

INTRODUCTION

The necessity and desire for home is a universal one and an ideal home plays an important role in the development of the human psyche, especially that of the child. In literature too, the quest for home has been interrogated time and again to arrive at conclusive definitions of what constitutes home. In a once colonized nation like India, home forms a fertile area of investigation in the light of large scale migration and transnational existence. Indian English fiction has probed the concept of home from various perspectives especially in the context of diasporic notions of home and belonging. In children's literature, the subject of home is a veritable ground to base the narrative where the child finds security, love and care in the process of its becoming an adult. It is also the place where the child starts and ends its journey, returning with the knowledge that home is the best place in the world. But how do adult constructions of home in literature differ from that in children's literature? Virginia L. Wolf in "From the Myth to the Wake of Home: Literary Houses" makes a crucial distinction between home in adult's fiction and home in children's fiction. She says that children's literature can be differentiated from adult literature basically on the myth of home. In adult fiction, the knowledge of being stranded alone in the world is what the protagonist struggles with but children's fiction is a celebration of home and reaffirmation in the myth of home (54). But it would be naïve to assume that the celebration of home in children's fiction is without any ideological baggage because children's fiction by itself is an adult construction and therefore adult shaping of personal hopes and aspirations take place through it. In fact, the history of childhood, and knowledge and beliefs regarding the child and children's literature too, are all adult constructions where the child's performing agency is negated and it remains a site of power play where mainly adults' reconstruction of an ideal self takes place. Home, thus, is also the lost phase of childhood where the adult author returns to celebrate the constructs of the innocence, joy and carefree world of childhood. In the context of this study, the adult constructions assume all the more significance because while the adult writings of some of the authors taken up here reflect a sense of loss and inability to regain home, their children's fiction in fact

shows this return as not only possible but also something that can lead to a betterment of the status of home. At the same time, this process of regaining home is problematic too because the child travels from knowledge to experience and thereby negotiates within adult spaces. When the child transgresses into the adult space, it crosses over the threshold of its own world to an alien world. The occupation of this alien world not only makes the child self-reliant but also ensures that the child understands the division of adult's space and child's place. It also brings forth the realization that inhabiting of different spaces can lead to a broadening of one's own boundaries which provides an easy transition into the next stage of life—from childhood to adulthood. If we take this concept of an adult's space into a broader perspective then we can bring within its purview the concept of the nation too. But the nation cannot be neatly compartmentalized as adult's space only, as the child is also an equal inhabitant of the nation. As the responsibility of securing the home is taken by the child, so also the onus of securing the home from its marauders is shared by the child. While the child acts as a powerful agency in its negotiations of achieving home, the narrative by itself supplies the author with a writing space that can be conceptualized as home in itself. How far is Indian English children's fiction successful in providing a narrative world, a created space, where the child, the author and the genre by itself find home? This question forms the central theme of this thesis. These concepts have been interrogated with detailed analysis of the selected works of Ruskin Bond, Arup Kumar Dutta, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, and Salman Rushdie.

Problems of Definition

One of the most basic questions that will determine the future course of this thesis is—how do we define home? What is the definition of home and more importantly can one definition encompass the vastness of conceptions regarding home? Jeanne Moore captures the problematic notion of defining home and thus says: “The difficulty in coming to grips with the concept of home is its increasingly central role in everyday life, coupled with its rich social, cultural and historical significance” (207). It is this difficulty or problem in definition that makes the whole concept of home diffuse in nature. In order

to understand the nature of home it is better to analyze the various aspects that go into the making of our conceptualization of home. David Benjamin gives the following definition of home which tries to encompass not a basic concept of home but rather looks at it from the diverse facets of home:

The home is that spatially localized, temporally defined, significant and autonomous physical frame and conceptual system for the ordering, transformation and interpretation of the physical and abstract aspects of domestic daily life at several simultaneous spatio-temporal scales, normally activated by the connection to a person or community such as a nuclear family. (158)

Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling put it in a simpler manner and try to connect both the physical and emotional aspects of home and therefore define home as “a complex and multi-layered geographical concept. Put most simply, home is: a place/site, a set of feelings/cultural meanings, and the relations between the two” (2-3). As both these definitions signify, home cannot be understood as a unified whole but rather needs to be interpreted from a piecemeal perspective. Tony Chapman says that despite the imaginative notion of home as a haven of security and privacy, in reality home is signified by change. In the process of changes in life we change various homes too. At the same time, certain factors like natural disasters, war, migration and similar factors also affect our homes and therefore compel us to leave homes. Chapman further says that the fact that there is no home to go back to gives rise in people the understanding of home in its deepest sense. This understanding is not necessarily of home as a mere physical structure but home also as a security, as a right to be enjoyed but which has now been violated (136). Theano S. Terkenli in “Home as a Region” adds something more to this idea. He says that human beings understand the value of home very often only in those circumstances when home is in a state of disappearance or when it has vanished. The notion of home is based “on the division of personally known worlds into home and nonhome contexts” (328). Terkenli adds that only when people move away from home do

they develop an understanding of the self which differentiates between home and nonhome (328). He further says that “home reinforces the need for human beings to attach themselves to a context that is unquestionably theirs, so that they are secure in the changing associations with place, society, and time”(331). Gaston Bachelard in his famous work *The Poetics of Space* (1958) says that “our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word” (4). John Rennie Short looks at the relation between home and space and says: “The home is a key site in the social organization of space. It is where space becomes place, and where family relations and gendered and class identities are negotiated, contested and transformed. The home is an active moment in both time and space in the creation of individual identity, social relations, and collective meaning”(x). There are numerous definitions of home which reflect on and also emphasize the diverse nature of home. Shelley Mallett defines home as a “place but it is also a space inhabited by family, people, things and belongings—a familiar, if not comfortable space where particular activities and relationships are lived . . . a virtual place, a repository for memories of the lived spaces. It locates lived time and space, particularly intimate familial time and space”(63). But these ideas of home need also to be examined in the context of the advancement of technology that has reduced distances and in all probability made the whole world a home itself. How do we visualize the concept of home in this age of instant access in the form of mobile phones, internet and what not? Is home located in a fixed idea or entity or is it in a diffuse sense that we can find home? More importantly has this easy accessibility made us feel more at home or has it in fact rendered us homeless? Two arguments are apt in this context. The first is by Vilem Flusser who says: “I am homeless, because there are so many homelands that make their home in me” (91). The second is by Gordon Mathews who says: “I myself . . . linked to the world through mass media and the Internet, have no particular reason to go home again, except for occasional visits . . . I am already home. I am home because of the Americanization of much of the world . . . and because of contemporary technology” (196). Both these arguments are significant in the fact that they emphasize the predicament of the modern man who is both homeless and at home at the same time. The problematic notion that

arises out of these definitions is that despite the longing and nostalgia for home that characterizes almost the whole of mankind, home by itself remains a contested site of belongingness precisely because of our inability to define home in concise terms. Home therefore constantly eludes definition and thus we can use here Witold Rybczynski's analysis of comfort which suggests that understanding home:

is like trying to describe an onion. It appears simple on the outside, but it is deceptive, for it has many layers. If it is cut apart, there are just onion skins left and the original form has disappeared. If each layer is described separately, we lose sight of the whole. The layers are transparent so that when we look at the whole onion we see not just the surface but also something of the interior. (230)

It is the layers that give us a definition or glimpse of the whole and despite the fear of losing sight of the whole it is necessary to discuss each layer and see if it is possible to organize all descriptions and come to a coherent meaning of home. There are countless other such definitions of home and research on the concept of home is not new since, from time immemorial, search for home and dwelling has remained basic to man's nature.

Research on Home

There are various interpretations of home over a long period of time and the amount of literature on home is voluminous. It would be pragmatic to say that a thorough analysis of all the work done on the concept of home would be beyond the scope of this study and therefore home needs to be conceptualized and contextualized within the limits of the themes of this thesis. A cursory survey would reveal that the examination of home has been done from myriads of perspectives and though not an exhausted area yet home has been one field which despite being very familiar has remained the site of constant interrogation. Let us briefly go through some of the studies that have formed the

background of this study. One of the basic texts that has resonated throughout this analysis is titled simply *Home* (2006), by Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling. It uses various theoretical perspectives like geographical, feminist, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies and demonstrates the meaning of home as a complex place and space that encompasses the physical and emotional aspects too. At the same time, it looks at the concept of home from diverse fields like the relation between home and nation, the culture of apartment living in cities, home and work for migrated workers, home and domesticity, British colonial experiences of home in India and such other experiences. David Benjamin and David Stea's *The Home: Words, Interpretations, Meanings and Environments* (1995) tries to provide the meaning of home along with an analysis of the changes that occur in our conception of home, the symbolism of home, research on home. The book tries to provide an exhaustive overview of the important issues related to the concept of home. Carole Despres' "The Meaning of Home: Literature Review and Directions for Future Research and Theoretical Development" (1991) is important because she explores at length most of the literature published between 1974 and 1989 on the meaning of home particularly from the North American perspective. But she also contends that most of the research on home has been unidirectional looking at the concept of home from the standpoint of family and single family households. Those studies that interpret home from the political and economic aspects try to locate home from a newer perspective and importance should be attached to interrogating the environments within home too. Shelley Mallett's "Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature" (2004) again looks at the prevalent notions and concepts of home in both theoretical and empirical literature together with a questioning of whether home is a place, space, feeling or practices. Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) looks at the phenomenological importance of the various images of house. He uses the term topoanalysis which he defines as the "systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives"(44). Thus, Bachelard looks at all the different sites, mundane but important too, that make a home and he delineates the significance of each space. Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974) looks at space as a construct of the society and importance is laid not only on the space itself but also on the processes that make

these spaces. Martin Heidegger, in his essay “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1954), claims that what we build has an intricate connection with where we dwell. Dwelling comes before building and only if we are capable of dwelling do we then take on the onus of building. Witold Rybczynski’s *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (1986) is in a sense a complete guide to an understanding of housing, architecture, furnishing, and the development of domestic technologies in Europe. The important aspect of this book is in providing a model of the processes that go into the transforming of houses into homes. The work also integrates different cultural and national concepts of home and tries to conceptualize a definition of home along with the examination of the formation of the modern family in Britain. Rybczynski’s explanation of the concepts of domesticity, comfort, privacy and so on is important in the understanding of the meaning of home. Graham Allan and Graham Crow’s *Home and Family* (1989), as the name signifies, emphasizes the depiction of family life and home and the nuances of everyday life as it is lived on a day-to-day basis. The mundane nature of daily life conceals within itself the power struggles that go into the making of domestic life. Life at home also entails privacy from the public sphere of life but it does not necessarily entail privacy for the family members. At the same time, home is not a space which allows freedom for all family members as movements and decisions are regulated by other family members. One work which perhaps encompasses a vast and extensive study on the subject of home is *The Domestic Space Reader* (2012) edited by Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei. It is an extensive study of most of the important works on the concept of home ranging from Bachelard, Heidegger, Lefebvre, Jung, Baudrillard, Freud to Ginsburg, Corbusier, Bhabha and Matthew Reynolds. Briganti and Mezei emphasize that the amount of literature on the concept of home is extensive and cite a large number of works that have stressed the subject of home in the last few years itself. Such a large amount of literature actually creates problem for the researcher in scrutinizing and selecting works and therefore the work is in a sense a complete guide which encompasses most of the relevant works from various disciplines. Two crucial books, so far as this study is concerned, have been *Children’s Geographies* (2000) and *Geographies of Young People* (2001), which look at the actuality of the space available to children and the tendency of academia to

romanticize this availability of space. *Children's Geographies*, which is edited by Sarah Holloway and Gill Valentine, looks at the subject of children's lived experiences from an interdisciplinary approach. Such taken for granted aspects as space, place, nature and so on are interrogated from various diverse aspects by researchers in sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Stuart Aitken's work *Geographies of Young People* (2001) incorporates a wide range of theoretical and historical contexts that look into the present research on childhood and children's relationship with place.

Most of these works do not look at home from the perspective of children's literature. But the concept of home in children's literature has been interrogated widely (Waddey, 1983; Hunt, 1992; Nodelman and Reimer, 2003; Kokkola, 2003; Dewan, 2004; Nodelman, 2008; Wilson and Short, 2012). In India too, research on home has been till recently primarily historical in nature, focusing on the colonial period and there have been various contributions from geographers, historians and literary theorists. The establishment of English homes in India and the Anglo-Indian search for home have also been looked into along with women's writings on home and the Bengali nationalists' constructions of home.

Research on Children's Literature

The perception that children's literature is not in any way subordinate to mainstream literature but only different in kind has at least registered and criticism of children's literature has finally emerged as a coherent field of study. The traditional method of criticism of children's books has been a judicious mixture of biography, history and literary evaluation as in May Hill Arbuthnot's *Children and Books* (1957) and John Rowe Townsend's *Writing for Children* (1990). Peter Hunt speaks of criticism of children's literature as having developed from bibliography and history to more specific literary, psychological, educational or political interests. The basic ways of looking at has changed with even fairy tales being assessed as tools of socialization for children to help them accept the class and gender divide stereotypes created by the dominant stereotypes. An important work in this area is Jack Zipes' *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The*

Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization (1983). To translate the later developments in critical theory into a form which could be used by readers has been the preoccupation of critics like Aidan Chambers who has brought about a change in the direction of the twentieth century critical thinking. In *Tell Me: Children, Reading and Talk* (1993), "The Reader in the Text" (1977), and *Book Talk: Occasional Writing on Literature and Children* (1975), Chambers' central concern has been with the reader. A landmark article in the field of reception response criticism has been Michael Benton's "Reader-Response Criticism" (1996) which analyzes the child's response to the printed matter placed in front of him/her. Seminal work in children's literature criticism has been done by Peter Hunt and some of his important works include *Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature* (1991) and *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism* (1992). Hunt propagates a new critical approach called "childist criticism" on the lines of feminist criticism, challenging the false assumptions that govern children's literature's inferior status and recognizing the importance of children's literature in the rewriting of the canon. Peter Hollindale's *Signs of Childness in Children's Books* (1977) and "Ideology and the Children's Book" (1992) are two other works which have looked at children's literature from the ideological perspective. There have been many other works on children's literature and people like Perry Nodelman, Mavis Reimer, Jack Zipes and others have provided ample research to the field. Despite the volume of work on children's literature, for critics like Margaret Meek research should be aimed at understanding the peculiarity as well as its continuity with literature in general.

In contrast to the availability of resource material in the West, there is a paucity of children's literary criticism in India. Research in the regional language literature for children has been done and in 1982 Publications Division brought out *Children's Literature in Indian Languages* which had an in-depth analysis of children's literary works from fourteen regional languages. The book contains a detailed analysis of folk literature and epics as well as the influences of western literature. It does not include contemporary Indian writing for children. Surprisingly enough, with Indian Writings in English making such strides, academia has remained silent with regard to Indian English children's writing. The only known works in this area are Indira Kulshreshtha's

Children's Literature in English (1999) and Prema Srinivisan's *Children's Fiction in English in India: Trends and Motifs* (1998). The first work introduces the subject but does not discuss Indian works or authors at length. Srinivasan's work is more of an assessment of the works of Indian English children's fiction rather than any attempt to understand these works in their proper perspective. Navin Menon and Bhavana Nair's *Children's literature in India* (1999), Sharmila Sinha's *Aspects of Children's Literature* (2001), Amit Dasgupta's *Telling Tales: Children's Literature in India* (1995) are some of the works which have tried to analyze children's literature in the Indian context, mainly the problems and prospects of this literature. More recently, a most comprehensive survey of Indian English children's literature was done by Michelle Superle in her work titled *Contemporary English-Language Indian Children's Literature* (2011). But ironically, she leaves out both Rushdie and Bond in her analysis and focuses more on the novels published in the last twenty years or so. Incidentally, she also does not take up *The Kaziranga Trail* for her analysis. Her work is based more on a minute survey of the various dispersed works based on the assumption that most of the works are aspirational in nature. It also emphasizes the concept of Indian girlhood and how the thrust is more on elitist, middle class childhood.

Overview of Chapters

In order to understand the concept of home with regards to children's literature it is necessary to first delineate as precisely as possible the concept and definition of the child and children's literature and then situate the child within and outside home. The problem with such an approach is that, like the definition of home, the concept of the child and children's literature has also remained diffuse throughout time and to arrive at a conclusive definition is difficult. Like the concept of home then we will have to understand the concept of the child and children's literature within the purview of this study and interrogate the various aspects that go into the making of the definition of child and children's literature. The definitions of child and children's literature are intricately connected to each other and in order to define children's literature it is imperative to define who is a child. Again the concept of child differs from age to age and from country

to country. The concept of an Anglo-American child does not necessarily apply to the concept of the Indian child and similarly thus to the concept of Indian children's literature.

Chapter one titled "Child and Literature" examines the intricacies of definition while placing the child within the concept of home. It also draws on the various works that have in a sense paved the way for the birth of children's literature as also the differences between the western and Indian construct of the child and childhood. It also analyzes the problem of English language in India and how Indian English children's literature is still in its formative stage despite various efforts being undertaken from time to time.

Chapter two titled "There is no place like home" analyzes the importance of home in a child's life and the reasons for which the child leaves home. The ample research on home has proved that home has remained the primary concern of man from time immemorial and it occupies a place of prominence in the general psyche of almost all human beings. But despite that there has been a continuous relinquishing of homes in history and as much as history has related man's position within the home, it has perhaps produced more literature on man's search for home in this wide world. If home is such a cherished place then why does the necessity of leaving home arise? And if man leaves home for other greener pastures then why would he want to return home? Krishnendu Ray in a telling remark on this aspect says: "Home is where one starts from. Home is where one endlessly seeks to return to while running away from it; from its tyrannies of being walled-in; from structuring places and times"(2723). Ray further says that there are aspects to the leaving of home that need to be looked into. There are those who are exiles and are forced into this because of political conditions. Then there are those who wilfully exile themselves for what he terms as "aesthetic reasons" or a "heroic posture". And then there are the tourists who are in a privileged situation than others and are leisurely in their attitude. There are of course the migrants who leave homelands for various reasons including search for livelihood which is neither heroic nor leisurely (2723).

Diasporic writings have emphasized the necessity to construct home in India and abroad, and the process of the loss of home due to migration and the partition of India has also found place in these writings. Surprisingly however, the concept of home in the context of children's literature, specifically Indian English children's literature, has scarcely been interrogated. But it would be wrong to say that children's literature has never tried to interrogate the position of home. In fact, one of the recurrent themes in children's literature is that of the "home, away, home" plot where home is regained at the end of the journey with the knowledge that it is the best place in the world. Kathy Short and Melissa Wilson in "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road: Challenging the Mythology of Home in Children's Literature" (2012), analyze recent award-winning middle reader novels from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia and find that the postmodern condition actually renders a child homeless through abandonment rather than the child leaving home. And it is up to the child to reconstruct its home within the realities of the adult world. When applied in the context of Indian English children's literature, this analysis emerges in a new light. The very notion of English fiction for children itself is an alienated one struggling to find its place, its "home", within the milieu of children's writings in India and home therefore remains elusive for the texts taken into consideration here. At the same time, the concept of home remains a failure not necessarily always because the parents fail the home or because the child feels the necessity to reconstruct a new home.

The child's concept of home in a very basic sense is one where the child finds love and security. Under these circumstances why would a child think of leaving home? The answer to this question lies in analyzing the specific circumstances from which the necessity to leave home arose and these circumstances more often than not reflect on the disruption of peaceful family life that compelled the child to go out and make things right. The disruption of life at home may also be the result of destruction of home arising out of natural causes and if a child is left to face the fury of nature all alone then it tries to come up with reasoning of existence too. But is it such a simple issue for a child to leave behind the comforts of home and embark on an unknown journey? The child leaves

because home is no longer home and it becomes imperative to search for a home outside. The journey outside does not necessarily reveal that the world is hostile or ill equipped to provide a home but the child faces the blatant truth that there is no place called home. The child returns with the knowledge that the adult controlled and constructed space called home that it used to live in needs to be appropriated according to one's own specificities to give it the semblance of an ephemeral concept called home.

We look at three Indian English children's novels to analyze this aspect of children's journey which are Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea* (first published in 1982, the edition used here is of 1984), and Ruskin Bond's *Angry River* (first published 1972, the edition used here is of 1995). Rushdie's first novel for children in fact became a polemic on censorship and his own tricky position during the fatwa which thereby reduced it to an essentialist position. *Haroun* therefore came to be increasingly viewed from Rushdie's own subjective position, and the agony and confusion of Haroun became lost in the process. There has been ample literature on *Haroun* but all of it has analyzed the text from Rushdie's perspective rather than from Haroun's perspective, the child's vision, which would have made a reading of the text less academic and more child centred. This has perhaps remained the problem of children's fiction in India and more so of Indian English children's fiction which has struggled to find a voice of its own. Haroun's struggle therefore remains subsumed under the struggle of Rushdie to come out of the fatwa and start living life normally. In the apparent hullabaloo of the fatwa and Rushdie's concerted efforts, the fact that *Haroun* could be read as a children's fiction which portrays the angst of a child in his loss of home and his efforts to recover that home is lost. The fact that *Haroun* has been analyzed very scantily from the perspective of children's fiction attests to the perception that the child Haroun has never been taken up for consideration. Haroun's journey therefore needs to be interpreted from the perspective of the child, his capability in retrieving his father's storytelling powers and also saving the sea of stories. The child's perspective is important primarily because if it is not done so, then children's literature, already an adult enterprise, remains adult-centric too. Haroun as a child is

necessary to be evaluated along with his search for home because it is only in undertaking this exercise that we can understand how the child perceives home and how parental behaviours can often rend apart the child's heart and home.

The child's understanding of the conditions that break apart home is also taken up by Anita Desai in *The Village by the Sea*. Like Rushdie, Anita Desai too represents writings from the diaspora and as such her works have been the subject of various evaluations and she is one of the most discussed authors in Indian English writings. But her children's novel *The Village by the Sea* is considered to be outside the purview of literary criticism and except for an occasional mention in a few works, it has been largely unanalyzed. We therefore look at the novel from the viewpoint of the two children, Hari and Lila, and locate their endeavours in the eternal search for home. Hari and Lila come from a household which has already become dysfunctional due to the drunkenness of the father and the ill-health of the mother. They have therefore become surrogate father and mother with the responsibility of the household on their young shoulders. The home needs to be reconstituted into its original form with the adults taking on their responsibilities and the children being allowed to enjoy their childhood, and for this to happen the children have to become more adult-like in their outlook than children. And thus Hari leaves home to find employment outside Thul and Lila takes over the responsibility of Mon-Repos too in addition to her own household. Hari returns home with the same knowledge that Haroun returns with that the onus of retaining home is on him; and for this to happen he wishes that his home or homeland, Thul, should change. Unless sweeping changes come across Thul, Hari cannot hope that the meagre means will sustain his home for long. The changes in his homeland can also be read in the light of the loss of homeland.

Ruskin Bond places his protagonist Sita within the same milieu where not only home but homeland is also destroyed leaving Sita to fend for herself in a situation where there are neither adults nor the security of home for her. Bond's work can be related to the predicament of the Anglo-Indian community itself. Faced with a situation where neither India nor England is willing to accept the community after India's independence, the

Anglo-Indians were rendered homeless despite their claims on home at two places that is India and England. The anguish felt at the loss of home and identity too has been captured by Bond in his first work *The Room on the Roof*. But *Angry River* captures the essence of loss and rehabilitation in a more metaphorical sense. Like the Anglo-Indian community, Sita too has already been rendered homeless because of the loss of her parents. Her mother is dead and her father is placed outside the narrative as he is working somewhere else. Devoid of parents, Sita's sense of homelessness is poignant but her loss of the island which has been her physical home not only posits her as absolutely helpless but also makes her question her position in the whole scheme of things in this world. The existential question that Sita puts forward can be analyzed in the context of all the three novels taken up here. What is the child's position in the context of home and how is agency and power bestowed on the child? Is leaving home the only option available to the child when disruption of home occurs and should the child don adult responsibilities so that home can function? All these questions need to be answered so that the position of the child can be determined in the context of its own home and the context of society at large.

Chapter three titled "Inhabiting Spaces" takes up three texts to look into the child's ability to control and negotiate spaces outside home. If the child leaves home so that home can be regained then how does the child conduct itself in the spaces outside home? Home is sacrosanct because it is also one's own space in the world and if that very space is repudiated then how does the child claim its space in the world? Ruskin Bond's *Adventures of Rusty* (1995), looks at the child's willing rejection of home and how spaces outside home require overcoming of adult control to find one's own position. If home itself is adult controlled then can spaces outside home be divested of adult power? But if home is willingly given up for other spaces then the child is put through a process where it understands the value of home and probably of parents too. Rushdie's places his protagonist Luka from *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010) in this very position. The postmodern child not only inhabits a physical space but also virtual spaces and it is the claim of these virtual spaces by the child that Rushdie questions. With the increasing loss of physical spaces for play and leisure, the child retreats to home not necessarily as a

means of acceptance but rather for a “home” within home which claims the identity of the child to an extent that the virtual identity more often than not consumes the real identity. But how does the child claim those spaces which are physically formidable primarily because the child itself is lacking in physical ability? Is the child then relegated to a space of marginalization and neglect or is the child able to regain a space of power and control? Arup Kumar Dutta’s *The Blind Witness* (first published 1983, the edition used here is of 1995), looks at this space of abject neglect and loneliness to locate the child within it. Ramu, the blind witness, is positioned such that physical spaces by themselves are formidable because of his inability to negotiate wilfully in those spaces. The very spaces and places that any child will take for granted have been laden with dangers that become tough for someone like Ramu to overcome easily. Under these circumstances, can Ramu be able to give up his position of marginality and inhabit not only an adult space but also a space that is filled up with double dangers—one because of his blindness and the other because of him being the prime target of the smugglers as the only witness to their crime. Arup Dutta’s work incorporates these elements to posit a helpless child within the loci of crime and brutality and allows him to successfully negotiate. The spaces outside home therefore are tricky places and a questioning of these spaces will be successful in revealing the capacity of the child for performing outside home too.

The failure of home primarily arises from two broad ideas which constitute the core of not only Indian English children’s literature but also Indian English literature in general and that of the whole diasporic notion of belongingness. The first idea of course refers to the imperative nature of most Indian English texts to find a place of prominence within India. The second arises from a broader perspective of India being “home” to various races, tribes, castes, creeds, and religions over a long stretch of time, each struggling to achieve its dominance and in reality each being marginalized in its race towards supremacy. In the birth of the nation that is conceived to be a post-independence phenomenon, certain values and ethics were accepted or attempts made to incorporate them into the Indian psyche, especially into the child’s psyche, with the belief that they will help in strengthening the concept of India as a unified nation. One of the concepts

that was emulated was to imbibe the child with the nationalistic fervour and spirit so that the child can take pride in the nation.

Chapter four titled “Home in the Nation” looks at how the concept of nation is upheld by the child and how the child performs for the nation. The concept of nationhood is one of the most potent markers of belonging and national identity is one of the foremost aspects of identity of any individual. The sense of belongingness that emanates from one’s national identity is the same notion of attachment that one feels with one’s own home. How do children react to their relation with nation and, if nation is at peril, will the children rise up to defend their home and nation? We take up three texts to analyze children’s concept of nation as home itself and locate the child’s capacity to perform for the nation. Arup Kumar Dutta’s *The Kaziranga Trail* (first published 1979, the edition used here is of 1995), interrogates the concept of nationhood from an act of sacrilege to the symbol of Assam—the one-horned rhino. If national property is treated with disrespect and irreverence then how do children rise up to the act of protection of the nation? At the same time, is nationhood too broad a concept for children to embrace and act accordingly? Do adults monopolize the concept of national identity or do children have a role to play here? These are questions that are taken up in the context of the study along with two other texts—Arup Dutta’s *Footprints in the Sand* (1999) and Shashi Deshpande’s *The Hidden Treasure* (first published 1980, the edition used here is of 2006).

If nation provides a space for children to find their identity and home then does writing children’s literature provide a space for children’s writers to find a home for themselves? In chapter five titled “Finding Home in Writing” we look at the works of three authors, Ruskin Bond, Arup Kumar Dutta, and Salman Rushdie, to examine how writing by itself and especially children’s literature provide a space to negotiate their problematic situations of writing. India is a nation of stark diversities from time immemorial but these diversities have often posed a problem and violence has torn apart the bond that has held together the nation. Do the myriad communities of India belong to a unified, justified whole called India which serves as their home or is home dispersed in the various instances of writing which serves as homes in their attempts to find a home in India? In a

world where violence has become the norm and the sanctity and security of home in an external world has almost vanished, when we have become familiar with terms like closing of borders, stapled visas, house arrest, inner line permit, it is probably the “writing spaces” that provides a true home for many. Where is home when alienation within one’s own homeland becomes a norm rather than an exception? An Anglo-Indian like Ruskin Bond may need to justify his intentions of staying back in India when he has got the option of making it out in the land of his forefathers. And in doing so, can he complete the process of his integration into the soil of this land from which he and his community have taken birth? Alison Blunt, in her study of the roles played by England and India in the lives of the Anglo-Indians, says:

Despite the political shift in emphasis from fatherland to motherland, and increasing attempts to identify India as home, many Anglo-Indians felt out of place in independent India . . . [A]n estimated one third of Anglo-Indians had emigrated by the 1970s, mainly to Britain, Canada and Australia. Many Anglo-Indians imagined themselves to be travelling home, either to Britain or to white dominions of the former British Empire. But travelling home was a difficult process, both practically and emotionally. The British Nationality Act of 1948 meant that Anglo-Indians had to provide documentary evidence of a British paternal ancestor and the White Australia Policy meant that some members of a family would be admitted while others would be excluded. The mixed descent of Anglo-Indians, whether domiciled in India or across a wider diaspora, continued to be both manifested and erased after Independence. (68-69)

The dichotomy faced by the likes of Bond could not be resolved easily through attempts at mere assimilation into the Indian landscape. It needed an acceptance from both sides of the fact that India is as much a home for the indigenous people as for the Anglo-Indians. Bond realized this by leaving the shores of India and going off to the land of his forefathers. It is only then that he realized that the alienation he faced in the “home” of his ancestors is one of being rejected by that culture and of being uprooted from one’s own actuality. This sense of belonging is thoroughly interrogated in *The Room on the Roof* which tries to give voice to the protagonist’s angst and turmoil in his search for belongingness and location and in a way it serves as Bond’s own search for roots in India. *Vagrants in the Valley* takes this interrogation farther to locate not only the protagonist’s sense of homelessness but others too like him who have lost their home because of various historical instances.

While Bond’s fear and anxiety serves as a metaphor for the whole community as such, Arup Kumar Dutta’s search is within a specific necessity of locating oneself through writings in an alien language and in a genre which has hardly gained any ground in India. Children’s literature as a genre in itself has much popularity in India since ancient times but children’s literature in English did not find much footing in India. At a time when the Indian English scenario is yet to see the flurry of activity through the publication of *Midnight’s Children*, Arup Kumar Dutta set out to do the unthinkable—to write in the English language and that too children’s literature. He set himself to break into a scenario which was self-sufficient in itself because the demands were fulfilled through the import of western children’s literature and the occasional forays into the field by other authors were few and far apart. What did he think of achieving, how did he go about it and what did *The Kaziranga Trail* bring forth for him? These are questions that need to be interrogated in the light of the socio-political aspects of the times too.

Salman Rushdie’s predicament on the other hand is one which has placed him in a position of marginalization and abject estrangement from the very readers who have played a significant role in his establishment as an author. The fatwa not only curbed his physical movements but also in a sense curbed his creative abilities too. The home that he

had established for himself seemed to have crumbled down under the pressure of external events. How does he reconstruct himself in writing and where from does he start with? It is children's literature again that provided him with the space to reconfigure his status as an author and to rebuild his confidence in himself and in his readers. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is interrogated from this aspect of writing to locate Rushdie's home in writing.

The last and conclusive chapter will look at the position of Indian English children's fiction and how home is located within this genre of writing. It will draw conclusions from the analysis done in the previous chapters and try to reach at a logical agreement of the concepts discussed earlier and try to find the position of Indian English children's fiction as a whole.

In order to understand the concept of home in Indian English children's literature, let us go through the various notions that try to define the child, children's literature, Indian English language, home for the child and Indian English children's literature. This will form the basis of the study of the next chapter.