

UNVEILING THE LABYRINTH OF SPACE AND MEMORY: A STUDY OF *A DELHI OBSESSION* BY M.G. VASSANJI



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An Abstract of the Project Entitled:
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The discourse of cultural geography encompasses the study of topographical space, which allows for a mechanistic and measurable relationship between man and his lived space. Individuals are necessarily situated in space, and they bear the imprint of the spaces they are moving through and have moved through. This project analyses M.G. Vassanji's novel *A Delhi Obsession* to show how the idea of homeland becomes a space that holds deep emotional connections and memories for individuals. The study also tries to reveal how the memory-space relationship constructs the concept of "identity". Chapter one titled "Spatiality and Setting of *A Delhi Obsession*" examines the idea of spatial theory in literature and emphasises the importance of understanding the social, political, and economic dimensions of space. Chapter Two titled "Memory, History and Culture" shows how and why certain places and events became a part of collective memory, and reveals the intricate connection between memory and history. Chapter three titled "Memory and the Socio-political Context" deals with the intersection of memory, space and nation in a postcolonial context and underlines memory as a tool for preserving cultural heritage and fostering social cohesion. The concluding chapter sums up the findings of the study.



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I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “Unveiling the Labyrinth of Space and Memory: A Study of *A Delhi Obsession* by M.G. Vassanji”, is a record of bona fide work done by me under the supervision of Dr. Jisha John, Assistant Professor, Department of English, and that no part of the dissertation has been presented earlier for the award of any degree, diploma or any other similar title of recognition.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled “Unveiling the Labyrinth of Space and Memory: A Study of *A Delhi Obsession* by M.G. Vassanji”, is a record of bona fide work carried out by Athira Anil under my supervision and guidance.

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CONTENTS

	Introduction	1
Chapter 1	Spatiality and Setting in <i>A Delhi Obsession</i>	9
Chapter 2	Memory, History and Culture	22
Chapter 3	Memory and the Socio-Political Context	37
	Conclusion	50
	Works Consulted	53

Introduction

The geographical range of a place is analogous to the cultural significance and the great diversity of the area in which it is located. The notion of space becomes a world of exploration, emphasizing the concept of cities or landscapes, which encompass psychological, emotional and metaphorical spaces. An inhabitant of an area or space naturally retains the shadow of the memories that he has of that area or space. Spatiality controls and structures our daily routines and interaction with the world. In the vast area of literary studies, Space serves as a backdrop and a canvas for the exploration of human emotions and experience. The memory of places and places of memory are amongst the most highly esteemed themes in the literature of recent years, and particularly within the boundaries of the literature of borderlands.

The project examines one such novel, *A Delhi Obsession* by Canadian author M.G. Vassanji. The novel portrays the life of a Canadian writer Munir Khan who revisits his ancestral roots in India and gets fascinated with the space and the fellow beings living there. Munir develops an attraction towards a modern Hindu woman, Mohini, that he met in the Delhi's recreational club. This later results in a love-affair that pushes societal boundaries in politically charged contemporary India. It was Mohini who offered him to show around the capital and it became an inspiration for Munir to visit Delhi again and again. Vassanji takes Munir through a seemingly random tour of India, retracing aspects of the author's own travels. The novel explores the complexities of love, desire, and identity in the vibrant city of Delhi. Memory plays a significant role in the novel where he identifies his personal history that defines his past and present. It allows him to connect with his past, and understand his roots, and appreciate the diverse tapestry of traditions that make up this dynamic city. This project came from the general interest in knowing the cultural significance of a particular

place, how the idea of homeland becomes a space that holds deep emotional connections and memories for individuals.

The Novel set in contemporary times unravels a vibrant present-day picture of Delhi with its beautiful landscape. The capital city is fascinating with its rich history and vibrant culture. The landscape of Delhi is a mix of old and new, with ancient monuments coexisting with modern architecture. It offers a unique blend of tradition and modernity. The novel depicts the journey of the protagonist's homeland, which is Delhi, where he explores and revisits the beauty of the space. The intention is a re-exploration or revisiting of the space and the place, just like a literary journey back to familiar settings. The self and identity of a person depend on his or her cultural space and the idea of selfhood is born out of this existence. Through a re-examination of his own cultural background, he gains an understanding of his roots and of the world around him.

Spatial theory in literature explores the relationship between physical space and its impact on characters and their experiences. It delves into how the setting, geography, and architecture of a place shape the narrative and contribute to the motifs of a literary work. M.G. Vassanji's novel *A Delhi Obsession* analyses how the spatial elements of Delhi such as its historical sites, bustling markets and contrasting neighbourhood plays a role in depicting the characters' obsession and their connection to the city. Space explores the complexities of love, desire and identity in the vibrant city of Delhi. In literature, the relationship between memory and space is often intertwined. The portrayal of space can trigger the memories for the characters, evoking emotions and shaping their experiences. Memories can also shape the perception and interpretation of space. The recollection of past events can influence how individuals perceive and interact with their surroundings.

At the time of partition in 1947, the nation was in a period of great political turmoil that had an impact on the lives of many people. As people had to choose between one nation and the other during and after the Partition, homes were lost and lives were altered forever. India has continued to bear the consequences of this great historical experience. This project also aims to explore how literature becomes important vehicle for representing inscription and transmission of Partition memories and connected idea of a lost home. Through his protagonist, Vassanji shows how partition had taken them far away from their homeland of Delhi, making them unaware of their own culture and tradition. The personal memories of partition and its afterlife in the literary imagination of the displaced, in order to better understand the persistence of dislocation, loss and anxiety in the spheres of everyday life. The tormenting process of displacement entailed devastation of lived space, cultural practice and social ties. It also signified violence of loss and the unsettling emergence of an immensely difficult life for the displaced. The expulsion from one's own space has made him unknown and has brought about a dynamic in identity. People who were at the receiving end of Partition-induced displacement were intensely busy resettling and starting life anew.

Memory is used as a technique in literary fields to recreate and revisit the selective experiences and periods to determine their status in the present that is what and how the societies remember and forget, what has been manipulated and politicised, and what has to be debated. The scope of interdisciplinary studies and the importance of reinterpreting the past are strengthened by the multiple pursuits of memory. It aims to bring together the deliberations on personal, social, political, historical and cultural experiences of individuals, communities and nations represented in literary narratives in rebuilding lost identity. In the contemporary era, Memory Studies is a mode of collaborative learning and understanding to critically examine the cognitive, social, historical, political, and cultural experiences of individuals and communities through diverse platforms like media, technology, historical

monuments, museums, repositories, oral culture, commemoration, autobiography, and everyday communication. The novel examines the protagonist's return to the place of his ancestors, making him obsessed with the old monuments and the beautiful places. Delhi becomes a very special place for him as he strolls through every nook and cranny with his beloved whom he meets there. The work suggests memory as a narrative and as a fluid and mediated set of cultural and personal traces of the past. Memories play a significant role in enhancing our connection to space. When a person has memories associated with a particular place, it creates a sense of attachment and familiarity. These memories can be triggered by specific landmarks, smells, or even the overall atmosphere of the space. Revisiting a person's childhood home and being flooded with memories of laughter, family gatherings and personal milestones helps to evoke emotions that help us to connect more deeply with that space.

The unravelling of space and memory runs through the whole of the work, suggesting how they relate to each other and leading to the changes in the life of an individual. As one navigates through spaces, his memories can unfold, revealing layers of personal experiences and emotions associated with those spaces. The interplay between space and memory can gain a deeper understanding of how one's personal histories and experience are intertwined with the places they inhabit. The protagonist of *A Delhi Obsession* uses Delhi, his city as a playground to re-enact scenes he feels a particular connection to. The streets of the city, the different scenes become the stages of his personal puppet show through which he manipulates people and places alike. His approach to his surroundings allows for discussing the interconnection between the self and the city, how time and space interact, and exert their mutual influence. Memory and spatiality connect the subjects past and present, flux and fixity, leading us to a greater understanding of the self in question. The concept of space that indicates a place where memory is held is an important research object of this study because memories, knowledge, experience and life experiences that makes an impression in memory

always takes place in a space. For this, space, besides being a concept that supports memory, actually has a memory itself. Memory spaces have a great influence on the formation of social identity.

In geography, the concept of space is used to determine the political boundaries, the resources and potentials, and the wealth of a specific area. The social and human sciences use the concept of space to understand the impact of the physical environment on human beings. Modernisation has led to a drastic change in the area, which has contributed to the transformation of its traditional way of life and geography. It can bring about changes in infrastructure, technology and cultural practices, transforming the character and identity of the space. The construction of modern buildings, the introduction of new transportation systems, or the adoption of advanced technologies can shape the physical and social landscape of a place. These changes can impact the economy, lifestyle and overall experience of the people living in or visiting the area. The new inventions completely change the atmosphere of a place, making it difficult for the previous inhabitants to recognise the original beauty of the place. As the title suggests, the city mentioned in the novel is Delhi, where the effects of urbanisation have led it to take a new path in developing. The city had been transformed into a bustling metropolis with its advancements in infrastructure and technology, making it a hub of economic activity and opportunity. From the iconic Red Fort and Jama Masjid to the bustling markets of Chandni Chowk, Delhi is a treasure trove of architectural wonders and historical landmarks. The city's space also encompasses wide boulevards, lush gardens like Lodhi Garden, and modern neighbourhoods like Connaught Place. M.G. Vassanji in his novel portrays the landscape of Delhi as diverse and captivating. From the bustling streets of Old Delhi with its narrow lanes and vibrant markets to the wide boulevards and modern architecture of New Delhi, the city offers a blend of historical charm and contemporary design. Delhi is also known for its beautiful parks and gardens like Lodhi

Garden and Nehru Park, providing peaceful green spaces amidst the urban hustle. The Yamuna River flowing through the city adds to the natural beauty. Exploring the different neighbourhoods and experiencing the contrasting landscapes is a delightful way to discover the essence of Delhi.

In fiction, both space and place play important roles in creating immersive and captivating narratives. Space refers to the broader concept of the setting, whether it's a distant planet, a bustling city, or a mysterious dimension. It sets the stage for the story and influences the atmosphere and tone. On the other hand, place refers to specific locations within that space, such as character's home, a secret hideout, or a pivotal landmark. These places often hold significance and contribute to the plot and character development. Whether it's exploring the vastness of space or delving into the intricacies of a particular place, fiction allows us to transport ourselves to different worlds and experience the magic of storytelling. The cultural and social factors tied to a specific space can also shape an individual's beliefs and values. An individual's surroundings can have a profound impact on their thoughts, emotion and actions. The space one inhabits whether it is his home, workplace, or community can shape his identity and influence his behaviour. When the protagonist returns to his home town of Delhi, he becomes accustomed to the culture there. The landscape of Delhi gives the protagonist a sense of deep connection to the place where his ancestors once lived before their departure for Kenya. The concept of Lived or Living Spaces would invite treatments of space as both an active participant in the shaping of stories, influencing the human characters, or as endowed by narrators with human qualities.

The Western space in which a person lives will have an impact on the individual's lifestyle and the environment's vibrant atmosphere. The cultural significance of the human being varies according to the environment in which he lives, and he gradually begins to move away from his roots. In his novel, Vassanji presents a protagonist who settles in Canada and

becomes accustomed to Western culture and traditions, forgetting his original identity. The space of the Western life has influenced him to such an extent that it can be seen reflected in his ideologies and in his way of life. In Western cultures, there is often a focus on individualism and personal space. Western societies tend to value privacy and personal boundaries, which can be reflected in the way spaces are designed and used. The idea of personal space and individual autonomy have had a significant impact on how Western societies interact with and perceive space.

Every year, millions of people are confronted with violence, environmental disasters, and political oppression, making it unsafe or impossible to remain at home. Displacement from one's home often has significant impacts on one's sense of self identity and life story, and is accompanied by a rupture from many of those things like materials, spaces, relationships that provide perspective, insights, and a sense of self-continuity. In addition to objects and spaces, self-identities are also constructed from cognitive processes, which give rise to internal representations and beliefs of where we come from, who we are today, and where we might be going in the future. These representations emerge in part from memories accumulated throughout one's life. Memories, however, are not influenced solely by the mind. They are supported and shaped by cultural, contextual, and temporal factors. Memory, or various forms of memory, are biologically based and play a central role in such fundamental aspects of life, such as our identities, relationships, and time. The paper also analyses the theory of diasporic memory, in which individuals think about their ancestral homeland by living in a foreign country.

The first chapter titled "Spatiality and Setting of *A Delhi Obsession*" is an analysis of the space and the setting of the novel *A Delhi Obsession*. It examines the idea of spatial theory in literature and emphasises the importance of understanding the social, political, and economic dimensions of space. The agency of individual in appropriating and transforming

spaces to suit their needs. It shows Delhi's rich spatiality and diverse settings. It offers a fascinating blend of old and new – iconic landmarks like the Red Fort, India Gate that shapes city's identity and provide a sense of place. Chapter two "Memory, History and Culture" highlights how memory acts as a tool for remembering the past. It shows how and why certain places, events, and figures became a part of collective memory, and reveals the intricate connection between memory and history. The city has rich historical legacy, with remnants of ancient empires and dynasties scattered throughout its landscape. Monuments serve as reminders of city's past and evoke a sense of collective memory. The cultural aspect of the place defines the life of the protagonist. Chapter three titled "Memory and the Socio-political Context" analyses memory and the socio-political context of the novel. It portrays the communal and religious conflict that is prevalent in contemporary Delhi. It shows how memory shapes socio-political contexts and how we perceive and interpret historical events, cultural practices, and social norms. The chapter deals with the intersection of memory, space and nation in a postcolonial context and underlines memory as a tool for preserving cultural heritage, fostering social cohesion and advocating for social justice. The concluding chapter sums up the findings of the study.

Chapter 1

Spatiality and Setting in *A Delhi Obsession*

A spatial or geo-critical approach would likely draw upon diverse critical and theoretical traditions in disclosing, analysing, and exploring the significance of space, place, and mapping in literature and in the world. Distinctive locales, regions, landscapes, or other geographical features are often crucial to the meaning and the effectiveness of literary works. In literary theory, spatiality refers to the exploration of how space is represented, constructed, and experienced in literary works. It encompasses the concept of ‘lived space’, which explores how individuals interact with and are influenced by their physical surroundings. Spatiality has risen to become a key concept in literary and cultural studies, with critical focus on the ‘spatial turn’ presenting a new approach to the traditional literary analyses of time and history. Spatial literary studies enable scholars to reflect upon the representation of space and place, whether in the real world, in imaginary universes, or in those hybrid zones where fiction meets reality.

The recent spatial turn in literary and cultural studies is largely a product of the post-present condition. Literary mapping is the primary way to demonstrate literary spatiality. Spatial theory in the field of literary studies draws out the significance of inner space of the literary text space, taking into account the changes in the spatial environment of literary criticism, such as landscape and geographical factors. Kant saw space as the container of all things. According to him, “Space is not an empirical concept which has been derived from outer experiences.” On the contrary: “...it is the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone outer intuition is possible for us” (Kant 42).

In other words, he asserts that space is not objective, self-subsisting realities, but subjective requirements of our human sensory-cognitive faculties to which all things must

conform. Space serves as indispensable tool that arrange and systemize the images of the objects imported by our sensory organs. Literature is a reflection of these spaces in the form of unique visual images. The narrated space structured in the novel has the potential to reveal the meanings that architectural space carries. Characters are fundamentally temporal constructs that unfold in a space, or 'setting', which, once established, seems to remain constant. Space is thus once again treated as the 'stage' upon which the drama of character development unfolds, and setting in such a tradition is viewed as distinctly secondary in importance to character. Spatiality adds depth and richness to the overall literary experience. By means of the description of places, literature positions the reader in an imaginary space that includes the references to their real world. There involves an understanding of the past, present and future worlds that are either personally experienced and envisioned by the author himself. The development of the self and identity of an individual has been shaped by the environment and the place in which he or she lives.

Space in urban planning terms is about outdoor open spaces and the daily inhibitions of human beings who use this space. It cannot be quantified and can be measured only in qualitative terms. This is closely related to cultural geography and cultural side of urban planning which suggests that the link of humans in the open spaces are important in understanding in order to gain knowledge about the different spaces people inhabit and the ways in which they relate to these built environments. The space is usually a consequence of city life, mostly to the ways in which people have built these outdoor and indoor spaces that result in a variety of behaviour by people as a consequence to the ways in which the space is built. The social relations become enhanced within the lived space of a human being. Most of our lived spaces are socially constructed indicating that humans have an impact on other human beings and the ways in which our cities and social spaces are constructed, can have a

big impact on our daily lives. “Rather than an actual force in the shaping of society and theory, space became” reflective mirror of societal modernization” (Soja 102).

This indicates that the ways in which the society modernizes and evolves in different ways is closely related to societal modernization which is about the ways in which society at large changes and becomes modern. People become more flexible to the changes in the society with age and this creates a big impact on what is known as the “Third Space.”

According to Edward Soja, there were three spaces;

Firstspace is the ‘real’ space that includes the urban built form of physical buildings that can be mapped and seen. Secondspace is the ‘imagined’ representational space that shows how the space is perceived, seen and argued over. Thirdspace combines First and Second space to create what Soja describes as, ‘a fully lived space, a simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual-and-virtual locus of structured individuality and collective experience and agency’. Thirdspace is the experience of life in the Firstspace mediated through Secondspace expectations. (Soja 206)

Third-Space is the life we live as individuals that is the experiences we have gained from the society and our individually imagined experiences with social space as a whole. The individual slowly begins to identify himself with the place that he is inhabiting and the culture that surrounds him evokes a fondness for the space in which he lives.

The social space is the result off the interaction and relationship between the inhabitants of the place where they communicate and develop a relationship with each other. The philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre may be regarded as the most influential one that identified space to be crucial in our comprehension and interaction with the world. The value of Lefebvre’s work lies in the notion that it provides a general framework to study the abstract notion of space, which according to Lefebvre, is where we decode and experience

everydayness. He claims that humans create the space in which they live, shape it according to their interests and reproduce it continuously through their intentions. For him, space is organic, living and therefore; shifting in its essence. As specified by his spatial triad, “Space is a social product that consists of three constituents; spatial practice or perceived space, representation of space or conceived space, representational space or lived space” (Lefebvre 38). Spatiality encompasses of physical space, mental space and a social construction of space. Space creates vast intricacies and complexities that enhance the living creatures in a region.

M.G. Vassanji in his novel *A Delhi Obsession* takes his protagonist Munir Khan to a seemingly random tour of India, retracing aspects of the author’s own travels. The intention is a re-exploration or revisiting of the space and the place, just like a literary journey back to familiar settings. As a non-resident Indian in Canada, Munir pays a visit to India, in particular to Delhi, where his ancestors had settled many years earlier. Munir’s grandfather Yunus Ali Khan, came from Delhi, but the family was originally from Peshawar, which was now in Pakistan. After their marriage, his Dada and Dadi had emigrated to Mombasa in British East Africa under somewhat mysterious circumstances. A few years later they moved inland to Nairobi’s Eastleigh area, where many Punjabis had settled. Although Munir is a Kenyan by birth, he has ancestral links to India and is therefore a Delhiite. On his return to Delhi, Munir meets the charming Mohini Singh, a college teacher, at the posh Delhi Recreational Club in the heart of the city, next to Sikandar Gardens. An enigma surrounds the Kenya-born, westernised and agnostic Munir, and an inexplicable attraction takes root. His affection for her was due to the Indian culture she came from. “Perhaps the attraction was nothing more than nostalgia, her Indian-ness reminding him of his Punjabi home in Nairobi’s Eastleigh; and certainly, he was lonely, pathetically so, and desperate” (Vassanji 21).

Delhi's streets, monuments and ruins become the setting of their passionate affair. The vibrant city of Delhi is rich in spatiality and diverse settings. The city's rich history and cultural heritage also play a significant role in shaping its spatiality. Munir's fondness for Delhi stems from its vast cultural and architectural heritage along with its rich history. As he moves through the nooks and crannies of Delhi, Munir imagines his Dada's earlier arrival in these places and get lost in his nostalgic memories. Munir's return to the homeland of his ancestors after several centuries was like a prospect that was daunting precisely because of its significance. He now vaguely remembers that, as a child, he had imagined India to be Delhi, a strange city somewhere in the Arabian Nights that Sinbad might have visited. India remained undone, a hole in his world map of journeys. His epiphany to visit India, and Delhi in particular, came when he saw the young family from India moving into his neighbourhood in Toronto. Munir could easily sense a greater awareness of other Indians because of his ancestral and family ties. In Delhi, he stayed in the Delhi Recreational Club or DRC, which had been booked for him by the Indian consul in Toronto. The novel focuses on the description of his living space in Delhi, which becomes the basic setting of the story.

It was a quiet complex set off from a moderately busy road, with a fountain and lovely front garden in which all the flora were neatly labelled; it provided everything he would need for his two weeks. The residential rooms were in the main building; across a stone patio were a formal dining room and an informal cafeteria called 'the lounge'. The food was decent, there was internet and room service. Adjoining the Club behind it was a park called Sikandar Gardens, where people went for walks, or did their yoga at dawn; at various places among the vast variety of trees and flowers stood the pink-and-white stone remains of past centuries, silent memorials to sultans and nobles. At the back of the main building was a small and discreet bar with glass walls, accessible from the back garden; it threw its doors open promptly at six in the

evenings to its eagerly awaiting patrons. The library was excellent and there he would look up arbitrary historical subjects, toying with ideas for stories. (Vassanji 6)

The atmosphere here in Delhi, for Munir, is the same as when he lived in Hardinge Street in Nairobi, which was designed in a Punjabi style. The immense cultural significance of the place attracts him and he becomes curious to know about the traditions and customs of the place. The rich history, diverse heritage, and vibrant arts scene make Delhi a treasure trove of cultural experiences. The space of Delhi is a fascinating mix of old and new, where ancient monuments stand alongside modern structures. From the landmarks like the Red Fort and Jama Masjid to the bustling markets of Chandni Chowk, Delhi is a melting pot of different cultures and traditions. The area around Nizamuddin is filled with history, culture and a vibrant atmosphere. The city's space also encompasses wide boulevards, lush gardens like Lodhi Garden, and modern neighbourhoods like Connaught Place. It has been the capital of various empires, and each era has left its mark on the city's architecture, cuisine and art. The diverse range of spaces in Delhi offers a unique blend of tradition and modernity. It's a city that truly captures the essence of India's past and present.

Space is all around us. We move through it, live within it and think in terms of it. Space in the sense of that which everything exists within. Cities are not infinite, the space within them is contested. As a result of the contestation of space, different spaces carry different meanings which mean different things for, well, different people. It both exists objectively, but is subjectively shaped by our experience to the extent that its meaning can be completely divergent from person to person. Space becomes a place not because of the built and unbuilt that design it, but also because of the way its users use it, behave around it, interact with it, and interact with each other in it. The concept of 'Human Space' signifies the space that surrounds every individual, in which an individual exists, interacts and performs. Human's attitude and behaviour towards fellow being extensively depends on their life's

physical or material aspects that they value or bestow significance. The Built environment plays an essential role in determining our behaviour towards the people with whom we share this space, simultaneously the culturally induced behaviour determines our relationship with the built environment. Cities are space that shows an expression of coexistence, a mixture of culture that continually evolves and continuously transforms lifestyle. People's interaction with their physical space is a result of their cognitive abilities and expresses a lot about their desire or willingness to communicate with the others around them. Most gathering spaces are designed as vast enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces clear of visual obstructions to ensure that every person in the room is put as spectacle. The novel portrays Munir's interaction with his new city, Delhi and slowly tries to assimilate its cultural practices.

The focus is on the panoramic view of the city and its urban meta-structures, or with the strategic view of urban planners. Urban space is an ongoing and dynamic process of social and cultural construction, which materializes in physical sites, social interactions, imagery and narratives. Urban space is thus variable and temporary and has differing criteria for meaning. The urban spatiality of Delhi is unique with its bustling streets, historical monuments and the vibrant markets. As the protagonist wanders the outskirts of the old city's Jama Masjid or among the ancient ruins of Tughlaqabad, he recovers Delhi's romantic appeal. The great city like Delhi characterises not simply the different architectural styles and forms of urbanism predominate but also the way they coexist, both physically and ideologically. Both the architecture and its layout represent an interlacing of extremely varied styles, the coexistence of which is based on fragile foundations.

The post-structuralist theory of space as a 'practiced place' was put forward by Michel de Certeau. Space, here, is always spatialization: the putting to action or to use that post-structuralist term that the performance of a pre-existing script. In De Certeau's hierarchical definition, place is thus the stable, static, ideologically informed given, whereas space is

about potentially anarchic movement. According to him, individuals have agency in shaping their surroundings through their everyday practices and tactics. He emphasises the distinction between strategies, which are the planned and controlled actions of institutions, and tactics, which are the creative and improvisational actions of individuals. Through these practices, individuals assert their own agency and create their own meanings within the spaces they inhabit. The idea that walking, as a practice, allows individuals to assert their presence and create meaning within a given space. The city was seen as “a space of enunciation,” where walkers demonstrate possibilities through their walking choices. “The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered” (Certeau 97).

The individual asserts an agency when walking through a certain space, where he explores each and every minute image that appears before his eyes. They express a kind of autonomy and make the urban space a more personal and lived experience. It enhances the perception of urban places and is a rich addition to the fabric of urban life. Spatiality analyses the evolution of urban spaces, their changes over time, and the social and cultural influences that shape them. The protagonist in the novel *A Delhi Obsession* explores the city of Delhi, where his clan as earlier claimed an existence. As Munir walks through the city of Delhi, he feels connected and interacts with the buildings, objects and other elements of the city. It underscores the relational nature of urban spaces and the interconnectedness of different components of different components within the urban fabric. The social and the spatial dimension of the city becomes evident to him as he visits the place again and again. The novel urges readers to view the city as a lived, corporeal experience, emphasising the sensory qualities, spatial interactions and personal narratives that emerge as people traverse its streets and lanes. Munir never views the city as a physical structure but as a multilayered tapestry of human tales and encounters. He sees walking as a tool for exploration and

discovery, enabling him to navigate the hidden corners and discover alternate paths. As he moves through the streets of Delhi, Munir engages with the place as an active participant in its ongoing narrative. There is a reimagining and redefining of urban spaces that contributes to the ongoing production of the city. It recognises how Munir's journey through the city is unique, shaped by personal histories, desires and intentions. The novel shows the complexity of urban life valuing and recognising its diverse perspectives. Through the act of walking, Munir develops a greater understanding of the delicate interaction that exists between the person and areas in which they live.

Munir's travels to other states, such as Odisha and Vadodara in Gujarat, have brought him closer to the values and traditions of a true Indian. His visit to Shimla reminded him of his ancestral connection with India. When he walked through the narrow routes of Shimla, Munir remembers that his grandfather Yunus Khan had used this route when he escaped for a short while to Shimla with his new bride. His arrival to Shimla seemed like entering into a different landscape.

He had come to different world, as romantic-looking as its reputation; he knew it to be the setting of Bollywood films in which young couples in bright clothes freckled about in the white snow. It was cool and misty, the air so pure he was inspired to take a few deep breaths...Occasionally, steep concrete steps led down from the ridge along which they walked to houses on the slopes. Behind them upon the hillsides lay a dense sprinkling of white buildings, the town of Shimla...Shimla wore an English veneer. (Vassanji 170)

A human's inner soul can be analysed on the basis of the space the individual inhabits. A well study of his consciousness and behaviour can be easily done from his relation to the surrounding where he interacts with other fellow beings. The physiological and

psychological state of an individual depends upon the lived space. Both man and the environment participant in moulding each other resulting a deeper connection between them. The configuration, scale, proportions, acoustics, and materials of the place address the senses of the individual and generate a spectrum of feelings and practices. There will be an emotional attachment to the space that an individual identifies his state of existence. Space can have a whole lot of impact on how we act or on what we feel, it focuses on the warmth and safety, defines well-being or create a positive and efficient working environment. It is not through the individual interpretation of the environment that human beings experience a space but it is the physicality of the space that creates a dialog with human body. The senses of an individual are awakened to comprehend and identify the space when once they encounter a space. The physicality of spaces possesses great importance in influencing an individual. It can be considered as regular environments in which humans live their daily lives, and metaphorical places within society, the world, and the universe in which humans feel that their existence has substance. Individuals have unique senses and emotions which suggests that no two people will have the same experience. It is vital to comprehend that no space will exist as the same place for two or more individuals and it is unique to the individual viewer. The physical spaces turn into human -made spaces when humans design and construct it according to his desire. The majority of spaces, which we presently experience and interact with, are the result of our own invention through use of the natural world. People changes according to their surrounding and they develop and grows by interacting with the space.

The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard in his works delves into the phenomenology of architecture and the significance of space in our lived experience. He highlights how the space we inhabit shape our thoughts, feelings, emotions and memories, providing deep insights into the human condition. His work examines various types of

spaces such as nest, shells, houses and cities emphasising their symbolic dimensions.

Bachelard brings a unique perspective on the relationship between space, memory and human psyche. Any inhabited space that has the notion of a home has the capacity to provide shelter so that it can protect and comfort the individuals. He sees the house as a maternal figure or container in which we contain our memories. Bachelard explores that house is a focus point for internal processes of human consciousness and remains as a point of the reference for all emotional experience. He thus determines upon taking the house as a tool for analysis of the human soul. Bachelard's house transforms into a living manifestation of the soul, a place suffused with dim light, where our daydreams and fantasies take form. The physicality of the space transcends when it is influenced by a human soul. "A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space" (Bachelard 55).

The house, as it protects and gives form to human lives, acquires a personality and psychology of its own. The house collects and contains past, present and future; it integrates thoughts and memories and desires, all this it does by allowing the human to "daydream". Bachelard says that the house we were born is more than an embodiment of home, it is also an embodiment of dreams. The house that a human inhabits makes an impression on him and the human makes an impression on the house showing that influence is mutual. Munir also felt a connection with India even though he lived in Canada. Delhi became the embodiment of his homeland, where he recalled many of the memories of his ancestors and began to attach his soul to the whole place. He had a sense of affiliation and affection for the whole culture and the vast geographical space there. His current living space of Toronto seemed unfamiliar to him compared to Delhi, which he had only come to explore the diversity of. The kind of relationship he developed with Mohini in Delhi freed him from the isolation that he felt in Toronto. The space of Delhi gave him a sense of comfort, and he had a psychological dimension to the place. His travels to all parts of India were a testament to his

soul's attachment to his lived experience. The architectural setting of the monuments enhances the beauty of Delhi and its history. For Munir, India becomes a kind of house that collects and contains the past, the present and the future, integrating thoughts, memories and desires. Delhi becomes his comfort zone and takes on the role of maternal figure in which he feels safe and secure. The city was also witness to the ongoing communal riots between Hindus and Muslims, which also affected the life of the protagonist. The personality and behaviour of the Munir, have been shaped by his experiences in the lived space of Delhi. The vast history and the archaeological buildings make him feel attracted to the cultural diversity of the Indian people.

M.G. Vassanji's novel explores the spatiality of the city and how this factor has an impact on the life of an individual in the diaspora. Delhi's cultural life exhibits a unique blend of the traditional and cosmopolitan styles. The city is dotted with numerous museums, historic forts and monuments, libraries, auditoriums, botanical gardens, and places of worship. A varied history has left behind a rich architectural heritage in Delhi. The oldest buildings in the city belong to the early Muslim period and they are not homogenous in construction. The first important piece of Mughal architecture in Delhi was Humāyūn's tomb, which was the precursor of the Taj Mahal. It introduced high arches and double domes to Indian architecture. Some of the finest representatives of later Mughal architecture are found within the Red Fort. Since Independence, India has sought to develop its own architectural language, synthesising western and indigenous styles. Buildings that can be described as post-modern in style has been added to the city's landscape by a number of Indian and foreign architects. Delhi has become a major metropolitan area and it has absorbed immigrants from throughout India at an astounding rate. The novel identifies not only Delhi as its setting but other Indian states, portraying an atmosphere of indigenouness.

The idea of spatiality in the novel captures the essence of different areas of Old Delhi, conveying their unique characteristics, cultural significance and historical context. The physical space gives depth to the image in the novel and tries to be in parallel with the narrative. Literature identifies with spatiality in order to enhance the setting of the work in different geographical areas, which helps to strengthen the aesthetic ideology.

Chapter 2

Memory, History and Culture

The dynamic interplay of history and memory, together with the cultural significance becomes the fundamental basis of the work. A combination of history and memory is essential to the shaping of meaning or perception of the world around us. The sequential series of indisputable events make up history, while memory focuses on such highly subjective events and influences the way they are perceived. The past and present can be viewed when there is a relation between the history and memory. Memories allow individuals to store relevant past experiences or incidents in their brains and transmit information across generations in the form of learned cultural traditions. The literary representation of these past experience can be shown through books, films, paintings and monuments. A cultural memory is defined as the transformative historical experience of a culture and have been studied by various individuals.

Memory Studies in literature incorporates theoretical insights from diverse disciplines to make it a highly influential area of interdisciplinary study. The narratives that show the past include war experiences, internal conflicts, personal, socio-political, historical, and cultural experiences of marginalized communities previously oppressed because of their nationality, religion, ethnicity, class and gender create a dominant identity in national records. The technique of memory is used to recreate and revisit the selective experiences and periods to determine their status in the present. Memories in the contemporary era reinforces the scope of interdisciplinary studies and the importance of reinterpretation of the past. Memory is a collective social identity not an individual possession. The study of memory helps to identify what and how the societies remember and forget, what has been manipulated and politicized, and what needs to be debated. An individual keeps some important cultural

heritage of his ancestors in his memory, which he connects with his present life, analysing the meaning of the traditions he has kept in his mind. Memory has become more central because it's often dependent on history, as historiography has broadened its focus from the official to the social and cultural. Memories as narratives and as cultural and personal traces of the past that are fluid and mediated. The act of remembering designs an individual's life where he can recognize himself much better and define his identity. "Remembering is an active reconciliation of past and present. The meaning of the past in relation to the present is what is at stake here; memories are important as they bring our changing sense of who we are and who we were, coherently into view of one another" (Keightley 58).

Memory is the reflection of the human brain on the things we have perceived, the problems we have thought about, the emotions we have experienced, and the actions we have done. There is a more special kind of memory known as autobiographical memory, which is a personal memory of an individual's past life experience and behavior that comes from personal life experience. Autobiographical memory is not only related to specific events, but also an important part of self-identity, which affects the formation of personal history and self-concept. This type of memory is not only related to specific events, but also an important part of self-identity, which affects the formation of personal history and self-concept. M.G. Vassanji's novel *A Delhi Obsession* analyses the memory of a visitor's personal experience which is considered to be an autobiographical memory. The protagonist Munir Khan, a recent widower from Toronto, visits India, particularly Delhi, makes him remember about his past experience of living in his Punjabi home in Nairobi Eastleigh. Born in Kenya, he has lost all family connections, and has never visited India before. He finds himself fateful when he visited the place where his Dada came from. Seeing Dariba Kalan, a jewellery market, Munir remembers hearing the word 'Dariba' which had been synonymous with Delhi when he was young. The Red Fort, the great mosque in Old Delhi, reminded him

of ancient Mughal rule. He had vague memories of the Mughal Empire from history lessons at school and a popular Hindi film he had seen as a child, which was exotic. Now, driving in the modern city, where there was a little essence of the old, he felt nostalgic and romantic about that period. He explored India in all its rawness, thinking of it as the city of his ancestors who had lived a hundred years before. When Munir visited the Nizamuddin Dargah, he felt a mixture of emotions. The spiritual atmosphere reminded him of his Dada's visit to the place where he had come to seek blessings for his journey to Kenya and the new life he would begin there. Munir had heard the name Nizamuddin Auliya since childhood, but he never knew what it meant until he visited the place now. At the same time, he has nostalgic memories of his childhood, when he lived with his family in Nairobi.

As a tourist, Munir Khan visits the city of Delhi to explore the vastness and richness of the place. Memory may be a determining factor in people's travel choice before they travel. It may have a strong impact on the travel experience once they arrive at their destination. The trip to Delhi leaves Munir with memories that affect his perception of both short-term and long-term experiences. People construct stories and collect memories through tourism and memorability is considered to be an important result of the travel experience. These memories of the trip to temples, mosques, and markets with Mohini encourage Munir to visit Delhi again and again. The impact of memory highlights the significance, emotional intensity and impact of events on individual's lives. Some events have been recalled, either on a personal or interpersonal level, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. The travel experiences that are memorable are highly self-centered and are seen as a particular subjective event in life that is stored in long-term memory as part of autobiographical memory. Autobiographical memory has a continuous impact on tourists and connects all kinds of things encountered by tourists with their destination. An individual can establish close relationship and emotional resonance with the people that he met during his travel

journey. As Munir and Mohini explore the thriving markets and historical buildings of Old Delhi, a baffling attraction begins. There arises a passionate love affair between them which is uncontrollable and impossible. This kind of memory is believed to be a positive driver of the affective association with place, and place attachment enables the individual to revisit the place.

The work focuses on an aspect of collective memory where the active past shapes our identity. Memories in literary texts reveal past events and can be used to temporally order narrative sequences. Munir's memory of Delhi is a kind of collective memory that is often passed from his forefathers to him. It is a shared pool of memory of his family that is significantly associated with their identity. His visit to the mosque made him remember about his grandfather's experience when he visited the mosque when their family were in Delhi before going to Nairobi. The novel is a parallel account of the life of Mohini, a modern Hindu woman in Delhi. Munir meets her when he is sitting in the bar of the Recreational Club in Delhi, where he has been staying. Utterly witty and charming, Mohini was religiously traditional, but also a liberal and provocative newspaper columnist. The memories of Partition were still alive in the mind of Mohini as she had heard about it during her childhood. She and her family were refugees from Sargodha, which became a part of Pakistan after the Partition. The Partition of 1947 resulted in the subcontinent being split into two independent nation states: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. Across the Indian subcontinent, communities that had coexisted for almost a millennium attacked each other in a terrifying outbreak of sectarian violence, with Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other—a mutual genocide as unexpected as it was unprecedented. As Muslims captured the city, Hindus and Sikhs had to leave their home in Sargodha. Partition had made life bitter for Mohini and her family, who lost their home and her father's younger

brother, Mohan. She had heard many times about the family's escape from Sargodha and their arrival in Delhi, where she explains in her narrative.

They had lived in terror for two days, her father Chand would say, as mobs roamed the streets in their Minto Close neighborhood of Sargodha. India had declared independence, Sargodha was in Pakistan, which would soon declare its independence, and the Hindus of the city had begun to flee. His father Nathu Lal had declared flatly that he was not leaving. We have lived here for generations, Nathu Lal said...A gang of Pathans had got on the train, we heard afterwards. There were many dead bodies that arrived in Delhi on that train. Not my brother. He's with God. (Vassanji 98-100)

Memories of one's homeland can sometimes become traumatic for individuals. The memories of their place may remind them of the people, places, and experiences they had to leave behind, which can be incredibly painful. These memories may trigger feelings of grief, sadness, and a sense of disconnection from their cultural roots. Munir Khan's family was originally from Peshawar, which was now in Pakistan. His grandfather's family stayed in city of Delhi during the time of Partition and was affected by the communal violence going on the city. Partition had never mentioned in their home in Kenya but he knew that there were two countries, India and Pakistan and they had gone to war when he was still a young boy. As a young boy in Nairobi, he remembers his family celebrating Eid with his Dadi, who would cook good food and give him money. He also remembers how Nairobi had an influence of Punjabi culture and he grew up in an atmosphere of Indianness. Even though the time passes, there is only memory that still lingers in the mind of individual enabling him or her to recollect it in the future times. There can be moments in our past that are pleasant and moments that are terrible, but our memory picks up these past events and applies them in the future. Memory allows him to connect with his past, and understand his roots, and appreciate the diverse tapestry of traditions that make up this dynamic city.

The idea of memory itself has been torn apart as people have neglected the old social forms and traditions, and memory has been abandoned by them. The power of memory is now preserved in the places of remembrance, where history is accumulated and kept alive. The physical or geographical significance of the places has been lost in the places of memory. Meaning and sense are made of places to remember, important place for history. People remember the monuments or historic buildings that once defined the cultural tradition of the place and which no longer exist. But memory helps to preserve the aura of these cultural artefacts. Pierre Nora sees history as a reflection of contemporary "sadness," of a mourning for a kind of society which we have lost, and for a sensibility we can never recover. These sites of memory called realms, and their study by historians, reproduce what literature once did, and now in Nora's view, no longer can accomplish. Hence the study of these artifacts and phenomena help refill "our depleted fund of collective memory." Thus, a new kind of "history offers profundity to an epoch devoid of it, true stories to an epoch devoid of real novels, Memory has been promoted to the centre of history: thus, do we mourn the loss of literature" (Nora 20).

It is through the act of remembering that individual is able to form a link with the history of a particular place. M.G. Vassanji paints a vibrant and rich history of Delhi from the time of Mughal rule and talks about the changes that colonial influence had on the place. The protagonist's visit to the ancient old Delhi reveals about the beauty of the artefact that once stood as the historical milestone of certain period. People appreciated the architecture of the historical monuments and buildings that served as the cultural heritage of the place. The capital served as the center for mighty kingdoms and powerful kingdoms. The colonial influence had increased the aesthetic beauty of the place with its vast landscape and narrow streets. The protagonist Munir was taken by Mohini to explore the whole capital and its landscape. She told him that historically there were several cities of Delhi and they were now

travelling through the most recent one that is New Delhi which was the contribution of the Britishers. It was due to the colonial hangover that the city was later called by people as ‘Lutyens’ Delhi. The first important architectural piece of Mughal empire in Delhi was Humāyūn’s tomb, which was the precursor of the Taj Mahal. It introduced high arches and double domes to Indian architecture. The Red Fort represents the historical significance of Delhi from where the Mughals ruled over for 200 years and the great mosque signifies the great religious heritage. These monuments give the picture of artistic talent and it act as a true guarding pillar of India. The novel also discusses about other historically significant places that represents India’s tradition and diverse cultural tradition. Munir visits these monuments and building which gives him an idea of the cultural beauty of Delhi.

Meanwhile he visited by taxi the Qutub Minar, a lean and elegant tower of red sandstone in the south of the city, from where the first Turkish sultans had ruled, having defeated the local Rajput kings in the tenth century; and the Purana Quila, which was the site of the earliest city of Delhi, called Indraprastha, from the time of the epic of Mahabharata. From here the five Pandava brothers had ruled in that hoary past. Delhi offered endless history. He was excited, up to the moderation that his nature demanded; his own history began here in this great, tumultuous city. (Vassanji 6)

Delhi was known for the famous Khan Market where people could buy everything they need for their Daily chores. Khan Market got its name after a freedom fighter and is amongst the costliest high-end streets in the world. The market and streets near to this were crowded and infinitely noisy. The history of Chandni Chowk Street begins when Mughal ruler shifted his capital from Agra to Shahjahanabad which was now known as the Old Delhi. The place was a commercial center with a lot of buzz from the wholesalers and retailers who come to do their business from across the world. ‘Dariba Kalan’ was famous for its silver

jewelry and the author used this place as a site where Munir's forbears used to work. Vassanji also describe about haveli where people earlier used to live together with an entire extended family. He also mentions about a particular Haveli where Kamala, the wife of Jawaharlal Nehru was raised. The old 'Havelis' and edifices from the ancient historic period stands calm but their silence also speaks volumes for their owners and people who lived here centuries back. Munir also reads about Delhi's crowded and confusing history in a library where he gets a partial glimpse of the capital. He visited many other historical places such as the ruins of thirteenth century city of Siri, Tughlaqabad, the city which was built by the ruler Muhammad bin Tughlaqabad and the mausoleum of Nizamuddin Auliya, the Sufi mystic who defeated Sultan Alauddin and Tughlaq. Earlier, Old Delhi was known by the name Nizamuddin due to the sacred Nizamuddin dargah. From the library, Munir Khan had brought Barani's history and he read about the grim death of Sultan Alauddin along with the murder of his son Khizr Khan. The book also had the story of two lovers Khizr Khan and princess Deval Rani who belonged to two different religion which he related with his own life. There are temples mentioned in the novel like the famous Ayodhya, the Konark temple of Odisha, Jagannath Temple in Puri which becomes a pilgrimage site for the tourists who visits India.

This unique blend of traditional and cosmopolitan styles exhibits Delhi's cultural significance. The numerous fairs and festivals that happens in India during every year also serves as a cultural heritage. Many sorts of trade, book fairs and film festivals that occurs in the streets of Delhi also contributes to the cultural lifestyle of Delhi. In the novel, Munir meets Mohini after she comes from the Jaipur Literature festival which was in Rajasthan. There is religious festival like Eid, Diwali which is celebrated in Delhi with vast decorations. M.G. Vassanji mentions about some museums in Delhi that becomes the cultural centre where history is preserved for long years. The Crafts Museum showcases Indian carving,

metalwork, painting, and other crafts which also hosts events at which local craftspeople exhibits their art and sell their wares. The novel also captures the Siri Fort Auditorium which is an important centre for major cultural events. Delhi is also a city of Gardens which was planned by the Mughal emperors. The reference to Lodhi Garden is made in the novel which was surrounded by the monuments.

The city of Delhi also faced a lot of political turmoil during the time of Partition when huge number of Hindu refugees came from Pakistan. It also accommodated a large number of immigrants from across the world. Partition had a huge impact on the city and many people faced political violence which caused a large commotion in the city. The population of Delhi increased and the entire culture of the city had changed with the change in people's job and occupation. There were numerous refugee camps where refugees arrived from western Punjab which was now in Pakistan. Due to the riots and violence, many of the people were driven out of the homes and took shelter in these camps which include the Jama Masjid area, Nizamuddin, Muslim monuments including Purana Quila and Humayun's Tomb. Muslims were forced to leave India and migrate to Pakistan whereas Hindus and Sikhs occupied the houses left by Muslims in Delhi. There was a constant divide between Hindus and Muslims and Delhi never considered Muslims as citizens but as refugees. M.G. Vassanji also mentions about the communal riots that were still there in the city showing the conflict between two religions. The social milieu of Delhi had changed due to this large migration from Punjab. This also resulted in a new urban culture which was overshadowed by new tastes and sensibilities, in food, dress and the arts. Before the Partition of 1947, the memories of Delhi give a possibility of living through a shared culture even the legacy and impact of Partition continued today. *A Delhi Obsession* portrays the picture of a post partition Delhi which showed the emergence of a new culture different from the ancient one and there still exists the communal riots and violence.

Memory plays a very significant role in an individual's life and it also affects how the person fits into the society. It has the power to drive our actions and thoughts which also helps to develop our behaviours through interactions in the society. "The mind reconstructs its memories under the pressures of society" (Halbwachs 51).

Maurice Halbwachs in his work presents two worlds to the reader: our present society and our society immersed in thought. He states that each individual is in control of their memories and can manipulate their societies immersed in thought. Memories affects parts of our lives and it also involves a reconstruction of the past. They are connected with an individual's personality and also enables him to connect with others which helps in finding a place with them. Children take part in collective memory when they recognise the meaning of things around them. The memories of childhood are always recalled in the present and the person approaches to these memories based on his social surrounding. In the novel *A Delhi Obsession*, Munir revisits his childhood memories when he lived in Nairobi with his Dada and Dadi remembering the Indian way of life that he led there. In shaping and for the formation of memories, intergenerational relation plays a great important role. M.G. Vassanji in his novel uses the idea of intergenerational memory which involves in passing down the stories and traditions from one generation to the next. Munir got to know the stories and traditions of his grandfather and this helps in asserting his identity of an Indian. He had an idea about the place that he was exploring now through the stories told by his ancestors. The present has the capacity to return him into his past. The other fellow members of the society help to render events to an individual. It is difficult to keep individual away from society as it plays a significant role in influencing them. The society helps in shaping one's self and this self of an individual is responsible in constructing memories. Memory, society and culture are interrelated and this relation affects the individual's life. The human faculty of preserving certain traces of past experiences and recalling it in the future is something referred to as

memory. “Memory is a complex network of activities, the study of which indicates that the past never remains ‘one and the same’, but is constantly selected, filtered and restructured in terms set by the questions and necessities of the present, at both the individual and the social levels” (Jedlowski 30).

The medium of language helps in recalling the events through narration and gives expression to what the individual had recalled. These narrative mechanisms are culturally mediated and the social context determines the memory of an individual. The recipients who listen to these narrative recalls intervenes by asking questions and generates interpretation. Munir when sharing his memories of his ancestral homeland to Mohini, she intervenes and ask him about his family, his relation with certain places in Delhi. Each society preserves and transmits its cultural heritage from generation to generation which includes every day and specialized knowledges, the arts and even the language itself, as well as skills and customs. This happens by giving concern to the images and the narration of the past. “The concept of ‘collective memory’ thus tends to be understood as a set of social representations concerning the past which each group produces, institutionalizes, guards and transmits through the interaction of its membersa” (Jedlowski 33).

The collective memory helps in defining the identity of a person and the idea of identity cannot be taken as granted in the contemporary world. The social past of a person helps him in asserting his role in this current world of living where he brings an amalgamation of the past and the present. Munir’s identity was in a constant fluctuation because of his Indian ancestral roots. But currently he was a diasporic living in Canada, outside his traditional homeland. The aspects of western lifestyle completely covered his personality and his interest towards Indian culture made him visit his ancestral roots. Munir liked watching Indian films as there was a reconciliation at the end in front of gods and the evils received their dues. An Indian couple’s house nearby to Munir’s house in Toronto

reminded him about the traditions and value systems of India. Razia, Munir's daughter was a symbol of western cultures and traditions. She was an independent girl who was in love with a professor of philosophy, Mark Goldstein, had already decided to marry him and live in New York. Her casual attitude towards marriage and relationships lifted her away from Indian identity. "Dad, we thought we'd go it alone initially, without family...and follow with a big reception with ceremonies later" (Vassanji 49).

Munir told her about their past that how his grandfather and grandmother came from Pakistan and later emigrated to Kenya. He also told that her mother's family was from a city called Jamnagar in India. The novel brings a reference to different cultures that of a western and an eastern one. The dual identity of a western and eastern enables him to live in a mixture of cultures and values. Munir's personal identity revolves between two cultures and he tries to inculcate the values of these two traditions. Munir places himself in between the two identities where he has his ancestral roots and other with his current lifestyle in Canada as a writer who had left his wife and lead a lonely life. The true self of an individual is hidden from other identities, but this true self has historical experience and shares the cultural aspects of a diaspora. Munir's identity becomes complex as he has to adopt a new culture when he left Kenya and came to live in Toronto. Munir remains in a state of doubleness where he stands in between his homeland and host land culture.

M.G. Vassanji examines the life of an individual who has been detached from his own homeland and he is left out with some old memories of the place. Even though Munir no longer live in the streets of Delhi, he has a strong sentimental and material connection with his homeland. There seemed an evolving connection with his ancestors when he visited each and every corner of Delhi.

The little streets were more residential and quiet, though the ground floors were busy with all sorts of industry- hand-printing, sewing, garland-making, metalwork. He could not find his way back to the main road but arrived at the great mosque on another one. All the long roads seemed to converge to this one focal point, where once the entire neighbourhood would have dropped all business to come and pray. Where his grandfather came to kneel one last time to Allah before setting off for Kenya. Since his previous visit to Delhi, Munir had realized that Dada had become an actual presence in his consciousness: he was now a person from a certain place, with a story of his own. The old man in the armchair, wearing a white skullcap, reminiscing with his wife about Dariba Kalan. (Vassanji 65)

Maintaining a rigid connection with his homeland, Munir copes up with the feeling of alienation and distance from his ancestral roots. Memory helps one to recall and remember the old precious connections that one cherishes with his experiences. Delhi becomes a repertory of memories for Munir Khan realising his strong bond with the place.

People in a social group hold different memories of the same experience and this was Paul Connerton's attitude towards collective memory. His focus was mainly on memory recollections and how social memory is collected and portrayed. The present experience of an individual largely depends on his knowledge of the past. "Our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past" (Connerton 2).

There exists a connection of our present with past events and objects. The communication across generations is impeded by different sets of memories. The encounter between different sets of memory across generations which are in the shape of implicit background narrative remain mentally and emotionally insulated, the memories of one generation, locked irretrievably, as it were, in the brains and bodies of that generation. In the

novel *A Delhi Obsession*, Munir's conversation with Mohini was agreeable, but he rendered difficult by the novelty to his ears of the names of most of the places she talked about, although these were the places which formed the core of polite society at that time. And the converse was also true, Munir narrated many anecdotes of the past, and many of the names which he pronounced meant nothing to her, she had for the most part never even heard of them such as the old name of Delhi as Dariba Kalan. Both Munir and Mohini had different sets of memory even though living in the same social world.

Connerton also discusses how the knowledge of the past was interwoven with historical reconstruction. Even though there is a strong relationship between social memory and historical reconstruction, history is not dependent on the memories that the groups have created. He says in his work that emotions and memories heavily influence the way history is re-read. The events that occurred in the past and the way it is remembered had a strong difference. Important events that occurred in the past tainted by the memories of those retelling those stories. He analyses how bodily practices are transmitted in as traditions. The ritual performances help in sustaining the images of the past and the recollected knowledge of the past. This kind of performative memory is bodily. Bodily social memory is an essential aspect of social memory. "The attempt to establish a beginning refers back inexorably to a pattern of social memories" (Connerton 13). Memory is socially habitual not only personal and cognitive. We tend to think and act in a ritual performance or in everyday bodily practices. He argues that social structure should be based on cumulative social memory and that body is socially constituted.

M.G. Vassanji highlights social memory in his novel *A Delhi Obsession* which are developed through interaction with the people and incorporate cultural norms, values, and styles of expression. The work analyses the capacity to retain and recall specific details about people that one had previous contact with and various interactions with them. Munir

recognises his interactions with grandfather and explores the various dimensions of his ancestral homeland where he sees the beauty of the place through his grandfather's eyes. These interactions aid in shaping of collective memories. Both memory and culture help in cultivating the development of collective memory. The past experience enables human beings to relate their cultural beliefs and understanding of the events. To shape one's identity, present and future, the elements of memory, history and culture intertwines in an inseparable web of remembrance and significance.

Chapter 3

Memory and the Socio-political Context

The complex tapestry of experiences and influences contributes to the development of memory in the social and political environment. The framework of memory moves towards a more socially oriented understanding and is a part of broader network of relationships. It engages in a shifting cultural, political and technological landscape when considering memory as a social phenomenon. The places such as museums, monuments and memorials become the site which have interpreted and reinterpreted traumatic pasts bearing great national identity, from the time of Independence and Partition. They have the power to act upon bodies and cultivate narratives that provide anchors for collective identity.

This chapter analyses the sociological situation along with the political climate and events surrounding the narrative. The events happening in a larger world will somehow influence the lives of the characters. The works of Literature examines an overlapping of social and political areas of the world. The issues concerning national aspect of human life becomes a major concern in fulfilling the basic potential of human beings. The selective remembering and forgetting of certain events that occurred in the past, depends on political and social exigencies. Literature plays a significant role in exhibiting memory as a narrative tool to manifest various social, political and cultural issues. There are different memories associated with different socio-political context in a society and these memories compete for the monopoly of preserving the past. The collective memory helps in the social creation of identity which makes the concept highly political. An individual's identity is shaped by the social and political environment which he or she inhabits. The shared experiences of people help in the development of the society in future. Memory is shaped and influenced by the socio-political atmosphere of a particular space. There are political events which cause a

huge impact on the life of humans and place which they inhabit. The social framework such as class, family, and religion within which an individual is situated affects the individual acts of recollection. “What memories tells us, more than anything, is the stakes held by individuals and institutions in attributing meaning to the past” (Sturken 9). It is a dynamic entity crafted with the political, social and cultural imperatives of the present. Memory acts as a communicative process where the social and political scenario of a particular period is transmitted to the future era through recalling and reinterpreting. This occurs due to the emergence of new media which give individuals opportunity to engage with the past that they may not have experienced. The newspapers and media develop an authority to interpret memory. The greater access to traces of the past through media had a greater capacity to explore how memory is used.

M.G. Vassanji in his novel *A Delhi Obsession* analyses the collective shared memory of Partition which affected the social and political scenario of India. The traumatic experience of Partition and its effects serves as the socio-political background of the novel. Traumatic events, especially large-scale disasters or wars that impact thousands of people, data show that rehashing painful memories can be dangerous. Trauma can have long-term effects on the person’s well-being. The past generation who was the victims of partition imbedded the after effects of Partition and some carried the trauma of those experiences in their future. The exploration of trauma and memory often involves depicting the psychological and emotional impact of past experiences on characters.

The Partition of 1947 resulted in the subcontinent being split into two independent nation states: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. Across the Indian subcontinent, communities that had coexisted for almost a millennium attacked each other in a terrifying outbreak of sectarian violence, with Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other. This significant event had a profound impact on the political and social

landscape of the region. The nation was in a period of great political turmoil that had an impact on the lives of many people. It led to the transfer of power from British colonial rule to the independent nations. The establishment of new government and administrations with Jawaharlal Nehru as the prime minister was the political impact of this incident. As people had to choose between one nation and the other during and after the Partition, homes were lost and lives were altered forever. There occurred a massive migration as Hindus and Sikhs moved from Pakistan to India, and Muslims moved from India to Pakistan. This mass movement resulted in violence, communal riots, and displacement of millions of people, leading to one of the largest human migrations in history.

The influx of refugees from both sides created a significant humanitarian crisis, with millions of people displaced and seeking shelter and rehabilitation. The impact of Partition brought about socio-cultural changes as communities had to adjust to new identities and cultural contexts. It led to the formation of distinct national identities for individuals in India and Pakistan. It shaped the identities, borders, and relationships between India and Pakistan, and left a lasting impact on the lives of people affected by the mass migrations and communal violence. The consequence of Partition is the forced migration and unprecedented violence against people whose lands were divided to make the new nations. The governments made efforts to provide assistance and settle refugees in new areas. The expulsion from one's own space has made him unknown and has brought about a dynamic in identity.

The personal memories of partition and its afterlife in the literary imagination of the displaced, in order to better understand the persistence of dislocation, loss and anxiety in the spheres of everyday life. A lot of forced displacement happened across the countries and both sides were filled with the refugees. The homeless individuals settled in the refugee camps organized by the government in Delhi. People were brought in large groups in trains during partition and were given space to live in the refugee camps. They were isolated from their

family and have to settle in a new adaptation which were unfamiliar for them. The victims of partition lost their family in this political turmoil and there arose religious violence across individuals. People lost communal harmony and started fighting in the name of religion which led to communal riots in most part of the country. The memory of Partition is basically a memory of displacement. A lot of people were uprooted overnight, evicted from their ancestral homeland, not having an idea of their escape. They travelled kilometers upon kilometers with their few bundles of belongings. The sights and conditions awaited them in the refugee camps were pathetic when they considered it as an end to their sufferings. Refugee camps were established across the Indian sub-continent with the many of them emerging in Lahore and Delhi.

Delhi underwent a transition from the city of Old Delhi, New Delhi and a Post-Partition city with a handful of refugees to today's 1,483 square kilometer city with a variety of Indian culture. The city was under Mughal rule from a very earlier period which was then taken over by the British rulers. It was the capital of several empires and an important political center of India. A huge influx of refugees from Pakistan after Partition changed the very fabric of the population of the city, giving it the characteristics of Punjabi along with the earlier mix of peoples who entered the city. There were political, cultural and demographical changes during the post partition in Delhi and came to be known as the 'Partition city'. The Jama Masjid area, Nizamuddin and the Muslim monuments including Purana Quila and Humayun's Tomb became areas of refugee camp which were occupied by those who lost their home.

Even though Partition made a negative impact upon the people of India, it also focused on some good outcomes that lead to the development on major part of the country. A mixture of culture and traditions were seen in most part of Delhi as it was the city of many people who came from different parts of India. It also led to the emergence of a new

civilization where people shared the cultural values and systems. The city was also filled with refugees from other regions like Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Tibet. The growth of refugees in the state determines the economic and social success of Delhi. These displaced people urbanize the locales they settled in contributing to the economy of Delhi. The area encompassing the refugee settlements develops since refugees offer so much human capital to their host nation. They entered into different jobs which led to the rise in the economic and social capital of the city. Delhi's famous food heritage was contributed to the social capital by the refugees. The descendants of the Mughal dynasty continue the famous Mughlai kebabs, biryani, and nihari in Old Delhi, the Bengali refugees from Bangladesh have stimulated a love for sweets and fish fry, the Afghans have introduced rote, phirni and falafel burger in the streets of Delhi. They also laid their hands in the trade markets which helped in empowering the city.

A Delhi Obsession identified the lives of the refugees who were displaced from places of great political turmoil. The protagonist Munir recalls how his ancestors were uprooted from their homeland Peshawar which was the part of Punjab province before Partition and was now in Pakistan. The ancestors left their homeland and has to settle in the streets of Delhi where they have to start a new occupation to enhance their livelihood. The family underwent a series of displacement and they came from Delhi, but were originally from Peshawar. Then they emigrated to Kenya under some mysterious circumstances in Delhi where their grandfather worked as a goldsmith. The political turmoil in the city had affected his grandfather's family to migrate to Nairobi's Eastleigh area where a lot of Punjabis were settled. Munir recalls that his dada used to talk about Dariba Kalan, a jewellery market, where they lived in the gully off this main street and worked for his uncle in Delhi. This was the place where Munir comes from and it was his roots. The impact of partition was also there in the lives of Mohini where she and her family had to leave their homeland in

Sargodha and had to settle in Delhi. Her family still hold the memories of Partition where they lost one of their family members. The city of Delhi also faced a huge political turmoil during the time of Partition which brought a dynamic change in the lives of the immigrants living there which led to the displacement of people from Delhi to other parts of the country. The religious fight between Hindus and Muslims changed the whole atmosphere of Delhi where people lost their harmony. The outbreak of communal violence in the city was an aftermath of Partition. Munir Khan while visiting the Birla House in Delhi recalls an incident from the history of this communal violence that he saw in one of the Indian films.

He stood for some moments on the porch steps of Birla House, a dignified white bungalow on a quiet residential street, contemplating its garden, its understated elegance. As was expected of any visitor here, he traced the path Gandhi had taken to the spot of his assassination, from the porch steps down to the lawn, the mahatma's hands supported on the shoulders of two young women. Munir was familiar with the scene from the Attenborough film. This was the house, owned by an industrial magnate, where Gandhi had undertaken his 'fast unto death', which he broke only when Delhi's influential citizens had signed a written promise to resist any outbreaks of communal violence in the city. It was the aftermath of the Partition. Behind the frail old man had been a small crowd of people; in front and on both sides many more. From the frantic crowd at the front, before the prayers could begin, the assassin appeared, did a namaste in greeting, and shot Gandhi, who uttered 'He Ram' as he fell. Oh God. What more satisfying death for him. (Vassanji 70-71)

Munir Khan still faced these communal riots and violence when he revisited Delhi after years of Partition. His identity as a Muslim became a threat for him to live in the Delhi Recreational Club. M.G. Vassanji tries to bring the nostalgia of partition and communal violence in Delhi as a background through the story of Munir and Mohini Singh. In the

cafeteria of the Club, Munir and Mohini were surrounded by some powerful people who had a great influence on the political affairs of Delhi. Mohini mentions a sardarji who was the head of security in Punjab during the Khalistan emergency that was defeated using encounter killings. She also talks about Jetha Lal, 'a Hindu purifier' from Ahmedabad who was there in the cafeteria with his group of powerful people. He was an activist and carries the business of protecting cows, Hindu women and censoring books that went against his ideologies. He and his people were against Hindu-Muslim and Hindu-Christian relationship and considered it as impure liaisons. The eating of beef was strictly seen as an offence by these purifiers as they lynch people who keep beef in their home. Vassanji uses this character throughout his novel as he is trying to show the social and political situation that still holds India from becoming a secular country. Through his novel, he brings the loss of faith between people and shows the religious conflict that spread throughout the city which began as an aftermath of partition.

Even though Munir Khan's visit to India helped in developing a connection with his ancestral land and shaped a collective memory with his forefathers, at times he felt strange by experiencing the ongoing political situation in Delhi. Along with the beautiful memories of the place, he sees the political drift that holds the city. The group of these powerful people were seen everywhere discussing the terrorist bases in Pakistan and bombing the cities into ashes.

He felt a strange sense of fulfilment in India, of just-so, of familiarity and ease. Ye, there was the faintest aloofness or dismissal he met sometimes- because he was ultimately a foreigner? A maybe- Muslim, as they saw it? He thought of the recent lynching and other similar violence in the country that he had read about. It was disturbing feature of this vast and complex country, where hatred and savagery coexisted with sublime thought and heroic non-violence; where naked ignorance

coexisted with the greatest intellectual achievements. India might have been a different proposition, a different place, if she had not come and sat at his table, this table, that night ... (Vassanji 144)

Revisiting the streets of Delhi and identifying with his ancestors, Munir tries to address the social issues and highlights the importance of personal growth and self-discovery. Munir's affair with Mohini helped him to experience the sweetness of India where he memorized his Gujarati mother and Punjabi grandmother when seeing her. The protagonist employs a deep affection to his Indian culture and his memory helps in viewing the social and political atmosphere of present Delhi.

Memory is a force that can shape cultural identity and allow cultures to respond creatively to both catastrophic changes and daily challenges. It is not a simple means of retaining information. There is a connection between memory, identity and cultural continuity or the formation of tradition. The culture helps in constituting a connective structure that helps in binding people together. By giving form and presence to experiences and memories, culture also links yesterday with today. It is through incorporating images and tales from the past into the background of the ongoing present. People binds together through the adherence to the same laws and values and through the memory of a shared past. Aleida Assmann in his work views cultural memory to coincide almost completely with whatever meaning is circulating within the group. It feeds tradition and encompasses all functional concepts such as tradition forming, past reference, and political identity or imagination.

“Cultural memory is not a matter of internal storage or control but of the external conditions imposed by social and cultural contexts” (Assmann 5). It is “cultural” because it can only be realized artificially and institutionally, and it is “memory” because in relation to social communication it functions in the same way as individual memory does in relation to

consciousness. The cultural meaning is both handed down and brought to present life through rituals which are a part of cultural memory. In the novel *A Delhi Obsession*, Munir remembers how he used to celebrate Eid with his Dada and Dadi in Nairobi. The festival celebrated with his family had a flavor of Indian traditions and customs that he recalls when he visits the mosque in Delhi in the present time.

Each and every thing in Delhi defines Munir's identity and represents his practicality, comfort and beauty. These objects reflect his inner self as it reminds him of who he is, of his past, of his forbears. The world of things in which one live has a time index that not only refers to the present but also to different phases and levels of their past. The representation such as monuments, tombs, temples transcend the borders of object memory because they make the implicit index of time and explicit identity. Munir visit to the Nizamuddin Dargah enable to him have a connection with his ancestors and he felt a sense of Indian identity. The places he visited in Old Delhi laid a connection with his grandfather and his family. He imagined his dada's visit to the shrine of Nizamuddin Auliya to seek blessing for his voyage to Kenya. Munir also wanted to visit Dariba Kalan, a jewelry market, where his grandfather worked for his uncles. It was a kind of livelihood that his grandfather adopted to look after his family. His dada always talked about Dariba Kalan from where his ancestral roots began and Munir wanted to visit this place.

An individual's participation in communicative process helps in forming a person's memory. Their involvement in variety of social groups ranging from family through religion to nation is a major function. Memory is a combination that emerges from participation in different social groups from an individual's point of view. It is a matter of knowledge that is distributed among and internalized by each member of a group. The link between collective memory and specific experience to the person concerned enables memory to be individual. Memories have their origin in the thoughts of different groups to which the individual belong

whereas emotions are closely connected with one's bodies so it is the emotions that is individual not the memory.

Vassanji portrays in his novel a group of members of a family who has to displace themselves from their habitat of living to another place leaving behind their past memories. The descendants of this family recall the past memories of their homeland. Munir and his sister Khadija remembers how his grandfather used to say about Dariba Kalan, a market where he used to work for his uncles. It was where they lived and their roots originated from there. Dada and his family have left Delhi after the Outrage and they occupied in the Hardinge Street in Nairobi. The place was pronounced in a Punjabi fashion as Lard Hardinge Street in their home. Khadija knew how they arrived in Nairobi and why the street they lived were associated with the name of Laard Hardinge. The street which they were living has the name Hardinge and their family always connected this street name with the governor general of India Lord Hardinge. She recalls how a bomb was thrown at Lord Hardinge and he died. She says Munir that his Dada was arrested because they thought he was involved in this attack. Actually, a Bangali was involved in this and he stayed in their gully for three days. If the police knew that Bangali was there in their gully, Dada had been hanged by them for protecting the accused. It was Dadi who told her about these past incidents. Dadi also told her that before Dada getting caught up in any other matters, they came to Nairobi. This is how the future generation memorizes the incidents associated with their forbears and their roots. The street in Nairobi were filled with Punjabi settlers and it felt like they were living in between Indian culture and traditions. Even though Munir was born in this street of Nairobi, he felt a sense of Indian atmosphere surrounding him. He experienced the same feeling of an individual who was living in the streets of Delhi as the streets were surrounded by the Punjabi settlers. The protagonist had an emotional attachment to India and both he and his siter had the shared memories their ancestors living in Delhi.

The social culture of India is highly valued where people go in harmony with others and offers high respectability. M. G. Vassanji also examines the spirit of hospitality shown by the Indians and how it gets passed on to their generation as a culture. This will help in creating unity and generates relation with their fellow beings. The rich cultural heritage of India is also a testament to its spirit of hospitality. The monuments, temples and tombs were built as a sign of gratitude to visitors and stand as a testament to India's tradition of hospitality. Munir's visit to these monuments and temples reveals a rich cultural heritage of the India and serve as an icon of hospitality. These streets of Delhi not only memorize him about his ancestors but also shows how the place welcomes their guests. He also visits Vadodara in Gujarat as he has to attend some conference there. Munir told that all those adulations that he received there was embarrassing and Mohini answered him that it was the Indian hospitality.

It so happened that as the train slowed down, screeching to a halt at Vadodara station, there were six people jogging alongside who had come to welcome him. This too was overdone and embarrassing, and only confirmed Altaf's and Rajender's estimations of Munir's greatness. He was indeed a VVIP...They shook hands, and his small bag was immediately snatched from him and thrust into the eager hands of someone younger, presumably a student. (Vassanji 161)

Living in Canada, Munir had experienced the western aspect of lifestyle where there was independent living and sense of shared community was absent. Munir felt a lonely life in Canada as he was a widower and his daughter Razia sought to live in relation with her lover in New York. The celebrations and festivals were also a reflection of Indian hospitality. Munir recalls how he celebrated Eid with his dada and Dadi in his home in Kenya during his childhood. The people of Indian society come together during such festivals where they share food, sweets and gifts with one another. The institution of family also serves a central

role in most of the lives of Indian. They emphasize loyalty and interdependence as a collectivist society. The character Mohini Singh portrays a typical Indian housewife who tries to maintain relation with whole members of her family. As a liberal newspaper columnist, she takes care of her two children, husband and her parents. She organized an expedition to the shrine of Sai Baba as a family venture. When her Bau-ji passes away, she takes care of her mother becoming a complete supporter for her. Her attraction towards Munir never let her forget about her duties to her family and she always combined her family as a whole. Munir also revisits India as he still holds a connection with his ancestors and their experience in Delhi. Being a foreigner, he felt more attraction to the Indian system of life where the tradition of family emphasizes kinship and social harmony.

The novel shows an intersection of space, nation and memory in a postcolonial context. It explores issues of nationalism, national identity, and national history as they appeared in stories centered on family. The national history often intertwines with the ancestral history of the family, where the future generation understands the past memories of the nation. The construction of nation and nationalism is examined through this narrative by the use of family sagas and cross-generational stories. There occurs a political intrusion into the family sphere and the home. Memory shapes the understandings of history, especially national history and convey a sense of national identity. The narratives also show national traumas in relation with the family, space and memory. The haunting power of trauma is explored in the narrative as it is affected by those who experienced it as well as the subsequent generations who continued to be affected by it. Particularly for those facing traumas experienced by previous generations that continue to affect them, they must grapple with historical understandings that often remain difficult to access in order to understand the trauma that continues to affect their present and their identity. The novel portrays the ‘unhomely’ that Homi Bhabha discusses in order to represent haunting memories and

experiences in these representations of trauma that intersect with and occur within the family sphere. To explore the relationship between public and private appearing in portrayals of historical trauma within the space, Bhabha's concept of unhomely is examined. "The intimate recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the border between home and world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (Bhabha 141).

A divided and disoriented experiences occur when private home life and public world of history and nation serves as a subject matter for the narratives. The exploration of memory and domestic space reveals a shaping effect of history and nation which helps in building the national identity. National history makes itself felt in the home, yet the domestic space does not remain merely acted-upon and shaped by the larger world; rather, it responds to the "intricate invasions" Bhabha mentions.

An individual memory helps in shaping the national history which helps him to identify with his identity. Vassanji through the recalling of ancestor's experience develops a method to analyse the social and political background of an individual. The novel serve as means to explore the history and culture of a particular person by identifying him with the nation.

Conclusion

The plurality of meaning and experience coexist in a dynamic construction for the production and connection of spatiality and memory. The space that elaborates the past experiences becomes the material places and site of memorialization. These spaces of memory are at the point where multiple ways of shaping, interpreting and experiencing the presence of the past take on a spatial and relational dimension. Monuments, memorials, and other significant places become the space of memory where an individual connects his past that he or his family has been experienced. Remembering is shaped by the mutually responsive relationship between social groups and the places they inhabit. A setting holds a set of meaning that stands from the act of remembering. The collective memory helps in extending the space. The generations of family give a particular significance and meaning to the space they inhabit.

The project has attempted to discover the concept of Space, Memory and the interrelation of the two in the Novel *A Delhi Obsession*, and it also shows how the life of an individual is shaped by the past experiences and incidents. The novel depicts the interconnectedness between physical spaces, personal memories and the characters' psychological experiences. The spatiality of Delhi becomes the central concern where the protagonist identifies his connection to the space through his ancestors. The personal memory of an individual acts upon his present life. The work reflects on the idea of spatial memory where a person identifies a particular place based on his autobiographical memory. The historical context of Delhi adds depth and significance to its cultural heritage and architectural marvels. The significance of identity also comes into question as the protagonist is a diaspora living in Toronto in Canada. The concrete historical event of displacement is referenced in the novel and the protagonist experiences a connection to his ancestral memory of their homeland.

The project has employed a spatial analysis in exploring the significance of place and the social habitat of individuals. Space becomes a geographical distribution where one through his own lived body interacts with the surrounding. It revolves around the physical and geographical aspect of space which is associated with deep emotional connections and memories for individuals. The common life of the people is shaped by the social, political and economic dimension of space. Spatiality offers a certain potential to human actions and is designed by their immediate behaviors. The setting of the novel is in the rich city of Delhi which has a rich variety of culture. Delhi is a vibrant mix of old and new, where ancient monuments stand alongside modern structures. The diverse range of spaces in Delhi offers a unique blend of tradition and modernity from its iconic Red Fort to the bustling markets of Chandni Chowk. The crowded streets of Delhi highlight the cultural significance of Indian values. The setting offers a particular meaning to the entire novel. The intention is a re exploration or revisiting of the space and the place, just like a literary journey back to familiar settings.

Memory becomes another central concern in the novel. The study also tries to analyse how the people applies history to their lives and understand how past influences their current living. Memory helps to form an awareness of selfhood both on individual and collective level. The relevant past experience stored in the human brain is transformed to the next generations. The streets, market and the monuments help him to establish a connection with his ancestral root. The city has a rich historical legacy, with remnants of ancient empires and dynasties scattered throughout its landscape. Monuments serve as reminders of city's past and evoke a sense of collective memory. The individual is caught hold between the Indian culture and the western culture where their identity becomes an important aspect.

The project also reflects the social and political background of Delhi during the current period. Partition had a great impact upon Delhi as there came an increase in population, a

mixture of different cultures and traditions. The communal violence also spread in the city as an aftermath of Partition where people started losing their harmony. The novel also depicts how the individual faces the political turmoil in the city of Delhi even after years of partition. Based on religion, peoples were divided and segregated into different extremes. The study focuses on the intersection of memory, space and nation in a postcolonial context and memory functions as a tool for preserving cultural heritage, fostering social cohesion and advocating for social justice. The study also tries to show the Indian social system which gives importance to the institution of family and treating its visitors with high value and respect.

The spatial framework enables a person to associate memories related with his ancestors and develops a strong connection with them. Each and every thing in that particular space shows a sense of connection to the historical events that have taken place in the past. The personal memory of an individual is shaped by the social landscape. Space not only acts as a social relation but also has a point of knowledge and power where information is passed from one generation to the next.

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