

## Space Defining Social Status: A Case Study of a Short Story

(گھر سے گھر تک)

SAIRA IQBAL AND GHANI-UR-RAHMAN

### Abstract

*When it comes to architecture the sketch appearing in mind is just a material supporting to form a house or a structure to provide a shelter. Architecture is beyond four walls and a concept of cement, wood, or bricks. It is an art form that has some immaterial importance in society as well.*

*Considering a designed space and its impact on human is the basic aim of the research article. Architecture is an art form that is composed of some tangible material while literature is an art form that is composed of words but the common thing between them is the idea or thought. From Home to Home (Ghar se Ghar tak) is a short story by Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi that highlights a dilemma of class and status in a society. This story depicts the clash of one's inner self and an outer self through space. A home reflects the people living in. The mind of the character and the architecture is interknitted.*

*The hypothesis of this research is, built environment defines a social status in such a manner that narration and character itself goes in the background but the setting of the house conveys all". The technique used will be Architectural Literary Analysis. The findings of the research are the relationship of architecture and literature, how one form of art successfully supported the other form(literature). Moreover, designed space defines not only the social status but also the psychological impact of the space.*

**Keywords:** Architecture, Literature, Space, Society

### Introduction

Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, an eminent figure when it comes to Urdu Literature in Pakistan. He is not only famous for his short stories but is a renowned journalist, literary critic, and

dramatist as well. In the contemporary times of Urdu, he is a prominent figure and much important in his readers for the subjects he raised. He highlighted poverty, social issues, psychological associations along with romance in his stories. *Ghar se Ghar tak* is a short story highlighting the societal set up. It is a story of a family from lower middle-class society who decorates their house with borrowed expensive things to show off their guests. There are different portions in a house. Two of these are: Private area and Public area. The public area is mostly the most decorated area and shows the unconscious mind of a person. This is the area designed for the people of society and is designed on the basis that how a person wants others to treat himself. The lady showed her interest to visit other rooms on the next portion with a claim that – “the personal residence area shows the discipline of a family”. The personal residence was totally opposite to the public area i.e. the drawing room in this story that revealed their class and way of living.

The idea behind the selection of this story is that “Architecture / Built or designed space defines one’s social status. The psychological makeup of the character and architecture is interknitted. Secondly, built environment (setting) is defining social status in such a manner that narrations and character itself goes in the background but the setting of a house speaks and conveys all.”

### **Methodology**

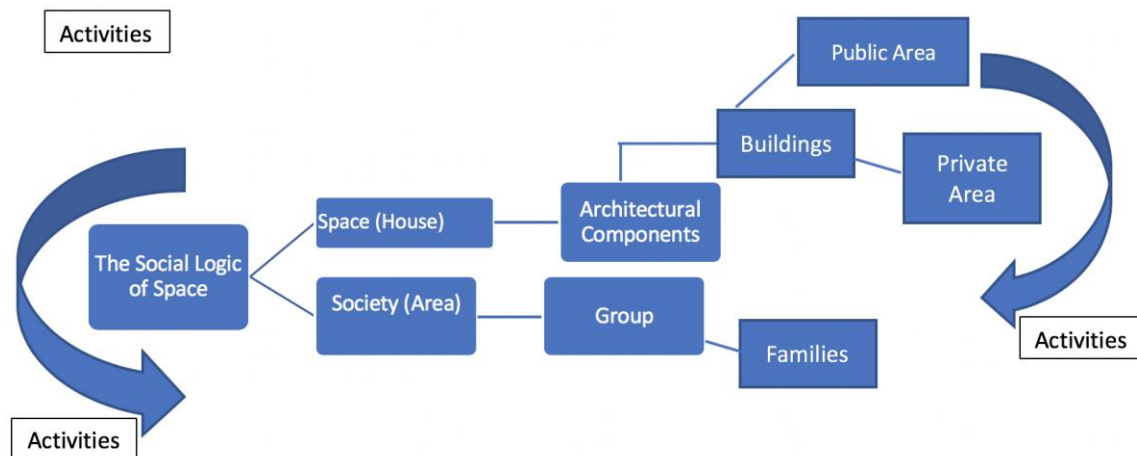
Sr. No.	Steps	Case in the Case Study
1	Deciding the genre	Fiction (Short Story)
2	Author	Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi
3	Limiting the work of author	<i>Ghar se Ghar Tak</i>
4	Finding out the architectural Theory	Social Logic of Space

5	Finding out the key concepts	Social logic of space	Ghar se Ghar Tak
		Space as a reflection,	Street Description, Difference between private and public area, House as a visual image of the residents

### Analysis

The story will be analyzed by sorting out the following elements related to space and architecture from the story. As this is mentioned in the delimitations as well Architecture is not only a built solid and compact structure. It is an art of creating a space be it a closed or open space.

Following model of Social Logic Of Space is suggested to analyze this story.



*Architecture as a symbol of social status in society: The story has started with a description of some guests and the car they came with. Through description,*

*the reader come to know that the hosts are not living in a posh area, but they are residing in a small street of a town. The excerpt is as follows:*

حاجی مقتدر احمد کے دیوان خانے میں قدم رکھتے ہی شیخ نور الزمان کی بیوی عشرت خانم ان کی بیٹی ہما اور بیٹے وقار کا سارا رعب داب صابن کی جھاگ کی طرح فٹافٹ غائب ہو گیا۔ یہ لوگ جس کار میں حاجی صاحب کے ہاں آئے تھے وہ اتنی لمبی تھی کہ اگر ہوائی اڈے پر کھلے دروازوں سے کھڑی ہوتی تو لوگ اسے طیارہ سمجھ بیٹھتے۔ حاجی صاحب کی گلی میں مڑتے ہوئے ڈرائیور کو اسی لیے خاصی دقت ہوئی

*“As soon as they entered in the drawing room of Haji Muqtadir Ahmed, their confidence shattered. They came in a car that was as long and lush that if one park the car with doors open , in an airport ; people assume it as an airplane. (Qasmi, 2000)”*

The culture of a street or a middle-class society is obvious to all. Neighbors keep an eye each other, one of the strong reasons is the architectural style. The houses constructed are so close and wall to wall each other that the activities of one family can easily be monitored by the other family.

As it is said in the story,

کار حاجی مقتدر احمد کے مکان کے سامنے رکی تو باوردی ڈرائیور نے اتر کر کار کے باقی تینوں دروازے کھولے۔ عشرت خانم ہما اور وقار پھول میں سے بھونروں کی طرح برآمد ہوئے۔ پھر ڈرائیور نے ایک شان بے نیازی کے ساتھ تینوں دروازے تڑاخ پڑا دیے تو گلی کے

*“Driver shut all the doors with such a confidence and style that the ladies peeping through their windows from one corner of the street to the other (incomplete)”.*

So, the description is clearly presenting an image of a society that what kind of people live there and how they used to live there. “Peeping out through windows” and then the reaction of a long lush car in a narrow street shows that their living standard is not according to the standard of the people that came in car.

سب سے آگے عشرت خانم تھیں۔ انہوں نے قالین پر قدم رکھا تو ڈگمگائیں جیسے پھسلنے سے بچی ہیں۔ پلٹ کر انہوں نے ہما کی طرف دیکھا اور شلواری کے پانچوں کو ذرا سا اٹھا کر صوفے کی طرف بڑھیں جیسے تالاب میں اترنے چلی ہیں۔ ہما اور وقار پر بھی کم و بیش یہی عالم گزر گیا۔ نور النساء نے سلیپر پاندان پر اتار دیئے اور ایک ڈگ بھر کر تخت کے پاس کھڑی ہو گئیں۔ سب اپنی اپنی جگہوں پر بیٹھنے لگے تو وقار ایک دم پیچھے ہٹ کر دروازے کے پاس پلش میں لپٹے ہوئے ایک مونڈھے پر دربان کی طرح بیٹھ گیا۔

*“Ishrat Khanum was in front of all. As she stepped on the carpet her feet staggered, she turned back towards Huma lifting her trousers a little up as if stepping into a pond. More or less, Huma and Waqar had the same condition. Noor un Nisa put off her sandals and in a step reached near the throne. While everyone was taking his respective seat, Waqar took the stool near the door like janitor (Qasmi, 2000).”*

Now, the guests are analyzing each and everything of the drawing room intricately. From carpet to curtains, sofa and all decoration items displayed in the drawing room. How a person decorates his surroundings is a clear depiction of his taste. When it comes to public area of a house, the setting, interior and all shows his best.

*“Look at these curtains, she touched the curtains with the ends of her finger. It would be almost of a thousand rupee. His brother criticized and said, Are you mad ?? it would be no less than ten thousand rupees.”*

They analyzed and gave an estimate amount of the interior of the drawing room that it would be more than one lac. The analysis didn't end here. She added, Look at the Sofa, its according to the new trend. Those antique items really look very expensive. That deer on the table, is that of wood or clay? No, it's of some expensive stone. This was the discussion carrying out in the drawing room. The lady Ishrat Khanum added, *‘She is from such a rich family, don't know what kind of attitude she holds.’*

*Impact of Designed Space on the People: Buildings have power in terms of size, design, construction, and material used. Same is the case with interior of a house. It has power and influence, according to its style and arrangement. It is said that house of a reflection of the residents that are living in. The built environment has an effect on the people around them. Although they came in such a lush and a big car with confidence, their confidence shattered when they saw a well decorated house assuming the hosts better and more well settled than the guest. Now, by analyzing the public area of a home i.e. the drawing room they assumed regarding the attitude or behavior of the resident. Her reservation regarding her attitude is the result of the space around them. The expensive interior all around created a powerful impact about the people living in the house. The interaction between human and the designed space was of inferiority complex. The surroundings were so dominant that affected the personality of the people who came from outside.*

Now, this was the analysis of the public space and its effect on the characters. Moving towards the private space, with the changing aura the effect changed as well.

*An excerpt is as follows:* In the next scene Ishrat Khanum was looking for Noor un Nisa but she wasn't there. She heard some sounds of dishes from the other room, she went there. Noor un Nisa was feeling embarrassed. Hiding her embarrassment, she said, "it's the kitchen but the kids have converted this into the storeroom."

*Difference between Private area and Public Area of a House: The architects work with 3 zones majorly, commonly known as public, semi-public and private. The Lady Ishrat Khanum requested to Noor un Nisa that she wanted the house to visit so that she can have a look and to meet her grandchildren. As Ishrat Khanum came with a proposal of her son Waqar for Noor un Nisa's daughter Masooma, she gave the reason that she wanted to see how beautifully she has decorated her house. The writer stated it as follows: "In a house of two to three floors, we can find the homely environment in the upper floors only and I am a housewife. Moreover, I want to see your grandchildren as well."*

She insisted and convinced her to move forward. She was climbing the stairs while talking to Noor un Nisa. The stairs played act as a shift from public area to private area. The writer depicted this as follows:

*"As she was on the last stairs, she heard Masooma's voice of yelling at Kulsoom (Niece). Kulsoom ! Take care of Zahid. He is coming towards me with dirty hands that will ruin my dress. What will Saleema say!"*

Although she was reluctant to take Ishrat Khanam with her, but she managed to visit the other floors by convincing her. As she stepped on the first floor, she was shocked to see the condition of the rooms.

Writer described as follows:

*“The room having dirty, stained walls and roof covered with spider web, the door was veiled with torn cloth whose one end was attached to the bolt of the door. At one corner of the room there was a broken rack having Masooma’s silk dress and at end of the charpoy, a naked child of about five to six years was standing licking his fingers. Five girls and boys of different ages was taking tea, sitting on the broken cement floor. Tea was in a rough black pot. The kids sitting on the floor has a clay pot or a pot of Muradabad in their hands.”*

The excerpt shows the difference between two important areas of house. The one is the private area and the other one is public area. Now public space is the one used to carry out some social activities there, so one who needs to show some impression. These are designed for human interaction (Karacor, 2007).

The setting of the other floors reflected their economic condition, social set-up, and the difference between both the floors was a clear picture of their mental condition. The clash between selves, the inner one and the outer one.

So, the writer has used tactically the description of a space interior and exterior both to unveil the cruel status of society. Moreover, this story is a reflection that how architecture (exterior and interior space) is a depiction of a social standard. The writer managed well to provide a contribution from architecture to express a social message and its psychological impact.

### **Results and Discussions:**

The clash between selves, the inner one and the outer one. Qasmi in his story has pointed out the major fact of Asian especially Pakistani society. When some family comes for a proposal, they observe each and everything starting from the financial condition to the expertise of the girl, they are coming for. Same was the case in this story. The family came with a rented car to show



their standard. They reach to the house, where they have also arranged an artificial look of a well-off family by borrowing furniture, curtains, decoration pieces, expensive crockery and designed the space accordingly. The borrowed setup showed the thoughts of a society. The space created by them shattered their confidence by presenting a picture of well-off family having imported and expensive furniture and accessories. He conveyed the psychological and social meaning through building very tactically. The amazement of neighbors by peeping through the windows, the borrowed items and artificial setting to raise their financial status. The difference between the drawing room and other floor showed lack of harmony between the real self and ideal self as presented by Carl Roger (Saundra K. Ciccarelli , J. Noland White, 2015). The spatial configuration in this story depicted a social meaning of importance of class in a society. Lack of satisfaction from one's own well-being. The individual need of privacy and a separate space requires barriers and physical insulation as well as the need for together requires contributor and clearly defined spaces. Those clearly defined spaces create a secure and safe feeling of home. The architects work majorly in three zones (focusing *ghar se ghar tak*).

*Public Zone:* This is the zone or area that includes majorly the zones that deals with public interference like drawing rooms. Private area is the one specially designed for the audience to engage them in or to show them off the wealth and economic condition of the residents.

*Semi-Public:* This area is the zone in architecture that is semipublic and deals not exactly with public but at times, can be used by public like lounge in a house.

*Private:* This area is the private and confidential area of the house that is designed for personal use. It is a common observation that people use that area without even bothering and giving special attention with a concept that they personally has to use that area. Private area is the one

that contains the unconscious representation of the people that are living in. The private space has to be considered both as

- a. Group-Private
- b. Individual Private

The functions of physical space can change and overlap during the day. The kitchen, which would be a public space in a space habitat, could become a group-private space, when two crew members hold a private conversation, which could be communicated to others outdoor by a lower voice. Some levels, especially like this are not physically defined but culturally, one with a 'good education', not just intrude into the kitchen, but knock on the door and come again later (Andreas Vogler, Jesper Jorgensen , 2004).

## Conclusion

The story exactly falls upon the idea presented in the hypothesis that Built or a designed space defines one's social and financial setup. Societal setup is different from psychological makeup of the residents. In this story both society and psychology are interknitted. Moreover, the architecture/interior and setup itself narrates the story that the characters go in the background but the setting of a house conveys all.

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