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MALE MIGRATIONS AND THE GATEKEEPERS OF AMERICA: MASCULINITY, VISAS, AND BORDERS IN NAMITA GOKHALE'S *TRAVELLING IN, TRAVELLING OUT*

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Abstract

This study examines the structural shift in travel narratives to the Americas post-9/11, where the Western security state interrogates and destabilizes non-Western masculinities. Using an integrated framework of Hegemonic Masculinity, Foucault's Panopticon, and Pre-Liminal/Liminal/Post-Liminal spaces, the paper analyzes three essays from Namita Gokhale's *Travelling In, Travelling Out*. The central thesis posits that the "American Encounter" for the elite South Asian male is split into the Trauma of Entry and the potential Triumph of Settlement. In the Liminal airport space (Advaita Kala's observations), the brown male body is viewed as an inherent threat, demanding a coercive "performance of harmlessness" to survive the crossing. Conversely, the Post-Liminal space (Mishi Saran's essay) illustrates the Triumph, where settled patriarch Jehangir Tata reclaims agency, confirming the emasculating state apparatus is confined to the temporary, intrusive threshold.

Keywords: Border Imperialism; Hegemonic Masculinity; Surveillance; Liminality.

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Introduction

The geopolitical landscape of the Americas underwent a significant transformation in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, as security concerns began to reshape the meaning and mechanics of cross-border mobility. The global framing of terrorism reconfigured borders from mere territorial markers into dynamic instruments of surveillance and control, fundamentally altering how sovereign states regulate entry and movement. Within this post-9/11 security paradigm, travel to the United States increasingly shifted from a narrative of opportunity, leisure, or intellectual exchange—once associated with the romanticized ideal of the "American Encounter"—to an experience structured by suspicion, procedural rigidity, and intensified bureaucratic scrutiny. As Reece Jones argues, "the framing of the war on terror as a global and interconnected problem has allowed sovereign states to consolidate power and move substantially closer to the territorial ideal of a closed and bounded container of an orderly population by attempting to lock down political borders" (Jones 2009, 295). His observation illuminates how border regimes have tightened not only at physical frontiers but also through administrative and consular practices that project state power beyond national territory. For travelers from the Global South, particularly South Asian subjects, the experience of mobility begins long before arrival at airports such as JFK or San Francisco; it unfolds in consular waiting rooms where the border operates as a portable bureaucratic apparatus. In this expanded security architecture, travel becomes a negotiation with surveillance, suspicion, and compulsory compliance. Shirin Patel further underscores the racialized dimensions of this regime, noting that "South Asians are not simply targeted for exclusion, but also elimination due to their racialization as potential terrorists" (Patel 2023, 162). Together, these perspectives reveal how the post-9/11 security state collapses the spatial distance between home and border, rendering mobility increasingly precarious for racialized travelers.

This externalization of the border creates a unique narrative space where the traveler must perform a specific identity in order to be granted mobility. Within this context, Namita Gokhale's anthology *Travelling In, Travelling Out* (2015) becomes a critical text that interrogates the contemporary conditions of displacement. Gokhale, an author and publisher committed to showcasing literature from across the Indian languages, curates a collection that deliberately moves away from the conventional tropes of travel writing. In her introduction, she observes that there are "few 'voyages of discovery' to be made in our times," and she instead frames the collection around "everyday explorations and encounters" and "cultural mappings." This shift is important because by rejecting the colonial framework of discovery, which traditionally implies authority and conquest, Gokhale redirects the travel narrative toward the tensions and complications that shape movement in an age of enforced cosmopolitanism. Madhukar notes that Gokhale's project can be read in this light, since "Gokhale's anthology offers a

critical lens on the frictions and negotiations of travel rather than triumphant arrivals" (Madhukar 2014). Through this reframing, the anthology foregrounds travel as a practice shaped by scrutiny, vulnerability, and unequal mobility rather than a celebration of unresisted passage.

The anthology shows that for many non-Western travelers, the primary encounter with the Americas is not cultural but administrative. The essays demonstrate how the security state embeds itself in the psyche of the prospective traveler long before they step onto a plane. Aveek Sen's description of the US visa office in Calcutta as a "schizophrenic street that can't decide whether it is in Calcutta or Washington" places the American border inside the Indian metropolis and creates a liminal zone in which the applicant is gradually stripped of agency. Advaita Kala's account of a security pat-down at JFK Airport further exposes the physical dimension of this new travel regime. Her image of standing in a "plexi-glass fortified cabin placed for maximum humiliation" reframes the airport as a space of containment and bodily vulnerability rather than a threshold of arrival. Blalock, Kadiyali, and Simon help clarify the significance of these experiences by arguing that "the travel checkpoint becomes a space of containment, negotiation, and potential humiliation, reshaping the journey into a performance of compliance" (Blalock, Kadiyali, and Simon 2007, 740). Together, these narratives reveal how the journey is redefined through administrative scrutiny and enforced submission rather than intercultural encounter.

Through these selections, Gokhale shifts the generic expectations of travel literature from a discourse of leisure to one of survival. The "Unexpected Journeys" promised in the subtitle function not as moments of serendipity but as unsettling encounters with state power. The collection suggests that in the post-9/11 era the traveler does more than move through space; they must endure a bureaucratic gauntlet specifically designed to restrict or immobilize them. As a result, the narrative arc of the South Asian male traveler becomes a test of identity in which he is compelled to navigate the "high-voltage suspicions of the state machinery." By foregrounding these experiences, Gokhale's anthology captures a distinctive geopolitical anxiety that shapes contemporary mobility and reveals that movement in the modern global order is not an inherent right but a tightly regulated privilege controlled by Western gatekeepers. Torpey's observation, cited in the work of Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles, clarifies this dynamic by noting that the goal of state sovereign power lies in establishing a "monopoly over legitimate means of movement" (Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles 2014, 11). This insight helps illuminate why the anthology treats travel not as effortless passage but as a continuous negotiation with institutional authority.

The Research Problem

Wallerius's description of "masculinity as a performance that depends on constant monitoring and policing" (Wallerius 2019, 138) provides an important conceptual frame for understanding a critical gap in scholarship on Namita

Gokhale. For decades, critics have read her work almost exclusively through a feminist lens, focusing on novels such as *Paro: Dreams of Passion* and *The Habit of Love* to examine her interrogation of gender and patriarchy within elite Indian contexts. This emphasis on Gokhale as a chronicler of female interiority and liberation, though essential, has inadvertently obscured her equally significant role as an anthologist and cultural curator. Her edited volume *Travelling In, Travelling Out: A Book of Unexpected Journeys* shifts her engagement from domestic concerns about gender to larger geopolitical anxieties surrounding the movement of South Asian subjects across Western borders. Within this framework, the travel narrative of the male subject from the Global South emerges not as a story of leisure or naturalized empowerment but as a compelled performance of obedience under the surveillance of the Western security apparatus. Yoon and Udor help clarify this condition by arguing that "the ideology of hegemonic masculinity is intrinsically based on racist normative ideals of the white, upper-class, heterosexual man" (Yoon and Udor 2024). Their insight underscores why South Asian men, when entering Western border regimes, must continually negotiate a racialized and politicized masculinity that is shaped not by agency but by containment and suspicion.

This study identifies a neglected intersection between Border Studies and Masculinity Studies within Gokhale's curated non-fiction. Although the "American Encounter" in postcolonial literature is often celebrated as the pinnacle of immigration and the moment of successful arrival and opportunity, this paper reinterprets it as a site marked by emasculation, surveillance, and bureaucratic violence. The research problem therefore centers on how American border imperialism, enacted both in overseas consulates and at points of arrival within the United States, interrogates and destabilizes traditional non-Western masculinities. This process compels the male traveler to temporarily relinquish his patriarchal or professional identity in exchange for the possibility of movement. The dynamics of border externalization further illuminate this shift, as states extend control beyond their physical territories through pre-emptive strategies that operate "extra-territorially and/or through sub-contracting to actors and agencies other than their own" (Moreno-Lax and Lemberg-Pedersen 2019, 10). These mechanisms reshape mobility into an experience of managed vulnerability that redefines the very terms of masculine agency.

This paper's central thesis argues that the "American Encounter" operates as a gatekeeping mechanism that divides the experience of South Asian masculinity into two distinct stages. At the bureaucratic gate, whether in the visa office or the airport security line, America functions as a site of scrutiny and emasculation, reducing the complexity of male identity to a set of compliant and non-threatening indicators. Once this barrier is crossed, however, the terrain shifts and America becomes a conditional arena of masculine recovery in which pre-existing patriarchy, often reinforced by diasporic economic achievement, is revalidated and strengthened. The border regime plays a crucial role in this transition because it mandates an intensified form of identification in which

biometrically authenticated and profiled bodies are sorted and categorized as "either known or unknown, legal or illegal, wanted or unwanted, low or high security risk" (Van der Ploeg 2012, 177). This classification system structures the very possibilities of masculine agency within the global mobility landscape.

This paper illustrates this dialectic through a close reading of three selected texts from *Travelling In, Travelling Out*. The first example is Aveek Sen's "Lost Without a Trace," which examines the visa photo booth as a "reductive machine" and traces the physical and emotional sense of somatic rejection experienced by the male subject as he is stripped of individuality and pressed into a "blank" identity. The second text, Advaita Kala's "Fear of Flying," exposes the institutional construction of the South Asian male body as an inherent post-9/11 threat at JFK Airport, which in turn demands a careful and suppressive performance of harmlessness. The third narrative, Mishi Saran's "A House for Mr. Tata," offers a counter-movement through the figure of Jehangir Tata in San Francisco, who embodies the settled patriarch capable of questioning history and reclaiming the agency that the visa applicant has previously lost. Read together, these texts chart a geopolitical trajectory in which the crisis of male agency intensifies as the traveler approaches the American border apparatus. Walia's theorization helps clarify this dynamic by arguing that although borders are often imagined as territorial lines, the study of border imperialism must attend to the "modes and networks of governance that determine how bodies will be included within the nation-state, and how territory will be controlled within and in conjunction with the dictates of global empire and transnational capitalism" (Walia 2013, 12). This framework illuminates how each narrative reveals the border as an active mechanism that shapes, disciplines, and redistributes masculine agency.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The methodology for this study is a qualitative, comparative literary analysis grounded in a postcolonial theoretical framework. This study reads three non-fiction essays from Namita Gokhale's *Travelling In, Travelling Out*—Aveek Sen's "Lost Without a Trace," Advaita Kala's "Fear of Flying," and Mishi Saran's "A House for Mr. Tata"—as a single staged encounter with American power: preparation, threshold, and settlement. The three were chosen not as a representative sample of the anthology but because, read in sequence, they trace one journey through its stages, each essay supplying the next. Gokhale's own framing of the collection invites this kind of reading: her introduction sets the essays against the colonial "voyage of discovery," proposing instead "everyday explorations and encounters" whose interest lies less in place than in the political conditions of movement itself. Reeser's observation is instructive here: literariness, he notes, "may also transform such conceptions in ways that only take place within the fictional text" (Reeser 2015, 13). This perspective highlights how literary form itself shapes the representation of mobility, surveillance, and identity.

Theoretical Framework: Masculinity, Hegemony, and Surveillance

Masculinity studies require deeper engagement with related fields such as critical race and queer studies, which offer vital insights into how "identities are rendered, controlled, and subordinated by administrative and carceral systems of surveillance" (Skinner-Thompson 2022, 295). Reading Gokhale's anthology through both Masculinity Studies and Border and Surveillance Studies together makes the stakes of her curation legible. Central to this reading is Raewyn Connell's theory of Hegemonic Masculinity: the culturally dominant form of male identity, which legitimates and sustains the broader patriarchal order. In the geopolitical frame this article proposes, the Western border state embodied in the United States and its security apparatus occupies that hegemonic position. It constructs and enforces an "acceptable" global masculinity: white, affluent, non-Muslim, unthreatening to state security interests.

The South Asian traveler, often identified by his "brown" body and non-Western cultural origin, is institutionally positioned as an example of Marginalized Masculinity. This subordination operates not only socially but also systemically and transactionally, as the traveler's passage depends on his performance of non-agency and harmlessness. Encounters with visa officers or TSA agents become direct confrontations between the hegemonic masculinity of the Western state and the marginalized masculinity of the non-Western applicant. In these interactions, the traveler is compelled to temporarily relinquish his professional status, personal history, and self-assertiveness to satisfy the expectations of the state, a concession that constitutes a symbolic form of emasculation. Neiman and Swagel highlight the material dimension of this experience, noting that travelers are subjected to "screening and other burdensome informal barriers that contribute to the 'hassle factor' of travel" (Neiman and Swagel 2007, 5).

Pervasive surveillance becomes a significant instrument of control in regulating the behaviour and self-perception of the South Asian male subject. This dynamic can be effectively examined through Michel Foucault's concept of the Panopticon, a structural model of institutional control in which the possibility of constant observation encourages subjects to monitor and discipline themselves. In spaces such as visa offices and airport security checkpoints, the physical arrangement, the persistent presence of surveillance cameras, and the authoritative gaze of the bureaucratic officer collectively produce a similar effect. Under this institutional gaze, the South Asian male becomes increasingly conscious of how his body, behaviour, and identity are being assessed, prompting him to regulate his conduct accordingly. Such self-regulation extends to emotional expression, particularly where culturally prescribed expectations of masculinity are concerned, as Jansz observes that "[a] man does not share his pain, does not grieve openly and avoids strong, dependent and warm feelings" (Jansz 2000, 168). The anxiety experienced by Aveek Sen, for instance, may be understood not merely as a response to an individual officer but as a somatic manifestation of the broader institutional scrutiny directed towards his body and

documentation. The uncertainty produced by this surveillance compels the male subject to perform harmlessness by carefully regulating his gestures, expressions, speech, and clothing. Such continuous self-monitoring consequently constrains conventional forms of assertive masculinity, requiring the subject to modify his masculine performance in response to the disciplinary gaze of the state.

The combined application of Connell and Foucault illuminates the central conflict in the anthology. Connell clarifies the power structure, highlighting the tension between the Hegemonic State and the Marginalized Subject, while Foucault explains the mechanisms of control through surveillance and self-discipline. Applying these frameworks to the narratives of Sen, Kala, and Saran allows this study to move beyond basic literary interpretation, treating Gokhale's anthology as a detailed map of contemporary geopolitical power dynamics. It demonstrates how the Western border functions as an instrument for the interrogation and restructuring of non-Western male identity, shaping the performance and perception of masculinity. Brod and Kaufman (1994) underscore this connection by noting that "the hegemonic definition of manhood is a man in power, a man with power and a man of power" (125), which highlights the stakes involved when non-Western men are confronted with a border regime that challenges their authority, autonomy, and social positioning.

Analytical Approach

The selection of Namita Gokhale's *Travelling In, Travelling Out* as the primary source is justified by its distinctive composition and its effective realization of the anthology's central concept. Unlike conventional travelogues, which typically feature a single authoritative voice and emphasize geographical discovery, this collection brings together diverse non-fiction voices that redefine travel as a series of "unexpected journeys," encompassing physical, emotional, and bureaucratic dimensions. Gokhale's thoughtful selection of deeply personal and politically engaged essays moves this study beyond a purely aesthetic appreciation of place, opening a window into the political economy of mobility. The essays chosen, "Lost Without a Trace" by Aveek Sen, "Fear of Flying" by Advaita Kala, and "A House for Mr. Tata" by Mishi Saran, were selected because they chart distinct phases of the journey and provide a controlled sample that directly engages with the research variables of male embodiment, agency, and interaction with the American state.

The analysis in this study conceptualizes the traveler's experience through three distinct geopolitical and psychological zones, drawing on the work of anthropologist Victor Turner: the Pre-Liminal Space, the Liminal Space, and the Post-Liminal Space. These zones serve as the framework for comparative textual analysis. The Pre-Liminal Space encompasses the preparatory processes in the traveler's home country, exemplified by Sen's essay, which focuses on the Calcutta visa office and the photographic booth, a stage marked by submission and bureaucratic anticipation. Van Gennep's observation that life transitions consist

of three phases, "preliminal" rites of separation, "liminal" rites of transition, and "postliminal" rites of incorporation, provides a conceptual lens for understanding these zones (Van Gennep 1960, 11). The Liminal Space represents the moment of border crossing, the point of greatest surveillance and power imbalance, illustrated in Kala's description of JFK Airport security, where the traveler exists in a state of regulatory suspension, neither fully 'in' nor fully 'out'. Finally, the Post-Liminal Space signifies the moment of successful arrival and settlement in the diaspora, as seen in Saran's essay in San Francisco, where the traveler works to reintegrate and re-establish his status and agency.

Foucault's concept of disciplinary power demonstrates how surveillance becomes most effective when individuals are rendered constantly visible, creating conditions in which they regulate their own behaviour. As Foucault explains, the Panopticon produces a state of "conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault 1998, 465). This framework provides a useful basis for examining the power relations operating within the three liminal spaces considered in this study. Through thematic coding, three recurring motifs are identified to trace the mechanisms through which surveillance, emasculation, and institutional control shape the South Asian male subject. The first motif, The Gaze, focuses on the dynamics of observation and asks who is authorized to look and who is positioned as the object of scrutiny. At the border, the gaze of the Western official operates as an instrument of institutional authority, while the South Asian traveler's attempt to return that gaze may be constrained or interpreted as an act of resistance. The second motif, Silence and Speechlessness, examines the gradual erosion of the male traveler's voice within bureaucratic encounters. The applicant's individual history and complex narrative are reduced to the limited information contained in official documents, while interrogation can further restrict his ability to explain or assert himself. This loss of voice signifies a corresponding loss of agency and becomes particularly significant in relation to the crisis of masculinity. The third motif, The Body and Physicality, considers how the non-Western male body is perceived, examined, and regulated within security and immigration structures. It encompasses representations of physical discomfort, frisking, the enforced neutrality of the visa photograph, and the institutional construction of the brown male body as a potential threat. Tracing these three motifs across the different stages of the liminal encounter enables the study to examine how power shifts and operates as the South Asian male subject moves through the various stages of his encounter with American institutional authority.

Textual Analysis

The Bureaucratic Erasure of the Self

The first analytical finding focuses on Aveek Sen's "Lost Without a Trace," an essay that captures the Pre-Liminal Space of the journey, encompassing the bureaucratic preparation and psychological confrontation that occurs long before the traveler physically reaches American soil. The encounter is situated at the US visa office in Calcutta, which Sen renders not merely as a consulate but as a "schizophrenic street," where the everyday reality of Calcutta is momentarily confused and overlaid with the distant, disembodied authority of Washington. This spatial confusion highlights a critical political insight: the American border is not a single, distant line but a mobile and pervasive force that extends its power into the sovereign territory of other nations, transforming local streets into zones of compulsory compliance. The anxiety experienced by Sen's subject, described as "the existential state of an actor feeling an uncomfortable disconnect with the self and disorientation from the world" (Poonkham 2023, 76), underscores how this bureaucratic and spatial dislocation directly affects the traveler's sense of self. The psychological confrontation and disorientation thus reveal the deep reach of American border power, making even preparatory stages of travel a site of control and emasculation.

The visa photo booth emerges as a central site of conflict and a significant point of emasculation, where individual identity is subjected to the standardizing demands of bureaucratic procedure. The official requirements governing the photograph, including its prescribed dimensions, uniform white background, and, most significantly, the requirement of a "blank" facial expression transform the act of being photographed into an exercise in bureaucratic regulation. Rather than merely documenting the applicant's physical appearance, the procedure separates him from the personal, professional, and emotional dimensions that constitute his identity. The blank face therefore operates beyond the level of aesthetic convention; it demands the suppression of individuality and expression, requiring the subject to appear neutral and devoid of characteristics that might signify assertiveness, autonomy, or intellectual agency. Sen captures the sense of personal displacement produced by this encounter through his feeling of having "left my face behind at home," suggesting that the pursuit of mobility requires a temporary surrender of the self to institutional expectations. This depersonalization resonates with Jenkins' observation that "categorization may be on its way to achieving dominance in identification" (Jenkins 2012, 165), illustrating how bureaucratic systems transform complex individual identities into standardized and legible forms of data. Consequently, the traveler, despite occupying a position associated with education and social privilege in his home country, becomes reduced within the foreign bureaucratic system to an anonymous visual representation whose identity is defined primarily through institutional categories rather than personal selfhood.

This depersonalization provokes a profound somatic rejection in the narrator, manifesting as both physical and emotional discomfort. Sen describes his reaction as feeling "resentful and queasy," a combination of intellectual indignation and visceral sickness. This is not mere impatience; it is the body itself reacting to the

loss of control and the imposition of a subordinate status. The queasiness signifies the stomach, the center of emotional and physical selfhood, recoiling from the forced submission, while the resentment signals the intellectual realization that his established masculine agency is being systematically dismantled by an anonymous, dehumanizing machine. The experience illustrates the connection between control, domination, and masculinity, as Mayordomo Marín observes that "the fact that control and domination are the most salient feature of manliness allows for a philosophical redefinition of masculinity in terms of self-domination, measure and strength of will" (Mayordomo Marín 2006, 7). Drawing on Foucault, the photo booth functions as a miniature, personal Panopticon, where the subject must discipline his own face, policing his emotions to meet the standard of non-threatening neutrality demanded by the unblinking photographic eye.

Sen's narrative ultimately presents the American visa office as a "reductive machine" that transforms complex human experiences and identities into standardized biometric information. Within this bureaucratic framework, the male traveler is repositioned from an individual subject to an object of administrative classification, becoming a data point that must conform to the state's prescribed requirements in order to obtain the conditional privilege of mobility. The anxiety associated with the "American Encounter" therefore begins before the actual crossing of a geographical boundary. It emerges within the pre-liminal space of the visa office, where bureaucratic procedures initiate a process of depersonalization that prepares the traveler for the intensified surveillance and assessment awaiting him at the physical border. The removal of the face consequently becomes more than a procedural requirement; it symbolically diminishes the authority of the speaking subject by separating personal identity from its institutional representation. This dynamic can also be considered in relation to Vito's observation that "common characteristics of hegemonic masculinity include emotional detachment and unavailability, competitiveness, aggression, the sexual objectification of and violence toward women" (Vito 2025, 4). While the visa procedure does not necessarily eliminate these characteristics directly, its demand for neutrality and controlled self-presentation restricts the forms through which masculine identity can be expressed, compelling the South Asian male traveler to suppress visible signs of individuality, assertiveness, and emotional expression within the bureaucratic encounter.

The Male Body as Threat

Angelides' discussion of multiple masculinities provides a framework for understanding the dynamics at the post-9/11 US border: "Connell's focus on gender relations is also lauded, first, through her conceptualization of 'emphasized femininity', which attends to performances of femininity that complement, accommodate, and/or comply with hegemonic masculinity, and second, the identification of multiple masculinities (hegemonic, complicit, subordinate, marginalized, and protest) that form a hierarchy" (Angelides 2019, 45). Advaita

Kala's "Fear of Flying" shifts the focus from the internal, bureaucratic confrontation in Calcutta to the external, physical confrontation at the Liminal Space of the US border, specifically JFK Airport. Although the narrator is female, the essay centers on her observation of the profiling and targeting of South Asian males. The border acts as a filter that instantly classifies bodies based on racial and ethnic criteria. Kala notes the visibility of "South Asian males" with backpacks, who are systematically pulled aside, their status as travelers immediately superseded by their institutional designation as potential threats. This dynamic demonstrates how the brown male body can be constructed within the security apparatus as a potential site of danger, placing South Asian masculinity under the regulatory authority of the state and positioning South Asian male travelers within the hierarchy of marginalized and subordinate masculinities identified by Angelides.

The most intrusive and symbolic mechanism of this control is the "pat-down," a physical, invasive procedure that fundamentally violates the bodily integrity and personal sovereignty of the male traveler. Kala's narrative emphasizes the humiliation inherent in this process. While the narrator attempts to dilute the experience with dark humor, noting the possibility of a "cavity search" just around the corner, the underlying seriousness of the violation remains palpable. For the male subject, whose traditional status often rests on notions of personal space, physical strength, and self-possession, the pat-down is a public and mandatory act of physical emasculation. This aligns with Schwenger's insight that "masculinity is not something given to you, something you're born with, but something you gain" (Schwenger 1984, 17), highlighting how the ritualized control of the body transforms masculine identity into a performance that must be earned under surveillance. It is a moment where the state asserts total ownership over the body, reducing the individual to a biological mass that must be confirmed as non-explosive and harmless. This intimate, forced touch is a powerful demonstration of state authority, showing that no aspect of the traveler's body is immune from suspicion or control.

The experience at the Liminal Space operates under a legal and psychological principle of presumed guilt. The South Asian male traveler is implicitly guilty upon presentation at the checkpoint; his entire transaction with the state apparatus is dedicated to establishing his innocence and safety, rather than having his identity validated. This forces the traveler into a state of performative harmlessness. His movements, gaze, and speech are carefully regulated, drawing on the Panopticon effect, as any assertive or hurried behavior could be misread as suspicious. This necessary self-regulation represents the voluntary dissolution of masculine agency required to survive the crossing. This dynamic contrasts sharply with traditional socialization, in which men are expected to be "in control of women, society, and nature" (Bozok 2021), highlighting the profound emasculation imposed by the border regime.

Kala's essay thus reveals how the border performs its power through the physical inscription of suspicion onto racialized bodies. It demonstrates the stark difference between the Western narrative of the airport as a gateway to opportunity

and the marginalized male narrative of the airport as a ritual site of subjugation. The surveillance mechanisms, from the biometric data collection in the pre-liminal phase to the physical pat-down in the liminal phase, work in concert to discipline and subordinate non-Western masculinities, making the border itself the primary antagonist in the narrative transit. This masculine crisis is rooted in the forced choice between asserting one's dignity and securing mobility, a tension reflected in Jensen's observation that "men in the sample express admiration for the bodies of other men by highlighting the willpower necessary to achieve their physiques" (Jensen 2023, 409). This observation underscores the centrality of bodily control and the performance of discipline in constructions of masculinity, even under conditions of coercion.

The Redemption of the Patriarch

Mishi Saran's "A House for Mr. Tata" delivers the crucial counter-narrative to the crisis of masculinity articulated by Sen and Kala, operating within the Post-Liminal Space of the diaspora. This essay shifts the geopolitical landscape from the anxious queue of the visa office or the humiliating checkpoint of the airport to the interior comfort of a settled home in San Francisco. The essay's subject, Jehangir Tata, is presented in a posture of reclaimed authority: he is "sitting straight" on his sofa, an image of quiet confidence and physical comfort that starkly contrasts with the anxious, scrutinized, and physically violated bodies in the previous two texts. This simple act of sitting straight signifies the restoration of dignity and personal sovereignty. Bozok notes that "gender roles in society position men as primary breadwinners, protectors of the family, and de facto leaders of the culture" (Bozok 2021); this shows how Tata's regained authority aligns with traditional masculine expectations, reasserting control, agency, and social recognition. Having successfully negotiated the border apparatus, the "Nightmare of Entry," Tata has earned the privilege of self-possession and domestic authority within the American context.

This analysis is defined by a necessary contrast with the preceding narratives of border trauma. Where Sen's traveler experienced bureaucratic erasure and somatic sickness in Calcutta, and Kala's observed subjects faced physical intrusion and presumed guilt at JFK, Tata represents the successful culmination of the transit: the restoration of the male subject to an agentic role. The anxiety of the Pre-Liminal and Liminal spaces dissolves into the tranquility of the Post-Liminal space, confirming the thesis that the American Encounter is a bifurcated experience. The emasculating state apparatus is confined to the threshold; once crossed, the rules of engagement change, allowing for the reassertion of a traditional, successful masculinity. This regained authority aligns with the idea of the "redefinition of masculinity in terms of self-domination, measure and strength of will" (Mayordomo Marín 7), emphasizing how the male subject recovers agency and control over his body and social position.

The geography of Tata's life in the Richmond District of San Francisco further solidifies this redemption. He has not dissolved into a generalized American melting pot; instead, he has successfully recreated his home and community, establishing a localized cultural enclave where his identity is validated rather than questioned. The home acts as a sanctuary, a private sphere where the state's pervasive gaze is finally blocked. The successful construction of this domicile is a classic masculine assertion of control over space. This physical and cultural rooting is essential to the stabilization of his status. The diaspora, in this context, is not merely a place of relocation, but a place of re-territorialization, where the masculine role of patriarch and keeper of history is actively rebuilt. Poorhosseinzadeh, Özbilgin, and Strachan note that "men declared their achievement of senior positions was a result of their hard work and acceptance of responsibilities; they had achieved their positions on their own merits" (Poorhosseinzadeh, Özbilgin, and Strachan 2024, 11). Their discussion of masculine achievement helps illuminate how Tata's regained authority and control signify the reassertion of hegemonic masculinity through individual effort and the accumulation of resources. Equipped with both financial and cultural capital, he is able to recreate the comfort and security that remained inaccessible to him during his journey. His experience thus reflects the re-establishment of hegemonic masculinity within a diasporic context, enabled by the very economic opportunities that the border had previously denied him.

The most potent mechanism of this redemption is the reclamation of Lineage and the confrontation with a fragmented past. Tata's family history was fractured by the geopolitical forces of the mid-20th century, specifically the political changes in Shanghai where his family's roots and initial success were violently erased. His journey to San Francisco, therefore, is not a simple immigration; it is a pilgrimage to mend a broken historical thread. By establishing himself in America, he succeeds in creating a space where he can demand answers from history, a capacity entirely denied to the speechless visa applicant. He regains his voice and his narrative control, transforming from a passive subject of state procedure into an active agent who can pass on a consolidated identity to future generations. As McGinley notes, masculinity is "varied and fluid depending on time, place, location, circumstances" (McGinley 318), which underscores how Tata's success lies in his ability to negotiate the change in context and successfully re-territorialize his identity in the diaspora, anchoring his existence in the stable institutions of work, family, and marriage. The house in San Francisco becomes the physical manifestation of a successful, enduring patriarchy, a safe harbor for the family's wealth and historical continuity that was impossible in the unstable geopolitical zones of the Old World.

Saran's essay demonstrates that the narrative transit for the elite South Asian male operates as a rite of passage. The public humiliation and forced submission at the border function as a temporary but mandatory sacrifice. The narrative of "A House for Mr. Tata" implies a direct exchange: the surrender of agency at the gate is compensated by the restoration of power in the settlement. The diasporic success is framed as the ultimate validation for enduring the systematic

emasculation of the state's security apparatus. The anxieties and somatic sickness described by Sen, and the physical threat observed by Kala, are erased by the quiet, comfortable authority of Tata sitting straight in his own home. This space is a carefully curated environment where his past is cherished, his wealth is secure, and his lineage is protected. Smitha observes that the female characters of Gokhale are "stronger and courageous than her male characters" (Smitha 2021, 5); this underscores how Tata's restoration of power also exists in contrast to the agency and strength of women depicted in the same narratives.

A closer examination of the "American Dream" in Gokhale's anthology reveals its particular significance for the male subject. It is not a dream of freedom or equality, but one of conditional security and patrimonial continuity. The dream is only fully realized after surviving the deliberate act of depersonalization mandated by the American state. The study concludes that Gokhale's curation, through this final, redemptive narrative, offers a complex statement on global mobility: the ultimate prize of agency and stability is guarded by a temporary but highly intrusive ritual of submission, making the trauma of entry the necessary precursor to the triumph of settlement. The patriarchal self is lost at the border but ultimately found and solidified in the safety of the diaspora.

Discussion

Comparative Analysis

The findings synthesized from Aveek Sen's, Advaita Kala's, and Mishi Saran's essays collectively define what this study terms the "Shadow Geography" of the United States. America here is not a landmass or a set of cities but an omnipresent political force field that projects its power well beyond its cartographic borders, beginning at the visa office in Calcutta, sustained through the international airport's liminal space, and dissipating only once the subject is settled in the diaspora. This Shadow Geography is invisible to Western citizens and hyper-visible to the non-Western traveler: a landscape of paperwork, queues, mandatory non-expression, and systemic suspicion. For the South Asian male, the American Encounter is primarily an engagement with this security-driven force field, not with the country's culture or its stated ideology of freedom. Within this environment, the surveillance and control mechanisms require the individual to move from asserting masculinity in the "act of destruction or as it erupts from quietude" to adhering to the "prefacing quietude itself" (Angelides 43). This shift reveals how constant observation constrains masculine expression, transforming male identity from an ostensibly autonomous performance into one shaped by discipline, surveillance, and the anticipation of institutional scrutiny.

This unique focus distinguishes Gokhale's anthology from the established canon of traditional immigrant novels, such as the work of Jhumpa Lahiri. Novels

in the assimilation genre typically begin after the border has been crossed. Their primary narrative concern is the internal and external negotiation of cultural assimilation—the conflict between the inherited traditions of the Old World and the adopted lifestyle of the New World, often centering on generational friction or domestic identity crises. The border, in these texts, is a backdrop, a faded memory of a past trauma. In contrast, *Travelling In, Travelling Out* is a study of the process of entry itself. The three selected essays dedicate their narrative energy to the state-mandated moments of pre-liminal anxiety and liminal subjugation. Gokhale, through her curation, deliberately shifts scholarly attention from the consequences of arrival to the political violence of the threshold. As Smitha observes, "femininity is not an exclusive version of man's dream; a woman needs to be defined as a woman" (Smitha 4), a principle that underlies Gokhale's narrative distinction as she moves the focus from cultural assimilation, which often forces compliance with an established male-defined structure, to a raw confrontation with power.

Furthermore, this analysis of Gokhale's curated non-fiction illuminates a distinct political dimension that is often absent from her own literary fiction. In novels like *The Blind Matriarch*, Gokhale frequently explores the theme of immobility and a profound sense of being "stuck" or constrained by the rigid social and patriarchal structures within India. The male characters in these fictional narratives often grapple with inertia, economic stagnation, or a stifling domestic environment. Their crises of masculinity are characterized by their inability to move or effect change within their own restrictive societal bounds. This reflects what Subashini identifies as the "failure of human relationships and lack of emotional stability" (Subashini 2020, 45), suggesting that masculine vulnerability can also arise from fractured interpersonal relationships and emotional instability. Unlike the geopolitical constraints explored in Gokhale's non-fiction, these characters experience a more intimate form of emasculation, produced through personal limitations, social expectations, and the inability to establish stable and fulfilling relationships.

The non-fiction essays in the anthology, however, invert this dynamic. The masculinity in *Travelling In, Travelling Out* is not crippled by immobility but by the excessive mobility that is permitted only through ritualized emasculation. The crisis shifts from being unable to move, as seen in the fictional, domestic narratives, to being forced to submit in order to move, reflecting a non-fictional, geopolitical crisis. The ability to travel is revealed not as a free act of agency, but as a high-stakes performance of compliance under the scrutiny of the Western state. While both sets of work deal with male frustration, the anthology politicizes that frustration, placing its root cause not in the failures of Indian society, but in the global imbalance of power enforced by the border. The essays argue that the male traveler must first lose his individual self at the border, as experienced by Sen's narrator, before he can attempt to regain a patriarchal self in the diaspora, a redemption contingent entirely upon surviving the geopolitical screening process. This experience aligns with Chhikara's understanding of masculinity as a

site of "resistance to enslavement, empowerment, emancipation, self-realization, self-identity, career and autonomy" (Chhikara 2023, 140), thereby foregrounding the tension between masculine agency and structures of domination in Gokhale's narratives, where Gokhale's dual role as a feminist novelist who critiques Indian patriarchy and as a curator who exposes its fragility when confronted by Western hegemony.

Implications and Limitations

The study's analysis of the crisis of masculinity in *Travelling In, Travelling Out* carries significant gender and geopolitical implications that extend far beyond the anthology itself. From a gender perspective, the texts shatter the perception of international travel as a uniform, gender-neutral leisure activity. For the Global South male, the journey is exposed as a high-stakes political performance. The findings show that while the female traveler may experience gendered inconveniences, the brown male is institutionally subjected to a mechanism that targets his body as a potential instrument of aggression. His performance must be one of total compliance and deliberate non-aggression, demanding the temporary suppression of traditional masculine traits like assertiveness or even impatience. The act of travel is thus revealed as a process of continuous, mandatory self-monitoring, where a failure to perform harmlessness can lead to physical search, detention, or the refusal of entry, a consequence that impacts his professional and social standing upon returning home, even if the trip is successful.

Crucially, the study must acknowledge the significant limitations inherent in the chosen data set. The narrators and subjects analyzed—Aveek Sen, Advaita Kala, and Jehangir Tata—represent an elite class of English-speaking Indians. They are affluent, highly educated, and possess the necessary social and economic capital to travel, apply for visas, and write about their experiences for an international audience. This inherent class privilege grants them significant advantages: they have access to sophisticated legal and social resources, and they are traveling with valid documentation for purposes typically categorized as business, tourism, or advanced education.

Despite this privilege, the findings demonstrate that even these elite subjects are not immune to the post-9/11 racial profiling that constructs their brown masculinity as inherently suspect. Kala's observations show that the color of the skin and the perceived ethno-national origin are sufficient variables to trigger suspicion, even when economic status is secure. However, the study recognizes that this experience is vastly different from that of a working-class migrant or an asylum seeker, whose lack of legal documentation, language barriers, and limited resources would subject them to dramatically more severe, protracted, and often invisible forms of bureaucratic and physical violence. The emasculation experienced by Sen is primarily psychological and symbolic; for the undocumented or working-class traveler, it is material and potentially devastating. Future research, as suggested by the framework, should compare these narratives

with vernacular travelogues or accounts from lower socioeconomic classes to fully chart the spectrum of geopolitical subjugation experienced by South Asian travelers. The current findings, therefore, stand as an analysis of the elite traveler's crisis, demonstrating that privileged status does not necessarily shield the male subject from emasculation at the border.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that Namita Gokhale's curated anthology, *Travelling In, Travelling Out*, offers a critical counter-narrative to the romanticized ideals of global mobility and the American Encounter. The central argument is validated by the clear bifurcation of the male traveler's experience: the journey is structured by a necessary Trauma of Entry followed by the potential, conditional Triumph of Settlement. The texts by Sen and Kala reveal the trauma, documenting the psychological and physical emasculation that occurs in the Pre-Liminal and Liminal spaces, the visa photo booth and the airport security line, respectively. Here, the state acts as a reductive machine, stripping the non-Western male subject of his personal history and bodily sovereignty, forcing him to comply with the hegemonic standard of non-threatening, marginalized masculinity. The frameworks used to analyze these experiences encompass multiple dimensions, including "psychological characteristics, gendered experiences, gender identity, power analysis, and institutional practices" (Eichler 1980, 102), which collectively illuminate how masculinity is continuously shaped and regulated by the geopolitical encounter. Conversely, the narrative of Mishi Saran provides the triumph, illustrating that agency and patriarchal authority are restored only in the secure, private sphere of the Post-Liminal Space in the diaspora, exemplified by the settled and confident posture of Jehangir Tata. The gatekeepers of America, including visa officers, biometric systems, and TSA agents, are thus defined as the primary antagonists of the modern travel narrative, shaping the traveler's identity through suspicion rather than validation.

This analysis reframes Namita Gokhale's significance, positioning her not merely as a novelist of feminist themes, but as a perceptive curator of geopolitical anxieties. By placing these diverse non-fiction accounts side-by-side, Gokhale successfully maps a "Shadow Geography" of the American security state. This map exposes the fiction of the "Global Village," demonstrating that the world of modern mobility is, in reality, a landscape riddled with invisible walls, high-tech gates, and systematic racial and class discrimination. As Lynne Segal observes, "The closer we come to uncovering some of exemplary masculinity, a masculinity which is solid and sure of itself, the clearer it becomes that masculinity is structured through contradiction: the more it asserts itself, the more it calls itself in question" (Segal 1990, 123), a principle that is evident in the tension faced by the elite South Asian male traveler negotiating the American Encounter. Gokhale's selection

forces the reader to confront the political labor required for such a traveler to gain access to the privilege of Western space. The apparently seamless journeys often represented in Western media can conceal the vulnerability, compliance, and forms of submission demanded of non-Western travelers. Her intervention forces the critical discussion of travel writing out of the purely aesthetic and into the political, emphasizing the profound power imbalances that govern movement across the North-South divide.

In reflection, this paper establishes that the "Encounter with the Americas" for the South Asian male is fundamentally an encounter with the security state, rather than primarily with the culture or the land. In Gokhale's texts, America functions as a rigorous test of identity and compliance. The narrative transit is therefore less about moving across space and more about surviving the regulatory spaces in between: the queue, the visa photo booth, and the airport checkpoint. The promise of the American Dream, as Saran's essay confirms, is fiercely guarded by a Nightmare of Entry. To succeed, the male traveler must symbolically lose himself at the border, surrendering his voice and assertive masculinity to the surveillance apparatus, only to emerge re-validated and re-empowered in the secure economic and domestic sanctuary of the diaspora.

This study contributes to the field by introducing a "South Asian Masculinity" perspective to Inter-American Studies and by offering a functional framework for analyzing "Bureaucratic Travel Writing." Given the limitations of the current study, particularly its reliance on narratives from the English-speaking elite, future research is necessary to fully map the spectrum of geopolitical subjugation. We specifically suggest examining vernacular travelogues in languages such as Hindi, Marathi, or Bengali. Such research would likely reveal how the "American Anxiety" is negotiated across different class lines, how limited English proficiency or lack of wealth intensifies the trauma of entry, and whether the potential for diasporic redemption is accessible to working-class or undocumented migrants. This comparative approach promises to deepen the understanding of Gokhale's anthology as a vital political document, marking the intersection of privilege, race, and mobility in the post-9/11 world.

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