

DISCRIMINATING MARGINS OF TWO DIFFERENT SOCIAL MILIEUS: NOSTALGIA AND AMNESIA IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S WRITINGS

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Abstract:

Literature brings positive bringing alterations in the society. The new works in Indian English Writing are gracious. Its dimensions are extending to conscious existence and ways in recent civilization and current literature. In the last two decades, there has been a surprising blooming of Indian Women Writing in English and the literature of this time is published both in India and in foreign. They are mainly Western liberated writers who present their dissatisfaction with the repressive culture that captures entire mankind in the chains of unidentified identity. In the modern age when all the boundaries are breaking and this world has become a nation, this shows that anthology becomes more important.

Keywords: *Nostalgia, Alienation, immigrant, Banishment, Culture.*

Dr. Malti Agrawal reveals 'the Diasporic Writings which are also known as expatriate writings' or 'immigrant writings' largely give voice to the traumatic experiences of the writers when they are on the rack owing to the clash of two cultures or the racial discrimination they undergo. Immigration proves a pleasant experience only to a few immigrants who succeed in assimilating themselves with new geographical, cultural, social and psychological environment (Agrawal 41-42).

While stating of Indian diaspora fiction in English, there are numerous questions come into our mind, for example; Does it have its free individuality? Does it possess some unmatched characteristics that fixed its distinct position? Does it reveal 'Indianness' in real sense? How such authors rule over Indian English Writing and so on? Diaspora fiction focuses over alienation, nostalgia, existential rootlessness, homelessness, loneliness, confirmations, protest and quest for identity. It also shows issues connected to union or disintegration of cultures, unequal boundaries of two distinct, social milieus, bearing a compelled amnesia and internalizing nostalgia- we may summon it a literary and cultural phenomenon with a separate dissolving, pot syndrome or that of salad born where identity of each component part is under questions. The author has to relocate himself a new for which he has to endure repentance such as rearrangement, fitness, participation and completion amidst perplexing situations and self-imposed ghettoisation. There are numerous Indian women authors lived in Britain, USA, Canada and other countries of the world. The new authors like Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee are revealing the cultural conflict suffered by Indian females who are provided western education. The observation of being entrapped between two cultures has become a significant theme in their works. These writers express their conditions in cross-cultural context-situation of in betweenness. Their works carry their auto-biographical principles. They have revealed female subjectivity in order to establish an individuality that is not imposed by a particular society. The concept of the new woman and her protest for an identity requires assistance structures in and outside of the family to inspire women to survive.

While the first generation migrants Bharati Mukherje, Shashi Deshpande and Anita Desai presented the issues like nostalgia, racism, craving and rootlessness, the second generation authors with their loose grip of real situation in contemporary India are attempting to present their imaginary homeland

as they are not openly in contact with actuality of India. This distance oppresses to objectivity and ossification of cultural creation. Jhumpa Lahiri, a new entrant into the world of Indian Diasporic authors, deals with the much debated topic of cultural individuality of India in a distant land. She reveals the current topic of cultural and racial identity. As cited in the novel, *The Namesake*: "Its theme of dislocation and the pain of building a new life in a different world shows that in building the new life, something must also be destroyed" (Lahiri 1).

Lahiri skillfully reveals the themes of intricacies of the immigrant observation, the conflict of lifestyle, encounter of assimilation, cultural disorientation, knitted lies between generations and delineates a picture of an Indian family separated between the pull of esteeming family tradition and the American style of living. Lahiri, the Bostonian is a real-blood Bengali. In spite of having experienced all her conscious existence in the U.S.A and U.K, she highlights the subtle nuances of typical Bengali style of living and culture. While her Pulitzer-winning collection of stories *Interpreter of Maladies* chiefly deals with her experience in Kolkata. Her novel, *The Namesake* forcefully delineates the disillusionment of the Bengali immigrants to the US, whose kids matures up rootless- strange to the culture of their nation of origin, not entirely comfortable in the society in which they really live.

Jhuma Lahiri's stories do not revolve around the "Indianness" of the characters. India is always in the background but the characters and their emotions are simply human (Vasthare 3).

Lahiri plays with the reversal of gender roles particularly as they connect to wife and husband roles within marital realm. Whereas in India, a hard set of rules directs how spouses act both publicly in America, such rules are not as clear-cut and oftentimes are thrown out altogether. Lahiri's married characters often handle with confusion of marriage roles in connection to cooking, functioning out of home and bearing children. According to Lahiri's generalizations of Indian marital culture, females are completely accountable for working domestic works as well as becoming totally domesticated with the coming of children. Males are accountable for operating and giving financial support to their families.

Lahiri's characters particularly the ones in Diaspora, must cope with recant and sometimes surprisingly distinct gender roles in their recent homelands. Generation and culture shock upon forwarding away from the 'homeland' and interrogations of sexuality toy their roles in Lahiri's illustrations of gender and what it means to Indians in Diaspora. *Interpreter of Maladies* as showing the trauma of self-change through immigration which can culminate in a shattered identities that from multiple anchorages, Lahiri's tales depict the diasporic struggle to contain culture as characters make new lives in foreign cultures. Affinities, religion, rituals and languages all assist these characters keep their culture in unknown surroundings even as they create a 'hybrid realization' as Asian Americans. (Katrak 5-6). Jhumpa Lahiri's new dealing is clear in her themes as well as narrative style. Some of her stories like the third and the last continent keep forwarding scenes of conscious existence. The Calcutta lad who obtains a service in library at MIT Boston, reminds us of numerous Indians who by vexation, settle abroad for a better conscious existence. The relationship between the landlady Mrs. Croft and the Bengali youth is beyond illustration. It is something to be experienced and unknown when Mrs. Croft is introduced with his spouse, the one hundred and three years old lady instinctively summons her perfect lady. The fact of her decision comes as shock and at once finishes the unfamiliarity that existed between the newly married couple. It also comes home to us that chiefly humanity is tied by definite common standards of demeanour and patterns of intuitive faculty. What is more significant is the fact that however profound experience of meeting different men and living in distinct places may be Lahiri's in her own inimitable style of assurance through her characters that there is always something new and unexpected in conscious existence. The speaker speaks:

There are times I am bewildered by each mile I have travelled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, and each room in which I have slept. As ordinary as it all appears,

there are times when it is beyond my imagination (Lahiri 2).

Jhumpa Lahiri states about the story in an interview. When Mr. Pirzada comes to dine:

This story is based on a gentleman from Bangladesh who used to come to my parents' house in 1971, I heard from my parents what his predicament was. And when I learned about his situation, which was that he was in the United States during the Pakistani civil war and this information that I wrote this story (An Online Interview to Farnsworth).

Mrs. Sen is a story that illustrates what emotional banishment is. The immigrant's observation is at the core of this arousing tale too as in other tales. We also see the comradeship between two completely opposite men. Mrs. Sen has to bring a small lad from his house to her and back as the lad's mother is a professional worker. Mrs. Sen reveals her happiness and shares her experience of Indian memories with extreme nerve. Eliot realizes the change of her conscious existence in Calcutta, India. Her religion, food and the living style come alive in her speech. When Eliot develops and is ceased by her mother to visit to Mrs. Sen, he appears to be missing their togetherness and an outcome goes through a sort of void as he observes the gray waves form the shore. Once again we watch this general human factor well presented by the author. It is the emotional dependence that ties Eliot and Mr. Sen whose other family members discard them on their own.

In Unaccustomed Earth, Jhumpa with eight illuminating stories deals from Cambridge and Seattle to India and Thailand. It also shows numerous relationships between men and women especially in the context of the immigrant experience. In Lahiri's writings women evaluate the gulf between first and the second generation immigrants' attitudes, achievements and wedding. These tales evaluate the destiny of second and third generations. As new generations happen increasingly to be absorbed into American culture and are comfortable in creating perspectives outside of their nation of origin. Lahiri's writings move to the requirement of the individual. She highlights how later generations deviate from the compulsions of their immigrant parents, who are often devoted to their community and their accountability to other immigrants. The first five stories are thematically connected. Each story presents to show parents who fetch their children back to Calcutta each summer to establish to their parents' traditional promises as well as the cultural requirements of an American adolescence. The kids often born in the United States are more related to the states. The Bengali culture is running away unobserved with each succeeding generation. Parents believe India as 'Home' while the kids only bear those repeated trips back there. 'Home' for kids is where they now survive, a home with a recent set of attitudes, language and affinities. There is a certain generational clash.

Ruma, the daughter of Indian descent, greets her widower, father with fear, to her new home in Seattle. Ruma is married to a Caucasian named Adam, and they have a young son named Akash. In every respect the young family is a model of mingled wedding and, in Ruma's case, complete cultural assimilation. Nevertheless, her father's visit assures to compel Ruma to confront the essential clefs that seem between first and second generation immigrant families. Journey to new nations or locating into new lands, postcards of foreign countries and measurement of distance all act in symbolic assistance to the story's title, but it is a common misplaced post card that strains everything together into pungent ending.

In 'Hell-Heaven' a young lady summons her childhood when fellow Bengali became family friends and part of her conscious existence. The absorbed Bengali American spoken believes how little idea she once provided to her mother's sacrifices as she recreates the humiliating unrequited emotion that her young mother had for graduate scholars during speaker's childhood. Usha's mother is left heartbroken when Pranab chooses to wed a white lady. At Pranab's marriage, Lahiri delineates numerous cultural conflicts between American and Bengali Cultures. In 'Choice of Accommodation' a middle aged, mingled married couple, Amit and Megan, reinvestigates and a bit of their previously undefined history during a comrade's marriage held at Amit's old boarding school. Amit realizes his parents have discarded him years ago. Now he as his American spouse Megan comes back to his prep school for a regathering he says that their

marriage has vanished. Just as they wait for the weakened, they create accommodation in their lives.

In 'Only Goodness' a model Bengali daughter named Sudha, married and a new mother, attempts to cope with her younger brother Rahul's alcoholic defects and her likely part in creating him what he has happened to all the characters in this story, it is Rahul who comes across most successfully. This tale towers over others in the collection, not only because of Lahiri's talent, brief prose, but also because the writer releases her works from cultural baggage and permits her characters to breathe as individual. And in 'Nobody's Business' an American graduate scholar pines for his Bengali American roommate a graduate school dropout who has no loving affections for him spurns the polite developments of perspective grooms from the global Bengali singles journey and believes herself attached to a selfish Egyptian historian. Each story makes an unmatched self-contained world yet, there is always the metaphor of dis-attachment with conscious existence in America. And despite the direct Bengali structure of reference on which each tale is hung, these are universal themes: the experience of not adjusting in, being ill at ease in an unknown society and the loss of spouse or parents.

Jhumpa Lahiri makes people familiar to us and these people left behind friends, family and excited activity of India to create a new conscious existence in America- a bare land of unfamiliar people, act cold and new customs. Lahiri's *The Namesake* chooses up on these themes and then spreads on them, pursuing the Indian American immigrant observation through the next generation as she follows the footsteps of the member of the Ganguli family. The tale starts in 1968, briefly before the birth of one Gogol, whose parents Ashima and Ashoke, have only recently shifted to Cambridge, Massachusetts, from Calcutta. For Ashoke, who is doing his Ph.D. in electrical engineering at MIT, his recent conscious existence in United States and his new son show a personal rebirth. Having lived a dreadful train wreck back in India in his teenage years- the others in the train all destroyed but he, having stayed up late reading tales by Nikolai Gogol rather than going to his sleeping birth, was saved. Ashoke who has promised to observe the world. But as Ashoke relishes the unfamiliarity of his new home, his young spouse Ashima whom his parents have engaged for him to wed, initially laments the conscious existence she has left behind. Yet for her too her USA born kid Gogol shows the recent conscious existence she will make in her taken home, the new foundations she will plant in America even as her old bases in Calcutta start to dry and cease. Describing in the detailed form, Lahiri is able to perform what she could not in her stories pursue her characters beyond one central moment in their conscious existences and track their advancement and proliferation. And if some of the new immigrants in *Interpreter of Maladies* appeared almost unacceptably sorrowful, their anguish too delicately delivered. Ashima's equally dejected condition remains only a chapter or two before relenting as she starts to create a fresh community around her and to adjust happily into her current conscious existence.

In her novel *The Namesake*, Lahiri again represents her skillful touch for the skilled information- the moving of phrase that discloses whole world of passion. *The Namesake* adopts the Ganguli family from their tradition bound conscious existence in Calcutta through their fraught stored changing into Americans. On the spurs of their arranged marriage, Ashoke and Ashima live together in Cambridge, Massachusetts. An Engineer by service, Ashoke modifies for less cautiously than his spouse, who resists all objects American and yearns for her family. She becomes the typical woman in spite of her physical location in Cambridge, far so numerous years. At the starting, when she is in her water breaks, Ashima summons out to Ashoke, her spouse. However she does not take his name because this would not be right. According to her: "It's not the type of thing Bengali wives do... a husband's name is something intimate and therefore unspoken... cleverly patched over" (Lahiri 2).

From the speech we are informed how significant privacy is to Bengali families. Ashoke is thoughtful and willing to accept American culture if not completely at least with an open mind. His young bride is far less malleable. Estranged desperately remembering her large family in India, she will be at peace with this new surroundings. Soon after they reach in Cambridge, their first baby is born. According to Indian customs, the baby will be provided two names: a professional name, to be deposited by the great

grandmother and a pet name to be taken only by family. But the letter from India with baby's official name never reaches and so the child parents take pet name to use for the time being. Ashoke selects a name that has special importance for him as on a train travel back in India many years earlier, he had been studying a collection of short story by one of his most beloved Russian authors, Nikolai Gogol, when the train derailed in the mid-night ceasing almost all the sleeping travellers onboard, Ashoke had stayed awake to read his Gogol and he considers the book protected his life. His baby will be familiar then as Gogol.

But Gogol, because of some situations cannot adjust between these two cultures, culminating it always follows him to be summoned Gogol. He gets his unknown name a continuous irritant, and finally he alters it to Nikhil. Gogol understands only that he suffers the torture of his heritage as well as his strange, odd name. Awkwardness is Gogol's birthright. He develops up a bright American lad. Visits to Yale, has beautiful girlfriend happens a renowned architect, but like second generations immigrants, he can never get his place in the world. There is an attractive section where he engages a cultured wealthy young Manhattan lady lives with her caring parents. They fold Gogol into their normal and graceful life but he can get no solace and he breaks off affinities. His mother ultimately sets him up on an ignorant date with the daughter of a Bengali comrade and Gogol understands he has got his match. Moushumi like Gogol is at odds with the Indian-American world. Like every American baby, Gogol finally goes away from home. He does not dislike his parents. For from it, he is very devoted to them. But the object they state do not interest him and their Indian style of living means nothing to him. He dislikes the manner they hold on to Indian tradition and operations that are of no significance to his American mind. He dislikes it when his parents whisk them off to Calcutta a land that couple believes as home, for months together, shattering his entire schedule. In spite of his yearly sojourns to Calcutta, he does not observe bound India as they are.

His parents could not realize him too, though they really attempt to provide him the best of both worlds by religiously enjoying every Indian and American holiday. But the host of Bengali of familiarities he interacts at these gatherings tends to put him off and leaves far behind him further. There are a few pungent moments that attach Ashoke and Gogol, but beyond that emotions appear to be lost is the commonplace of daily lives. Ashima is a permanently dejected character who goes through the movements of conscious existence without any energy. Is she sorrowful because she feels lost in this new nation? Is she unhappy because she has not that familiar affinity with her spouse she was expecting for? Do her children and her spouse never assemble together and have entertainment?

Like his American comrades Gogol smokes and has more than one romantic affinity and is able to disconnect himself from the recollections of his girlfriend, though with great pain. He goes about his conscious existence without a sense of goal, going where destiny carries. Gogol never understands to act otherwise he adopts a few fast activities in his conscious existence, but they are inspired more by revolutionary line against his early education rather than a pure wish to swim against the current. His unlucky choice in wedding matters from an instinctive wish to adhere to his Indian roots. Is Gogol's conscious existence is a pattern? Do all Indian immigrant kids interact the similar plight? Do they all visit through same reckless stages in their lives, sleeping with every random girl they just interact because it prohibited? Do their American worth conflict with their Indian culture? so much that they almost end up being Zombies like Gogol? Do they all experience the similar indifference towards their parents? Are their affinities ill-fated just because they have two clashing cultures profoundly embedded in them? Do they all fight hard to conceal their Indian side from their American peers?

Eventually, which manner of conscious existence does? Does Lahiri recommend for a prosperous immigrant feel? Lahiri's book is an insightful learning and more of personal evaluation of the Indian immigrant observation and how it can sometimes go awry. Lahiri's writings reveal that she is a victim of the domination. But like Gogol Lahiri states that she herself has now arrived at the phase in her conscious existence where she observes that bi-cultural early education is a rich even though defective object. Yet, by her own admission a part of her years is to be totally American, summon it a opposition of sorts, just like

any other inconsistency is Gogol's conscious existence.

The Namesake is about this permanent dilemma encountered by immigrants as they struggle to keep their individualities while attempting to get rid of them at the same time. It is about the list of distressing selections they are encountered to create every day as they attempt hard to neglect being uncomfortable in a foreign country. This work might not be the most original depiction of the Indian-American experience, but even with its one-dimensional dealing, it adjusts to create a deep impact. Lahiri attempts to resituate her cultural space and individuality mediated by important cross-cultural influence. She says to Radhika S. Shankar: "When I began writing fiction seriously my first attempt, for some reason, was always set in Calcutta which is a city, I know quite well from repeated visits with my family, sometimes for several months at a time" (www.rediff.com/new/may22/1999).

In spite of such powerful emotional experience, Lahiri at the same moment also does not miss to describe the typical immigrant phenomenon of appertaining nowhere that even in India, she did not experience at home. She also mentions the dichotomy of maturing up in two-cultures- how it worried her when matured up that there was no single space to which she completely appertained to. *The namesake* is a strongly desirous effort to list the lives of a family of immigrants through the perspectives of a young lad. Both her works have perceived brickbats as well as accolades but she merits an illustration for dealing a topic long avoided by other Indian authors.

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