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Diasporic Consciousness In Jhumpa Lahiri's Novel The Namesake

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Abstract

In Indo-English literature, diaspora has always been a big problem. The majority of Indian English Literature fiction authors are based in other countries, but they have never been uprooted from their homeland, hence diaspora is an important part in their work. Jhumpa Lahiri is yet another shining star in Indo-English literature, notably diasporic literature. In the year 2000, she was awarded the renowned Pulitzer Prize for fiction. In this essay, the author discusses diasporic issues, diaspora in indo-English fiction, indo-English diasporic literature, how to distinguish Jhumpa Lahiri from other Indian writers working in English, and a comparison between the namesake and the lowland diaspora, as well as cross-cultural identity.

Her first novel *The Namesake* is the work of a fine writer. Her first novel, *The Namesake*, is incredibly engaging, elegant, and lucid, and her second novel, *The Lowland*, is essentially a narrative about two brothers, but it might easily be a story about ideology, and how it molds the family and ties the lives touched by two brothers.

Keywords: *Diaspora, Jhumpa Lahiri, Immigration, exile, nostalgia etc.*

1. Introduction

The term diaspora arises from the words *dia* meaning —away and *speire* in meaning —scatter or —sow Connotatively, the diaspora has also been defined variedly by many people. At the beginning, applied to refer to the dispersal of Jews outside Israel, the term diaspora as per the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary currently refers to —*The movement of people from any nation or group far away from their own country* (Hornby, 1995) as diaspora has varied meaning.

People have always sought a better and more fulfilling life for themselves because they are self-centered. Everyone has been studying and exploring since the beginning of our globe till today's sophisticated time in order to have the best for the living ones and to make them comfortable. Man travels from one location to another in search of comfort and success, as well as to meet his or her needs. Most of the time, those who are left behind are left with their homelands to build a brighter future than those who have previously departed.

Jhumpa Lahiri is a well-known and well-known Indian American novelist who has been a much-admired chronicler of one's Bengali immigrant experience, and she understands the worth and challenges that immigrant encounter and has explored them in depth. Her paintings depict migrant experiences as well as their loyalty to their country as well as their desire to belong in an established area for the benefit of economic and social life, and she was drawn to their way of life. This will to have a look at various diasporic aspects and features in the fictions of Jhumpa Lahiri particularly the short story collections in *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) after her first novel *The Namesake* (2003). It's essential because Jhumpa Lahiri is the daughter of an Indian migrant, and she believes that the topic of identity is always a difficult one for people who are culturally displaced and reared in two cultures at the same time, as she is questioning or inquiring about others as well.

People living in the diaspora are always in a dual condition, which causes others to be confused and disagree. Individual and family stress is exacerbated by their sense of alienation and dislocation, despite the fact that their experiences of alienation and dislocation will differ both individually and collectively, since alienation makes one feel alone amid all. Her characters make an attempt to become a new self but not really letting go of the old self, resulting in universally appealing stories. Lahiri's work will be a delicate and balanced voice within the Indian and international diasporic literature since she seeks paradoxical approaches of dealing with challenges of diasporic living.

In English, Indian authors have selected subjects and situations that are relevant across the world, if not the entire world, since they choose what affects a large number of people. These topics are not many, as different sections of India have diverse social structures, values, norms, and practices, yet they are deeply felt by many. The post-independence Indian English fiction is devoid of social and political implications, and there is a change in focus toward the individual and self-identification, as it is more frequently used to describe a person in a personal context rather than in a political context.

In recent years, Indian writing in English has gained enormous importance not just in India but also throughout the world, yet Indian writing is concise. The short story is, without a doubt, the most popular literary genre today. Short tale authors in English hail from all across the country, with a wide range of socioeconomic, cultural, and familial origins. However, what connects them is their use of English as a means of expression, with varied cultural expression blended in, and the outcome is vibrant.

Diaspora Theory, with its many distinct aspects and qualities, has inspired and continues to influence the literature of every language on the world. Expatriate or Diasporic Literature is the name given to this type of literature all over the world. It would be fair to analyze the aspect and of such literature in which Indian Writing in English has not only made a significant contribution but has also earned worldwide acclaim and adoration in recent years and has left an indelible mark all over the world.

Nilanjana Sudeshna "Jhumpa" Lahiri (Bengali; born on July 11, 1967) is an American author and is very well known among all. Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the most significant writers of the Indian diaspora in the present time, and she is expert in her writing skills. Lahiri's commence the task of short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, along with her first novel, *The Namesake* (2003), was adapted directly into a popular film of the same name and is famous among all.

With her breakthrough series *Interpreter of Maladies*, Lahiri became the first American of Asian heritage to win the Pulitzer Prize, America's highest literary prize, and she did so on her own. Jhumpa Lahiri received the James Beard Foundation's M.F.K. Fisher Distinguished Writing Award (2000) and a Guggenheim Fellowship (2002) for her devotional writing. Her second literary effort, *The Namesake*, was published in 2003 and received the same rapturous response. *The Namesake*, like her earlier novel, revealed her subjective perspective on immigration and exile from one area to another. In *Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa applies many different perspectives and outlooks of narration, viz male, female as well as children viewpoint of narration conversely in *The Namesake* she presented solely male perspective, she shows all the perspective but differently in different time.

Lahiri discusses immigrant displacements as well as deracination and alienation from their new home, and believes that practically every American can relate on some level to a family history of crossing an ocean, as it is with almost everyone at some point in their lives.

In her writings, Lahiri mostly discusses cultural clashes and the topic of human identity as a whole. Lahiri also tries her hardest to describe some proper native characters living in India through her own perspective that she feels for them, and as readers, we can tell she did a fantastic job in her literature because it shows that even though she was born and raised in a foreign land, she is never rooted from her nativeness and it still exists in her blood, which is something very significant about Diaspora writing in literature.

Lahiri's fictions tell us a lot about the experiences of migrant families and migrant people, where we have both the first and second generations telling their stories separately or individually about them, and each of them has that plight of living in a foreign land away from homeland, and those of the second generations have their own difficulties of blending in. Lahiri has travelled widely throughout India, where he witnessed the impacts of colonialism as well as the difficulties of the diaspora, which is deeply ingrained in the country. She has strong feelings for her parents' homeland, as well as the United States and England, but she accepts it. Growing up with links to all three nations gave Lahiri a sense of homelessness and an inability to feel welcomed, yet she seemed to have accepted from the outside.

Lahiri, a well-known young Indian writer, serves as a kind of emblematic figure for non-immigrant Americans who are unfamiliar with what it takes to straddle the cultural divide and the consequences of doing so.

Jhumpa Lahiri belongs to the second type of Asian American writers who deal with India as an exotic nation for a living, and likewise with the issues of Indian immigrants adjusting in a foreign land for their survival.

Because of being an immigrant, both *The Interpreter of Maladies* and, of course, *The Namesake* feature themes of struggle in relationships between spouses, families, and friends. She investigates notions of isolation and identity, both personal and cultural, in each of these interactions, which influence everyone in the family. Characters in both works commonly have identity crises as a result of their inability to reconcile their American and Indian identities. Lahiri frequently leaves these crises unsolved and left for the reader, particularly in the short stories in *Interpreter of Maladies*. As a result, her writing presents us with a fairly pessimistic outlook on the future of her characters, indicating the type of reader she is. We can assume that this reflects some of Lahiri's anxieties about their real-life counterparts and what will happen. She frequently links her characters' cultural isolation with great personal isolation, implying that cultural isolation is the source of personal problems. In most cases, the resolution or avoidance of cultural isolation is accompanied by a comparable resolution or avoidance of personal isolation, and people grow concerned about personal isolation.

Jhumpa Lahiri's novels deal with seemingly mundane issues, but they raise themes about culture, identity, and the subject's position and condition in an Americanized neocolonial society about an immigrant who is dissatisfied in their new home. Bhabha has looked at the problem of being between two cultures, yet occupying a space that belongs to neither is always a scenario of two new cultures. Jhumpa Lahiri, although being an American, belongs to a diaspora of writers who may be connected with and studied within a postcolonial framework because she is also an immigrant. However, the questions of identity in her fiction invite compelling and important scholarly inquiry whether the identity is preserved or not (Gholipour & Sanahmadi, 2013).

One of the key topics in *The Namesake* that might be transmitted throughout the entire work is the notion of identity, and the person is battling for one. As an immigrant, practically everyone in the narrative is either a little bit lost or a lot lost. Practically every character battle with his or her identity, as each character is torn between different cultures, customs, and dreams, and each character's identity is being lost and fought for.

Gogol/Nikhil particularly is stuck in between two cultures- the Indian traditions of his parents and the mainstream American culture wherein he grows up and is fighting between two cultures. Gogol and his sister, Sonia face a similar struggle as an immigrant. It's related to the struggle their parents undergo as immigrants and has lost being as an immigrant. Each character faces a choice: should I accept American culture or should I not? If so, how much? Will I be betraying my roots if I do accept other culture? Characters constantly think of these questions through their relationships along with their names, their relationships with their families, and also their choices regarding the future whether they should accept or not. In *The Namesake*, everybody is just a little bit lost. Or a lot lost, frankly because identity is still a question. Practically every character struggle with his or her identity because practically every character feels the tug and pull of different cultures, different traditions, and different dreams because fighting for their exact identity. Normally, the subject of identification is emphasized on Gogol's identity. They have two names in the novel: Gogol and Nikhil, whose identities are in question. He was Gogol when he was confused, furious, and didn't feel like himself. He also didn't feel kind. He despised that name, yet it was it that provided him with his first and real identity, since his identity began there.

He will always be known as Gogol, his previous persona, around his family and friends (school). Gogol is a name that indicates his ties to his family and the place where he was born. On the other hand, the same person goes by the name Nikhil. When he adopts the name Nikhil for Gogol, his persona comes to life. He felt brave, fearless, and most importantly, he felt like himself. With the name Nikhil, he knows who he is. He loses his virginity by using the name Nikhil, and that name has to lead him to fulfill and have relationships with multiple women which he never had with Gogol (Ruth, Maxine, Bridget, and Moushumi). He legally changes his name to Nikhil before going to college since he didn't think Gogol was appropriate for her.

Nikhil comes to symbolize his independence and isolation from his parents or the new culture. With a new name and a new culture, it might also indicate him accepting American society and separating himself from Indian culture. The twist occurs when people start calling him Nikhil, and he is taken aback because he has retained his new name. He prefers the name Nikhil to Gogol, but he doesn't feel like Nikhil since he prefers this name. He feels like Gogol on the inside, despite the fact that he despises the name and has adopted a new one. This adds to the controversy of his identity: is he Gogol or Nikhil not clear? Or is he a mix of both? Gogol by day, and Nikhil by night not known till now? Perhaps he is trying to emulate a superhero with two identities (Bruce Wayne and Batman, Clark Kent and Superman, Peter Parker and Spiderman), or perhaps not or is he confused.

In *The Namesake*, the concept of identity is a very difficult one, as the characters strive to discover their actual and pure identities since they have multiple identities of recognition. They're always asking themselves questions about who they are, where they belong, and why he is the way he is. Are they Indian or American not clear? Or are they a hybrid of both not known? The characters in the novel live their lives trying to answer these questions as well as search for answers through their relationships, actions, and dreams why he is here and what he has to get. Leisurely, they find some answers but not true exactly. Their journey might lead them to find the answers they need, as they fight to continue the search for the truth of their identity.

The lives of Lahiri's characters were made palpably real to readers in her 2003 novel *The Namesake*, as well as in her two collections of short stories - *Unaccustomed Earth* and *Interpreter of Maladies* - through her exacting evocation of their everyday routines: the Wonder Bread sandwiches tinted green with curry that a Bengali mother makes for her embarrassed daughter to take to school, the careful adoption of American rituals like making snow, and so on.

Lahiri's novel, —*The Namesake*, which depicted the angst of a young Bengali-American named Gogol a person who is fighting for his identity, had the virtues of a ferocious devotion to realist description, a satirical edge when probing upper-class New York pretensions, and a simple, linear plot unable to understand why identity by means of name means so much for others. In *The Lowland*, the narrative moves back and forth through time and across the points of view of all the principal characters and explain about all characters, but this diffusion does not appear to be in the service of formal

playfulness or experimentation in the spirit of one of the many variants of modernism but trying to find the identity of migrants.

Today, the Indian Diaspora has evolved into diverse transnational societies that connect the local and “global.” It is made up of professionals from several sectors such as information technology, medicine, space technology, engineering, and management. The establishment of these networks among the Indian Diaspora in general, and regional/ linguistic/ caste Diasporas in particular, has been helped by advancements in communication and transportation technologies. This is evident in transnational and global organizations among expatriate Indian populations, involving their motherland as well as their relatives all over the world, in social, political, and cultural networks. These relationships have been fostered during the last decade thanks to the encouragement and participation of the Indian government and a number of other state governments in different political and economic affairs. Despite the fact that the Indians are separated by a great distance, they stay connected by bonds of actual or imagined family, common resources, and cultural exchanges. They maintain and re-create their identities in new locations around the world.

2. Conclusion

The fundamental focus of diasporic authors has been problems of identity, nostalgia, longing, and desire for home. The three fundamental components of diasporic identity are language, culture, and history. The purpose of this research is to look at how diaspora has become a dominating or significant issue in South Asian literature. In the investigation, I attempted to summarize Lahiri's ability to handle diaspora in her fictions. The study is designed to depict the pains, sentiments, experiences, ups and downs, wealth and misfortunes of diasporic individuals represented in Lahiri's fictions.

Readers are constantly asked to go from India to America alongside the characters in Lahiri's work. Lahiri's fictions beautifully depict Indian immigrants, their accomplishments, hardships, and conflicts, as well as their lives.

She depicts the lives of two generations of an immigrant Bengali family in America, the Ganguli's, in *The Namesake*. It may also be claimed that in Diaspora literature, people's identities are inextricably linked to the spaces they occupy and navigate. Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction, in particular, addresses the relationship between geography and identity. Her works also depict international space, or the “third space,” as areas of junction of subjectivities, generations, and cultures for Diaspora individuals

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