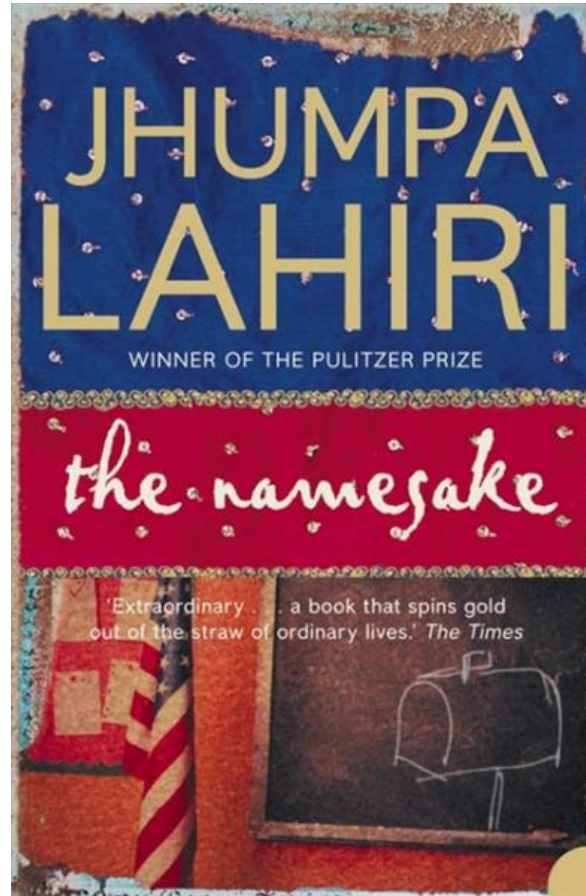


Conflicts of Experience and Memory in Jhumpha Lahiri's *The Namesake*

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Abstract

This paper focuses on one particular migrant family settled in United States; describing hardships of a lonely Indian woman became adapted to her life in the foreign culture. As each one of the family feels about his or her own identity as an Indian, American, or Indian-American affects their idealistic decision making. *The Namesake* reflects the perspectives and changing family ties of the Gangulis, who are Indian in an arrange marriage and they relocate to America, in search of American dream of wealth

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and success. The novel expresses about how the family stand alienated from their own culture along with practices they cherished in previous years. And also the novel is an autobiographical in portraying repercussions of what the children of immigrants have to experience when they are intended to born in a country which does not belong to their parents, which bear the burden of individual conflicts.

Keywords: Jhumpa Lahiri, Alienation, Autobiographical, Culture, Migration, *Namesake*

Introduction

The process of immigration in the 20th century has created a mystery of the world geographical space and nationality. The immigrants are perhaps the definitive characteristic of the period and identifies the crucial way of diasporic expression have come to represent some of the experience of postcolonial identities. Singh argued that the “migration changes individual and group identities, affiliations and cultural attitudes and practices among the mobile population and host. As soon as it is recognized that cultures are fluid and temporary social constructions made and remove time-it is apparent that movement involves the remapping of cultural identities for all those involved” (Singh 2006). The immigrant is never shown to perceive their old world as flawed not to visualize other country as the space for offers his/her freedom from their institutions or cultural scenario.

Immigrant Life from the Perspective of Jhumpa Lahiri

Lahiri described “immigrant life thus appears to be almost an equivalent of exile” (Lahiri 2010). Vogt-William argued “how cultural traditions are considered sacred, in the sense of being prescribed by some form of cultural authority, which are then instrumental in reinforcing cultural integrity and a sense of belonging in otherwise foreign contexts” (Vogt-William, 2015). Sreelakshmi views “the diasporic communities have succeeded in creating a new life for themselves in different social contexts. The culture and ideologies of the first generation immigrants are different from that of the succeeding generations.

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The new generations of immigrants' personal lives and self-images have been conditioned by circumstances very different from those familiar to their parents. The first generation immigrants' way of life, opinions, perspectives and beliefs were highly influenced by the homeland culture" (Sreelakshmi 2012).

Lahiri's writings have often crossed cultures and the theme is obvious: intersection of "in-between's," hybridity and identity. The identity is influenced by the culture of the homeland as well as the culture of the host country. The immigrants and their children occupy different positions due to generational differences, but they share the similar experience of feeling rootless and displaced.

Conflicts to Protagonist's Mother

The Namesake, Ashima is immigrated to foreign land entails a loss of the familiar. She has struggled to retain her Indian tradition from the beginning, later; it is not seemed as simple an experience of loss in her memories. Consequently, she cannot able to claim back her old custom with relatives especially her parents. She realized herself as a stranger in America. And she is asking herself, why have you come this new place?, because there is no home, she has lived around thirty years of married life in a foreign country. As a woman should have completely dependent only on her husband for survival in a new land, understands to do things on her own. The information about her son's relationship with girls seems to sense of loss in the newness of Gogol's attitude. It is completely different from what she had known in her previous middle-class Indian life at Calcutta. Later, she compared the world of her birth with her new habitation and her search for the familiar with new environment. Her memories of home are the only compensation for "the loss of native hearth and homeland" (Said 1993:178).

Ashima seems to be adapting to resist American culture from the beginning. She does not consciously attempt to go beyond her role of an immigrant Indian lady and a mother of two children. As the family wanted to retain their native culture and transform

it of their son and daughter become failed in their attempt. When Ashima sees her children becoming cultural orphans in the United States, therefore, the children do not know what to do after their parents' suggestion and restricted life with them. The family finally realized that the solution for the problem is abandoned to them. The protagonist knows that his real identity and he is overstated by both cultures. He does not have one, but they have two culture. He is confused to choose which is better for his future. These conflict issue proves that the inner psyche of characters and brings out clashes over on cultures automatically. The family is trying to come out this turmoil but Gogol is able to stand on his feet. He has no longer hated himself of the way he has been living since childhood. Therefore, his mother has experienced the different phases of her life as a mother, wife, and daughter.

Ashima's Memories and Experiences

The novel *The Namesake* opens with Ashima and her husband Ashoke in Massachusetts in the month of August 1968. Both are eagerly waiting for their new baby into the world. Of course, rights now it was the happy time, a memorable moment when Ashima had given birth a baby child. The message passed to India and waiting for the grandmother's letter around one month had gone. There is no information from or a telephone call from the reparative. They have little confusion to call the baby? Baby? kiddo? Him. They have to enter into the name in the birth certificate otherwise they cannot leave in the hospital. Before delivery, Ashima worried about her stay in the hospital where she is alone, no one is not there, "It is the first time in her life alone, surrounded by strangers; all her life she has slept either in a room with her parents, or with Ashoke at her side" (Lahiri 2003). She longed to hear a voice of her husband; here she reveals so much of pain alone herself. Anyhow, she knows, she would survive. It is the consequence attending as motherhood in a foreign country without the family and close relatives.

Ashima's first child grown up named Gogol is an Old Russian man's last name. Then Gogol starts school and Ashoke tries to give Nikil. But Gogol refused. His name it has a strong connection to Russian literature. He is adding neither Bengali nor his present American future. Gogol or Nikil? They are getting a little confusion to call him. "He is afraid to be Nikil, someone he doesn't know. Who does not know him?" (3.19) therefore, "Not only does Gogol Ganguli have a pet name turned first name. And so it occurs to him that no one he knows in the world, in Russia or India or America or anywhere, shares his name. Not even the source of his namesake" (4.26) As a school going small boy who is discovering strangeness of his name and sometimes ashamed of it himself. Honestly, he decides to change his name to Nikil before him entering College at Yale.

Being a foreigner, Ashmia never thinks of her husband name when she remembers her husband. She has followed like the traditional Indian woman. During her stay in America never change anything in her activities and habits including her dress, she wore sari. They celebrated Gogol's annaprasad (rice ceremony), all these would determine the child's future. When the years go by, more of Ashima and Ashok's Indian culture pass away. Their son starts to fit into American culture fully because his native. Still, both husband and wife little bit touch with Bengali customs but their children cannot. In College, Gogol develops a love of architecture in his drawing class when it reminds his experience at the Taj Mahal. The family once visited India, towards the end of their stay they he was really impressed by the exquisite architecture. He does not anything interested in Bengali roots to share it with the family. He is away from his family, spends with his friends and becomes his own culture. It seems to forget his parental roots and the thing that left him connects to his birth land. The author says in an interview: "it was always a question of allegiance, of choice. She wanted to please my parents and meet their expectations; she wanted to meet expectations of her parents and meet their expectation, she also wanted to meet expectations of her American peers and the expectations she put on herself to fit into American society. It is a classic case of divided identity" (Lahiri 118).

Gogol's Childhood Experience

As from the childhood onwards Gogol once enjoyed his own luxuries American environment with the moral support of his father. His father's sudden death change begins to regret a lot. Ashoke's disappearance sakes entire family especially Ashima because others do not show a lot of emotion instead one who feels is Ashima. The family came to understand the feelings of alienation, cultural shock, and homesickness that may be many immigrants feel it. Macwan says that "alienation is a part of the experience of the Indian Diaspora and even if people are at home in any part of the world it does not mean that they will not become victims of the sense of alienation. The dilemma of name cannot be solved by the name on record. The identity of the individual, which is consistently affected by society, is something one has to discover through a process of reflections and negotiations" (Macwan 2015). This shows the second isolation to the protagonist's family. During his college days he fall in love with a girl named Ruth. When she departs for semester holidays at Oxford, leaves him alone and lonely. The second meet they break up their relationship. At last he learns thoroughly the origin of his strange and frustrating past memories. It is the tough time to move ahead. Every year the family celebrates Ashoke's birthday and commemorate the day of death. A garland of rose petals covered over his picture.

Ashima feels lonely, suddenly, horrible, permanently alone, and briefly, turned away from the mirror; she sobs for her husband. She feels overwhelmed by the thought of the more she is what to make to the city life that was once home and is now in its own way foreign. It has come to expect deep, intense feeling from Ashima, but these are many really and particularly. Due this sudden crisis of Ashima's family she has plans to move back to India, she things that now Calcutta as foreign to them. However, many happenings in Gogol's life story are predictable, but the unexpected changes made, rejoicings over his little triumphs. A down memory is inevitable in every walks of individuals life especially Ashima's family. And also the author reflects a clear and

simple account of the predicament of the protagonist of the novel. He is constantly reminded of the uniqueness of his name, neither Indian nor America. Sometimes he hates his life with it. The past does not leave him alone; instead he gets more stress as well. His family attempts to do the best he can by not only transforming into true foreign culture but at the same time retaining their own Indian customs. Gogol's mother often regret that where she is related to, no one in the new place, which brings her to know little, realizes being a foreigner not proper American citizen. In this connection reflects the opposite reaction from her children. But the sudden death of Gogol's father is the eye-opener to his children that makes them reinterpret the cultural values of Bengali family. They can never find their place in the foreign land, longing to and unhappy relations with new society.

Conclusion

To sum up this paper, in *The Namesake*, each one of the Gogol's family realized their isolation from native culture. The novel is the portrayal of woman's perspective and different views on her life struggle in the foreign country. Gogol's family settled in faraway from native place longing to reunite their relatives. Merely they had an own experiences of memory which remains they were separated. Many things happened to the family, which was impossible to prepare but which one spent a lifetime looking back at, trying to accept, interpret, and comprehend. The family meets alienated society that seemed out of place and wrong in their settlement. It prevailed, what endured, in the end.

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