

Saarth

E-Journal of Research

ISSN NO: 2395-339X

CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN THE NOVEL “THE NAMESAKE” OF JHUMPA LAHIRI

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ABSTRACT

Writers of every era are always mirror of contemporary age, which reflects image of political and social condition of that society. Social, political and moral thinking can be seen reflected in the literature of the age. So many novels, fictions, short stories, drama and poetries are written regarding the events and episode of zamindars and landless farmers as well as cultural conflicts in India and abroad. So many movies are also released on the same content. Jhumpa Lahiri's original name is Nilanjana Sudeshna. "Jhumpa Lahiri" is her nickname (Bengali born on July 11, 1967) is an American author. (The rest history of this author is presented and published at many places and so the author is not repeating it here again and is directly coming to the content related to the article title.)

Key Words: Culture, Conflict, Fiction, Novel, Events

INTRODUCTION

Lahiri's ambivalence over her identity was the inspiration for the ambivalence of Gogol, the protagonist of her novel “The Namesake”, over his unusual name. Lahiri's early short stories faced rejection from publishers for years. Her debut short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, was finally released in 1999. Lahiri's second collection of short stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*, was released on April 1, 2008. Lahiri's writing is characterized by her "plain" language and her characters, often Indian immigrants to America who must navigate between the cultural values and conflicts of their homeland and their adopted home. Lahiri's fiction is autobiographical and frequently draws upon her own experiences as well as those of her parents, friends, acquaintances, and others in the Bengali communities with which she is familiar. Lahiri examines her characters' cultural conflicts, struggles, anxieties, and bosses to chronicle the nuances and details of immigrant psychology and behavior. Until *“Unaccustomed Earth”*, she focused mostly on first generation Indian American immigrants and their struggle to raise a family in a country very different from theirs. Her stories describe their efforts to keep their children acquainted with Indian culture and traditions and to keep them close even after they have grown up in order to hang onto the Indian tradition of a joint family, in which the parents, their children and the children's families live under the same roof and to keep them away from the cultural conflicts.

“Unaccustomed Earth” departs from this earlier original ethos, as Lahiri's characters' embark on new stages of development. These stories scrutinize the fate of the second and third generations. As succeeding generations become increasingly assimilated into American culture and are comfortable in constructing perspectives outside of their country of origin, Lahiri's fiction shifts to the needs of the individual and their struggle for cultural conflicts.

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She shows how later generations depart from the constraints of their immigrant parents, who are often devoted to their community and their responsibility to other immigrants but still are facing the cultural conflicts.

“THE NAMESAKE”

“*The Namesake*” is fantastically readable, warm and profound novel. This is a novel that explores concepts of cultural identity & conflicts of rootlessness, of tradition and familial expectations but never succumbs to the clichés those themes so often entail. Instead, the author turns it into something both larger and simpler: the story of a man and his family, of his life and hopes, love and sorrows, She has talent-magical sly, cumulative- that most writers would kill for. The novel is eloquent. Prose of Lahiri is striking spurning the antsy, transultural wordplay precision. She loves to amass inventories like Victorian urban chronicler. Things matter to her and to her characters they are bulwarks against drift and confusion. The novel “*The Namesake*” is lucid, generous in its narrative scope, and an extremely accomplished first novel of the kind. In this way, Jhumpa Lahiri is a good novelist, like Bengali parents, must make their creations unique and her central characters like Ashima Ganguli and Gogol are painfully believable. This is her extremely good first novel, a glowing miniature of tiny (very small) family making the voyage between the two worlds.

Prose of Jhumpa Lahiri is refined and empathetic. Each character of her patches together, at her own, identity making the fable neither uniquely which is Asian, not uniquely American, but tenderly barely a human facing the cultural conflicts. “The Namesake” is in extraordinary book that spins gold out of straw of ordinary lines. Her prose is calm, pellucid grace. Her writing is sustained stench of crystal clear. Tone pulls the reader from beginning to end in one neat. Her every detail, every observation, every sentence rings with the clarity of truth. In this way, “The Namesake” is a novel that makes its reader feel privileged to be allowed access to its immensely empathetic world. “*The Namesake*” covers time span of thirty years from pregnancy of Ashima Ganguli to thirty years of her son Gogol. The novel manages to represent without patronizing, life within the confines of a professional expatriate enclave. The author is at her best while mapping these confines, and the cultural conflicts between individual pursuits and family loyalties reality, it is family loyalties. Really, it is fluid, accessible and very nice. After winning a Pulitzer Prize with *Interpreter of Maladies*, which is a collection of stories, this novel “The Namesake” published by Jhumpa Lahiri is in full glare of critical attention. The author has responded admirably to the pressure, serving up a beautifully written novel without a hint of ostentation. She turns the banal trajectory of an unremarkable life to advantage, finding subtle patterns in...."a string of accidents, unforeseen and unintended".....it is a detail, as much as the ironies embedded in the narrative, that makes “*The Namesake*” such a joy to read in one sitting. It is a thoughtful and heartwarming novel, which proves Lahiri a born story teller.

Her prose reveals her as a mistress of the small moment with a debt to the Russian classics. It is a quality moving tale that explores the somewhat fashionable themes of racial and cultural identify in un-shown elegant prose. It is graceful, funny as well as sad, its theme dislocation and the trauma of building a new life in a different western world. In building that new life, something must also be restored, which is narrated here.

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CONCLUSION

After an arranged marriage, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli leave Calcutta to settle in Cambridge, Massachusetts. With extraordinary effective economy, here the author analyses the cultural conflicting attractions of the American way of life and the tug of tradition starts. The author has a marksman's eye for the detail: the texture of flesh or food, fleeting unease, the small betrayal that singles reader the doom of a love affair. While reading the vertical and horizontal threads of the novel we can say that, her writing has a breadth and authority to die for, and a whirlpool effect on its readers if one becomes one, resigns thyself to being sucked in right now and then. Yep, that's good.

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