significantly, at this point, the novelist draws upon a spatial metaphor to comment on the 'distance' between the husband and wife: "The few hundred feet separating the upstairs verandah from the garden bench became a vastness impossible to cross" (*Atlas*, 25).

The strain of having lived life in a house marked by its 'echoing, empty rooms' and the 'wild enormous garden' takes a toll on Kananbala as she begins to manifest signs of ageing much before her time, shuffling and mumbling to herself (*Atlas*, 16). To her husband Amulya, the changes in his wife merit the page for Sunday in his diary, the rest being taken up by records of his factory. The meticulous records help him keep things under control and manageable, be it the factory, or his wife's mysterious ailment. When the doctor finds her medically fit, ailing from nothing worse than 'boredom,' Amulya can only find fault with her for not engaging in any constructive pursuits. Clearly, the distance between them is a 'vastness impossible to cross.'

Meanwhile, the wedding preparations for her favourite son Nirmal are on in full swing, and she prepares to welcome another daughter-in-law. The house by the river that featured in the sepia-toned image of the prologue now formally enters the narrative, as the bride is from the house in Manoharpur. Given the traditional Indian cultural milieu, the tussle for proprietorship between the mother and the bride over the son/groom are played out in tragic-comic tableau the morning after the bride arrives in her marital home, exemplifying Donald Sander's reading of cultural conventions and behavioural responses to the built environment. Sanders draws upon the theoretical framework of semiotics to interpret the interplay between human behaviour and domestic space. In the event, it is his elaboration of the properties of personal space that proves valuable in analysing the spatio-behavioural conflict that ensues in the novel. Sanders discusses the properties of personal space thus:

(I)nvulnerable boundaries are created in relation to each individual; the boundaries define concentric zones of acceptable behaviour; the size of each zone changes as the behaviour setting changes; the degree of influence of each zone can be

mitigated by the organisation and placement of semi-fixed objects; stress created if the zones are violated without warning or invitation ...⁵²²

A thunderous knock on the door at dawn startles the newly-wed son who is deeply disturbed to find his mother charge into their room and briskly go about clearing up things as she instructs them to get ready at the earliest, for the guests were waiting downstairs. They have been assigned a room at the far end of the top floor terrace, and the barely awake Nirmal is embarrassed to find his mother vigorously tidying up the room, folding Shanti's sari, with a fumbling Shanti frantically trying to mimic her mother-in-law. Nirmal is filled with irritation especially because his mother has never bothered to tidy up his room before. His frustration is an expression of a newly-wed's intense need for privacy: "He wanted to bundle his mother out and slam the door on her. He wished he lived on an island far away from his family, his parents, his cousins' sly glances waiting downstairs" (*Atlas*, 34). Kananbala, in fact, finds it very difficult to accept her son's blatant impatience to go upstairs to his new bride, after perfunctorily spending a few moments with her after returning from work. On one instance she takes them unawares by barging into their room, as seven thirty in the evening was 'too early' for 'locked doors'. Needless to add, the young couple is hugely discomfited, Shanti stops singing in mid-syllable, and the two begin to move apart, almost guiltily. For Kananbala, it is not easy to relinquish her hold over her favourite son, the only member of the family who would, until now, genuinely love to spend time with her. Her husband is too busy with his work and his solitary pursuits, and her older son has grown to be 'ill-humoured' and 'dyspeptic'. Nirmal, however had always been her favourite, doing nothing without consulting her, and she really believed "their dependence on each other was absolute" (*Atlas*, 31). However, now that Nirmal seems to be increasingly involved in his own life, her sense of loneliness is only exacerbated. It is reflected in a description of her recurring nightmare that conjures, for the reader, the image of someone being literally stifled by the house: "The ceiling had pressed upon her, iron rafters and all, and then the serpentine posts of the bed, fleshy and pliable, had tried to choke her" (*Atlas*, 37). Coming as she did from a large family settled in a bustling city like Calcutta, it must have been extremely difficult for her to adjust to living in a house cut off from everyone, with a husband who was only too possessive of his

⁵²²Sanders, Donald. "Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology" *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S.Kent.. 1990. Pp 49.

solitude. Once the sons grow up and get married, her isolation in the house is complete.⁵²³ Silenced and marginalised, it is but obvious that she has nightmares about being clamped down by the 'iron rafters' of the house. Even in her waking moments, the house almost seems to be closing in on her, as she feels the walls tilt towards her as she walks. Clearly, Kananbala does not feel 'at home' in the house.⁵²⁴

Kananbala's sense of isolation and loneliness gets to her, and she soon begins to throw abuses at random. The first time it happens is when she walks into the kitchen on her daughters-in-law, and throws an abuse at the younger one. The older daughter-in-law has been glad to find company in the newly married sister-in-law, and the two have been bonding over their daily chores. That particular afternoon, listening to Shanti sing, Manjula conveys her pleasure to finally have some entertainment in the 'dull old house' when their mother-in-law walks in with her caustic comment. The next moment, oblivious to the import of what she has just uttered, she carries on with her routine instructions. Not only is Shanti shocked into silence, she feels extremely hurt to have been abused by her mother-in-law, in front of the entire household. She feels she is in a 'friendless house,' among callous strangers who could abuse her so, and is filled with a strong urge to go back to the world she grew up in, her friends, and most importantly, to her own room in her natal home at Manoharpur, if only for a day, to recover her sense of self-worth. In an empirical study on place-identity and self-regulation, Kalevi Mikael Korpela contends that "the physical environment is used as a means of maintaining the psychic balance of pain and pleasure, and the coherence of one's self and self-esteem."⁵²⁵ Going by Korpela's argument about the yearning to go to one's favourite place in times of extreme pleasure or pain, Shanti's desire seems only natural. DEF

A few days later, Amulya happens to be Kananbala's next target, and he can't believe he heard her right. After these two episodes, Kananbala does not utter anything offensive for more than ten days. Amulya is relieved, with the house seemingly having 'soaked up' the outbursts, "hiding everything from the world outside its walls" (*Atlas*, 43).

⁵²³ Paul J.J. Pennartz lists two sociopsychological factors that are crucial to experience 'pleasantness' at home: 'communicating with one another' and 'being accessible to one another.' It is but natural that Kananbala experiences alienation in the house inhabited by her family, as no one bothers to 'communicate' with her or even spend time with her. "Home: The Experience of an Atmosphere." *At Home*, edited by I. Cieraad.. 1999. Pp 98.

⁵²⁴ Paul J.J. Pennartz's theorem that the atmosphere of the room works on a person and the person projects his or her mood on the room seems relevant to the understanding of Kananbala's experience of home.. "Home: The Experience of an Atmosphere." *At Home*, edited by I. Cieraad.. 1999. Pp 95.

⁵²⁵ Korpela, Kalevi Mikael. "Place-Identity as a Product of Environmental Self-Regulation." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 9. Issue 3 (1989): Pp 241-256. Pp 241.

However, after a lull, Kannanbala starts spewing venom again with her words, picking on various family members at random. Amulya is extremely contrite, especially worried what his new daughter-in-law must think of the family. Introspecting over the possible causes of his wife's breakdown, he wonders if he is to blame, but soon absolves himself. He ascribes it to her age, conceding that he should have spent more time with her, and not have taken her so far from the family. However, in a move to safeguard the 'family honour' from the neighbourhood's tongues, Amulya has her confined to her room. She has effectively been reduced to be the proverbial 'madwoman in the attic'. The house that had seemed to be 'closing in' on her, eventually turns into a veritable prison, the place where she will henceforth stay confined to her room.

A passive Kananbala acquiesces to her husband's wishes, only vaguely aware of her infractions. Ironically, the ever busy and preoccupied husband now takes time out for his wife, after years of neglect. Each afternoon he comes back from the factory, to watch over her lunch and settle her for a nap. In the evenings, he walks her in the garden for precisely 'forty-three' steps both ways, and then chats with her on the swing, filling her about his day and the goings on in the neighbourhood. The irony of this belated companionship is, however, not lost on his wife, though she refrains from questioning him. If Kananbala had earlier watched her husband from a distance, finding the 'few hundred feet' between the upstairs verandah and the garden bench unfathomable, now it is the turn of her elder daughter-in-law to look on with them with jealousy. Watching the old couple on the swing each evening makes her wish herself in Kannanbala's shoes, who now has two daughters-in-law to cater to her needs, and a 'doting' husband who seems to be rekindling the romance in their twilight years. If the elder daughter-in-law disgorges venom over this seeming turn-around in her mother-in-law's fortunes, the younger daughter-in-law, awaiting the birth of her first child, tries to block out Manjula's scathing comments. The atmosphere of the house with a mentally disturbed mother-in-law and a spiteful sister-in-law under its roof can only be vitiated,⁵²⁶ leaving Shanti yearn for the moment when she could be back in her much loved home at Manoharpur two months from now, for the delivery. Until then, she would hum old songs, close her ears and try her best to shield her baby.

⁵²⁶ Paul J. J. Pennartz's observation on the correlation of the quality of interpersonal relationships and the atmosphere of the house is pertinent here. "Home: The Experience of an Atmosphere." *At Home*, edited by I. Cieraad.. 1999 Pp 99.

Interestingly, Kananbala's 'captivity' literally gives her a new perspective to the world outside, with the windows in her room becoming her singular viewfinder, both in the day and night. She could mark the time of the day by the call of the different vendors who passed by, attracted by the wares that were now beyond her reach. Every weekend, she observes the English couple across the road go out in their car to some promising and mysterious destination beyond her imagination. On some weekends, they hosted lavish parties, and Kananbala watches the goings on 'greedily.' The keenness with which she took in the spectacle only serves to highlight the pathos of a vicarious life that is marked by only watching other people. Mrs. Barnum had once spied the 'mad woman' at the window, and she takes to waving out to her, much to her husband's disapproval. Typically, the story of the Barnums also has a sordid secret, in that the wife has a local lover she meets when her husband is on tour. Equally typically, Barnum returns early from one of his trips to catch his wife cheating on him. Barnum is killed by the young lover, who makes good his escape. When the police come to investigate, Amulya tries to keep his wife from being examined by the police, but she makes for an ideal witness with a bird's eye view to the Barnum house. More interestingly, having decided to shield Mrs. Barnum, Kananbala concocts a story to explain the murder. However, the murder has put an end to the exciting social life she had loved to watch from her window, as Barnum's widow rarely steps out of the house now.

This is only the first of a couple of other deaths that follow, in quick succession. As the house on 3, Dulganj Road awaits the birth of its first grand-child, the scene temporarily shifts to Manoharpur, Shanti's parental home where she has gone for the delivery. After foraying into the house at 3, Dulganj road that does not seem to be 'home' to the family residing there,⁵²⁷ the reader is introduced to another idea of home, the house as 'status symbol.' If Mrs. Barnum's house is a magical foil to Amulya's home, the house at Manoharpur is sheer poetry in comparison to the prosaic abode on 3, Dulganj road. The narrative shifts to the grand house by the river, where its owner Bikash Babu and his friend and neighbour, Ashwin Mullick, the other man of property in the village, along with Potol Babu, a teacher at the local school, sit chatting on the verandah. In a Sunday Book Review of the novel, Michael Gorra comments on Roy's astute touch in capturing the statement people make with their houses: "For Amulya, his home in Songarh stands as both a declaration of independence and an attempt to establish a family. For his widowed son's father-in-law,

⁵²⁷ Shelley Mallett has pointed out that the association between 'home' and 'family' has been explored by many researchers. "Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature." *The Sociological Review* 52 Issue 1 (2004) Pp62-89. Pp 73-74.

Bikash, the house on the river with which the novel begins is above all a mark of taste.”⁵²⁸ This is reflected in the discussion that ensues amongst the three interlocutors. In a setting that exposes the class and caste dynamics of early twentieth century rural Bengal, Anuradha Roy draws the reader into an animated discussion amongst the two landholders and the third interlocutor who is a part of the haloed circle only due to the lineage of his caste and education. Bikash Babu is a worried man, as he watches the river swell alarmingly close to the house. His house was picturesque in its seclusion, but also the most vulnerable as it faced the river alone. The three of them sit on the verandah to discuss the house, the river, and the projects to divert the course of the river. Ashwin Mullick, however, can afford to be complacent because his own house is on high ground, and he has resources to spare, dispensing loans and favours to his friends. However, the chink in his armour is his jealousy of the unmistakable grandeur of Bikash Babu’s house. Potol Babu extols the splendours of the latter’s house with its ‘Burma teak staircase’ and ‘Belgian mirrors,’ that has no parallel in all of Manoharpur, ending with a rather lame nod to the Aswhin Mullick’s house, by making it an exception:

They fell silent, each irritable for a separate reason they found hard to identify. Ashwin Babu suspecting a slight, knowing his house was newer and had a staircase of mere brick and marble, not Burma teak, because of one fatal moment’s economising; Bikash Babu knowing people saw him as an old eccentric who needed to be placated; and Potol Babu wondering if he had sounded craven when truly he admired the architecture of both houses (*Atlas*, 68).

The river that changed its course a generation or two ago, would swell every monsoon and come closer to the house every year. Yet, it’s an annual feature the house has braved over many monsoons, and there is no imminent danger at least for the next two generations. Or so Bikash Babu tries to convince the visitors. Meanwhile, Shanti is glad to be home again, away from Manjula’s acerbic vibes and her mother-in-law’s madness, to the peace and quiet of her

⁵²⁸ Gorra, Michael. “Love and Real Estate in South Asia.” Rev. of *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, by Anuradha Roy. www.nytimes.com. New York: The New York Times Company. June 24, 2011. Accessed on 17th August, 2016. ..

beloved room overlooking the river and the Bakul trees.⁵²⁹ Her father, however, for all his bravado earlier, sits watching the innocuous white lines spreading on the red floor, which is the water from the river seeping up through the floor. It was also creeping up the walls at the edges, leaving dark patches and puffed plaster. The imagery is portentous of the disaster that is to follow, described in terms such as the ‘patches’ that were sure to feel ‘clammy’ like a ‘sick forehead,’ and ‘cool’ like a ‘dead one.’ In fact, Shanti senses the danger and is caught up in her own nightmares, even as her father tries to pacify her by rubbishing her fears. However, they are shortly marooned by incessant rain, and Shanti goes into labour a month too early. Even as the servant tries to jolt the master into sending for help, the old man is too dazed by the sight of his house drowning in the river: “The river will make this house its own....My grandfather would boast of the Italian marble. That marble will be the river’s bed now....The arrogance,” he whispered, “the arrogance” (*Atlas*, 74).

Despite housing a woman who is kept under confinement as she has gone mad, a patriarch who has no time for his wife, an embittered daughter-in-law who resents having to look after the mother-in-law, the house had an air of feverish excitement as it awaited the arrival of its first grandchild. The monsoon, however, wrecked havoc with the lives of all concerned, as it engulfs Shanti, leaving behind a motherless infant, a father who escapes into oblivion and a grandfather who is unable to bear the shock. The first section of the novel opened with the image of the drowned house, and closes on a death that practically drowns the happiness of the house on 3, Dulganj Road.

The next section is entitled ‘The Ruined Fort,’ even though the action revolves around the family that lives in the Songarh house, where the motherless infant is brought up. Yet, as this section of the narrative unfolds, one gathers that it is the wild open spaces of the fort, rather than the house, that feels more welcoming and homely to some of the protagonists. The opening scene sets the tone as it presents an inmate of the house who lives there, but doesn’t ‘belong’, someone who is part servant, and part family. It is a scene where the rules proscribing space use for other castes in a Brahmin household are played out. The family priest is making the preparations for the Saraswati puja, and a servant boy of ‘unknown caste’ seems to be mocking at his efforts at maintaining the distinction between the ‘pure’ and the ‘impure’. Thus, the boy Mukunda can enter the Puja room to clean and mop it, but not before

⁵²⁹ Though the house has been presented as unique example of taste and class, despite its incongruous rural setting, it is a much loved ‘home’ to not only the father but also the daughter Shanti, who is deeply attached to the place. Shanti’s bonding with her childhood home exemplifies what H. M. Proshansky, et al refer as ‘place-belongingness.’ “Place Identity.” *Journal of Enviromental Psychology*. 3 Issue 1 (1983).Pp 57-83..Pp 76.

the Purohit jumps out of the room, lest he be ‘sullied’ by his touch. The scene in the Puja room may be an extreme instance of the injustice meted out to the young boy, but the element of discrimination is very much a part of Mukunda’s growing up years, dictating what he can or cannot do, as well as where he can be, or not.⁵³⁰

There is a distinct change in the neighbourhood with the passage of time. The first few decades of the twentieth century were prosperous years for the neighbourhood, as large houses with expatriates came up there. However, the drying up of the mines and the concomitant labour unrest make the expatriates pack up and leave, and the neighbourhood grows deserted and decrepit again. Amulya’s much loved garden also turns to weed, as there was no one to tend to it. Only to Bakul and Mukunda is Songarh a magical place, for they have populated it with “their own secret places and people. To them it throbbed with magic and meanings which only the two of them could share” (*Atlas*, 101). They had been inseparable ever since Mukunda joined the household when he was six and Bakul was four. The baby that Amulya had placed in the Orphanage was brought home, though the facts of his birth were buried with Amulya. Mukunda, the boy, now lives in the house, but is clearly marginalised: “He ate their food, but on a demarcated plate; he lived in their home now, but in a room out in the courtyard; they gave him clothes, but hand-me-downs; he had homework, but he also had household chores” (*Atlas*, 95). In revisioning the emotional attachment to places, L.C Manzo’s observation that one can adequately consider a person’s emotional attachment to place only by factoring in the significant political implications of the phenomena is pertinent here. He contends that “who we are can have a real impact on where we find ourselves and where we feel we belong.”⁵³¹ Also, as Edward Relph has famously postulated, “To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and to *know* your place.”⁵³² Mukunda lives in a house where he is constantly reminded of ‘who’ and ‘where’ he is, and of ‘his place’ in the house.

Interestingly, just as the Barnum house had once afforded an incarcerated Kannanbala a place to vicariously go off on her flights of fancy, it is also a favourite get-away for the two children growing up in 3, Dulganj Road. While the reader is hardly given a description of the rooms of Amulya’s house the children are growing up in, the detailed layout of Mrs.

⁵³⁰ Recall Amos Rapoport’s injunction on the most significant question regarding environment-behaviour interaction: “*Who does what, where, when, including or excluding whom (and why).*” (*sic*) “Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings.” *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 99(()) p 9.

⁵³¹ Manzo, L.C. “Beyond House and Haven: Toward a Revisioning of Emotional Relationship with Places.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 23. Issue 1(2003): Pp 47-61. Pp 54.

⁵³² Relph, Edward. *Place and Placelessness*. Second edition. London: Pion Ltd. 1980. P 1.

Barnum's house belies its sorry exterior. There is much to captivate the children there, and ignite their imagination, though the house itself has begun to show signs of the long years of neglect.⁵³³ Scabby with black mould, it had little trees emerging from the many cracks and crevices that were sure to bring the house down one day. Yet, it was the warmth of the hostess, as well as the mystery both Mrs. Barnum and her house exuded, that drew the children to her. The very description of her room, for instance, is rendered in terms that would make it seem magical, especially to the eyes of the curious children. Thus, the large room with its green curtains firmly drawn, give it the sense of being an 'over-decorated aquarium.' There is a large globe on the mantelpiece, along with two other glass balls containing the leaning tower of Pisa and a cottage with a red roof, with white flakes that would cascade like a storm, when shaken up. There was also an ornamental 'Khukri' that had supposedly been the one that was knifed into Mr. Barnum, or so the 'Khansama' had conspiratorially whispered into the children's ears. Yet there are also the clear signs of decay, in the table with a leg eaten up by termites, the threadbare carpets and the faded curtains. The round table was set for six, with napkins and silver, a cake and candles in the centre. The children sit at the table, familiar with the routine as they proceed to commemorate Mrs. Barnum's 'birthday' that she celebrates once a month. To add to her aura is the board with numbers and letters, and the coin that jumps, and the spells she utters to summon the spirits. What, to them, may seem to have been harmless quirks of an eccentric old lady, are, in fact, Mrs. Barnum's pathetic efforts at filling the emptiness in her life. Later in the evening, as she sits by the dressing table mirror, there is no hiding the toll time has taken, living a sad, lonesome life, in a household run on her pawned jewellery. The house feels 'larger' and emptier in the evenings. She pours herself a drink, and goes to play big, crashing notes on the piano, literally to crowd the house with the sound, imagine it full of people. If nothing else, the many hues of Mrs. Barnum and her house, if too loud or pretentious, act as a foil to the other widow and her house, across the road.

Interestingly, it was this raucous sound of the piano that made Nirmal, Amulya's younger son, experience the feeling of finally having come back home. This character, seen briefly in the first section as a newly married, joyous young man, had vanished when tragedy

⁵³³ It is interesting the way the novelist presents an alternative 'place' for the children to go to, a sharp contrast to the mundane world of 'home', the house where they are constantly harangued by their guardians. It is a fascinating 'home'/ world that has all the elements of mystery and magic, with Mrs. Barnum as the presiding deity.

struck, unable to live in the house he had spent happy moments with his bride.⁵³⁴ He chose instead, to take up distant assignments as an archaeologist, occasionally coming home on brief visits. However, before he left, he had introduced two new people into the house: Meera, a distant relative and widow who was in search for a home, and Mukunda, the child Amulya had consigned to an orphanage. His brother Kamal used to joke that Nirmal thought he had fulfilled his responsibilities by providing his daughter with a ‘mother’ who was not a ‘mother’ and a ‘brother’ who was not a ‘brother.’ Although Bakul has a ‘home’ and ‘family’, she had a very lonely childhood, and could only count on Mukunda as a true friend. With a dead mother and an absent father, the ‘family’ Bakul had comprised of a grandmother who was mentally unbalanced, an indifferent aunt and uncle as guardians.⁵³⁵ Rather than learn the usual rhymes or folktales from her grandmother, Bakul has picked up all kinds of abuses at the knees of the old woman. Most importantly, however, it was her grandmother who had given her an old picture of the house by the river, her mother Shanti’s house, that she treasures the most. All that Bakul had known of her mother was from the stories her grandmother had woven, for Bakul’s father had never spoken to her about Shanti. The photograph was very dear to Bakul, and till she was young enough to believe in fairy tales, she was taken in by her grandmother’s account of the picture as ‘magical’ in which her mother still lived. Bakul’s most precious possession was a tin of treasures that she kept safe in her grandmother’s box, under layers of her saris, filled with, among her favourite knick knacks, the picture of the house in Manoharpur. Clearly, it is the only tangible memorabilia she has of her mother, and with the other parent only a father in absentia, she holds on to the box like a talisman for strength and reassurance, turning to it in times of emotional distress. In their study of meaning of things as domestic symbols, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton contend that the “meaning of a cherished possession is realised in the transaction between the person and object;” moreover, these transactions are, they elaborate, “psychic activities.” When one values a cherished photo, they go on to add, it gives the “sense of being in touch with the loved one...”⁵³⁶

⁵³⁴H. M Proshansky et al point to the significance of the ‘environmental past’ of a person that affects the way the person relates to his or her environment. Moreover, the scholars also stress upon the significant role other people play in forming place-identity. Shanti, Nirmal’s wife, was an extremely significant component of what ‘home’ had come to mean to him. None of his other filial relationships mattered as much. “Place Identity.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3 Issue 1 (1983). Pp 59-60.

⁵³⁵ Sophie Bowlby, among others, has defined ‘home’ as the place where children are nurtured. “Doing Home.” *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 20 Issue 3 (1997) Pp343-350. Pp 344.

⁵³⁶Csikszentmihalyi, M. and Eugene Rochberg-Halton. *The Meaning of Things Domestic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1981. Pp 175, 188.

Significantly, the day her father had returned was one of the days she felt the need to dip into her secret box again. Turning to Korpela's study of place-identity and self-regulation again, one gathers that "clearing one's mind in a favourite place reflects the unity principle."⁵³⁷ Essentially, he argues, it allows the person to 'organise' one's thoughts and feelings. As a child growing up in a house sans her parents, Bakul has no room or corner to call her own, but just this box that stands for her dead mother, and in which she has invested her deepest emotions. Her father, the other parent, has obviously not succeeded in forming any meaningful relationship with her. The fact that she fails to recognise him when he had suddenly landed home clearly symbolises the lack of bonding between the father and daughter. She is even more alarmed when she learns that her father plans to 'dig up' the ruined fort for archaeological purposes. It has been one of her favourite places that she loved to explore with Mukunda. This love for the outdoors is corroborated in a study by Rachel Sebba in an empirical study of the environments of childhood. Thus, Sebba establishes that outdoor areas and natural features are the favourite places for most children, as well as in adult memories of childhood.⁵³⁸ Besides, one could argue, there is not much to hold the children at home, brought-up as they are by rather apathetic and less than affectionate guardians. In fact, as the children reach adolescence, the same guardians will not rest easy until they have succeeded in sundering their close bonding, cruelly separating them for good.

As for Nirmal, the father-daughter relationship is off to a shaky start when he impetuously snubs her at the dining table when she protests against her father's plans. Later, he tries to engage her interest by unpacking and opening up his meticulous collection of remarkable leaves and flowers, but she is still smarting from the rebuke at the dining table. He had imagined he would be a different father, unlike his own father who had been stern and distant, but now wonders if he had left it till too late. She shows no interest in him or his work. Tracing the evolution of the idea of home in Western culture, Witold Rybczynski posits that the Bourgeois Age gave birth to the modern idea of 'home,' one that incorporated domesticity by bringing together notions of 'family,' 'intimacy' and 'devotion' to the home. The concept of intimacy, he goes on to add, was reinforced by a change in attitude to children, who were now nurtured at home rather than sent out as apprentices at a young age. The home

⁵³⁷ Korpela, K.M. Place-Identity as a Product of Environmental Self-Regulation." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 9. Issue 3 (1989): Pp 241-256.. Pp 246.

⁵³⁸ Sebba, Rachel. "Environments of Childhood: The Reflection of Childhood's Environment in Adult Memories and in Children's Attitudes." *Environment and Behaviour*. 23. Issue 4 (1991): Pp 401.

was now the setting for a new, compact unit, the family.⁵³⁹ The house on 3, Dulganj road doesn't seem to be capable of fostering loving familial bonds amongst its members. Like his father before him, the only bonds Nirmal seems capable of nurturing are with his collection of fossilised leaves and flowers, rather than those of flesh and blood.

There are numerous instances in the house when various members of the household get at other people by targeting anything that brings joy, be it material objects they cherish, favourite pastimes, or even a shared bond of love and friendship. For example, Nirmal had a good collection of music, and used to really enjoy listening to them with his wife Shanti, but he had not touched them since Shanti's death. Having taken years to come over his grief, one evening he chooses to take out the old records and listen to some music. However, his reverie is soon broken as his sister-in-law Manjula comes charging up to berate him for turning his room into a 'den of vice,' all because he was trying to unwind with a drink and a cigar. Nirmal is quite taken aback by this 'invasion' of his privacy, even as she goes on about how blasphemous it is to indulge in such activities, especially in a house that has young children. In an article on privacy as a political possibility, Judith Squires argues that "The right to be alone includes choice about, and control over, when one is alone.... it entails power over the space which surrounds one."⁵⁴⁰ Apparently, Nirmal cannot exercise the privilege to privacy even in his own quarters, if he indulges in such 'vices' in a Brahmin household. Manjula, his sister-in-law, does not pass by the opportunity to police any pleasures or indulgences.

Bakul's conflict with her father, and his near retaliation, is yet another example of the propensity of the family members acting as a kill-joy. Bakul is incensed by her father not only for planning to tear down her favourite get-away place, the ruined fort, but also be insensitive enough to rebuke her in public, and retaliates by destroying his precious collection of exotic leaves and flowers. Blinded by anger and deeply aggrieved by the loss of a decade of painstaking work, Nirmal's first instinct is to retaliate in kind. He makes a grab for her precious box from her trunk, determined to destroy something equally cherished.

However, a more sober Nirmal examines the contents of Bakul's precious box, and apart from some childish odds and ends, finds three envelopes containing one of his letters to Bakul, a photograph of Shanti, their wedding picture, and a picture of the house at Manoharpur. Going through the photographs acts as a metonymic device as the pictures

⁵³⁹ Rybczynski, Witold. *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. New York: Penguin Books. 1987. Pp 74-75, 77.

⁵⁴⁰ Squires, Judith. "Private Lives, Secluded Places: Privacy as Political Possibility." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 12. Issue 4 (1994): Pp 387-401. Pp 390.

trigger old memories that he had tried to keep at bay. In the event, the episode does have a positive fall out, as it makes a contrite Nirmal examine his own role as a father who has done nothing to add to his daughter's 'box of memories'. Eager to make amends, he devises a plan to take Bakul to Manoharpur, along with Mukunda, to show her the house of her mother, along with a tour of Calcutta. The children are obviously very excited about the prospective train journey, the chance to see Calcutta, and of course, the house. Of course, the proposal evokes another round of complaints from the perennially discontented Manjula. Bakul shares the excitement with her grandmother but Kananbala's rather damp response is filled with pathos, and yet prescient: "...who'll take you on a train? Don't you know nobody leaves this house? Look at *me*" (*Atlas*, 144).

Nirmal is charged up from the moment he had decided upon the trip with the children, and he can sense some change in Bakul too; she seems to be less hostile. He begins to experience a sense of contentment for the first time since his return home six months ago, a contentment that came through in the house that seemed to be accepting him back as its own: "the house was getting used to having him back..." (*Atlas*, 141).⁵⁴¹ Of course, an addition to his sense of happiness lay in discovering a kindred spirit in Meera, the widowed relative who had come to live in the house to look after the children. However, as they are unrelated by birth or marriage, social convention proscribes their interaction at any level beyond the functional. It is a clear instance of furtive attraction and suppressed desire that they can only interact outside the boundaries of the house. In fact, he informally 'commissions' her to draw sketches of the ruins to help map out the excavation work that he is undertaking of the fort, if only to give him the occasion to interact with her. However, the tranquillity he was now beginning to experience, imagining he had lost it forever after Shanti's death, is shattered again when Meera suddenly announces she plans to leave Songarh for good. As always, he heads to the fort to think things through, wondering if it was something inappropriate he had said or done, that had prompted her decision.⁵⁴² It was here that he had found the freedom and ease to talk to her, discovering that they had much in common; it was here at the fort that he had brought his tiffin so she could taste foods forbidden her as a widow. He wonders if it is

⁵⁴¹ Kimberly Dovey defines 'home' as 'connectedness' with people, place, as well as with the past. Nirmal seems to be recovering this sense of 'home.' "Home and Homelessness." *Home Environments*, edited by Altman and Werner. 1985. Pp 43.

⁵⁴² K. M. Korpela's comment about seeking one's favourite place to think things out is pertinent. "Place-Identity as a Product of Environmental Self-Regulation." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 9. Issue 3 (1989): Pp 241-256.. Pp 320. (())

the ease of their proximity that has propelled her to leave, unable to pinpoint the reason for her sudden decision. But this is not the only reason for his sense of disquiet.

Nirmal has also been concerned about Mukunda, who seems to be increasingly marginalised in the house. He recalls the day he had first brought him home from the Orphanage, sure that the potential he could sense in him would be wasted in the orphanage. Manjula and Kamal, his brother and sister-in-law had put up a stiff opposition against having a child of 'uncertain origin' be brought to live in the house. Not only were they horrified by the idea of having him in their room, Nirmal's offer of his own room was also turned down, as it was located in the 'middle' of the house. Culture clearly imbricates spatial behaviour. The argument had lasted a couple of days, as Nirmal had tried to convince them into accepting him as part of the family. Finally, a compromise is reached, he is allowed into the house, but can only stay in the 'outhouse,' not in any part of the main house. Mukunda's marginalised status in the family is thus stamped by his 'location' in the house. Now that the two children have grown up and reached adolescence, their close bonding has given Manjula and Kamal an opportunity to question the 'appropriateness' in having Mukunda continue living with them. Also, given the animosity the two have always harboured against Mukunda, they stoop to commenting on his growing appetite, 'he would eat us out of our house and home.' Soon, the events are going to take such a turn that the two 'castaways,' Meera and Mukunda, who had come to the house at the same time, would be thrown adrift almost simultaneously.

Meera had accepted Nirmal's request to come to Songarh and look after his daughter, if only to live with a life of dignity otherwise denied her as a widow. Bakul had not been an easy child to bond with, though she performed her duties diligently, allowing herself just a couple of hours of respite when she would go off to the old fort and spend some time in peace. It was at the fort that Nirmal had spotted her sketching, and developed an undeniable camaraderie. Yet, this new-found friendship has not gone unnoticed, with Manjula and Kamal throwing the occasional barb. However, Kamal's unexpected pass at her, when he caught her alone on the roof top one evening unnerves her completely. The maid's condescension and Kanabala's usual taunts prove to be the last straw, and she decides to leave and make a fresh start in an unknown city. She had never liked the house that had seemed 'gloomy' and 'foreboding' from the start, unsure whether she felt sad, afraid, or relieved as she left the house.

Based on an experiential categorisation of the meanings of ‘home’, Judith Sixsmith divides home into three types: the ‘personal home,’ the ‘social home’ and the ‘physical home.’ Of these, the description of what makes up the ‘social home’ is interesting for this thesis to examine whether the dynamics of the house on 3, Dulganj Road make it a ‘home’, or not. According to Sixsmith, in the social home, “it is the presence and relationships with other people that contribute towards the place being home. Where social relationships have turned sour, the effect on a home can be devastating.”⁵⁴³ The house is always rife with undercurrents of rancour and complaint, due to the presence of Manjula and Kamal, who are never satisfied with their lot. From complaining about the attention her father-in-law gave his mentally disturbed wife, to having to tolerate a low caste Mukunda, or policing the house against any indulgences, there is always something to target.

Manjula has always disapproved of Nirmal’s casual approach to parenting, and has a long running argument on the need to curb Bakul’s freedom. Nirmal’s proposal to take the children for the trip only gives her fresh fodder to take on Nirmal with. It is not a good idea to take the two together on a trip, she tells him, as they vanish for hours together. Nirmal, however, doesn’t want Manjula’s arguments to put a damper on the trip, for the prospect seems to have thawed Bakul’s antagonism towards him. He just wished his sister-in-law would leave him alone, and not interfere in his affairs. One of the days when the two youngsters are particularly late in returning home, Kamal and Manjula again take up their argument about packing off Mukunda from the house. According to Marie Arana, time is harsh on the sibling love of Bakul and Mukunda: “There comes a point in their adolescence when the family begins to worry about the wisdom of their growing up together — there is the question of burgeoning sexualities, the question of castes.”⁵⁴⁴ Eventually, they win the argument, and Nirmal has no choice but to make arrangements to send Mukunda away to Calcutta and have him admitted to a school there. On his part, Nirmal castigates himself for his selfishness in being ‘whimsical’ in bringing Mukunda home, and then ‘arbitrarily’ throwing him out when it was not convenient to have him around as Bakul was growing up.

The third section is entitled ‘The Water’s Edge,’ one that will both take us forward in time in terms of the characters, and also backwards in time in terms of the house by the river

⁵⁴³ Sixsmith, Judith. “The Meaning of Home: An Exploratory Study of an Environmental Experience.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 6 Issue 4(1986): Pp 281-298. Pp 291.

⁵⁴⁴ Arana, Marie. “Book Review: ‘An Atlas of Impossible Longing.’” Rev. of *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, by Anuradha Roy. www.washingtonpost.com. WP Company LLC. 25th April 2011. Accessed on 16th August 2016...

that featured in the first section. It is a first person account by Mukunda, the orphan boy who had been unceremoniously discarded from the house on 3, Dulganj Road. Born homeless, he is now the ‘destroyer’ as well as the ‘creator’ of homes, in the role of assistant to a wily land developer. Yet, paradoxically, even as he supervises the destruction of an old house in the opening scene, he can read the signs of deep love for a pet found buried with his dish and blanket, in the basement of the house being dug up. This sensitivity stems from the memory of a house that he carries in his bones, every last tree and chipped away step of the staircase. His paean to old houses is nothing but a throwback on what can only have come from the memory of ‘home’ from childhood⁵⁴⁵:

Old houses don’t go away. They lurk crumbling and musty, their cobweb hung rooms still brooding over the angled corners of shining new kitchens and marbled bathrooms, their gardens and stairwells still somewhere there in the elevator shafts.

Left to myself- despite my profession- I would let old houses remain exactly as my memory told me they had always been (*Atlas*, 178).

As someone who was born ‘homeless,’ he tells us, he knows all about homes and houses. For someone who looks upon ‘old houses and homes’ with the eye of a poet, it is ironic that he now makes a living from the demolition of old houses. Mukunda’s elemental bonding with the idea of his childhood home finds substance in Louise Chawla’s study of childhood memory in adult interpretations of home, where she argues that “childhood memories have proved an important part of adult relations to home.”⁵⁴⁶ He begins the account of his life at age eighteen, when he finishes his schooling and cuts off all ties with his benefactor, determined to start life on his own terms. He wanted to cut off his ties with Songarh, just as Songarh had once cast him out unceremoniously. He was lucky to find not just a house to lodge in, but a home with an old Muslim childless couple, who treat him as their own son. To Mukunda, having severed all ties with Songarh after being unceremoniously being banished from the only ‘home’ he had known, the house he takes up lodgings in proves to be the anchor in his life. Mukunda’s ‘dislocation’ from his

⁵⁴⁵ Gaston Bachelard observes that “by remembering ‘houses’ and ‘rooms,’ we learn to ‘abide’ within ourselves... the house images move in both directions: they are in us as much as we are in them.” “Introduction.” *The Poetics of Space*. Second edition. 1994. Pp xxxvii.web.

⁵⁴⁶ Chawla, Louise. “Home is Where you Start From: Childhood Memory in Adult Interpretations of Home.” *The Meaning and Use of Housing: International Perspectives, Approaches and Their Applications*, Ethnoscapes: Current Challenges in the Environmental Social Sciences, Vol. 7, Series Editors: David Canter and David Stea, Aldershot: Avebury, 1993, p481.

childhood home resonates with the fate of his landlord, an old, childless couple Suleiman and his wife who will soon be caught up in the Hindu-Muslim frenzy of the Partition. Sulieman's house, in the midst of chaotic markets and narrow lanes, despite being threadbare and frugal, is described as an oasis of peace and contentment. Thus, a description of the arson and looting somewhere on the horizon acts as a perfect foil to the peace and quiet of an idyllic home:

Despite the noise, a quiet contentment spread over the verandah, as if we were nestling in a translucent globe that fended off the world. The cups, the saucers, the faded purple flowers on them, the faint aroma of tea, even the chips in the old gilt edging on the saucers, all seemed to have a perfection that made me unwilling to touch anything and mar it (*Atlas*, 186).

Caught in the cross hairs of communal unrest during a particular historical juncture, Suleiman and his wife have no choice but to leave for a safer place, entrusting their home and a pet parrot to Mukunda's care. This event gives the 'homeless orphan' Mukunda to explore various imaginaries of 'home.' The next morning fills him with a new feeling of good cheer, even though he misses the usual morning sounds of the old couple at their ablutions. It is the first time in his life that he has a place all to himself, not obliged to vacate a chair for anyone, free to keep his feet up on the table if he so desired: "I was filled with a sudden sense of elation and space" (*Atlas*, 192). He finds the parrot a burden and tries to release by leaving the cage open. The bird, however, stays cowering in a corner of the cage instead of flying away and when Mukunda tries to coax it out, it only pecks at him and draws blood. The bird, missing its master, keeps refusing food and water, prompting an annoyed Mukunda to hurl abuses at him. Even though Mukunda now has the house to himself, he makes no changes to his routine or his claim over the house initially. He continues to lodge in the smaller of the rooms he had been occupying, and feed the parrot every day, though it was clearly mourning for its master. A Hindu mob comes baying for Suleiman, but the house gets a reprieve because of the Hindu occupant. However, though the roof over his head is secure, Mukunda is soon out of a job, as the Tannery where he worked closes down. It is the head clerk at the tannery who points out to him he is lucky to have a house with no liabilities. The head clerk suggests he should feel free to sell a Muslim evacuee's house or rent out the rooms to sustain himself. Meanwhile, the parrot that had been silent for so long, suddenly breaks into 'words,' ironically throwing back at him all abuses Mukunda had been hurling the past few weeks.

Mukunda is soon cured of his 'landlord' fantasies after he gets a job with Angati Babu, who was in the business of destroying old houses to build new ones. Angati bought old houses, either those that had been abandoned by evacuees, or were under disputed ownership, or had the tenants evacuated by stealth, getting the house at cheap rates, to raze them and build afresh. In Angati Babu's world, a 'home' is literally reduced to nothing but a house, where it is just a game of money that can render one homeless if one is caught up by the forces of history, usurious relatives or land sharks. One cannot help but concur with Roderick J. Lawrence's observation: "(a)lthough dwelling units are primarily functional objects they serve a range of purposes and can be attributed a range of values, including an economic value, an exchange value, an aesthetic value, a use value, a sentimental value, and a symbolic value."⁵⁴⁷ Ironically, Mukunda finds it difficult to watch tenants or old relatives being evicted by force or subterfuge, unable to stomach the obvious trauma of the people witnessing their homes being demolished. Mukunda simply schools himself to stay unaffected, telling himself this was what the adult world was like. On occasions when Angati Babu's hench men had to be brought in to use force, he would look away, mentally taking refuge in the Buddha's gnarled face in the tree at the Songarh ruin. It was the only memory he has kept alive, shutting out everything else from back then. Settling into a routine, he goes back home for the parrot Noorie, feeding her and sharing his day with her. The bird that he had detested earlier becomes the only companion he has in a friendless world, the swear words now sounding like terms of endearment. Occasionally, his mind drifts to Songarh, humorously wondering if the parrot was a reincarnation of Kananbala, but he never permits himself to think of his childhood companion Bakul.

Marriage and fatherhood takes him to another level of contentment he had never visualised earlier, discarding his childhood fantasies of romance and adventure. To him, the room with his wife, baby and the bird seem to make up his entire world, one that he fantasised of capturing in a bell jar for eternity, if he could.⁵⁴⁸ Yet he will soon abandon this idyllic world as he is irresistibly drawn into the past later on in the narrative. It is in the course of his work that Mukunda finds himself accompanying his boss Angati Babu to the house by the river, in Manoharpur. Initially, he finds it difficult to recall why the place rings a bell and seems so familiar, as if he has some connection with it. The house is practically in ruins, with rotting

⁵⁴⁷ Lawrence, R.J. "Public Collective and Private Space: A Study of Urban Housing in Switzerland." *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S.Kent. 1990..Pp 78.

⁵⁴⁸ Sophie Bowlby et al map out the popular notion that a 'house' becomes 'home' when close, private and intimate familial relationships are located within it. Mukunda's experience of 'home' at this point reflects this ideal. "Doing Home." *Women's Studies International Forum*. 20 Issue 3 (1997). Pp 343-350. Pp 344.

curtains and broken furniture, and an old man whose 'manager cum nurse' wants to sell the house before it is too late. The priceless teak wood and the Belgian chandelier are not lost on the covetous Angati babu, who includes the furniture in the deal that he strikes with the manager. On his part, Mukunda returns inexplicably despondent, unable to explain to his wife why he is so deeply affected by the plight of the old man. Moreover, a vague but persistent feeling of familiarity with the house is a secret he could not bring himself to share with his wife. In the event, Mukunda welcomes the news of the old retainer having played a double game, for once delighted that the deal doesn't go through.

Not much later, Mukunda finds himself assigned to another out of town property disputed between two brothers that, to his horror, is none other than Bakul's home in Songarh. As he makes his way to the town, the irony is not lost on him: twelve years after Nirmal had sent him away from Songarh, he was going to evict him and Bakul, from the house the two had grown up in. To comprehend the conundrum Mukunda finds himself trapped in, one needs to examine the undeniable draw of the childhood home. Gaston Bachelard has famously drawn upon Jungian psychology to delineate the relationship between childhood home and the spaces one relates to as adults, a point highlighted by Guido Francescato in a conceptual study of the 'meaning and use' of housing.⁵⁴⁹ Thus, the house we were born in, Bachelard contends, is not just an embodiment of home, but also an embodiment of dreams; it is "inscribed in us."⁵⁵⁰ One can perceive a similar embeddedness in Mukunda. Edward Relph also reiterates the deep association one has with the places one was born in and grew up in, which seems to "constitute a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security, a point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world."⁵⁵¹ He will feel compelled to jeopardise the 'idyllic home' he has in Calcutta, if only to safeguard what was once his 'childhood home'.

As Mukunda hurtles towards Songarh, he recalls the journey out of Songarh as a thirteen year old, biting into the blanket so Nirmal wouldn't hear him cry, vowing to himself never to come back or speak to him, shaken by the unfairness of being summarily uprooted. He could never fathom the rationale behind first being taken into the folds of the family, only to be unceremoniously thrown out. It is significant that whenever he thought of Bakul, he visualised her not in her own house, but in Mrs. Barnum's house, with the music, by the lily

⁵⁴⁹ Francescato, G. "Meaning and Use: A Conceptual Basis." *The Meaning and Use of Housing* edited by E.G. Arias. Aldershot: Avebury. 1993. Pp 42.

⁵⁵⁰ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics Of Space*. Second edition . 1994. Pp 51.

⁵⁵¹ Relph, E. *Place and Placelessness*. Second edition. London: PION Ltd. 1980. Pp43.

pond there. When he finally arrives at 3, Dulganj Road, there is no one home, and he has to wait for them in the garden, a garden of which Nirmal is very proud, with its variety of fruits and flowering trees. As for the house, his professional eye immediately takes in the obvious signs of disrepair and decay that had set in. Bakul and Nirmal are happy to see him, though Mukunda can't bring himself to reveal the purpose of his visit. Bakul gets him to pay a visit to Mrs. Barnum as well, though he had not been too keen. He still burns with the mortification of having been caught spying by Mrs. Barnum. The latter, however, welcomes him like old times, and an old wound is healed deep within him.

At night, after dinner, Nirmal and Bakul fill him with the details of their fall out with Kamal and Manjula, who have sold off the house deviously behind their back, to pay off their debts. Even as Mukunda listens to the facts he is ironically aware of, his boss's henchmen throw pebbles into the garden to carry on with the plan of intimidating them. Back at the hotel, Mukunda weighs the options available, one of them being to move the father-daughter duo out to another place. However, the mere thought of the house, his 'childhood home' getting into the hands of Angati Babu and his men, only to be "broken into, broken down, bartered away in parts, built over, forgotten" is unbearable to him (*Atlas*, 238).⁵⁵² His line of work had invariably forced the trauma of 'homelessness' on the hapless owners or residents, but he had merely closed himself to the harsh underbelly of his trade. This one instance, however, is different: this time, what had once been his own home and hearth, the one he had grown up in, however tenuous the claim, was under threat. He begins to frantically explore the options to preserve and protect his roots, if only for the sake of his benefactor and, most importantly, for Bakul. Finding the hotel room too sinister, he sets off to revisit the places closest to him as a child, particularly the pond in Mrs. Barnum's garden. In a scene that is a rather sentimental coincidence, none other than Bakul herself comes to the spot, even as he lay reminiscing about the past when he and Bakul would swim in the pond as children. It is there that they consummate their friendship, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Mukunda has a sense of fulfilment so complete, that nothing else matters to him.

He returns to Calcutta, unable to fulfil the task he had been assigned. What he carries back with him, however, is the feeling of euphoria that he fails to notice his son's first baby

⁵⁵² Mukunda's horror of just imagining the 'house' suffering damage and destruction recalls similar response in Upamanyu Chatterjee's novel *Way to Go*. To the respective protagonists, any harm coming to the 'house' that was 'home' to them feels like a body-blow. Such elemental reactions can only symbolise a deep attachment with the childhood home.

steps.⁵⁵³ His wife is obviously miffed by his lack of interest, but all he has in mind is how to pull Nirmal and Bakul out of the difficulty they are in. The need to find a solution had gained a 'moral' urgency, because he couldn't stand by and watch as his erstwhile benefactor and guardian was rendered homeless. Mukunda's dilemma is best understood through Patricia Price's argument about place attachment to the home as the most elemental of human needs.⁵⁵⁴ Price contends that "(h)ome ... is the site of our most intimate of relationships with place.... Homes ...and houses...frame the family dynamics that are so central to shaping us as adults."⁵⁵⁵

Mukunda decides to trade off the only 'asset' he was master of by default. It has been six years since Suleiman left the house in his care, and has not been heard of since. Though Mukunda had been staying there all this while, he had always been insecure about his rights over it. Now, however, he decides to stake his claim, and goes to Angati Babu with a proposal. He asks the latter to 'buy' the Calcutta house, in return for the house at Songarh, and pay him the balance so he could start his own business. Ever the shrewd businessman, Angati Babu lowers the price for the Calcutta house, despite a latent fear that Mukunda might refuse to undersell the property. However, Mukunda's only concern is to finalise the deal that will bail Nirmal and Bakul out. Mukunda is immensely relieved to have secured the childhood home from predators, and discards many drafts before he can finalise a letter to Nirmal. Nirmal's response alternates between gratitude and curiosity, unsure of how to retain his dignity when he is obviously beholden to the once servant-boy. Michael Gorra also finds Roy's play upon a house as 'real estate' as one of the interesting aspects of the novel.⁵⁵⁶

If his attachment to the childhood home was so deep that he was willing to forgo an amount that would have secured his future, his attachment to Suleiman's house is no less, an 'attachment' reflected in the distress the move entails. An exploratory study by Giuliani on the mental representations of attachment to home throws light on the degree of attachment

⁵⁵³ Revisiting his 'environmental past,' to borrow from Proshansky et al, has rekindled his 'place-attachment' to such an extent, that the 'home' in Calcutta with his wife and child he once found 'heavenly' ceases to have meaning. That is why he fails to notice his baby's progress. "Place Attachment." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3 Issue 1.(1983).Pp 57-83. Pp 59.

⁵⁵⁴ Notwithstanding the irony that he trades one 'home'(conjugal) for the other 'home' (childhood).

⁵⁵⁵ Price, L. Patricia. "Place." *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*, edited by N.C. Johnson, et al. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons. 2013. Pp 125.

⁵⁵⁶ Gorra, Michael. "Love and Real Estate in South Asia." Rev. of *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, by Anuradha Roy. www.nytimes.com. New York: The New York Times Company. June 24, 2011. Accessed on 17th August, 2016..

revealed in the emotive effect or the possibility of loss.⁵⁵⁷ Thus, as the husband and wife fight bitterly over the choice of things they should take along with them, Mukunda's possessiveness and affection to things that had been a part of Suleiman's house reveal his attachment. The old man's books, for instance, were like 'old friends' to him, but his wife would have preferred to sell them off to the second hand dealer. Also, she had never really taken to Noorie the parrot, and wanted to give it away, or set it free. The two literally bicker and negotiate over every little thing in the house. Clearly, members of the same family or household may ascribe differing meanings and value to the various objects in a house they share.⁵⁵⁸ Thus, a carved cupboard that had come with her dowry was preserved so that Chacha's table could be retained as well. Despite all the bickering, Mukunda breezes through the move, buoyed by the thought of being Bakul's 'saviour,' knowing she was 'safe' in her own house. Mukunda, however, is now in a tight spot, because he has ended up with a smaller amount than he was expecting as balance. They have to move to a rented accommodation in a slummy area, as he wants to keep the modest amount of cash in hand to start his business. But it is too cramped and impossible to live in, and they have to move house again, just two weeks later. The new accommodation was slightly better, and despite a single room, they have more privacy. Even Noorie screeched less here, much to his relief. However, the reprieve is brief, as his father-in-law soon arrives to question Mukunda about his inexplicable transactions. Pushed to a corner, he feels trapped in a state of being alone and friendless. This is quite a turn around from his state of experiencing, until recently, the idyllic state of being, wrapped in his little world, the 'home' he had created in Suleiman's house with his wife, baby and the parrot.

Even as he struggles to make ends meet, he receives a card inviting him to Bakul's wedding. Ever since his visit to Songarh and the tryst with Bakul, Mukunda's long suppressed feelings for Bakul have begun to surface again. On the spur of the moment he decides to go to Songarh, to see her one last time before she gets married and goes away. However, a glimpse of Bakul's bangle laden arm in an upstairs window makes him lose all courage to face her as another man's wife and returns to the hotel without meeting her. Heartbroken at 'losing' Bakul, he cannot make himself return to his own family at Calcutta. When he does return he

⁵⁵⁷ Giuliani, Maria V. "Towards an Analysis of Mental Representations of Attachment to the Home." *The Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*. 8. Issue 2 (1991) Pp 133-42.

⁵⁵⁸ M. Csikszentmihalyi and E. Rochberg-Halton suggest that "the household objectively represents what the self is in terms of what things psychic energy has been invested in- what we consider significant to possess." The emotional distance between Mukunda and his wife are reflected in the varying significance and value they attach to different household possessions. "The Transactions Between Persons and Things." *The Meaning of Things*. 1981. Pp 184-85.

finds the house locked, his wife having left the key and an open note with the neighbour, informing him that she was going home. Noorie has been released from her cage. He finds the room to have been tidied up, with Suleiman Chacha's books piled up, and discovers she has left the picture of Bakul's look-alike that he had once torn off and hidden, and the wedding card, in the notebook she maintained for her household accounts. He finally goes to his in-law's house in the village, only to be rebuffed by his father-in-law. The latter accuses him of supporting another family, and keeping pictures of 'other women' hidden in his books. He stipulates that his wife would return only when he has sold off the Songarh house. Rather than comply with this 'impossible' proposition, Mukunda chooses to live alone, revelling in his new-found solitude. To him, it becomes the oasis of calm that he returns to after the clamour at work, cooking himself a simple meal. In the initial days of his marriage, he used to feel scared of being alone, but now he seems to derive a kind of guilty pleasure in having the house to himself.⁵⁵⁹ He lived life on his own terms now, indulging in the pleasures of reading or playing the flute. Playing the Sibelius melody, for instance, takes him back in time to Mrs. Barnum's garden, with Bakul listening to him in a corner. In the evenings, he just lay on the terrace, and dreams of going to meet Bakul in Bombay. Two years pass while he regularly sends money to his wife, along with writing letters to her, but they go unanswered. Angati Babu occasionally taunts him about the Songarh house. Interestingly, the novelist presents us with another vignette of uprootedness and loss, a subtle portrayal that puts a human face not only on the trauma of Partition, but also to the tragic experience of homelessness. One fine day, Suleiman Chacha returns to Calcutta after a gap of nine years, and looks up Mukunda. Listening to their tales of horror and loss during the Partition, Mukunda is unable to face them. They had gone straight to where their house was, but all they had found was a pile of rubble that was once 'home' to them. It is with an ironic sense of wonder that they tell Mukunda, they hadn't expected their house to leave behind a rubble that was 'so big'. The old man keeps trying to gloss over his actions, telling him it was foolish of his wife to have expected to see the house as they left it almost a decade ago. "His eyes were too apologetic ...Although the crime was mine, it was as if he was d criminal and my sins had become his..." (*Atlas*, 278). A contrite Mukunda asks them to live with him, that he would like to look after them, but they just leave to be with other relatives.

⁵⁵⁹ Lynn C. Manzo contends that the relationship to place is dynamic. Thus, Mukunda's imaginaries of 'home' keep evolving with time. "Beyond House and Haven." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 23 Issue 1 (2003). Pp 47-61...Pp 51.

Faced with the bitter harvest of his actions, Mukunda decides to make a clean break with his past, rather than turn into another 'Angati Babu.' One of the first thing he does is go about clearing up and tidying his room, throwing out all that is rotting and bug-infested, a move that literally signifies a fresh start. Hating himself for the person he has turned into, an exhausted Mukunda goes to sleep. He wakes up to find a letter from Nirmal waiting for him, appealing for his help to stand by Bakul, who has gone alone to Manohrpur and claim her grandfather's house. Nirmal also writes about the inexplicable obsession that his father-in-law had with his house, holding on to it till his dying breath. Now, even more alarming is the fact that Bakul had decided to go and retrieve her legacy, all by herself. He appeals to him, as a son, to go and stand by her, protecting her from all the land sharks waiting to pounce on it. The only catch is that no one can make a move without the house deed in their possession.

Mukunda obviously rushes to Manoharpur, and after the land sharks have been dealt with and their mutual confusions sorted out, the two come together again, reclaiming a relationship forged in childhood. To Michael Gorra, the ending "borders on the trite."⁵⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Bakul has find her way back to the house that was a beloved home to her mother, the house that literally lives in her genes. She has finally retrieved the house of her births, having come back to her roots. The novel had opened on a fading image of the house by the river, seemingly dissolving into the river by its side, but closes with a move that gives it a fresh lease of life, as the young protagonists ostensibly make it their home. Mukunda, in striving to safeguard all that was dear to Bakul, atones for the sin of destroying other homes, by preserving her home.

David Davidar's narrative *The House of Blue Mangoes*(2002)is located in a village of pre-independence India at the turn of the century, marking the rise and fall of the Dorai clan based in a dwelling called the 'Big House', as successive generations of banished or recalcitrant sons come back to reclaim their 'roots,' reviving the bonds with their homeland on return. Unlike most of the novels discussed above that have stories largely located within the domestic space, Davidar's narrative encompasses a wider area. It centres around a house but also the 'homeland,' the village community as well as more distant places where the characters might found 'home.' it is in the metaphor of the 'journey' and 'return' that the

⁵⁶⁰Gorra, Michael. "Love and Real Estate in South Asia."Rev. of *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, by Anuradha Roy. www.nytimes.com. New York: The New York Times Company. June 24, 2011.Accessed on 17th August, 2016.

novel locates itself in.⁵⁶¹ At the outset, the reader is given a brief layout of the Big House, its imposing structure marking the status of the village headman, Daniel Dorai, whose family has presided over the fortunes of the village for many generations. The trees that surround the Big House, we are told, aren't common to the place. It was Charity, Daniel's wife, who had brought the trees from her native town, to allay her homesickness. The home, according to J. Douglas Porteous, provides one with 'territorial satisfaction' through the 'personalisation of space' that allows an assertion of identity and a means of achieving stimulation. Moderate levels of stimulation, he argues, can be achieved by 'personalising' the space by modifying or cultivating a garden.⁵⁶² Thus it was by way of bringing in certain modifications in the Big House and creating a garden to her liking that Charity had personalised the homespace. Her character also brings a sense of stability and continuum to her home and family, her stoicism and a brief descent into insanity marking the upheavals in the family. Significantly, her good sense is restored once she is back home in the Big House.

As the narrative opens, the quiet of a sleepy village stirring up to attend the festival fair, is reinforced by a picture of Solomon Dorai, the present master of the Big House, enjoying a quiet morning on the verandah. It is a festival morning, and, like Sunday mornings, he is best left undisturbed, except in an emergency. The smell of freshly brewed coffee that tells him his wife Charity has come and gone, having served his coffee just the way he likes it. Clearly, his domestic arrangements give the reader an inkling of his character: he is a man used to being obeyed, intolerant of even a minor disruption. However, even as he sits on the verandah watching the antics of a squirrel, he is filled with a sense of unease, disturbed by the prospect of a shrinking river and a poor crop. In any case, trouble soon descends on the village in the form of a brutal rape that unleashes the caste conflict Solomon Dorai had until now managed to keep in check. It is an hour before the horror will be discovered, and in the meantime Solomon muses over the possibility of caste wars starting again, as there has been some trouble brewing in a village close by. As low caste converts to Christianity, the probability of caste-conflict is never far from the surface. In sharp contrast to the unpredictable world outside that Solomon Dorai has to deal with, is the ordered and predictable world of the 'Big House' that Charity Dorai presides over with finesse.

⁵⁶¹ L. C. Manzo examines the many discussions of 'home' and 'away,' and 'home' and 'reach.' "Beyond House and Haven." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 23 Issue 1,(2003) Pp 47-61.Pp 52.

⁵⁶² Porteous, J. D. "Home: The Territorial Core." *The Geographical Review*.66.Issue 4 (1976): Pp 383-390.Pp 383.

Given the way his household is run with clockwork precision under the supervision of his wife, one could surmise that Solomon was a man not only of habit, but also tradition. A Solomon who doesn't take kindly to a breach of tradition, finds it difficult to deal with or accept changes to the age old patterns of the village community, changes wrought by the dawn of the twentieth century. Thus, there was the new road brought into the village, connecting it with the nearest town that he found objectionable, for it would play havoc with the customary patterns of life the villagers had followed for centuries. The recent instance of the rape, perpetrated by outsiders, he believed, happened only because of a road that allowed people to move around freely. However, despite Solomon's efforts at maintaining peace, the lawyer, Vakeel Perumal lets no opportunity go by without trying to incite disorder and enmity amongst the rival communities. Through his machinations he manages to incite passions, resulting in an all out confrontation between the opposing factions.

Meanwhile, Solomon's favourite cousin Joshua has returned home from his wanderings, after a gap of ten years. This is a character that practically proves the idea propounded by Humanist geographers such as Relph and Tuan that the sense of rootedness is largely an unselfconscious state.⁵⁶³ In the event, ,intrepid traveller that he was, Joshua could never bring himself to settling down at home, spurred by an inexplicable urge to wander far from home. Yet, it is a mendicant he meets on one of his journeys, who makes him confront a truth he had been hitherto oblivious of:

He asked me why I was so restless, why I wandered so far from home, and I said my village held nothing for me, it was something I had always longed to escape. He said, no matter how far you run from Chevathar or for how long, it will never let you go because you have been fashioned by Chevathar, it is in you, you are Chevethar (*THBM* 104).

Interestingly, the narrative will replay this theme of homecoming in unexpected and compelling ways. For Solomon, delighted as he is to have Joshua with him again, his arrival could not have been at a more opportune moment. Conferring with his cousin over the trouble brewing with the Vedhars, Solomon is exhorted by his cousin to go into battle to safeguard the future of his descendants. However, there is another battle Solomon has to confront at home, first. Of his two sons, Daniel and Aaron, Solomon was extremely disappointed in his

⁵⁶³Relph, E. First name. "Essence of Place." *Place and Placelessness*. 1976. Pp 43.; Tuan, Yi-Fu, "Rootedness Versus Sense of Place." *Landscape* 24 Issue 1(.1980) Pp 3-8..Pp 4.

first born. He had expected him to take on the mantle from him, but Daniel had no interest in such worldly affairs. In fact, he had been pleading with his father for long, to let him go and study medicine, but in vain. It was the younger son Aaron, however, who was every inch the valiant Dorai his father expected him to be. His son Daniel refuses to take up arms and fight alongside, despite his exhortations and threats. Angry with his son for what seemed to him a failure, he punishes him by sending him off with the women and children, to the safety of his wife's parental home in Nagercoil. Saddened by his rejection by his father, Daniel faces further humiliation when he sees the contempt in his younger brother's eyes. In the event, the battle turns bloody and disastrous for all concerned, as the leaders of both the factions die a tragic death. The death of Solomon and Joshua marks the decline of the Big House that Solomon was master of at the opening of the narrative.

The next part of the narrative turns the spotlight on Nagercoil where Daniel has moved with his mother and sisters. Given his abiding interest in medicine, we find him assisting Dr. Pillai, a popular Siddha doctor highly esteemed for his expertise. Dr. Pillai finds in him a worthy successor, and Daniel is eventually sent off to study 'Western' medicine. Daniel's mother Charity is happy that her elder son could realise a cherished dream, but is despondent to be estranged from her younger son. The death of Solomon also effects a change in proprietorship over the Big House, for the master of the house is the leader of the community. Charity and her son Daniel are shocked to find everything has changed after the battle in Chevathar. Her younger son Aaron, "consumed by his father's passion" had ended up "broken and bitter and full of hatred for his surviving family" (*THBM*, p 135). The worse was the turnaround of her brother-in-law and his wife, who had taken over as the head after Solomon's death. Having spent a lifetime under his elder brother's shadow, Abraham has no qualms in showing his true colours. Initially they are conciliatory towards Charity and her sons, and wary of annoying the hot headed Aaron. Aaron has been deeply affected by the death of his father and uncle, blaming his surviving family for their demise. He picks up a fight with Abraham, and eventually leaves home, leaving behind a devastated Charity and Daniel. Abraham and Kaveri are, however, relieved by Aaron's departure, and Kaveri loses no time in consolidating her hold over the Big House. A hapless Charity is practically asked to leave, with her brother-in-law 'generously' bestowing on her a nominal annual rent by way of some mangoes and rice. Effectively rendered homeless, Charity and Daniel have no choice but to settle down in Nagercoil.

Meanwhile, Solomon's other son Aaron decides to return home to Chevathar after five years of loafing around and petty thievery. He is surprised to find none of his family members there, except Uncle Abraham and Aunt Kaveri. They have a well rehearsed story about his mother and brother deciding to return to Nagercoil, choosing a comfortable life over the struggle to preserve the sanctity of home: "Nothing could make them change their mind, not even (Kaveri said) his chithappa reminding them of Solomon-anna's ultimate sacrifice in the defence of their family home" (*THBM*, 145). Abraham and Kaveri's devious efforts at appropriating the Big House illustrate Richard R. Wilk's contention that the household is not undifferentiated in its use of domestic space: "Members may contest with each other for the use of areas, they may negotiate, argue, fight or use deception in acquiring access or claim to space, in excluding others from it, or in setting rules on its use."⁵⁶⁴ The wily Abraham and Kaveri are successful in poisoning Aaron's mind against his mother and brother, though they hadn't bargained for him deciding to stay on in the Big House at Chevathar. They do their best to keep out of his way and avoid provoking him into losing his temper. Aaron, on his part, may have come back to his 'physical home,' but there no sense of being in a space that is 'personal' or 'social.'⁵⁶⁵ He spends most of his time drifting with the village youngsters, until the Nationalist movement reaches the village. Intrigued by the rhetoric, if not the cause, Aaron jumps into it, excited just by the idea of having something to fight for. In any case, there was nothing to stop him from plunging into the violent struggle, as he had cut off all ties with his family, choosing to ignore his mother's attempts at reaching out to him.

At Nagercoil, Daniel's practice begins to flourish, and his mother arranges for his marriage after her daughter has been married off. Yet, despite having spent years in Nagercoil, Daniel doesn't feel like he belongs there, always nostalgic for the place of his birth, Chevathar. For instance, he misses the bird-sound at dawn, or even the sound of the cows and the fowl, sounds that he felt were typical and unique to his birthplace. In an article entitled "Place Identity: Physical World Socialisation of the Self," Proshansky, et al begin by establishing the connection between 'self-identity' and 'place-identity,' categorising the latter as a sub-structure of the former. According to them, the physical environment-related cognitions form the 'environmental past' of the person, that, along with the other people who are or have been a part of that environment, play a crucial role in forming the 'place-identity'

⁵⁶⁴ Wilk, R. R. "The Built Environment and Consumer Decisions." *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 41.

⁵⁶⁵ Sixsmith, Judith. "The Meaning of Home" *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 6 Issue 4 (1986). Pp 281-298. Pp. Pp 290-292.

of the person. Further, they go on to establish the significance of 'home' as the most important 'place' for human beings. If, they argue, one goes by the work of modern personality theorists, the period from infancy to puberty is the most significant for the development of self-identity, concomitantly, places that play a crucial role in that stage of life are the home, neighbourhood and school.⁵⁶⁶ This thesis certainly explicates Daniel's longing for Chevathar. It is only with the birth of his daughter Shanthi that he begins to experience a sense of belonging, for this is now his daughter's place of birth. He began to look upon the world around him through her eyes, and saw them anew. Again, this change in his sense of attachment or belonging towards Nagercoil has been theorised in the same article. Thus, Proshansky et al go on to argue that place-belongingness may occur not only for the children, but also the parents who bring them up in the particular place.⁵⁶⁷ Daniel soon gains fame and fortune with professional success. Daniel's work expands, and his mother Charity has her hands full running the household and enjoying being a grandmother to four grandchildren, with a fifth on the way. She quite liked her daughter-in-law Lily, though it had taken the headstrong bride a while to adapt to a different culture. Again, the household has evolved a set pattern the women followed from morning until night. Charity feels blessed in the joy her family brings, though she does get perturbed about her younger son Aaron, not sure of his whereabouts or his well-being.

Aaron, on the other hand, gets increasingly involved in the Freedom movement, travelling from place to place to propagate the word. He is soon sucked into the cycle of violence and retribution, as the underground revolutionaries try to target the Colonial state. In the words of S. Prasannarajan,

It is Aaron's destiny to give himself to the romance of the revolution. He is the outcast, the rebel who has long ago established his heroism by jumping the biggest well in Chevathar. Today, the diameter of the danger he has to cross is determined by anger, the sense of rejection, of betrayal. His underground rebellion against the Raj is the political expression of a personal grief, his romance with the assassin's gun is a compensation for the lost romance of the blue mangoes....⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁶ Proshansky, et al. "Place- Identity." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 3. Issue 1 (1983): Pp 57-83.

⁵⁶⁷ Proshansky, et al. "Place Identity." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 3 Issue 1 (1983) Pp 57-83. .Pp 76.

⁵⁶⁸ Prasannarajan, S. "A River in Memory." Rev. of *A House of the Blue Mangoes*, by David Davidhar. www.indiatoday.in. Living Media. January 14, 2002. Accessed on 20th August, 2016..

Though the assassination of a British Magistrate is successful, most of the conspirators including Aaron are caught and imprisoned. Back in Nagercoil, disaster strikes the family, as there are two deaths in quick succession. First Charity's old father breathes his last, and then her daughter dies in childbirth. To add to the family's ordeal is the news about Aaron's arrest and incarceration. Charity is devastated, and unable to bear the shock, loses her mental balance. Daniel uses his money and his contacts, to get the permission to have Aaron's status upgraded, so he could be moved to a better prison, and the possibility of his sentence being reduced by a year. Unfortunately, news of Aaron's actual condition was suppressed by the jail authorities, and Daniel has to wait before he is allowed to meet his brother. Daniel is horrified to eventually see a completely wasted Aaron, a body reduced to skin and bones after being relentlessly tortured in jail, close to death from TB. Even on his deathbed, Aaron's hatred for his family has not lessened, and he turns his back on his brother. Deeply hurt by the baseless allegations in Aaron's rejection, Daniel inadvertently reveals to him the loss and suffering they have gone through, and of their mother gone mad. It is then that the Uncle and Aunt's deception and avarice is exposed, and Aaron a shocked realises how he was fooled by them into believing the worst of his family.

Reconciliation is poignant, as Aaron doesn't have long to survive. One of the last things Aaron shares with his brother is of how it was the memories of their childhood home that kept him going all these years: "It's ironic, I kept running away from the place, but it grew to be the most important thing in my life..." (*THBM*, 227). This harking for 'home' is reminiscent of another Dorai who had spent his adult life wondering far from home, their Uncle Joshua. It is an elemental pull that has been amply theorised as the place embodying the highest significance to human beings.⁵⁶⁹ Overcome by regret, Aaron's last wish is that Daniel take the family back home, back to where they belong. Daniel finally makes the journey back to Chevathar, vowing to recover it for his brother, hoping it is the restorative his mother needs to recover her balance. Daniel determines to fulfil the promise made to his dead brother, travels homewards to Chevathar after a gap of many years. As he gets closer to the once familiar landscape, he wonders how he could have kept away for so long. The Big House has 'naturally' lost its vitality and grandeur, in the absence of the rightful head. The the great neem and teak trees that always provided the Big House with a benign, protective cover, now

⁵⁶⁹ See Bachelard(1994):"House...is the body and soul...It is the human being's first world." (Pp 7);Relph(1976) understands 'home' as the "central reference point of human existence."(Pp 20)

seemed 'positively malevolent'. Meeting his Uncle and Aunt is far from pleasant, and he rues their deplorable conduct. Listening to their pathetic attempts at covering up, his anger gives way to pity, as he suppresses his desire to punish them. He gets them to leave with exactly the same amount of money his mother had received from them, in lieu of the house and the land. The dawn renews his feeling of being at home, as he takes in the once loved sights and sounds, though saddened by all that is lost and gone.

At age thirty-five, one of the richest men in Nagercoil, Dr. Daniel decides to close his flourishing practice, and go back to his roots. Daniel goes about reestablishing his roots at a much grander level. He goes about it in a planned manner by first consolidating his holding, acquiring as much land in and around Chevathar and Meenakshikoil as he could. His next step invites the head of every family of the Dorai clan, as he wishes to set up a settlement of the Dorai family in Chevathar. He proposed to offer each family an acre of land at one fifth of the market rate, provided they were willing to settle there. His own house was to come up where the Big House once stood, of which he only retains the room his father used. A house has long been seen as a marker of status and identity, as evidenced in the collection of essays in J.S. Duncan's(ed.) *Housing and Identity: Cross-Cultural Perspective*.(1981)⁵⁷⁰ Just as the house in Deshpande's *A Matter of Time*, also called 'the Big House,' stands like a solid edifice to mark and proclaim the male lineage of the family, Daniel goes about reinventing the 'Big House' to glorify the family name. He wanted the architect to "enshrine within the edifice the unquenchable spirit of the Dorais and proclaim to the whole world the magnificence of the family. Locally, it came to be known as the 'thousand year's house'. The new house is anointed as 'The House of Blue Mangoes,' thus named to honour the memory of the ancestors, as well as mark the place of origin. As he had hoped, the move proves beneficial to his mother, who goes about doing her bit to establish the community. With Daniel's own skills as pharmacist and the able assistance of his brother-in-law Ramadoss, 'Doraipuram,' the new settlement, begins to attract the 'importunate' as well as the 'great' and the 'good.' It gained in both stature and prosperity. To quell idle mischief and gossip, Charity divides the women into small groups, assigning to each tasks ranging from minding the toddlers, teaching children of the poor, to making arrangements for guests and visitors. Except for the occasional disturbance caused by Gandhi's salt march, the death of his mother was the only other event that dampened Daniels' spirits. He devotes all his time and resources to build up 'Doraipuram,' the home of the Dorai clan.

⁵⁷⁰ Duncan, J.S.*Housing and Identity: Cross Cultural Perspectives*.London: Croom Helm. 1981.

Over the passage of time, and despite Daniel's efforts, things in Doraipuram begin to deteriorate, if only because it was a large commune, and not everyone shared his passion or vision. The focus of the narrative now turns to Kannan, Daniel's son and successor. Not much inclined towards studying, Kannan is more caught up with the boisterous activities of adolescents, constantly being reported for some infraction or the other. Various tutors were successively hired to prepare him towards admission to college, and his mother Lily has to pitch in often as each tutor gave up his charge. In the time she gets to spend with her son, she introduces him to the exotic world of tea plantations and planter's bungalows of Ceylon, where she had grown up. The 'makeshift' tutorials transformed into 'storytelling sessions' play a significant role in Kannan's life, for they introduce him to the idea of "elsewhere" (*THBM*, 281).

However, the first time he steps out of the cocoon of home, he is in for a shock, completely unprepared for the world outside. Distraught at being uprooted and sent far away from home to study, his first day at the famous college in Madras is disastrous. However, he soon takes to the bright city lights, and Chevathar begins to seem 'dull' and 'provincial' in comparison. To add to the lustre is Kannan's new found attraction for an Anglo-Indian girl, Helen. Meanwhile, back in Doraipuram, things are going from bad to worse, and Daniel seems to have withdrawn himself from everyone except his immediate family. Moreover, politics by way of the freedom movement has begun to make greater inroads into the settlement, despite his injunctions to the contrary. In fact, he gets so agitated when a group of students come close to the house on their protest march, that he suffers a sudden stroke. On returning to Doraipuram, a besotted Kannan announces to his shocked parents of his desire to marry Helen. His father is livid, and puts his foot down, refusing to budge. Yet, recalling his own father's rejection of him, he is saddened by the disagreement with his son.⁵⁷¹ The typical inter-generational clash is played out again, resulting not only in disaffection between the father and son, but also in rendering the son homeless. Just as Daniel had once been banished from home by his father for not fulfilling the latter's expectations, now Daniel himself gives an ultimatum to his son Kannan. His wife Lily, more amenable to Kannan's wishes, is nevertheless worried for his future, for she knows her husband would rather banish his only son than relent. She gets Ramadoss to write to all possible contacts, asking for a job for her

⁵⁷¹ Mary Douglas explores the 'kind of space' home is and contends that even the most 'altruistic' and 'successful' versions exert "a tyrannous control over mind and body." In the novel, fathers turn out their sons for their unacceptable ideas or behaviour. "The Idea of A Home: A Kind of Space." *Social Research* 58.Issue1(1991):Pp 287-307.

son, and finds the reply from Chris Cooke, the retired English Officer and an old family friend the most promising. He tells them of an opening for managers on a tea estate in Pulimed.

Helen, daughter of a lowly paid railway employee, was looking forward to a secure future with the scion of the Dorai clan. News of his banishment makes her lose all interest in him, and he has a tough time convincing her to marry him. She finally relents as Kannan is all set to make a new beginning with his job at the tea estate, and set up home there. This part of the novel not only opens up imaginaries of home that are culturally diverse, but even allows for cultural clashes of the ideas of 'home.' The third section of the novel is titled Pulimed, the place Kannan sets up his own home to lead an independent life. Not only does it give occasion to start afresh, without the trappings of the legacy he has left behind, but it is also transplantation into a new and alien culture. As one of the first Indian managers, Kanan is literally storming the bastion of a hitherto true-blue British society, the 'colonial Sahib.' If the presence of an Indian at the Planter's Club is not curious enough, an 'Anglo-Indian' wife plays up the distinctions of 'belongingness' an ironic twist. However, before exploring the conundrum of 'race,' 'class' and 'location,' it would be fruitful to first look at the argument that establishes 'place identity' as a dynamic process. Drawing upon various studies that emphasise the "dynamic nature of relationships to places as part of identity development," L.C Manzo goes on to establish that one's attachment to place is dynamic, just as 'place-identity' is fluid.⁵⁷² The section opens on a Kannan quite satisfied with the way things have turned out for him. Despite having been disinherited and turned out of home, not only has he managed to find himself a comfortable job, but he has also managed to get a toe hold in British society. However, he hadn't anticipated the world of the tea district to be so 'white' and 'alien.' He had felt like the 'outsider' at first, but he was quick to adapt. As we shall see, it is by adapting to and mimicking the English society, he begins to gradually identify himself with and become attached to the tea district. He finally gets married to Helen six months later, bringing an ecstatic bride home as she is mesmerised by the beauty of the tea estate on the drive up.

To Helen, the bungalow she steps into after marriage is almost like a dream come true. As an Anglo-Indian who looked upon England as 'home,' she had always fantasised living the life of a 'memsahib' somewhere overseas, but this was the closest it came to those amorphous dreams. From the tall trees to the profusion of flowers, the servants bowing deep, to the bay

⁵⁷² Manzo, Lynn, C. "Beyond House and Haven." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 23. Issue 1 (2003): Pp 52.

windows in the drawing room with the magnificent view of the valley, the size of the house and the number of rooms, she is fascinated by it all: “What a distance she had travelled, she thought, from the grubby three-room houses in a succession of government colonies!” (*THBM*, 323). Even though it’s not a big bungalow by Pulimed standards, to her, it was better than anything she had hoped for. On being told of the invitation to tea at the Superintendent’s house that Sunday, she feels her fantasy complete. She can’t wait to have tea with “real posh English people,” sipping tea like a “proper English lady” (*THBM*, 324).

Interestingly, the writer gives an insight into the frisson of the colonial encounter at the turn of the century, not so much through the State versus native interface, or by leading the reader to the centre of the raging debate for self-rule, but through a vignette played out in the drawing room of the Superintendent’s residence. Mrs. Matilda Stevenson, wife of the Superintendent of the Karadi Estate, is the undisputed ‘queen’ of Pulimed society. She is also the self-appointed sentinel of ‘Englishness’ amongst the tea estate society, making or ruining many a reputation for not being ‘English’ enough. The house she keeps is emblematic of that pristine ‘Englishness,’ reflected in her ‘impeccable’ taste and position. In an essay titled “Women, Home and Status,” Bonnie Loyd elaborates on the evolution of the ‘home’ as the women’s major symbol of status and identity: “The home is intricately intertwined with the self-image of each of its inhabitants.”⁵⁷³ Only those who make the mark are allowed into the hallowed precincts of the Superintendent’s house. An engraved invitation to tea with her on a Thursday afternoon was a coveted prize. No one dares cross her, and her word is never questioned. If nothing else, her retinue of servants including a ‘dog walker,’ a ‘senior polisher’ as well as a ‘junior polisher,’ exemplifies Loyd’s contention that “(c)aring for the house-as-status-symbol requires time and attention.”⁵⁷⁴ Though she was hugely dependent on her Indian butler, she looked upon all Indians as only fit to be servants or subordinates. As the wife of the General Manager of the Pulimed Tea Company, she considered herself superior to all Indians. Never bothering herself with the latest political developments, she was extremely disturbed when her husband hired an Indian to replace Joe Wilson, ‘Old Etonian,’ a true blue Englishman. Always in command of the situation, she doesn’t know how to take Kannan Dorai’s presence in the white society, wondering if it is a precursor of the things to come. And now, with his marriage to someone of ‘mixed blood,’ she is even more nonplussed. Here is someone who looks deceptively English, but is clearly not the ‘right’ blood, making it all the more difficult

⁵⁷³ Loyd, Bonnie. “Women, Home, Status.” *Housing and Identity*, edited by J.S. Duncan. 1981. Pp 181..

⁵⁷⁴ ---. “Women, Home, Status.” *Housing and Identity*, edited by J.S. Duncan. 1981. Pp 181.

to put down than the 'brown' Indian. A Mrs. Stevenson, who has summarily cut short the social standing of even an occasional fellow-White who did not exhibit the 'right pedigree' in mores and manners, is hardly likely to allow a woman who is only a 'half-English' go unscathed. Thus, it is only natural that Mrs. Stevenson responds with anger and disdain to her husband's proposal that they invite home the latest entrant to the Pulimed circle, Kannan's new bride Helen. On being asked to entertain a woman of 'mixed blood' it seemed to Mrs. Stevenson, her husband was not only 'undermining her position,' but also 'letting their side down.' However, she knows she has no choice but to welcome them with appropriate civility, as her husband has decreed.

Finally, the much awaited engraved invitation to dinner arrives from the General Manager's residence. Kannan silently recalls the great deal of preparation he had done for the party hosted to welcome him, barely managing to scrape through the 'test':

He had spent a fortnight observing everything the Frasers did – the way they sat, ate, drank, wielded cutlery and glasses. Even then he had almost collapsed from the strain of trying not to come up short during the course of that long evening (*THBM*, 350).

Being an Indian, Kannan seems to be more alert to the chasm between the two cultures than the Anglo-Indian Helen. She seems to be floating in the confidence of her 'imagined Englishness.' Anxious about his wife, he wonders how she will cope, though he is sure she wouldn't take kindly to being coached by him.

In the event, a resplendently attired Helen commits her first faux pas by greeting Mrs. Stevenson with a 'pleased to meet you.' Apparently, a classy Englishwoman does not use phrases such as 'pleased to meet you' or 'cheerio.' Anyone who used the phrase was immediately cut down to size. Kannan had first heard the story from Freddie Hamilton over a long drunken evening, who had raved about the futility of making an issue of such minor things. On his part, Kannan had been worried about the gaffes he may be making in ignorance, and started to observe and mimic the English in good earnest. For a woman who makes it her business to watch people's accents, discover their pedigree, or even detect 'vulgar blood' behind a facade of sophistication, would hardly be expected to pass up the opportunity to 'expose' the pretensions of a 'mixed blood.' Mrs Stevenson is relentless in her pursuit of Helen, snubbing her at every opportunity, even as Kannan watches on helpless. Race and class together raise an insurmountable barrier. The evening ends, to Mrs.

Stevenson's joy and relief as she recalls with 'pleasure' the shame and confusion on her guests' face after she had inadvertently broken one of Mrs. Stevenson's exquisite fruit baskets: "The spectre of an India damaged beyond repair that the Dorais' arrival had raised in Mrs. Stevenson's mind receded – for now" (*THBM*, 362). Thus, to the British society, the 'house' becomes the paragon of status and culture, closely guarded to maintain its exclusive superiority. This vignette, if nothing else, allows the writer to bring out the not 'inconsiderable role' the English Memsahib has played in aiding the departure of the British from India (*THBM*, 339-340). It isn't simply an attempt to show a beautiful pretender her place that explains Mrs. Stevenson's conduct, observes Magdalena Ball in a review of the novel. "She was also battling," Ball argues, "something she but dimly sensed, a feeling that everything she held dear was about to be swept away. It was bad enough that fools like her husband though Indians could be their equals, but to think that she had to entertain a mixed blood, whom even Indians discriminated against, in her own sitting room..."⁵⁷⁵ Interestingly, it is not just the beleaguered British society that exhibits a fear of losing their power by guarding their elitism. Daniel Dorai, as the traditional head of the Chevathar, too, lays down strictures for what will not be tolerated on the premises of the Chevathar homestead. An Anglo-Indian daughter-in-law can never be acceptable, because she could 'corrupt' the very blood of the future Dorais. It is only with time and age that Daniel mellows down, and encourages his wife Lily to pay his estranged son Kannan a visit.

If a 'mixed blood pretender' Helen has been cut down to size by a 'pedigreed' Englishwoman, an 'anglicised' Helen loses no time in expressing her disdain for the rustic and simple Lily, Kannan's mother when she comes to Pulimed. Lily, eager as she is to visit Pulimed, is also anxious that she find some common ground to meet her new daughter-in-law on. On her part, Helen is still nursing the wound inflicted not only by her father-in-law's rejection, but more recently by the Pulimed society. In any case, Helen and Lily do not have much in common, not even a language that they could communicate in. At the outset, Helen rejects all the gifts her mother-in-law has brought along, asking her husband to distribute the sweets and the saris to the servants. She also objects to Lily teaching the servants to cook Kannan's favourite dishes. Clearly, the daughter-in-law looks upon Lily's overtures as an invasion of the turf she presides over as the lady of the house. Treated as nothing but an intrusion into the household, Lily has no option but to physically withdraw herself to her

⁵⁷⁵ Ball, Magdalena. "A Review of The House of Blue Mangoes." www.compulsivereader.com. Magdalena Ball. 25th March, 2003. Accessed 20th August, 2016.

room and stay, “all the advice she had rehearsed for weeks remained unsaid” (*THBM*, 366). In an essay on the behaviour and built-space interface, Donald Sanders contends that the cultural conventions that determine behaviour in domestic spaces comprise four significant components, viz., ‘personal space,’ ‘territoriality,’ ‘privacy regulation’ and ‘boundary control.’ However, he adds a caveat that the four categories overlap and all four need to be integrated as determinants of cultural convention. “In the definitions of personal space and territoriality, humans establish visible and invisible boundaries and zones of interaction; the boundaries are marked, and privacy mechanisms can be viewed as a form of boundary control.”⁵⁷⁶

As the lady of the house, Helen has clearly marked it off as her ‘territory,’ and her verbal and non-verbal cues act as ‘boundaries’ that make Lily literally withdraw to the guest room and confine herself there, with a minimal of interaction. Kannan, on his part, swings between anger and guilt, angry with his wife for the impasse, and guilty for being embarrassed about the bags and bundles of home-made goodies his mother had brought to Pulimed. Even as he hates his own weakness, his dislike for his wife increased too. He begins to stay away from home as much as possible, and when there, to divide the time between the two warring women. Ironically, Kannan’s acquired English tastes, like borrowed finery, come in the way, affecting his relationship not only with his mother, but will soon drive a wedge between him and his wife too. Lily refuses to be taken around to the Pulimed club, for instance, eagerly waiting to return to her own home and her ailing husband. On the day she was to leave, a guilt-laden Kannan hugs her warmly, and she pretends she had had a good time. Helen does not bother to come out and bid her goodbye. The servants were pleased with the parting gift of money she gave, though it saddened her to learn that they were particularly grateful for the ‘delicious mango pickle.’ The visit was an unmitigated disaster, though Lily had done all she could.

The tiff with her mother-in-law was but a minor irritant for Helen, who also has to brave the condescension from much of the entire tea district, as word of Mrs. Stevenson’s treatment meted to Helen travels far, becoming the gold standard. Meanwhile, the British were fighting on various fronts, trying to keep their hold on an empire that seemed to be slipping from their hands, even as they were caught up in the World War. The memorial service for Joe Wilson, who had left Pulimed to join the war, evoked anguished responses

⁵⁷⁶ Sanders, Donald. “Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology” *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S.Kent..1990. Pp 51.

from all his ex-colleagues. As one of the planters, Michael Fraser, put it: "It galls me that a fine lad like Joe should have died in a hell-hole called Kohima, for an idea that is no longer important" (*THBM*, 372). Kannan, who has always looked upon the British as the eternal figures of authority and control, is taken aback by the momentary show of despair and uncertainty in the world of the White man. Their vulnerability makes him look upon them in new light. Yet, both he and his wife have had to make relentless efforts trying to fit into this 'white world' of the Sahib, the former slightly more successfully than the latter. But the wheel seems to be imperceptibly, but surely, turning in favour of the Indians. It was the fear of this change of order that had propelled Mrs. Stevenson to be at her imperious best to show Kannan's 'mixed blood' bride in poor light. On the other hand is Freddie, a very close friend of the now deceased Joe Wilson, wondering if he could become just as good friends with Kannan, the Indian, or would 'race' and the absence of a 'shared history' come in the way.

Meanwhile, back at the House of the Blue Mangoes, Lily never gets the time to brood over her unsuccessful holiday in the hills, for the moment she gets back, her husband Daniel needs to be nursed from a second stroke that rendered him bed-ridden. In his last days, Daniel's world shrinks to his room, drastically trimmed from the sprawling family settlement he had established. He took to raving about everything from 'siddha medicine' to the ingratitude of the world, occasionally communing with his family now gone, or asking about his son Kanan. The one thing he was glad of, he confesses to his cherished companion Ramadoss, was that he would be dying in his beloved place Chevathar. By the time Kannan rushes home, his father lay dead for twelve hours, the body bathed and prepared for burial. Kannan had come home after a long gap, and after the funeral, as he moved around from room to room,

(t)ouching a table here, brushing a cobweb there, pausing to examine a book, a painting or a memory, it occurred to him that a man's house resembled nothing so much as those fossil beds, in shale or sandstone, that preserve epoch upon epoch in neatly ordered layers (*THBM*, 397).

Before he returns to Pulimed, Kannan cannot not help noticing the general state of decay and decline the entire settlement seems to be plagued by. His father's will was an expression of the disillusionment and bitterness his last days must have been filled with, he muses. As Kannan leaves Chevathar, the parting words of his Uncle Ramadoss haunt him for

long. Ramadoss and his mother wished he would visit home more often, even perhaps, someday, Kannan return for good. It had also been his father's innate desire, he was told.

Kannan hadn't reckoned with the sense of loss and devastation he experienced after his father's death, from whom he had been estranged for so long. In fact, he finds it difficult to get on with work once he gets back to Pulimed. He really needed to be able to share his mixed feelings about his father with someone, but Helen was the last person he could talk to. To her, Daniel was the man who had disowned his son, and thus deprived her of the family riches. She was just relieved that there was one adversary less in her life. Unbeknown to her, Daniel had drawn his son to himself in death, a reality that she lacked the sensitivity to grasp. The distance between husband and wife stretches, and the monsoon that she hated, only exacerbates the situation. She longs to be back in Madras, away from a world full of old men and women who disliked her, and a husband who could not shield her. The very house that she had once been proud to have been the mistress of, as the symbol of her social enhancement, now seems unbearable to live in.⁵⁷⁷ "To the long list of things she *abhorred* about estate life, she added the weather" (*THBM*, 405; italics mine). Obviously, it is but a reflection of the breakdown in the relationship. Thus, finding fault with everything, she complains to her husband about the butler, but he can see no reason to throw him out. They begin to argue, and losing his patience, he tells her she can never become a 'white,' no matter how hard she tries, because she is not one of them. An angry Helen retaliates swiftly with a barb about how he lacks self respect, given the way he fawns over the same 'white' community. Soon, they are mocking each other's 'pathetic origins,' but the last straw is when Helen passes a disparaging remark about Kannan's mother. She realises too late she has crossed her limits, and he is tempted to hit her. He moves to a spare bedroom, and in December, when the rains stop, she packs up and returns to Madras.⁵⁷⁸ Going by Judith Sixsmith's observation on the notion of 'home' being defined by warm and loving familial relationships, the 'home' they had set up literally disintegrates once the relationship turns sour.⁵⁷⁹

Now that he is alone, he invites his college friend Murthy on his long promised visit. A staunch nationalist, Murthy's visit provides the opportunity to put Kannan's acquired

⁵⁷⁷ Recall Paul J. J. Pennartz's correlation between negativity among people and the deterioration in atmosphere of the house. "Home: The Experience of Atmosphere." *At Home*, edited by I. Cieraad. 1999. Pp 99.

⁵⁷⁸ Again, Pennartz has observed that poor relationships among people is reflected in spatial behaviour; the couple no longer shares their bedroom. "Home: The Experience of Atmosphere." *At Home*, edited by I. Cieraad. 1999. Pp 99..

⁵⁷⁹ Sixsmith, Judith. "The Meaning of Home" *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 6 Issue 4.1986: Pp 291.

'Englishness' in perspective. To begin with, Kannan sweeps his friend into a flurry of clubbing and partying. Murthy, however, tires of this intense socialisation, and asks Kannan if they can't just have a quiet day together at home. Murthy tells him he has changed a lot from the youngster he knew at college, in the way he fawns over his British colleagues, or uncharacteristically eating 'dosais' with a fork and knife. Kannan just brushes it aside as a 'natural' evolution, and asks Murthy to tell him about himself. Murthy takes the opportunity to expound on the need for political freedom and the ramifications of siding with the British. He probes Kannan about his future plans, once the British leave. Kannan, however, has not yet decided whether he would want to stay on, for there would be immense opportunities once the English leave, or if he would actually return to Doraipuram. They spend Murthy's last few days by themselves, and Murthy is glad to discover that despite the superficial changes, at heart they still share the same bond.

About a fortnight after his friend's visit, a man-eating tiger surfaced in Pulimed. Initially, Kannan and Freddie, try to hunt the tiger down and kill it, with no knowledge about how to really go about it. Things get worse after a couple of more killings, and the coolies go on a strike demanding protection. A meeting of the Planter's Association is called at the Club, including, for the first time, the women as well. However, Freddie is shocked to discover that the Indian planters have been deliberately left out of the meeting, ostensibly "so they could speak freely"(THBM, 435). He gets so worked up that he practically accuses the President of being foolish to distrust Indians, pointing out they wouldn't be comfortably ensconced in their bungalows, if it weren't for the unstinting support of the Indians. He drives over to see Kannan, angry with his counterparts for their racist attitude. At first, Freddie is not sure how to broach the subject, but when Kannan talks about calling a meeting, he tells him about how he was deliberately kept out of one. Kannan is of course grateful to Freddie for standing up for him, but also disturbed, realising the truth in Murthy's words that he shares with Freddie: "He told me my desire to excel here, to make something of myself in the white man's world, was counterfeit. Nothing I'd ever achieve would stand up to scrutiny. He was right" (THBM,p 437). Going out for a walk, Kannan is filled with rage as he views the tea plantations around him, the world he had escaped to, where he had hoped to 'rebuild his life'. Liz Bondi pertinently points out that 'identity politics' is about the "making and remaking of ourselves in relation to others," as well as the world around us.⁵⁸⁰ Kannan had certainly put in a lot of

⁵⁸⁰ Bondi, L.."Locating Identity Politics." *Place and the Politics of Identity*, edited by M. Keith and S. Pile. London: Routledge. 1993. Pp 84.

effort to emulate the white man, if only by way of the arguably superficial traits such as mannerisms and conduct. Yet, he had felt compelled to do it so as to fit into the predominantly white culture of the tea estate, an obvious example of how deeply the politics of place imbricates with the politics of identity. To grasp the dynamics of place and identity, one can turn to Lynne Manzo's explication of the political context of relationship to places. Manzo posits that "our identity is shaped by our interactions with the world and the messages that we receive about ourselves from others. The converse is also true: our relationships to places are influenced by who we are, with all of the political implications of this identity."⁵⁸¹

Smarting with the realisation of truth in his friend Murthy's words, Kannan finally comes to a decision that he would first somehow track and kill the tiger, if only to show the white men what he was worth, and then resign from the job and jump into the freedom struggle. When his friend comes to tell him he is the subject of gossip and innuendos, his resolve is cemented. He manages to cajole the reclusive old man Harrison, the only one around who had the knowledge and experience of shooting tigers, and together they manage to pull it off. Harrison's only condition was that he tell no one of the kill, as he didn't want to be feted by the white man's society he had forsaken a long time back. Interestingly, Harrison manages to make Kannan rethink his belief in the 'goodness' of the white man, especially at the cost of disparaging all things native. Ultimately, Kannan follows Harrison's advice and keeps mum about the killing. He just keeps a tiger-claw as keepsake, and on his farewell visit to the Frasers, gives it to their son. To his boss Mr. Stevenson's query if he nailed the tiger, he just mysteriously asks him to check with Mr. Harrison. It is with a great sense of satisfaction that he quits Pulimed.

He eventually returns home to Chevathar, and it turns out to be a special Christmas, because many of the Dorai family who had scattered all over the world come back to be together again, just one year short of the silver jubilee of Doraipuram. As he joins his family in singing aloud the carols, he revels in the sheer joy of being together, vowing that he would revive the spirit and make his father's dream come alive again. He is a little sad that his wife isn't with him, but at that moment, he felt optimistic that he could heal that breach as well, sure that she would be there by his side next Christmas. "I'm glad I'm here, it is the place of my heart" (*THBM*, 469). Magdalena Ball finds the ending 'reasonably satisfying': "Kannan finds a kind of sense of purpose in home – almost a Panglossian tilling of his garden....and

⁵⁸¹Manzo, Lynne C. "Beyond House and Haven" *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.23 Issue 1 (2003) Pp 47-61. P 54.

perhaps that is the ultimate theme of the book – to stay home, and become yourself, and till your own garden/grow your mangoes.”⁵⁸²

Thus, the narratives discussed in this section not only reveal the many imaginaries of home, but also veer towards a movement that takes the respective protagonists back to their roots. Anuradha Roy’s novel *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* presents us with a multitude of characters that seem to particularly lack the feeling of being ‘at home’ in their respective dwelling spaces. Or, as this thesis finds in the case of Amulya, the ‘at-homeness’ that he fashions for himself comes at the price of rendering his wife Kananbala alienated from the home that she shares with him. The very seclusion from society that his house allows him, that he so revels in, proves to be the gregarious Kananbala’s undoing. A ‘house’, by definition, becomes a ‘home’ wherein familial relationships are nurtured.⁵⁸³ Yet, here is an instance where the ‘home’ that is ‘haven’ for one character, is ‘trap’ for another member of the family, to borrow from Claire Cooper Marcus. The claustrophobia that Kananbala experiences in her marital home manifests itself in her madness. Kamal and Manjula, Amulya’s elder son and daughter-in-law are characters who only seem to be venting spleen and taking out their frustrations on other members of the household. Childless themselves, they provide anything but a loving and caring home as foster parents to the two children growing up in the house. A Kananbala or a Nirmal, a Shanti or a Meera, or even the adolescent Mukunda have one thing in common as co-residents of the house on 3, Dulganj Road: each of them have been subjected to their barbs at some point or the other. Their presence in the house only vitiates the atmosphere, thus corroding the experience of the house as ‘home’ for the other members of the family. Nirmal, Amulya’s younger son experiences the house as ‘home,’ at least until the tragedy in his life turns it into an ‘alien’ space he practically flees from. It takes him years to gather courage to come back and live there, only to find the filial bonds, especially between him and his daughter, frayed, if not non-existent. The disaffection amongst the various family members would hardly make for a ‘home’ that carries any positive valence. Meera, the widow who had been glad to find a ‘home’ of sorts in the house at Songarh, would rather seek cover in the anonymous city, than deal with the lecherous advances of an unscrupulous Kamal. Even though it is Bakul’s house by right, she is hardly ‘at home’ in the place where she is constantly harangued by her aunt and uncle. She

⁵⁸²Ball, M. “A Review of the House of Blue Mangoes.” www.compulsivereader.com. Magdalena Ball. N.d 25th March 2003. Accessed on 20th August, 2016.

⁵⁸³Bowlby, Sophie, et al. “Doing Home” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 20 No. 3 (1997). Pp 343-350. Pp 344.

is only 'at home' exploring the wild open spaces around the ruined Fort with Mukunda, her playmate and companion, or in the exotic world of Mrs. Barnum and her birthday rituals. For Bakul, her attachment to the childhood home was largely due to Mukunda, her constant companion.⁵⁸⁴ Once he is thrown out of the house, the place no longer feels like 'home' as there is no one she can quite relate to. There is always something lacking in her experience of 'home.' Mukunda, the orphan brought home by Nirmal, is constantly reminded of his marginal position in the house. Yet, because of the close bond he develops with Bakul he comes to establish a close attachment with the place, finding in it his closest experience of 'home' as he ever could. The many meanings of 'home' play up again and again in his life-course, as he experiences the loss of home, both literally and vicariously. Yet, if he 'finds' and 'founds' a home in Suleiman's old house in Calcutta, he also forsakes it to preserve Bakul's 'home' when it comes under threat.

David Davidar's *The House of Blue Mangoes* runs through generations of the Dorai family, as they establish or re-establish their imaginaries of 'home.' At the opening of the narrative is Solomon Dorai, quite at home in his patrimony, upholding the legacy and tradition of the Dorais. His wife, as the narrative reveals, personalises her marital home in her own ways, even as she upholds the family traditional patterns. Daniel, Solomon's elder son was banished to Nagercoil by his father, but never feels quite at home there, though he has established himself as a respectable medical practitioner. He misses his natal Chevethar. The family home has been usurped by the wily Uncle Abraham and his covetous wife. The rebel in Daniel's brother Aaron turns him into a misguided revolutionary, alienated from his family almost until the end when his wasted and tortured body is close to death in a British prison. The reconciliation between the brothers happens when he is on his deathbed, and he urges Daniel to reclaim what is rightfully theirs, reiterating the unmistakable pull of home he has always harboured. Even as Daniel fulfils the promise made to his brother and finally is 'at home' in the Big House, history repeats itself in the next generation as his estranged son Kannan goes on to set up home independently in the British tea district at Pulimed. This vignette presents an interesting clash of cultures as the English idea of a 'house' and 'home' is pitted against the native tradition. Thus, if a Helen imagines she can only be 'at home' amidst all things 'English,' a Mrs. Stevenson does not mask her derision for such pretensions. On the other hand, the 'anglicised' Helen's scorn for a mother-in-law who tries to bring in her

⁵⁸⁴ Recall H. M. Proshansky et al reiterating the significance of other people in establishing 'place-identity.' "Place Identity." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3 Issue 1 (1983) 57-83..P p 60.

traditional housekeeping skills to the son's house drives a wedge between the generations. On her visit to Pulimed, Lily feels completely estranged not only from her surroundings, but even her son, and longs to return home to Chevathar. It is only with the passage of time that Helen, and ultimately Kannan realise that they could never be 'at home' amongst the White Sahibs. Presumably, Kannan finally feels 'at home' in Chevathar where he returns at the end of the narrative.

Gilles Barbey characterises 'home' as a 'familiar place,' and a place of 'eternal return.'⁵⁸⁵ The protagonists of both the novels ultimately return to the place of their roots, incidentally also home of their respective births. The one thing that both the narratives have in common is 'journey' and 'return,' movements that, according to Manzo, suggest "a dynamic interplay between people and their physical surroundings, and conveys a sense of personal development and change over time."⁵⁸⁶ In Anuradha Roy's narrative, a Mukunda is forced to journey out of the only home he has known, ultimately finding himself a home in someone else's house. Circumstances lead him back to his childhood home, and he gives up all he has, to preserve that home. Ultimately, in a sentimental journey, Bakul goes on to reclaim her maternal past, with the 'born homeless' Mukunda joining her to shape their future. David Davidar's narrative revolves around banished sons who come back to reclaim their roots, generation after generation.

The swing between journey and return alerts us to another aspect of place-identity, that is, its flexible and dynamic nature, something pointed out by both Proshansky, et. al. (1983), and Manzo (2003). For instance, Manzo contends that "(j)ust as place-identity is fluid, our attachments to places are also quite dynamic."⁵⁸⁷ Thus, we see this realised in the character of Mukunda, who is deeply attached to the house in Songarh, to begin with, but later comes to identify with Suleiman's house in Calcutta as 'home.' An Aaron has a love-hate relationship with home, alienated from his family, drifting between 'home' and 'away'. As he lay dying, however, he finally reveals to his brother the overpowering pull of home that he experienced, exhorting his brother to reclaim the place closest to his heart, the home they left behind in Chevathar. Forced by circumstance to settle down in an alien place, his brother Daniel finally goes back to claim his legacy. A young Kannan, dazzled by the bright city

⁵⁸⁵ Barbey, Gilles. "Spatial Archetypes and the Experience of Time: Identifying the Dimensions of Home." *The Meaning and Use of Housing*, edited by E.G. Arias. 1993. Pp 108-109.

⁵⁸⁶ Manzo, Lynn, C. "Beyond House and Haven." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. **23 Issue (1)** 2003 Pp 47-61. Pp 52.

⁵⁸⁷ ---. "Beyond House and Haven." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. **23 Issue 1** (2003) Pp 47-61. Pp 52

lights, begins to find Chevathar too provincial, and goes on to set himself in the English world of the tea gardens, until, disaffected by the colonial dynamics of race and identity, he chooses to return to his roots. Manzo pertinently alerts us to the conscious choices people make about the place they want to associate with: “People choose environments that are congruent with their self-concept, modifying settings to better represent themselves, or moving to find places which are more congruent with their sense of self.”⁵⁸⁸ The protagonists of both the novels realise the inexorable pull of their roots, choose to go back ‘home,’ imagining it to be the place most ‘congruent’ with their sense of self. . In the words of E. Relph,

It may be that it is just the physical appearance, the landscape of place that is important to us, or it is the awareness of the persistence of place through time, or the fact that *here* is where we know and are known, or where the most significant experiences of our life have occurred. But if we are really rooted in a place and attached to it, if this place is authentically our *home*, then all these facets are profoundly significant and inseparable. Such home places are indeed the foundation of man’s existence, providing not only the context for all human activity,ut also security and identity for individuals and groups..⁵⁸⁹

Presumably, at the end of *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, Bakul and Mukunda will give shape to their idyllic home, having arrived to where the protagonist’s roots are. Kannan, at the end of *The House of Blue Mangoes*, is finally back where he truly belongs, with no conflict between location, identity and belonging.

⁵⁸⁸Manzo, Lynn, C. “Beyond House and Haven.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.2003: Pp 54

⁵⁸⁹Relph, E. “Home Places as Profound Centres of Human Existence.” *Place and Placelessness*.1980. Pp 41.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the notions of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ across a range of fictional narratives, closely examining the manner in which the protagonists dwell at home. The significance of a phenomenological approach to the study of the person-environment interface has already been established in the Introduction, as is Martin Heidegger’s exegesis on the notions of ‘building and dwelling.’ As this thesis explores various facets of dwelling at home in a range of fictional narratives, it would be insightful to turn to Heidegger’s hypothesis for a concluding perspective to the argument. In Heidegger’s formulation, ‘dwelling’ is the process by which the place where we exist becomes a ‘personal world’ and ‘home.’⁵⁹⁰ Heidegger relates people’s quality of life with the manner in which they are able to ‘dwell,’ where the act of dwelling goes beyond mere living or residing in a certain place or house. In fact, Heidegger’s contention that ‘dwelling’ involves a desire to belong to the environment, to feel ‘inside a place’ and to be ‘at home’ is quite pertinent to this thesis.⁵⁹¹

A detailed engagement with the dynamics of space use within the domestic space this thesis has focused on has arguably opened up alternate ways of reading fictional narratives. The analysis exemplifies the observation made by Hillier and Hanson on the social logic of space: “The ordering of space in buildings is really about the ordering of relations between people.”⁵⁹² The dynamics of space use observed in the narratives reflect, in effect, on the way the relationships play out, as various characters try to assert themselves by co-opting some corner as Yezad does in *Family Matters*, or tacitly creating boundaries to foreclose the access of certain other people, a ploy Helen in *The House of Blue Mangoes* takes resort to against the unwanted ‘intrusion’ of a mother-in-law. Exploring the interface between architecture and its users, the house and its inhabitants, has been a productive tool to study how architecture encloses behaviour. The study also bears with Amos Rapoport’s observation: “built environments influence behaviour both instrumentally and through communicative situations. They are also used to communicate and assert status, power, roles, etc.”⁵⁹³ Thus, for instance, a

⁵⁹⁰Seamon, D and R. Mugerauer. “Introduction” *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World*, edited by. Seamon and Mugerauer. New York: Columbia University Press. 1985. Pp 8.

⁵⁹¹ Heidegger, Martin. “Building, Dwelling, Thinking.” *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, edited by Neil Leach. London: Routledge. 1997. Pp 160

⁵⁹² Hillier, Bill and Julienne Hanson. *The Social Logic of Space*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1984. Pp 2.

⁵⁹³ Rapoport, Amos. “Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings.” *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S. Kent. 1990. Pp 11.

Ram Karan in *An Obedient Father* manipulates his activities in the house to gain access to a vulnerable daughter, or a Mukunda in *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* is relegated to the outhouse, effectively putting the 'casteless' orphan in his 'place,' a move that exposes the class and caste dynamics of the household.

One of the important factors that colours an understanding and response to built space are the buildings one has grown up in, for they are inscribed in the consciousness as the ideal building.⁵⁹⁴ In his well-known exegesis on the house, the most intimate of spaces to which one is innately attached, Gaston Bachelard expounds on the virtue and value of the oneiric house, which is the "crypt of the house" one was born in.⁵⁹⁵ The house of our birth, contends Bachelard, is inscribed in us, an embodiment not only of 'home,' but also of 'dreams.' Drawing upon Bachelard's exploration of the childhood home, Harries contends that the way buildings and spaces speak to us is tied to quite specific personal memories, memories inevitably tied to a particular place, a particular landscape."⁵⁹⁶ Louis Chawla also reasserts the significance of childhood memories of home to adult relations of home.⁵⁹⁷ This is exemplified in some of the narratives discussed by the thesis, as the protagonists variously draw upon their memories of childhood homes, or other significant homes they once inhabited. For instance, it is through her memories of the houses she lived in earlier that the protagonist of Deshpande's *That Long Silence* can explore her many selves as she seeks to come to terms with her present dilemmas. It is the protagonist's intense desire to reclaim the childhood home that animates the novels *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* and *The House of Blue Mangoes*. Graham D. Rowles' hypothesis also finds the attachment to place amongst the 'old-old' to be often grounded in "lifelong familiarity with a single physical setting."⁵⁹⁸ Taking on from Rowles' thesis, it would be interesting to examine the place attachment of two old protagonists. Rowles' argument clearly holds true for Kalyani from *A Matter of Time* but is belied in the case of Nariman of *Family Matters*. Nariman's lack of affective bonding with his childhood home can best be understood through Proshansky, et al's caveat on the attachment to the childhood home. Thus, they reiterate that a strong bond with the natal home is only tenable

⁵⁹⁴Harries, Karsten. "Learning From Two Invisible Houses." *The Ethical Function of Architecture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. 1997. Pp 202.

⁵⁹⁵ Bachelard, Gaston. "The House: From Cellar to Garret: The Significance of the Hut." *Poetics of Space*. Second edition 1994. Pp 50-51.

⁵⁹⁶Harries, Karsten. "Learning from Two Invisible Houses." *The Ethical Function of Architecture*. 1977. Pp 205.

⁵⁹⁷ Chawla, Louis. "Home is Where you Start From: Childhood Memory in the Adult Interpretations of Home." *The Meaning and Use of Housing: International Perspectives, Approaches and Their Applications*, edited by Ernesto G. Arias. Aldershot: Avebury. 1993. Pp 481.

⁵⁹⁸Rowles, Graham D. "Place and Personal Identity in Old Age: Observations from Appalachia." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 3. Issue 4 (1983): Pp 299-313.

when positive cognitions of the environment outweigh the negatives.⁵⁹⁹ This thesis' reading of the narrative *Family Matters* has shown that Nariman's experiences and memories of 'home' have only been negative and draining.

This thesis has explored the emotional relationships of the fictional protagonists with the 'place' they call home. Given that 'place' is arguably the trickiest of words in the English language, one is nevertheless compelled to explore and comprehend the nature of one's emotional relationship to places as every human being is embodied and embedded in a physical context.⁶⁰⁰ However, the concept of 'home' comes across as the predominant metaphor that shapes much of the debate around the relationship to 'place,' a tendency that has been critiqued by many scholars who argue for the deep attachments people can form to places other than home too.⁶⁰¹ While these scholars do not dispute the valency attached with the notion of home as a spatial metaphor signifying an attachment to various places, they critique the narrowing down of the debate to 'home' only as the literal house or residence. This thesis accepts the need to take the approach to 'place attachment' beyond the realm of home and hearth, yet chooses to focus on the domestic space as the site of varying kinds of attachment or even disconnect that the home-space can engender. Further, Manzo pertinently alerts us to the danger of looking upon the metaphor of home only through the prism of positive notions of 'belonging,' 'safety' and 'comfort' while ignoring the negative or ambivalent feelings it can evoke, and thus running the risk of exploring only 'eulogised space.'⁶⁰² This thesis has examined and located both positive as well as negative feelings and experiences among the many imaginaries of 'home.' Concurrently, this thesis' reading of 'home' as depicted in fictional narratives also follows Jeanne Moore's suggestion that "we need to focus on the ways in which home disappoints, aggravates, neglects, confines and contradicts as much as it inspires and comforts us."⁶⁰³

One of the three experiential modes that Judith Sixsmith categorises 'home' on the basis of the many meanings that 'home' can embody is what she terms as the 'social home.' Essentially, this classification draws attention to the social function of 'home.' Thus, it is not

⁵⁹⁹ H. M. Proshansky, et al. "Place Identity." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3 Issue 1.(1983). Pp57-83.Pp 76..

⁶⁰⁰ Manzo, L.C."Beyond House and Haven." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.23 Issue 1 (2003). Pp47-61;Pp 56.

⁶⁰¹ See Manzo, L.C. (2003) and Moore, J. (2000)..

⁶⁰²Manzo, L.C. "Beyond House and Haven." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 2003. Pp47-61; Pp 57.

⁶⁰³ Moore, Jeanne."Placing *Home*)in Context." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.20.Issue 3 (2000): Pp207-217.

only in the presence of other people, but also in the quality and kind of relationships they have with each other that contributes to the place being ‘home.’ More importantly, where the relationships have turned sour or indifferent, the place no longer feels like ‘home.’ For instance, the protagonists of *Sweet Chillies* are a close knit family, and as they weather the storms collectively, they can find ‘home’ even in the cramped room they share with their relatives, when their own house has just burnt down. However, for most other characters, be it a Sona or a Nisha in *Home*, a Jaya in *That Long Silence* or a beleaguered Nariman in *Family Matters*, to name a few, the place they inhabit doesn’t feel like home. In fact, the notion of ‘home’ is often seen in conjunction with the idea of ‘family’: “Houses are assumed to become homes because they provide and become the environment within which family relationships—close, private and intimate—are located.”⁶⁰⁴ Taking a cue from this definition, one could argue that these fictional ‘houses’ don’t really seem to be ‘homes’ as most of the narratives discussed in the thesis seem to house families whose relationships are less than ‘close’ or ‘intimate,’ if not outright dysfunctional. Another not so appealing facet of home, as Lynn Manzo points out, is the place as “the location for the mundane aspects of daily life.”⁶⁰⁵ This sense of ‘drudgery of place’ that feels ‘oppressive’ and ‘imprisoning,’ as Manzo terms it, is exemplified in the lives of various women characters such as Jaya in *That Long Silence*, Coomy in *Family Matters*, or Kananbala in *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*.

The various possessions and objects that may be lovingly displayed or casually scattered around the house have been the object of study for scholars looking into the meanings of home. The many articles of use or aesthetic value that are found in any house also carry symbolic value, and occasionally even affective value: “...household objects constitute an ecology of signs that reflects as well as *shapes* the pattern of the owner’s self.”⁶⁰⁶ Objects and possessions being used for establishing status is exemplified in *Home* and *That Long Silence*, for instance. However, in *Way to Go*, though Shyamanand has been collecting a vast array of objects and stowing them away in his cupboards, it is not for purposes of display, but exemplifies an instance when the collection turns into memorabilia that mark and define his past. In fact, drawing upon the need for Bachelard’s attics and cellars

⁶⁰⁴ Bowlby, Sophie, Susan Gregory and Linda McKie. ““Doing Home”: Patriarchy, Caring and Space.” *Women’s Studies International Forum*. 20. Issue 3 (1997): Pp 343-350. Pp 344.

⁶⁰⁵ Manzo, L.C. “Beyond House and Haven.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 2003. Pp 47-61; Pp 51; See also Bowlby, et al (Year) who highlight the home as the site for the creation and maintenance of patriarchal relations, engendered through the activities conducted within the house.

⁶⁰⁶ Csikszentmihalyi, M. and E. Rochberg-Halton. “People and Things.” *The Meaning of Things*. 1981. Pp 17.; See also Gerry Pratt “The House as Expression of Social Worlds.” *Housing and Identity*. (1981) :”Objects become a mirror of the self.” (Pp 143)

as the repository of memories that make life meaningful, Karsten Harries makes an interesting point. Harries compares Bachelard's idea of the onieric house, with its nooks and corners, attics and cellars, where one can hide things, or even oneself, to Frank Lloyd Wright's idea of home as a simple shelter that gathered around a central hearth. Although Harries acknowledges that Bachelard's vision of the ideal home is rather complicated, marked by his subject position as French, European bourgeois, yet finds reasons to justify Bachelard's ideals that finds resonance in the thesis. For instance, Harries suggests that one needs houses with doors that can occasionally be slammed shut, and spaces or closets where things can be stowed away or forgotten, "only to be rediscovered many years later, perhaps only by children or grandchildren."⁶⁰⁷ This postulation finds reflection in instances from the novels *Way to Go*, *A Matter of Time*, or even *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, among others. In fact, while much may be said for Wright's ideal that banishes closets, to allow for greater discipline within and open spaces without, as Harries puts it, he problematises this quest for a 'simpler' and more 'natural life,' unburdened by the past, whether personal or historical. Yet again he cautions against divesting oneself of any relics or burdens from the past, be they old photographs or letters.⁶⁰⁸ In fact he makes a strong case for preserving and retaining the traces of our past, whether as memories stowed away in the 'attics' and 'cellars' of the psyche, or the nooks and corners of our buildings that tend to accumulate traces of our older selves:

Our psyche, too, has its attics, cellars and closets. But if so, theories of dwelling should not attempt to elide them. In our buildings, too, we need spaces that play the part of the subconscious, spaces where we store what we do not seem to need, spaces where the relics of our lives are allowed to accumulate, spaces where we may rummage someday to be confronted with some long forgotten aspect of our past, spaces that provide our dwelling with a usually obscured continuity. Attics, cellars, and closets are such spaces.⁶⁰⁹

Harries' contention can be adequately substantiated by instances from most of the texts analysed in the present work. The variety of objects that the protagonists have stowed away or confront, in the novels discussed in the chapters above, add depth and meaning to their characters. The gleaming and sparkling artefacts that embellish Jaya's drawing room in *That*

⁶⁰⁷ Harries, Karsten.. "Learning From Two Invisible Houses." *Ethical Function of Architecture*.. 1997. Pp208.

⁶⁰⁸ In *Way to Go*, some of the objects remind the sons of their deceased mother; Jehangir in *Family Matters* is sad to see his beloved grandfather's possessions being disposed off; Coomy, on the other hand, couldn't wait to clear the house of Nariman's meagre possessions, removing any objects that may remind her of his existence.

⁶⁰⁹ Harries, Karsten. "Learning from Invisible Houses." *Ethical Function of Architecture*. 1997. Pp 209.

Long Silence were all carefully chosen and arranged to impress the guests. In *Family Matters*, Jal and Coomy's showcase displays childhood memorabilia they are extremely proud and possessive about. The old wedding picture Sumi in *A Matter of Time* comes across is one of the few articles of significance in the novel, that throws the warped relationship of the 'owners' of the Big House in relief. It is an ironic reminder of a union that was incongruous from the word go, marking the beginning of a disastrous marriage. The brief glimpse the reader gets into Sumi and Gopal's household is when it has come apart, the life of a close knit family scattered around in the odd childhood toys and other odds and ends that carried so many loving memories. As his sons empty out Shyamam and's packed cupboards, in *Way to Go*, it is like unravelling his life, one object at a time, as they come face to face with a personality they were unaware of. It is a telling comment on the engagement, or rather the lack of it, of the narrator in *Shadow Lines* with his own house, as we hardly get to know much about what it looks like from inside, though he certainly seems to have an eye for the array of knick-knacks in the Price family home. Whether it is old Mrs. Barnum's fascinating collection in her drawing room, the cupboards and shelves crammed in the house by the river in Manoharpur, or even little Bakul's treasured little box of knick-knacks in *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, they certainly add mystery and depth to the respective characters. A lot of research on 'home' has foregrounded the significance of 'object' in the house as signifiers of 'class' or social status. Or, what Saunders and Williams term as the 'differential class capacity' that allows for self-expression and identity in the household through consumption.⁶¹⁰ However, the exhibition of class position through a display of goods has not come across as a significant aspect of self-expression, except laterally. Objects as represented in the narratives gain significance primarily in terms of their affective value or as marker in the protagonist's life-trajectory.

In an empirical study of people's affective relation with their home, Clare Cooper Marcus contends that the dwelling is reflective of both, the person's collective identity as well as his or her individual identity. It is, she argues, the 'container' of one's memories, allowing one to 'fix' their life in time and space, a mirror of what one is, or may become, as an individual. Drawing upon Jung's concept of individuation that allows one to most fully become oneself, Cooper-Marcus explicates the process by which just as people invest themselves psychically in certain relationships, they also invest in places as well as in

⁶¹⁰Saunders, Peter and Peter Williams. "The Constitution of the Home: Towards a Research Agenda." *Housing Studies*. 3. Issue 2 (1988): Pp 81-93.

some significant objects: “The key seems to be in the personalisation of space..... it is the movable objects, in the home, rather than the physical fabric itself, which are the symbols of the self.personalisation of space is an inalienable right.”⁶¹¹

Another facet of ‘home’ that is deeply interconnected with household objects is the sense of vulnerability that is experienced by the protagonist when their household effects are brought out in the street as they vacate or are evicted from home. For instance, there is a moment in *Sweet Chilies* when the family has to vacate the fancy house in the posh locality they had inhabited briefly. With all their things out on the road, Omi is extremely discomfited to find their personal possessions exposed to the world. Aru in *A Matter of Time* is similarly discomfited when the family is in the process of vacating the house after the man of the house has walked out on them. This feeling of ‘discomfort’ is best understood through Perla Korosec-Serfaty’s concept of the ‘hidden’ and the ‘visible’ in the composition of ‘home.’ According to her, one of the key affordances that the dwelling allows is ‘secrecy.’ It is in closing doors and windows, and putting away things in drawers and closets that one preserves what is ‘personal,’ choosing what to make ‘visible,’ when and to whom. With their household effects out in the open for all to see, things in which the residents have obviously invested their psychic energies,⁶¹² it feels as if their very selves have been exposed to the public.

An interesting pattern that emerges from a spatial reading of home in this thesis is the manner in which the meaning of ‘home’ seems to be intrinsically identified with the figure of the father in such a way that the idea of ‘home’ begins to unravel when the father goes ‘missing’ or is ‘dead,’ or even when he is not the ‘fatherly figure’ he is expected to be. Thus, for instance, Jaya in *That Long Silence* marks the death of her father as the moment she lost her ‘home,’ unable to recover from the feeling of ‘homelessness’ a long time. In *Family Matters*, the flat in Chateau Felicity never felt like ‘home’ to the stepchildren, especially Coomy, for they always longed for their dead father. In fact, the master of the house, the incapacitated (step)father, is unceremoniously bundled out so that the stepchildren can reclaim their idea of ‘home.’ In *A Matter of Time*, Aru at the beginning of the narrative is quite lost as she flounders in her grandparent’s home, for, to her, they no longer have a ‘home’ to call their own sans their father who has walked out on them. Again, going back in time, the house ‘Vishwas’ had never felt like ‘home’ to Shripati’s daughters, as their father

⁶¹¹ Cooper-Marcus, Clare. “Home-As-Haven, Home As Trap: Explorations In The Experience of Dwelling.” *The Spirit of Home: Proceedings of the Seventy-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture*, 1986. Washington, D.C.: Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture. 2006. Pp 19.

⁶¹² Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Eugene Rocherg-Halton. *Meaning of Things*. 1981. Pp 16- 17.

was only the terrifying (and ‘un-fatherly’) presence at the top of the house. However, Kalyani’s elemental bonding with her childhood home is remarkable, given the convoluted history of the custody of the house. It is only Kalyani who looks upon it as her ‘home’ in its most positive sense, and interestingly, her bonding with the house is a reflection of her bonding with her father. It was the house that her father had built, a father who had loved and cherished her, despite the wedge driven between them by her mother. That affection seems to have permeated the very walls of the house, for it was in that house that Kalyani braves not only her mother’s vehemence, but also survives a husband’s cruelty. As the narrative proceeds, one gets the distinct impression of the patrimony that has shielded her from the vicious jibes fate threw at her. The ‘Big House’ has always been home to her in the true sense of the word, and her dead husband could only bequeath it in letter, what was always hers in spirit.

Shyamanand’s sons in *Way To Go* are only too eager to get rid of the house their father built, and no longer have a ‘home’ after the death of their father. In *An Obedient Father*, it is the father himself who renders the home as ‘unhomely,’ as the young girl is assaulted in the very place that, by definition, provides ‘safety’ to the inmate. To top it all, she has been violated by, ironically, the parent who is meant to be the ‘protector’ and care-giver.⁶¹³ In *Ladies Coupetoo*, Akhila loses the sense of ‘home,’ though they continue to reside in the same house after the death of their father. A beleaguered Aradhana in *A Web of Silk and Gold* can only dream of escaping to the security of her father’s home to escape an abusive husband. The protagonists of both *The House of Blue Mangoes* and *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* put their energies into recovering and reclaiming the legacy of their forefathers. At another level, these instances, in effect, substantiate Manzo’s observation that the “myth of domestic life as blissful... belies the fact that the residence has, and continues to be, a space for strife as well as joy for many people.”⁶¹⁴

One of the most significant aspects that emerges from the literature on the meaning and value of home is manner in which it is constantly changing and evolving, making it one of the most complex entities to grapple with, even theoretically. Of course, the broad parameters are governed by specific time and place, and the culture of which it is a part. Yet, as the reading of this thesis shows, in practical terms, its dynamism is revealed not only in way the meaning

⁶¹³Kimberley Dovey (1985): “To be at home is... to inhabit a secure centre....” “Home and Homelessness.” *Home Environments*, edited by Altman and Werner. Pp 36.

⁶¹⁴Manzo, Lynn, C..“Beyond House and Haven.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.2003: Pp 50-51.

of home varies from person to person even within the same household, the attachment and value of home is seen to evolve and change over time for the individual concerned as well. In fact, Roderick J. Lawrence's theorem argues for a dynamic and temporal approach to the study of built environment: "*the relationship between habitat and resident is dynamic or changeable, and it includes factors which may remain unresolved over a relatively long period of time*(italics in original)."⁶¹⁵ To begin with, the dynamics of the 'house' as 'home' change over time, especially across generations. These changes are very obvious in *Home*, on the death of the patriarch; in *That Long Silence*, the protagonist's life turns upside down as she shuttles between the maternal and paternal grandparental homes. Things change drastically once Nariman in *Family Matters* passes away, or even when Shripati in *A Matter of Time* dies in the accident. The house that Shyamanad built to create a home for his family does not survive him. Ram Karan in *An Obedient Father* forces himself on his daughter, then a vulnerable twelve year old girl. But she turns the tables on the old man when he breaches his promise of keeping away from his granddaughter. In *The Web of Silk and Gold*, Aradhana has to physically remove herself from her marital home to retain her sanctity, as no change of dynamics is possible while her husband rules the house. The peaceful haven that Amulya had built for his family in *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* is ruled by a petty Kamal and his caustic wife Manjula.

In an exploratory study of attachment to home, Maria Vittoria Giuliani reiterates the significance of time in marking the changes in the strength and salience of attachment people have with their homes, just as their identity evolves and changes over time.⁶¹⁶ Thus, the dynamics of attachment with home evolves and changes over time for the mother and daughter, respectively, in the novel *Home*. Until Sona is blessed with a child, she is marginalised in her marital home, by both her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. However, she comes into her own when she becomes the mother to not only a daughter, but also a son. Her daughter Nisha, nonetheless, finds a loving home not in the parental house, but in the house of her Aunt Rupa. As a young woman, when she is back home, she again finds herself an outcast because she has failed to land a match, with her brother and his growing family practically nudge her into the crevices of the house. Many scholars find the notion of 'home' closely intertwined by the notion of the 'family,' an observation that finds resonance in a manner

⁶¹⁵ Lawrence, R.J. "Public Collective and Private Space: A Study of Urban Housing in Switzerland." *Domestic Architecture*, edited by S.Kent.. 1990. Pp 78.

⁶¹⁶ Giuliani, Maria Vittoria. "Place Attachment in a Developmental Context." *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 13 Issue 3 (September 1993) Pp 134-146.

peculiar to Indian culture.⁶¹⁷ In Manju Kapur's *Home*, the daughters-in-law of the house, across generations, can feel truly 'at home' only once they become mothers and start their own 'family'; until then, the mother-in-law resents her presence and never lets her 'feel at home.' The narrative of *That Long Silence* revolves around the protagonist's ruminations over her past, and the evolution of her character is literally mapped out in terms of not only the way she engaged with her family and friends, but various sites of engagement also play a crucial role. It is when she can come to terms with the loss of her 'childhood home,' a loss that had cast a shadow on all her subsequent engagement with the homes and houses she shared with other people, as a daughter and wife, that she can relay go ahead feel at home in her current abode at Churchgate. We can see the swing in attachment and disaffection with home in the character of Yezad in *Family Matters*, as the narrative progresses. The changes are most pronounced in the character of Aru of *A Matter of Time*, in her relationship with the Big House. She starts by feeling like a visitor in her grandparent's home, and initially spends as much time outside the house as possible. But with time, her engagement with her grandmother increases as their bond deepens, which is reflected in an increased involvement in the house. In *Way to Go*, Jamun and Burfi's feelings evolve over time, in consonance with, especially Jamun's comprehension of his feelings for his father. This self-realisation takes the form of a realisation of the meaning of 'home.' Of course, it is extremely ironic that the recognition of this bond with home comes at a time when it is too late, and the house is gone forever. In *An Obedient Father*, the terms of engagement change over time, as initially it is the father, and subsequently the daughter who manipulates and controls the dynamics at home, thus generating different meanings of home. As Anuradha in *The Web of Silk and Gold* seeks refuge in her childhood home from an abusive marriage, she realises to her shock that as a married daughter, it is no longer available to her. In this instance, it is not her attachment that changes, but the circumstances that change the meaning of home for her, forcing her to found a safe haven for herself elsewhere. The respective protagonists of *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* and *The House of Blue Mangoes* go back to forge fresh and deep ties with their natal home.

Clare Cooper Marcus' formulation of 'home-as-haven' and 'home-as-trap' seems to be one of the most frequently recurring motifs amongst the fictional narratives chosen for this study.⁶¹⁸ Most of the protagonists find their 'home' as 'trap' in some way or the other. Thus, a Nisha in

⁶¹⁷See Phillipe Aries *Centuries of Childhood* 1962 and Allan and Crow, *Home and Family: Creating the Domestic Sphere* 1989, among others.

⁶¹⁸Marcus, Clare Cooper Marcus. "Home-as-Haven, Home-as-Trap." *The Spirit of Home Proceedings*. 2006. Pp 2.

Home feels trapped as she is practically confined to the house until she can be sent away 'respectably married.' Nariman in *Family Matters* was constrained by his family both as a youngster, and as an old man. Unable to fulfil his familial obligations on the limited resources at his disposal, Yezad begins to find the 'home' that was once a 'haven' now feels like a 'trap.' Deshpande's *That Long Silence* abounds with protagonists who feel 'trapped' at home, be it a Jaya in the Lohanagar flat, or her father in his parental home, Mohan in the Dadar flat, and so on. Anita in *An Obedient Father* was trapped in an abusive home, and in turn 'traps' an errant Ram Karan. Aradhana in *A Web of Silk and Gold* is of course 'trapped in her marital home by an abusive husband. Kananbala in *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* has to be kept literally confined as she has become a social embarrassment. A home as 'trap' can never feel like 'home,' of course.

According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton,

(t)he importance of the home derives from the fact that it provides a space for action and interaction in which one can develop, maintain and change one's identity. In its privacy one can cultivate one's goals without fear of ostracism or ridicule. The home is a shelter for those persons and objects that define the self; thus it becomes, for most people, an indispensable symbolic environment.⁶¹⁹

This thesis finds that the experience of 'home, the 'indispensable symbolic environment', to most of the characters inhabiting these narratives, fails them on most of these parameters.

It is only their ambition that makes the protagonists of *Sweet Chillies* not quite at home as they constantly seek to upgrade their status by establishing themselves at a more posh address. The protagonists of *Home*, Sona and Nisha, on the other hand, are not quite at home until they fulfil the normative expectations of a patriarchal society and fulfil the roles of wife and mother. Jaya in *That Long Silence* is mired in her own complexes as she carries the feeling of being rendered homeless as a child upon her father's death, right into her adulthood. It is only by the end of the narrative that she sheds her dilemmas and seemingly resolves to live more meaningfully with her family in the 'home' she has at Churchgate. Nariman of *Family Matters* could never experience the feeling of being 'at home' in his natal home where

⁶¹⁹ Csikszentmihalyi, M. and E.Rochberg-Halton."The Home as Symbolic Environment." *Meaning of Things*.1981.Pp 144.

he is surrounded by domineering family members. Yezad transforms from a loving family man to a bigot who hounds his family into following his impossible diktats. No one can feel 'at home' in the house. Although Kalyani in *A Matter of Time* spends a lifetime suffering the excesses of her mother and later her estranged husband in the place that was 'home,' it is only her bonding with her father and the house that he built helps maintain her sanity. Yet, she can only truly be 'at home' once all the antagonistic relationships are gone. Shyamand, the man who loved the house he built for his family, is dead when *Way to Go* opens. His sons, however, have never felt 'at home' there as there is no love lost. It is only when the house is gone that the true meaning of 'home' sinks in.

Anita in *An Obedient Father* could never feel 'at home' in a house where she was abused as a child. Her present is marred by her widowhood that forces her to depend on the incestuous father, not quite at home in a house where she is unable to safeguard the autonomy of her daughter. An Aradhana has to flee her marital home to escape a violent relationship, and even her once loving natal home closes its doors on her in *The Web of Silk and Gold*. The protagonists of both *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* and *The House of Blue Mangoes* only really feel 'at home' once they reclaim their 'homespace,' one that they had been bereft of or denied earlier.

In a book-length exploration of the ethical function of Architecture, Karsten Harries opines that "the needs of a dwelling are not yet met when adequate shelter has been provided; we also need to feel at home where we dwell."⁶²⁰ Harries reiterates Heidegger's notion that 'building' allows for 'dwelling' by granting a 'sense of place.' Coincidentally, this thesis finds that most of the protagonists lack that sense of belonging to the home they dwell in. However, while the thesis finds a parallel between dilemma of the protagonists and their inability to 'dwell' in the Heideggerian sense of the term, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve into the philosophical nature of their not being 'at home.' This thesis finds that the positive valence of being 'at home' is missing in most, if not all of the protagonist's experience of 'home,' as they are 'not quite at home.'

⁶²⁰ Harries, Karsten. "Tales of the Origin of Building." *The Ethical Function of Architecture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts.: MIT Press. 1997. Pp147.

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