

Dwelling in Displacement: The Architectural Uncanny and Transgender Exile in Irani's *The Parcel* and Laxmi's *Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life*

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This paper attempts to investigate the portrayal of the homes of transgenders in order to highlight the complex interplay between the societal dynamics and the transgenders' identities in the selected Indian fiction, i.e., *The Parcel* by Anosh Irani and *Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life* by Laxmi Naryan Tripathi. By drawing upon Anthony Vidler, Crawford, Gozlan, and Freud's concept of the "uncanny", this research highlights the frightening realities and effects of societal judgment and displacement experienced by transgenders in the Indian society.

Methodology: The current qualitative study employs Catherine Belsey's model of "Textual Analysis" to analyze the selected fiction to trace the vulnerabilities of transgender bodies and the systemic inequality they face in securing safe housing in India.

Findings: The findings of this research highlight the discrimination faced by the transgender individuals in the Indian society and call for the reevaluation of legal and social norms for the recognition of transgender voices to foster more inclusivity.

Conclusion: So, through detailed textual analysis, this study not only foregrounds the living conditions of the transgenders but also attempts to promote equitable and inclusive discourses which may pave the way for greater acceptance and social recognition of the transgender individuals. Also, this research aims to emphasize that Indian society needs to develop awareness and empathy for the transgender individuals in order to establish equitable social structures.

Keywords: Transgender Housing, Architectural Uncanny, Displacement, Exile, Marginalized Identities, Societal Dynamics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary Indian fiction is significant as it aims to explore the living experiences of marginalized communities such as transgenders and sheds light on cultural and social implications of identity, exclusion and belonging. The experiences particularly unravel the suppressed lives of transgenders in Indian societies as they struggle with exclusion histories and displacement, which resonates with broader

Article History

Received:
May 29, 2025

Revised:
July 28, 2025

Accepted:
August 5, 2025

Online:
August 12, 2025

legacies of colonialism. Within this context, the concept of 'home' is transformed; it not only represents a mere physical shelter but also a complex site where questions about identity, social norms and self, arise and converge. This research study examines how home which is a physical space and also used as a metaphor, reflects all those challenges that transgender individuals face in two novels selected for this study, i.e., *The Parcel* by Anosh Irani and *Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life* by Laxmi Narayan Tripathi. These novels depict 'home' as a sanctuary and also a site of alienation. It shows a physical reflection of marginalization and societal rejection that is depicted through the framework of the "architectural uncanny" a concept that is rooted in Sigmund Freud's notion of the uncanny, which describes how familiar spaces become alien and disturbing. *The Parcel* by Anosh Irani, illustrates this concept where Madhu's home in Kamathipura, the red-light district is depicted as a space which is familiar and deeply alienating at the same time. To unpack the concept of 'home' for the transgender individuals, this study draws upon Freud and Vidler's notions of uncanny spaces – spaces which are intimate yet estranged. This article depicts how Indian culture saturates transgender homes with symbolic resonance. It also shows how transgenders are exiled from society as well as from their own bodies, and how they struggle to deal with the expectations of the society that conflicts with their own identities. Through detailed analysis of the lives of Madhu in *The Parcel* and Laxmi in *Red Lipstick*, this study unpacks the interplay among identity construction, physical displacement and emotional exile.

The transgender community in India has a long history that dates back centuries. Ancient texts, including religious epics like the Mahabharata, acknowledge the presence of Hijras, highlighting their unique cultural roles in blessing ceremonies and religious rituals (Anuja, 2020, p. 296; Nanda, 1999, p. 45). Pre-colonial societies in India often held ambivalent but culturally significant attitudes toward Hijras, viewing them with a mix of reverence and superstition (Arvind, 2015, p. 64). However, this perception changed drastically with the onset of British colonial rule, which imposed Victorian morality on the subcontinent, institutionalizing discrimination against non-binary and gender-nonconforming individuals ("Hijra: India's Third Gender," n.d.). The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, implemented by the British, marked a turning point by legally categorizing Hijras as "habitual offenders" ("The Legal Recognition of Hijras as a Third Gender," n.d.). This act institutionalized their marginalization, and despite its repeal in the post-colonial period, its damaging impact persists (Iqbal & Hussain, 2018, p. 344). This act systematically established the structures of exclusion, systemic stigmatization and marginalization specifically with reference to the transgender individuals and left indelible marks on their lives as they were labelled as "criminal tribe" marking them dangerous and inherently deviant. This stigmatization created a framework for continued social marginalization and led to legal discrimination and stereotypes. Even when this Act was overruled, the effects of colonial policies were deeply endorsed in legal frameworks, social attitudes and cultural stigmas which created hindrances in the acceptance of transgender community. In post-colonial India, transgender individuals continue to face systemic discrimination, social exclusion, and economic marginalization, as they are still struggling for societal acceptance and legal recognition. Although some countries have taken progressive steps such as recognizing a "third gender" in official documents, transgender individuals still face substantial barriers to education, healthcare, and stable housing ("The Life of a Hijra," n.d.). Since literature, specifically fiction, plays a crucial role in documenting these struggles, so it offers readers a window into the systemic inequities that shape the lives of transgender individuals. Thus, by examining Indian narratives that depict transgender characters' experiences, we can better understand the sociocultural dynamics that perpetuate their marginalization (Patel & Kumar, 2016, p. 78). So, this study attempts to explore the peripheral position of the transgender community in the Indian context where they are not only pushed to exilic experiences in their bodies but also their homes.

1.1 Problem Statement

The transgender community in India faces social exclusion, cultural stigmatization and economic disparities. The peripheral position in the Indian society not only compels them to face displacement in their bodies but also their homes – as they are pushed outside the mainstream living spaces. The current

study highlights the “architectural uncanny” that the transgender individuals face as far as their housing is concerned which is a manifestation of the exclusionary socio-cultural structures that are prevalent in the Indian society that further pushes them to the periphery and further downgrades their social status. Through detailed textual analysis of the selected fiction, this study calls for reevaluation of the legal frameworks and socio-cultural structures of the Indian society in order to transform the existing patterns and promote more equitable and inclusive social structures that recognize and accept transgender individuals in the mainstream discourses.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The current study is significant as it analyzes the peripheral position of the transgender individuals in the Indian society – the exclusionary practices that they are subjected to, not only in terms of their bodies but also the uncanniness of their homes, whereby homes is a dual metaphor, both a symbol of dwelling as well as displacement. This study is significant as it analyzes the selected fiction to highlight the plight of the transgender individuals in the contemporary Indian society with reference to the “architectural uncanny” and exile that they face in their bodies and their homes – places that are familiar yet alien. Besides, it also calls for the inclusion of the transgender community in the mainstream society for the establishment of more inclusive and equitable socio-cultural structures.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In recent years, research into transgender lives across South Asia has grown more nuanced. Still, much of it stays focused on institutional, cultural, or digital contexts, often leaving out the more intimate dimensions of domestic space. Murad-Kassam and Siraj (2024), in their scoping review, point out that even with legal protections in place, deep-rooted structural inequalities tied to caste, class, and broader socio-economic conditions continue to restrict fair access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. Suleman et al. (2023) draw attention to the consequences of widespread stigma and familial rejection. Many transgender individuals find themselves forced out of their parental homes, which leads not only to unstable housing situations but also to ongoing psychological strain. Meanwhile, cultural and literary studies add further depth to this conversation. Fatima (2025) examines how fiction in the region grapples with transgender identity and the idea of social belonging. Similarly, the 2025 special issue of *Transgender Studies Quarterly* looks at the double-edged nature of cultural narratives and activism and how they both resist and, at times, replicate marginalization. Almaarii (2024), taking a more symbolic approach, reimagines the “closet” as a spatial metaphor that speaks to both concealment and the desire for belonging. However, this metaphor often stays in the realm of the communal or public, with less attention paid to the private, everyday spaces of home life.

Work grounded in historical inquiry continues to outline the deep-rooted nature of marginalization faced by the transgenders. Rawat (2024) traces the erosion of pre-colonial recognition for hijras who were once embraced as a third gender through the imposition of colonial legal structures like Section 377 and the Criminal Tribes Act. This framing draws attention to systemic exclusion, yet it rarely engages with spatial themes, particularly in the context of literary interpretation. First-person accounts, like Revathi’s *The Truth About Me* (2010), offer raw, often painful reflections on rejection and forced displacement. However, these stories primarily emerge from an activist or biographical lens. Similarly, regional voices such as Khurai’s *The Yellow Sparrow* (2023) bring focus to indigeneity and identity, yet they tend to bypass the domestic realm as a space where alienation or resistance might unfold. Nova et al. (2021), working within the Bangladeshi context, explore how hijra individuals navigate identity and privacy in digital spaces, particularly across social media platforms. Their work sheds light on how online environments can be both liberating and exposing for the transgenders. However, this attention to virtual spheres leaves the layered realities of their actual domestic life largely untouched. Within these diverse scholarly contributions, one notable gap remains: the home both as a lived space and as a deeply symbolic, psychological construct has yet to be meaningfully theorized within South Asian transgender narratives. When spatial metaphors do surface, they often stay in the abstract or are linked to broader,

more public domains. Current literature largely overlooks the domestic settings of the transgenders as a site where marginalization, identity, and the experience of embodied estrangement come together.

These studies offer valuable insight into transgenders' lives across South Asia, yet they lack to address transgenders' home as both a physical site and a psycho-spatial metaphor for alienation, identity formation, and lived marginalization. When spatial metaphors do appear, they tend to be abstract or tethered to public realms, rarely touching the intimate and emotionally complex space of the domestic. This study enters that overlooked terrain by analyzing how domestic environments are represented in South Asian fiction featuring transgenders' experiences. With theoretical grounding in the work of Vidler, Crawford, Gozlan, and Freud's concept of the "uncanny", the home is approached as a conflicted and embodied space shaped by exclusion, social judgment, and the shifting contours of selfhood. In taking this route, the research adds a new layer to South Asian transgender literary studies, foregrounding how domestic spaces act not just as backdrops but as active forces shaping the experience and representation of marginalization.

The concept of the "architectural uncanny," as discussed by Anthony Vidler and rooted in Freud's psychological theories, provides a compelling lens for understanding the estranged relationship transgender individuals often experience within their homes. A sense of psychological discomfort is explained through the "uncanny," which is defined as a feeling that arises when familiar worlds or an environment like "home" become disturbingly unfamiliar. This effect is illustrated by Vidler as "the sensation of being buried alive, feelings of homesickness, the presence of cyborgs, and the use of transparency," which urges the individuals to come face to face with their discomfort in their surrounding and it also defamiliarizes the familiar (Vidler, 1992, p. 54). For transgender individuals, home is like an uncanny space that is secure and intimate but societal rejection causes it to become alien and strange. This alienation blurs the lines between shelter and exposure, safety and threat. Vidler's architectural theory reveals that the unnatural emerges from spaces that are considered safe and provide a sense of belonging which reduces fear, unease, and rejection. In the case of transgender community this unnatural space often manifests within the home which is considered as an environment accepted by the society but for transgender individuals it becomes a place of vulnerability, judgement, and exclusion. This unnatural element within the home reflects the broader experience of societal alienation for transgender community. Homes are considered ideally neutral and nurturing, often reflecting the cultural attitudes and prejudices of the society in which they are embedded. For transgender individuals, however, the home becomes an ironic symbol; instead of offering refuge, it reinforces their exclusion and marginalization – as it becomes a place where gender norms are rigidly enforced, where deviation is policed, and where nonconformity meets resistance. As Laxmi Narayan Tripathi notes in *Red Lipstick*, even the domestic space is not free from judgment: "he also wanted me to live in less smell that I couldn't but not able to live as a 'normal' boy" (Tripathi, 2016, p. 35). This reflects how the home itself becomes a battleground for identity, where societal expectations infiltrate private space. Similarly, Anthony Vidler's notion of the architectural uncanny also explains how even the most intimate spaces can provoke unease when they no longer affirm one's identity. He identifies how architecture "defamiliarizes the familiar," turning domestic space into a site of psychological discomfort when it fails to accommodate the self (Vidler, 1992, p. 54). For transgender individuals, this dissonance is intensified by experiences of rejection, displacement, and imposed invisibility within their own families. As reflected in Madhu's story in *The Parcel*, the home is no sanctuary for her as she is rejected after her brother's birth, and made to sleep under the bed – such treatment signals how domestic spaces can enact and embody systemic transphobia. Thus, the transgender's home is not just a physical structure but a charged site of identity negotiation, alienation, and, at times, resistance. A home that is considered a safe haven for one individual often clashes with the transgender's idea of home in which they are being judged and trapped in an unnatural environment. This suffocating environment is further complicated by Indian society by histories of exile and displacement. Fanon argues that a maintained control done by native identities and picturizing pre-colonial cultures as barbaric is a process that has "portrayed the transgender community in India as criminals who needed to be kept at a safe distance from mainstream society" (Ashcroft et al., 2003). Societal dynamics are

influenced by this colonial legacy that render home spaces hostile to those people who deviate from normal gender expectations. In such a situation, exile not only means the physical displacement of people from their homes but also makes it harder for them to become a part of the society. Post-colonial societies have fought with the effects of imposed identities, ruptured histories, and disrupted social structures which makes it hard for non-normative individuals to be treated and identified like normal people. In Indian culture, the transgender communities have a different kind of exile that operates on multiple levels. Their homes are mostly located in areas known as red-light districts, and their neighborhood is impoverished which makes the environment very unwelcoming. Such an environment creates a symbol of broader exclusion, neglect, and social abandonment. Such unnatural spaces act as a social marker for these communities indicating who is welcomed in the mainstream and who is relegated to the margins. This kind of exile and discrimination is not only physical but also psychological.

Transgender communities not only feel estranged from their physical homes but are also made to believe that they are subjected to societal disapproval within their own bodies. This level of discomfort within their own skin echoes a strange feeling within their own personal space. They become a site of contention and the spaces they occupy become a center of societal policing; the place they consider home doesn't feel the same way due to rigid societal expectations. The theory of gender performativity described by Judith Butler states that gender is a repeated social performance instead of a stable identity, which makes the bodies of transgender individuals susceptible to coercion and surveillance when they disrupt norms (Butler, 1990, p. 190). Similarly, Susan Stryker asserts that trans bodies "challenge the boundaries between the natural and the constructed, the subject and object," often inciting societal anxiety and control over bodily presentation (Stryker, 2006, p. 248). These frameworks help illuminate why transgender individuals often experience their bodies and homes as contested spaces, inhabited, but not fully their own. This exile is particularly poignant in South Asian societies, where transgender individuals are often met with stigma and exclusion. In such settings, transgender individuals exist in a state of perpetual liminality, living in bodies and spaces society refuses to acknowledge or support.

The relationship between transgender individuals and the spaces they inhabit is further intensified in narratives that depict these individuals' lives in marginalized or transitional spaces. Red-light districts, impoverished neighborhoods, and neglected buildings become the physical backdrops against which the transgender experience unfolds, reflecting their psychological and social liminality. These spaces, often marked by physical decay and neglect, underscore the broader societal disregard for transgender lives. The uncanny emerges in "places of collapse, ruin, or excessive order," reflecting not only architectural disrepair but the psychological and social alienation imposed by the environment itself (Vidler, 1992, p. 11). The uncanniness of these environments once perhaps homes but now sites of abandonment mirrors the social abandonment transgender individuals endure. The habitat of transgender communities who are living in red-light districts and forgotten neighborhoods are considered an anomaly, who are existing and surviving in a society that disowns them. In Indian culture the transgender identities are defined as a group of people who are fighting the tension between personal identities and societal expectation. This not only causes physical displacement but also induces emotional, social and bodily dislocation. Their homes stand as symbols of an ongoing struggle. They also show how exclusion works and how rules about belonging are enforced. A place meant to be a refuge can turn into a place watched over by constant policing and quiet surveillance. In this kind of setting, the gaze of society creates discomfort and drives out anyone who is different. Stories like these do more than describe the daily hardships of transgender communities. They reveal the psychological weight and the emotional harm that come from being denied dignity, security, and legitimacy. The idea of the architectural uncanny is especially powerful here – as it describes, how home, which is something familiar, something meant to keep a person safe, can turn into a silent partner in their exclusion. A home, which should protect, begins to fall into physical disrepair and in doing so reminds its inhabitants that they are outsiders, both within the walls they live in and within society at large. Within these spaces, Indian narratives point to the systems that decide who will be welcomed and who will be pushed away. The architectural uncanny, therefore, shows us how the same forces that make transgender people feel like strangers in their own homes operate. The loneliness they

feel is a signal of how society writes rules for bodies, controls what is considered normal, and limits how identities are expressed. This sense of strangeness in transgender homes pushes us to rethink what it means for a place to feel like home and who is allowed to claim that feeling. Indian fiction invites its readers to critique and challenge the larger socio-cultural structures that create rejection and alienation. For transgender people, home becomes both a strong symbol of the fight to belong and a reminder of the challenges they face. That unsettling feeling inside the home reflects the constant tension between who society expects them to be and who they really are, making a case for the need to create spaces that accept all identities. The concept of the architectural uncanny, drawn from Anthony Vidler, captures this unease and strangeness. Vidler describes such settings as “spaces of estrangement, where the familiar becomes strangely unfamiliar and the domestic turns into a site of anxiety” (Vidler, 1992, p. 11). The uncanniness in transgender homes, particularly in Indian society, reflects a deep feeling of being out of place.

The emotional state of transgender homes is similar to places that are unorganized, where cultural bias, past neglect, and social expectations come together to cause discomfort and feelings of being an outsider. These homes, reflecting society’s views, often lack a sense of stability and acceptance, making transgender people constantly feel at risk. Exile, usually seen as being physically away from home, takes on a deeper and more complicated meaning when we think about the transgender experience in post-colonial India. This form of exile is not confined to geographic displacement but emerges through emotional detachment, psychological alienation, and systemic social exclusion. These dimensions intersect most poignantly in the daily lives of transgender individuals, for whom the idea of 'home' both as a physical space and a conceptual anchor often becomes inaccessible. The phenomenon of being estranged from one's own domestic space is central to this discourse. What should offer belonging instead becomes an instrument of rejection, echoing the rupture between self and place described as “the unhealable rift... between the self and its true home” (Said, 2000, p. 137). In such a setting, exile begins within the family where gender nonconformity is policed and expelled, redefining the domestic sphere as an early site of dispossession. Emotional exile takes root when one's identity is invalidated or rendered invisible within intimate spaces, fostering a lasting sense of dislocation.

The prevalence of biased attitude towards the transgenders in the Indian society is closely tied to the colonial legacy that informs present-day structures. As discussed earlier, gender diversity, once embedded into Indian cultural and spiritual life, was pathologized under imperial rule. Colonial powers systematically recast indigenous gender expressions as deviant, using legal instruments such as the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 to marginalize certain communities, particularly the transgenders. These mechanisms of control, inherited and often perpetuated by post-colonial nation-states, continue to regulate transgenders’ access to space, identity, and social belonging (Fanon, 1963, p. 211). Spatially, the architecture of exile is mirrored in the uncanny environments transgender individuals inhabit. These are homes in name only – unfamiliar, unstable, and unwelcoming. The notion of the architectural uncanny, where familiar spaces become estranged, captures this displacement. As discussed earlier, such homes “defamiliarize the familiar,” unsettling the very sense of security they are meant to provide (Vidler, 1992, p. 54). The home becomes a metaphorical exile: a space where the self is present but not permitted to fully exist. Yet, exile also marks the threshold of transformation. Amid systemic rejection, transgender individuals cultivate alternative spaces, self-chosen families, community structures, and networks of solidarity that function as reimagined homes. These are not merely responses to exclusion, but acts of creation that defy dominant narratives. This reclamation of space corresponds with the concept of a cultural “third space,” where identity is not fixed but fluid, negotiated, and continuously reconstructed (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38). In these liminal zones, exile becomes the condition of both vulnerability and resilience. Ultimately, to theorize exile in the transgender context is to confront a layered condition of being. It encompasses the psychological effects of social alienation, the historical impact of colonial disinheritance, and the architectural dimensions of marginality. By foregrounding exile as a framework, the analysis deepens the understanding of how space, identity, and power intersect in the lives of transgender individuals, offering a lens through which to view both their marginalization and their persistent strategies of survival and resistance.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study which has employed Catherine Belsey's model of "Textual Analysis", which focuses on a close encounter with the work itself, an examination of the details without bringing to them more presuppositions than we can help" (160). The meaning of text, according to Belsey is generated by an interplay of the ideological structures, cultural context, and personal experiences along with the secondary sources, which is a manifestation of the relationship between the reader and the text. This research method highlights the possibility of interpretations as there is no single meaning or interpretation of the text but rather many possible interpretations that emerge from the text which itself develops from a complex socio-cultural context embedded in different ideological structures.

4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS: ARCHITECTURAL UNCANNY AND EXILE IN *THE PARCEL AND RED LIPSTICK: THE MEN IN MY LIFE*

Anosh Irani's *The Parcel* and Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's *Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life*, the novels selected for this study, are particularly noteworthy for their portrayal of the architectural uncanny and societal alienation through the eyes of their main transgender characters, i.e., Madhu and Laxmi. *The Parcel* documents the life of Madhu, a transgender individual living within the hard boundaries of Kamathipura, Mumbai's red-light district. Her household works are almost like a living metaphor for her inner struggle. Her own body feels unfamiliar to her, marked as something on the margins, engaged in a constant fight for both identity and acceptance. The cycle she takes part in, training and breaking down young girls for prostitution, mirrors the broader challenge transgender individuals face when trying to claim space in a world that keeps pushing them aside. Madhu's relationship with her surroundings makes the sense of displacement even sharper. Irani's descriptions linger on what she sees, hears, and smells, such as cooking oil in the air, the scent of rot, and the changing streets of Mumbai. All of it reflects the emotional turbulence she is going through in her life. In one moment, her home feels like a refuge, in another, like a cage. Survival holds the community together, yet exclusion still works quietly in the background, keeping them apart. This uneasy domestic reality shows how conventional ideas of home often fail transgender individuals. Tripathi's *Red Lipstick*, an autobiographical account, explores a similar reality. Laxmi's journey moves from her childhood to her life as an activist. Her story reveals what it means to inhabit a body that society refuses to understand or accept, creating an ongoing sense of alienation even within one's self. When she embraces symbols like bright lipstick and silk sarees, she is not just making a fashion choice; she is reclaiming identity, much like turning an abandoned building into something livable. Her change from Raju to Laxmi is not only physical, it is also a mental reworking of the idea of home, pushing against the limits, society sets. These stories, shaped by history and cultural expectations, show the layered experiences of transgender individuals in India. In many Indian communities, family defines identity. Being excluded from that foundation makes transgender individuals even more vulnerable. Without solid legal protection for property rights, many hijras and transgender individuals are evicted or forced into temporary homes in poor neighborhoods. This reality is clear in *The Parcel*, where Madhu lives in a two-storey building "adopted by Kamathipura" but kept at its edges, a place that signals both neglect and exclusion (Irani, 2016, p. 67). There is no guarantee of structural safety. Economic inequality adds to the danger, leaving transgender individuals in unstable, sometimes unsafe, conditions that deepen their marginalization.

Vidler's ideas about unstructured spaces fit powerfully here. In most communities, a house offers refuge, however, in the hijra residences described by Irani, that sense of safety is replaced by something unsettling and dehumanizing. The deterioration of Kamathipura represents the internal struggles and external societal pressures that force Madhu and her community into a vicious cycle of survival and poverty. This depiction challenges the sufficiency of existing social frameworks that overlook the distinct spatial and emotional requirements of transgender individuals, suggesting a pressing necessity for inclusive, secure housing that recognizes varied gender identities. For numerous individuals, home represents an idea that transcends mere physical structures, symbolizing safety and personal identity. Nevertheless, transgender groups in India frequently face exclusion from these rights. The bedroom and

bathroom, frequently overlooked in popular narratives, gain fresh importance in these tales, symbolizing areas for gender validation and personal discovery. In *The Parcel*, the restroom/bathroom represents a blend of vulnerability and independence. Madhu, in getting young Kinjal ready for the brothel, is observed managing the physical and emotional unease of places filled with traces of bodily trauma: “Madhu took her to the bathroom... cleaned her, wiped her, powdered her” (Irani, 2016, p. 55). This personal and ordinary activity is portrayed with a stark urgency, illustrating how even the most secluded areas function as places of authority, ceremony, and endurance. The unease deepens when Madhu reflects on her history, stating how “she was forced to sleep beneath the bed following her brother’s arrival” (Irani, 2016, p. 84), an early displacement within her home that would resonate throughout her existence.

In *Red Lipstick*, Laxmi's portrayal of her childhood environment highlights the struggle between gender identity and domestic isolation, indicating the pressures placed upon her to conform, while simultaneously being rejected. The bathroom in Laxmi's narrative becomes a place of reflection and rebellion where she finds herself adjusting her hair and makeup, trying to see “Laxmi” in the mirror, even when others refuse to see her at all. These personal spaces can sometimes offer affirmation, yet they can just as easily hold violence, constant surveillance, and alienation. Poverty finds its way in and so does prejudice. Violence too. They slip quietly into these rooms and corners, showing how exclusion works not only in public but also in the design of buildings. For many transgender individuals, the fight for a stable home and a place where they are accepted lays bare the thin limits of compassion in our laws, in families, and in the wider community. These portrayals make a clear demand – policies must go further than simply allowing people to exist. They need to provide secure housing, protect safety, and guarantee the right to live in one's own space without fear or shame.

In *The Parcel*, Madhu's unease when she steps into clean, traditional homes says a lot about the gap between her world and what society calls “normal.” She has spent years surviving in cramped, unsanitary places, so, when she sees spotless rooms, it is not comfort she feels but something close to revulsion. Entering her parental home after years of being away, she recalls, “It felt like another planet... she thought she might gag on the cleanliness, and on all those fake smiles tolerating her presence” (Irani, 2016, p. 61). That moment is more than just discomfort. It is the weight of alienation pressing against her in her own family's space. Years in neglected, makeshift housing have reshaped what feels normal, what she can accept, even what she can bear. Cleanliness itself becomes strange. This is the heart of the uncanny, a place that should offer sanctuary yet turns into something foreign. Irani's portrayal captures this gap between transgender lives and mainstream social norms. Similarly, Tripathi's novel shows the same struggle in a different setting, describing life in dangerous and impoverished neighborhoods. Both point to the same truth: discriminatory systems in India that often push transgender people into unsafe areas, locking them in poverty with little chance of escape. A home, for them, becomes a site of daily resistance as much as it is a shelter. Madhu's world in Kamathipura brings that to life. The buildings there, in Irani's telling, are more than just run-down structures. They are shifting symbols, sometimes rejection, sometimes a fragile kind of stability. For hijra residents, they are, as Irani writes, “the unofficial womb for members of the third gender” (Irani, 2016, p. 67). That phrase itself is immersed in irony. This home can give identity and belonging, yet it is steeped in neglect, poverty, and exclusion. The description stays vivid: “a patchwork of purple and green... some of the panes were broken, exposing the rusted iron grilles” (Irani, 2016, p. 28). What should be safe domestic space becomes a zone where survival is always precarious. And this uncanniness is not only in the walls or streets. It seeps into the body, into the mind, into the ways identity is carried every single day.

The clean, orderly space becomes a site of alienation, not sanctuary, illustrating how marginalized individuals internalize instability as familiar. Yet, despite these pervasive obstacles, narratives like Laxmi's offer a glimmer of resilience and hope. Her insistence on dressing boldly “silk sarees, red lipstick and *gajras*” serves as more than aesthetic choice; it is an assertion of self in a world that consistently seeks to erase her (Tripathi, 2016, p. 89). In her own words: “I was no longer Raju. I was Laxmi, and I was here to stay” (Tripathi, 2016, p. 43). These acts of gendered self-expression within restrictive spaces

exemplify how transgender individuals reclaim autonomy and visibility, even in spaces designed to marginalize them. Moreover, her advocacy extends beyond personal transformation. Laxmi writes, “My people need homes, not just shelter but a space to live without fear” (Tripathi, 2016, p. 141). This sentence says a lot. It speaks to a shared struggle, and to a fight for structural change that recognizes the humanity of the hijra community. In both narratives the home is not neither fixed nor neutral. It is a place of trauma, a place of transition – both at the same time. This is how the depictions of such places push us to think about space in a different way, not as a quiet backdrop but as something active, shaping identity, shaping resistance, and even shaping dignity.

The link between body and home is central to understanding the struggles that transgender individuals in India live with. It is far from a small matter. Madhu’s story makes this clear. A physical space does more than simply contain someone. It can mirror who they are, and in some cases, it can even shape who they might become. She works to claim a space of her own, but the weight of economic and social limits never really let her have it. In many ways, this fight runs alongside her journey toward self-acceptance. Laxmi’s story carries echoes of the same struggle. Her identity as a hijra is questioned at times in the open, at other times in quiet, and indirect ways. Even so, she keeps moving forward, determined to secure housing that she can truly call hers. The everyday realities faced by transgender communities in India make a person pause, and think, and feel the depth of the obstacles they are forced to confront. They point to the social structures that either refuse to see or simply do not support people with diverse identities. If this sense of not belonging to this unhomeliness is ever going to change, society has to take concrete steps, which means more inclusive policies. It means housing rights that are real, not just on paper. It means protecting marginalized communities and building spaces where anyone can feel secure, valued, able to express themselves fully. The idea of home, whether you take it literally or see it as something symbolic, has to expand to welcome everyone, no matter their gender.

In *The Parcel*, Madhu’s life moves from being a child pushed out by her family to becoming a senior member of the hijra household. That journey is marked by trauma, by survival, and by a reluctant complicity in the systems around her. Her early exile comes through with painful clarity when she remembers, “After her brother was born, she was made to sleep under the bed.” That was the first time she realized she didn’t belong” (Irani, 2016, p. 84). This moment becomes the genesis of her lifelong search for a space where she can exist without shame. Yet, even in Kamathipura, a space carved out by and for hijras, Madhu feels only partial safety. When faced with the task of breaking young Kinjal’s spirit, she reflects: “It was for their own good. The world doesn’t leave space for soft girls like her” (Irani, 2016, p. 56). These words reveal the internalized violence of systemic rejection, forcing Madhu into roles that replicate her own suffering. Her desire for a place of belonging never fades. This confrontation with domestic alienation solidifies her internal exile. And yet, her decision to protect Kinjal to finally not deliver “the parcel” becomes a redemptive act, reclaiming agency and humanity in a world that had denied her both. Laxmi’s narrative traces a similarly turbulent but resilient path. Her voice is unapologetically bold, insisting: “They want everything to fit neatly into boxes except accepting us.” (Tripathi, 2016, p. 45). This assertion follows years of rejection and confusion. Laxmi’s transformation is driven by her need for dignity and truth. When asked why she still wears bright lipstick and traditional attire, she replies: “Because it’s mine. My body, my choice, my womanhood” (Tripathi, 2016, p. 89). Her physical presentation becomes an architectural metaphor reconstructing her body into a home she can finally inhabit. The challenges both women, face are structural and deeply personal: rejection from families, systemic housing insecurity, absence of legal protections, and violence in both public and private spheres. Yet, their responses are layered with resistance and vision. Laxmi advocates fiercely: “My people need home, not just shelter but a space to live without fear” (Tripathi, 2016, p. 141). In doing so, she redefines home as an inclusive, communal, and justice-oriented space.

Madhu in *The Parcel* and Laxmi in *Red Lipstick*, both are literary embodiments of a colonial legacy that refuses to fade. They walk through societal spaces that look at them with suspicion, even hostility. Each step they take carries the weight of a struggle for acceptance, belonging, and self-assertion inside a culture

that will not grant them full humanity. In Kamathipura, the red-light district of Mumbai, Madhu lives in what is at once home and exile. It is not a place chosen for comfort, it is mere survival, and nothing more. The crumbling walls and the district's marginal position mirror the isolation she feels. Society still sees her through the old colonial suspicion of "deviant" identities. That view is not new. It reaches back to the historical branding of Hijras as "criminals" and "outcasts." And that label continues, quietly but persistently, keeping them outside the rights and dignities freely given to others. The novel explicitly links Madhu's body to this criminalized status, with her own family treating her as "something to be hidden, like shame in the back of a cupboard" (Irani, 2016, p. 84). When she returns to her family home after years in Kamathipura, she reflects bitterly: "No matter where you go, you will never be home." (Irani, 2016, p. 40). These moments evoke a deep sense of structural exile where not even her childhood home can offer belonging.

For Laxmi, the experience of rejection comes from within her family and the larger societal structures, highlighting the deep-seated prejudice embedded in Indian culture. Her personal journey of transformation from Raju to Laxmi symbolizes a struggle against restrictive social norms that enforce binary gender roles and reject those who do not conform. Although India has a precolonial history of acceptance and recognition of Hijras and other gender-diverse individuals, colonial policies disrupted these structures and imposed a rigid framework of heteronormativity and binary gender identity. As Irani notes, "When India finally broke free of the British and the white women went back to England, and some of the Indian women moved elsewhere they gifted their homes to the hijras." (Irani, 2016, p. 50). This observation highlights how colonial withdrawal left behind fragmented spaces that the marginalized were forced to inhabit while cementing the rigid framework of heteronormativity and binary gender identity. Laxmi's story makes clear how deeply these colonial attitudes have penetrated familial and cultural structures. They limit her family's capacity to accept her identity and reinforce the societal norms that deny her very existence.

4.1 Key Findings of the Study

The current study shows that the impact of colonial-era stigmatization is not just an isolated historical event, it continues to influence the spatial and emotional realities of transgender individuals. In Indian society, transgender homes are not simply physical structures but spaces of psychological exile. The concept of "home" becomes complex for individuals like Madhu and Laxmi who are denied familial acceptance and societal recognition. Their homes therefore reflect not only physical displacement but also emotional alienation. Post-colonial Indian fiction often employs the idea of exile to portray the lives of transgender characters. They are shown occupying spaces at the margins of society, often located in neglected areas or red-light districts, and these homes symbolize the exile experienced both in society and within families. The architectural uncanny, as theorists such as Anthony Vidler have described, offers a way to understand this relationship between transgender individuals and their homes. A home should be a place of refuge, yet for many it becomes an uncanny space familiar yet alien, offering the promise of safety while carrying judgment and rejection. Through this lens, characters like Madhu and Laxmi navigate homes that fail to provide security, a reflection of their precarious place in society. Madhu's home in Kamathipura embodies this uncanniness. It is the place she lives in but it is a constant reminder of her marginalization. The decaying architecture of Kamathipura mirrors the decay of social acceptance and the physical spaces where transgender individuals are permitted to exist. "Home" here is fragile, its meaning is threatened by neglect and impermanence. The uncanny nature of such spaces arises not only from physical ruin but from the way they serve as both sanctuary and a site of exclusion. This exile is also present within the transgender's body itself, which becomes a site of societal judgment. There is a dual displacement: estrangement from physical spaces and from one's own body, as legitimacy is denied to it. Madhu's alienation from her own body shows the internalized judgments she has faced. In *The Parcel*, her body becomes a place of inherited shame and discomfort. At one moment, her physical vulnerability is plain: "Her body was wet from sweat and she was shivering. Even the slightest touch of a cloth upon her skin made her bawl..." (Irani, 2016, p. 87). Her body is shaped by violence and by roles she has had to

take in Kamathipura: “She had turned into a man to save a girl. She had become the very thing she had once feared” (Irani, 2016, p. 173). These changes are not self-realization but survival in a hostile world. *Red Lipstick* shows how Laxmi’s transformation is at once empowering and painful, marked by rejection from those closest to her. Her femininity becomes a form of resistance and at the same time a reason for expulsion. The bodily exile of these characters reinforces that home is more than physical space. It is also the longing for acceptance and recognition, often unfulfilled. There is a double kind of displacement here, and it feeds a constant fight for recognition. For control. For simply being allowed to exist in peace. Transgender individuals lose out on both fronts, the physical places they can live and the emotional spaces where they can feel safe.

Another key finding of this study is that contemporary Indian fiction puts transgender characters right in the center, and by doing that they pull apart the social and cultural systems that keep exclusion alive. These stories document how colonial history has a long shadow that still shapes the way people think, the way they treat others, and the way transgender individuals are kept out of everyday spaces. The contemporary fiction through such portrayal of transgender characters show why change has to come, why the old frameworks have to be broken apart if there is ever going to be a truly inclusive society. Despite all the societal pressures, Madhu and Laxmi do not disappear into the background, they push back. They find ways to make “home” on their own terms. For Madhu, staying in Kamathipura is more than just staying alive. It is a kind of statement, a refusal to be moved. When she works with Kinjal, a young girl she is meant to prepare for a hard life at the margins, one can see the tension. She is part of the system, but she is also resisting it which is a proof of her courage and strength. Her transition is about leaving one life behind and stepping into another – not just in body, but in her mind and spirit as well. She uses her position as an activist and public figure to speak up for the rights of the transgender community. In doing so, she pushes back against the rules that try to box her in, thereby they widen the space for others to follow. The society often sees home as just a physical structure but her transformation and her advocacy denote home as a place of self-acceptance and pride. Due to her experience, Laxmi states that 'home' is something that lies within one’s self even when society is not accepting of you as a transgender person. Her strength emphasizes the significance of the personal will in overcoming the systems of structural oppression, thus she compels the readers to not only acknowledge their own prejudices but also be accepting of the different identities.

5. CONCLUSION

The depiction of homes of transgender in selected Indian fiction, i.e., Irani’s *The Parcel* and Laxmi’s *Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life*, is, in many ways, a layered look at where identity, architecture and social exclusion all meet. These narratives talk about alienation and displacement of the transgender individuals, but they also advocate for reform, for empathy, for spaces that include rather than exclude. The struggles of Laxmi and Madhu, show how deeply colonial legacies have sunken into present day structures, shaping who gets to belong and where. The contemporary Indian fiction, through transgender characters who endure and resist, emphasizes the agency of the marginalized communities. Recognizing the humanity and resilience of transgender communities within the confines of societal and structural boundaries is not just an observation. It is, in a way, a reminder of the work still needed if inclusive spaces are to exist. By giving space to the voices of people like Madhu and Laxmi, whose very existence is resistance, these stories open a door to understanding the basic right to a safe and affirming home. The transgender individuals reimagine identity and reshape the meaning of their home. These are not only tales of hardship, they are also a kind of blueprint for an inclusive society, one that values every identity and makes space for it. These narratives push the readers to think about practices that could affirm belonging and dignity for the transgender. Henceforth, these novels broaden the way we understand the effect of attitudes on the lives of the transgender and also advocate for empathy, inclusion, and real reform to make the Indian society more inclusive and just.

Acknowledgments

None.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding Source

The authors received No funding to conduct this study.

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