



CULTURAL DISLOCATION IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S THE NAMESAKE: AN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the immigrant writer Jhumpa Lahiri who goes beyond the conventional wisdom where she creates her identity as transnational. She emphasizes not only Diaspora, besides that the impact of multiculturalism also explained. It also throws light upon Identity of Diasporic nature, conflict of dual identity and Cultural Dislocation.

Key Words: *Identity, religion, social status, cultural isolation, immigration human relationship, emotional displacement.*

INTRODUCTIUON

The identity of the individual is moulded on the basis of religion , race, caste and economic and social status .Jhumpa Lahiri explores the ideas of cultural and personal isolations and identities through various characters and her debut novel *The Namesake* explores the themes of expatriate painful experiences and cultural dilemmas of the first and second generation Indian immigrants by which the loneliness is one of the burning issues of the expatriate community in the nation of their choice.Lahiri's handling of the complexities of the immigrant experiences in a lucid and simple manner by which she closely analyses the cross-cultural conflicts between Indian and Western culture. She successfully explores the myriad landscape of human relationships by welding the theme of immigration and displacement to that of human relationships against the backdrop of both geographiacal as well as emotional displacement.

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1P a g e



Interpreter of Maladies and *The Namesake* explores the ideas of cultural and personal isolations by which her stories draw upon different aspects of Lahiri's Indian background and project the life of second generation Indian Americans like Lahiri herself. Conflict in relationships between couples, families and friends is projected in *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake*. She correlates her characters' cultural isolation with extreme personal isolation suggesting that the cultural isolation causes the personal. Multiculturalism is a weapon of justice which can solve a quite number of differences between various cultural communities including minorities. The novel *The Namesake* is a deeply moving family drama that illuminates her signature themes like the immigrant experience, the clash of cultures, the tangled ties between generations etc. This work is a dispassionate account of the limited, contented lives of Bengali immigrant community by which the people surrendered themselves to their adopted country without taking the risk of exercising choices. Her first novel *The Namesake*, spans over thirty years in the life of the Ganguli family where her Calcutta born parents immigrated as young adults to United States where Gogol and Sonia experienced the generational and cultural gap with their parents. The story of two generations of an Indian family and their struggle to acculturate themselves in the West is projected through this autobiographical novel. The hybrid identity of the immigrants creates a tumultuous situation in the novel regarding their belongingness and it creates impure identity rather than fixed identity in which national identities get eroded and replaced by the hybrid identities. "They argue riotously over the films of Ritwik Ghatak versus those of Satyajit Ray. The CPIM versus the Congress Party. North Calcutta versus South. For hours they argue about the politics of America, a country in which none of them is eligible to vote." (*The Namesake*, 38). *The Namesake* celebrates cultural hybridity resulting from globalization and it rethinks conventional immigrant experience in which it throws light on national and cultural identities of India suggesting that individuals cannot confine themselves within the narrow concept of national and cultural boundaries characterized by migration. The issues of global migration and cross-cultural elements seem to disavow the popular hearsay and it reflects the fact that 'Home is where the heart lies'. Edward Said's scepticism with the concept of cultures is very relevant and it is as something distinctive, representative of an exclusive to a certain group or nation in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Said writes: Culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Matthew Arnold put it in the 1860's Arnold believed that culture palliates, if it does not altogether neutralizes, the ravage of a modern, aggressive, mercantile and brutalizing urban experience....In time culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the nation or the state, this differentiates 'us from them' almost always with some degree of identity, and a rather combative one at that....(xii) (Said: 1993). Jhumpa Lahiri's characters are in a search for their origin and they find a place that can be called as one's own and it is a choice between the concept of cultural identity and multiculturalism which remained as juxtaposed throughout. Constructing new identity in the foreign country is very difficult and holding the cultural values by sticking the

conventional ways was very difficult for them. The frantic search for the cultural identity, personal identity and psychological identity has been portrayed by Jhumpa Lahiri in a palpable manner by which Gogol is not in a right way until he realizes that he is embellished by new culture. Many characters like Sonia, Moushmi overcomes divided identity by proving the fact that identity is an open question not a guaranteed one.

The Namesake is a novel of identities where Gogol perplexed by his pet name but he has legally changed it to Nikhil and realized how it is difficult to become a different person. Gogol tries on different identities at different stages of his life. Gogol's identity is closely linked to that of his father. Gogol represents the life that followed the horrible train accident he suffered in 1961. Gogol does not understand that part of his identity till his father's dooms day. Another character Moushumi is wrapped up in an identity that is "French then the identity she forms with Gogol etc. Ashima and Ashoke grow closer together. When Ashok dies Ashima begins to learn a new identity, that of a widow which is gained by the support of her family. Lahiri's works are imbued with the ethos of Indian culture and sensibility and it can be examined from a number of perspectives and can be deconstructed.

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