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The Grid of Exilic Actuality and Expedition in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

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Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri's coherent account has been greatly acknowledged and appreciated for scrutinizing the encounters of diasporic mass in the alienland. Jhumpa Lahiri being a lucid fictionalist, has heralded to the futuristic Indian narratives. Lahiri is impelled, at the same time perturbed by the state of the Americans of Indian origin along with their customs, ethos and the authority of lineage which secures an individual to his native land for she herself is an expatriate. The survival of the Ganguli's clan for a stretch of thirty years is what accentuated in *The Namesake*. The novel sheds light on the incessant generational differences sustained by Gogol and Sonia with their parents Ashima and Ashoke. The confrontations which the newcomers experiences in the newly adopted land while hankering for a greater existence is what this research analysis divulges.

Keywords: Acculturation, adaptation, native home, newcomers, origin, distinctiveness and ordeal.

1. Introduction

Disbandment in India has been age-old and it elements the traversing of the Bhuddhist monks to the distinct locations of Asia. The nineteenth and twentieth century saw enormous deportations of Indians to the flourishing nations in search of finer occupations, which has made this period the acme of Indian diaspora. These expatriates endure enormous pain due to their inability to adapt to the new culture still persisting to adhere to their root and acquired culture simultaneously.

The writers who belong to India who exist and render their narratives in alien land exhibit greater resistance towards the existing multiethnicities of the adopted land thusly straddling amidst divergent ethnologies. The narratives of those who identify themselves as the first generation are concentrated towards depicting the yearning of the immigrants along with their homesickness, at the same time enormous accentuation is given to the societal and agonizing afflictions pertaining to the settlers who are on their way to adhere and acclimatize in their current arena altogether.

Jhumpa Lahiri has always been successful in featuring the characters like Ashima Ganguli who wants to locate their identity both physically and psychologically in the world where the barriers like race, culture are diminishing. Lahiri always captures the underlying emotions of alienated individuals further

says, that, Lahiri's own spatial experience marks her as a true representative of melting pot generation. This quality of Lahiri helps her better to understand the psychological trauma faced by the immigrants in the not – so – receptive native culture.

The questions posed on Lahiri about her parental lineage, her birth, cultural identity and home, make her understand the psyche of the displaced people resulting in the novel *The Namesake*. This novel has first generation immigrants leaving from Calcutta in India and arriving in America, hoping for a better life. While the second generation which is born and brought up with a American aspirations, who do not suffer any longing. But the former finds it hard to deviate from their cultural roots.

Lahiri's concern is mainly associated with the dislocation and location, cultural deviation and acceptance, nothingness and identity of a Bengali family. After marriage Ashima joins her husband Ashoke in Cambridge, who is working as a faculty member in an University. Ashima grew averse towards the openness prevailing in America, whereas Ashoke well accepts the American way of living while sticking to his Bengali roots. Ashima grew nostalgic as she feels lonely. She sets to revisit her past in Calcutta.

The main cause of rootlessness caused between families is due to deracination and yearning for their root. The word immigrant itself varies to the first and second generation. Ashima and Ashoke have to face the issue of belongingness in the United States.

Ashoke easily adheres to the cultural surroundings of America. The memories of homeland haunts Ashima, who during her birthing pains turns reminiscent of her family and its members in Calcutta who would have been around her at that hour. In hospital, Ashima was homesick due to the lack of physical and emotional guidance. Ashima recalls the time frame in India and the activities of her family members who would have been engaged at that point of time. She struggles to accept the alien culture, she finds herself : “unmonitored and unobserved by those she loved, had made it more miraculous still” (TN 6). But she was horrified by the fact that she cannot raise her child in the land where nobody was her relation and the place which she knows very little, where every thing seems to be indefinite.

She grew more anxious about naming her son, which would be a ritual in India. Since the letter carrying the name suggested by her grandmother has not arrived they have named their son Gogol after the Russian author Nikolai Gogol. Ashima disapproves the culture of the adopted land very much, for she gave preference for the Bengali rituals and foods. She always tries to make Gogol understand the Bengali stories. She being taken by the sense of nostalgia grew very lonely.

Living in the alien land means a lot to Ashima. For, she realizes it's a kind of endless carrying, never-ending interlude, a perpetual freight. In this process of coping with the new environment one would lose their previous experiences and emotions. Pregnancy brings the same kind of anxiousness in the strangers too.

Gogol, Sonia and Moushumi who constitute the second generation are regardless of their roots. They are greatly attracted by the American way of living, which could be traced by their responses and preferences on various occasions. While in contrast Ashoke and Ashima are deeply attached to their roots, their own place. They are greatly disturbed by their children's carefree attitude developed in the foreign soil, Ashima finds it very hard to attach herself to the alien culture and tradition: “Hurry up and finish your degree” (TN 33). Says Ashima in frustration for she doesn't love to bring Gogol all alone in the new land. She has felt that would not be right and wishes to go back.

The values they have gained in their mother country has its very impression on everything they follow and represent alike naming their kids and decisions connected to their marriages. They also resist any deviation from their roots, especially to the openness of American society and the children's yearning for freedom and privacy. In spite of all these things they also become less rigid to inculcate the new culture, and also wants to be identified in the alien soil too, being attached to their roots. This

characteristic involving various cultural things into one, becomes the diasporic writers fascination. They are always inclined to project the ordeals of people who struggles being caught betwixt ethnologies.

The second generation of immigrants have no sense of attachment to the ancestral land and yearning for the past. They can't think beyond the place of their birth. They feel more at ease in the American ways, for they have entirely Americanized. They simply hate even to visit the ancestral land during Ashoke's sabbatical. Nobody enquired about their visit to India and they too do not want to share those things to anyone except when Gogol causally refers to it during his journey in train with Ruth.

Gogol, Sonia and Moushumi do not find at home in India. They love the land and space where any impropriety in morality would not be questioned. They don't even find any guilt in flirting before marriage, which hurts their parents.

The very idea of nativeland is identified variably by the members of Ganguli's family. For Gogol and Sonia America remains to be their land of birth, they feel that they belong to America. Whereas to Ashoke and Ashima India remains their adopted land. That is why Ashima wishes to spend a greater part of the year in India after her husband's death. She wanted to be rooted to her origin, and she also expects the same from her children. Gogol and Sonia cannot adjust to the Indian ways, moving constantly, attending relatives, surrounded by neighbours and friends. They lack the privacy which they enjoy in America. India remains a strange place to them where they couldn't connect culturally and emotionally.

Ashoke and Ashima form a bond between two divergent culture, breaching the wall of hatred and other things within. They pave the way for homogeneity. Primarily in order to make their children feel comfortable in the alien land, the parents try to make everything peaceful celebrating Christmas, encouraging Gogol to speak English fluently. Ashima also unwillingly approves Gogol's relationship with Moushumi and Sonia's marriage to a half – Jewish, Half – Chinese – Ben. Ashima tries to partially accept the alien culture and tries to adhere to it for her children's sake. Gogol and Sonia felt that their parents suffer, finding a chord to learn alien culture and traditions.

2. Conclusion

Gogol's aversion towards his name have been diluted when he comes to know the true story behind his name and he decides to change his name to Nikhil Gogol Ganguli. The more he abhorred his roots the more he grew closer, for his name itself has an Indian identity. Ashima shuns the reservation of her native land thereby she belongs to the place where her kids also belong resulting in cultural pluralism.

The entire world has shrunk into a village encouraging people to move from place to place, either temporarily or permanently, where they should adapt the alien culture without being detached from their roots. *The Namesake* suggests that dislocation and assimilation are very common but there should be a fine balance between the two. Specifications and identities could never be complete amidst its complex originations. Thus *The Namesake* centers on the psychological travails of the protagonist Gogol who tries to fix a sense of belongingness and distinctiveness for himself out of his tricultural adaptation.

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