

THE STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY AND CULTURAL INTERFERENCE IN JUMPA LAHIRI'S THE NAMESAKE

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ABSTRACT:

The world has become a global village due to fast developing technology. In the fast globalizing world in which the boundaries are becoming redundant, there is expected to be cultural openness and co operation. The question of identity is always a difficult one and especially for those who are culturally displaced , as immigrants are those who grow up in two worlds simultaneously. The Namesake is essentially a story about the culture, race and inheritance and how these factors mold our attitudes and direct our lives in the society. The novel follows the lives of Ashima and Ashoke Ganguli , and how they left behind a life in India that they had grown to know and love to live the American dream and provide the best life for themselves and their children. The current research work highlights the cultural Interference and identity crisis in JumpaLahiri's The Namesake.

KEY WORDS:

Culture, identity, social content, immigrants, alienation.

The novel narrates the assimilation of an Indian Bengali family from Calcutta, the Ganguli into American culture, the cultural dilemmas experienced by them, and their American born children in different ways; the special, cultural and emotional dislocation suffered by them in their efforts to settle home in the new land. The Namesake , takes the Ganguli family from their tradition bound life in Calcutta through their fraught transformation into America. The major theme portrayed in the novel is identity, vividly illustrated by examining the importance of one's name as the definition of patriarchal lineage , background and gender as a means by which one's destiny in life is dictated.

The novel shows the immigrants of cultural dilemmas in the foreign system Lahiri shows that the immigrants in the enthusiasm to stick to their own cultural beliefs and customs gradually adopt the cultural ways of the host country too. Their own children groomed to be “bilingual” and “bicultural” face dilemmas and displacement more. The Namesake also shows how these immigrants are making efforts to preserve their ‘home culture’ in their new homes. The first generation immigrants train their children in Bengali language literature and history at home and through special Bengali classes and expose them to their own family ancestry , religious custom , rites, beliefs food tastes , habit and mannerisms. They also groom them to cope with the way of life in America.

The identities of Diaspora individuals and communities can neither be placed only in relation to some homeland to which they all long to return nor to that country alone where they settle down. The main characters of this novel face the crisis of hybrid Sonia, Gogol’s sister completely assimilates into American culture with ease, while Ashima’s forbearance against the same culture is meticulously sustained until the end of the novel.

Though Gogol is a born citizen and desires to blend in the American society, he is not viewed as an American by other Americans. He tries to put a wall between his past and his present but it is not easy. With the adoption of the name ‘Nikhil’ he can live only in the present but he cannot forget his old name. culture suggest the arts , customs and institutions of a certain people or nation, thereby helping us to distinguish a certain group of people from others and one nation from another. The Namesake is a novel that celebrates the cultural hybridity resulting from globalization and the connection of the modern world and rethinks conventional immigrant’s experience. Lahiri is aware of the existing problem of cultural diversity in the multicultural United states and she argues that the struggle to grasp a transnational identity becomes an urgent issue for immigrants in this environment.

The cultural displacement damages the sacred bond of marriage in the lives of Indian immigrants. The marital conflict comes to the fore because “in India a strict set of guidelines dictates how husbands and wives act both publicly and privately, in America, such guidelines are not as clear cut and often, are thrown out guidelines together.” The first-generation and the second generation immigrants are at loggerheads over marriage. To the first generation immigrants like Ashoke and Ashima, marriage is a sacred thing and it instills in their mind that it is their duty to remain as couple till their last breath on the earth. But the second generation immigrants like Gogol and Moushumi, fail to remain loyal to this parental tradition. After leading a happy life for a year and a few months, Moushumi doesn’t want to continue her married life with him. She now wants to be a life partner of Dimitri, with whom she had had a relationship even before she married Gogol. She applies for a divorce and flies back to New York. The second generation immigrants’ attitude towards marriage and married life undergo a drastic change under the influence of the Western culture (American culture).

Through Gogol, Lahiri presents identity crisis several conflicts explore due to cultural practices before the children of Indian parentage. Ashima struggles a lot to put in to Gogol who never likes to be called by this name. The crisis faced by Gogol is the agony of Ashima. Gogol name is the chief causes which make him feel alienated .Gogol loneliness started from the second he entered the World. The word” Identity Crisis “is otherwise called as “a period of uncertainty” and a period of insecurity” when their expected aims come to change. This Identity Crisis develops through experiences of each and every person to accustom to the situation and to overcome the difficulty faced by them in the present world.

Ashoke cherishes his childhood, that he didn't engage himself with his brothers instead he ran silently into his grandfather's s room and when his grandfather went blind he asked his grandson to read some of the books he loves to read with a promise that Ashoke would be gifted with a set of books Ashoke's desire for her to reach the journey that Ashoke made to reach his uniqueness. Becoming a “Mother” is a graceful adorable status of a woman, America or India, the depth of their every woman all over the world.

The novel ‘The Namesake’ deals with the clash between the two different worlds the Ganguli family simultaneously inhabits. And she also focused the cultural disruption by the immigrants in the foreign system. The quest for identity is an incessantly altering world is a daunting task for the immigrants. It explores the dilemma of name and immigrant's sense of identity and belongingness through the characters. The main characters of this novel face the crisis of hybrid or dual identity , which makes their existence all the difficult.

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