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Cross Culture Struggles in Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Namesake" And "Hell-Heaven"

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Abstract:

The Paper throws light on the cross culture struggles in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and *Hell-Heaven*. *The Namesake* describes the struggles and hardships of a Bengali couple who immigrate to the United States to form a life outside of everything they are accustomed to. It explores the concepts of cultural identity, of rootlessness, of tradition and family expectations in a lucid and elegant prose. In her fiction, memory, nostalgia, loss and longing are some of the prominent themes. Her stories tell of people who have moved countries in the hope of a better life, but past remains there as a shadow to remind them of their original roots. This novel is a documentary of such experiences, a glowing miniature of a tiny family making the voyage between two worlds. The aim of the paper would be to analyse first and second generation immigrant characters in the novel, *The Namesake* and explore complex cultural relations and identity crisis from the contemporary cultural discourse. The paper would be an attempt to examine the conflicting attractions of the American way of life and the tug of traditions between two different cultures. The kind of relationship these characters develop over the years in an alien land, and how the inherited values always determine one's cultural identity.

Key words: Culturalism, Diaspora, cross culture, struggle.

Nilanjana Sudeshna Lahiri was born 11 July 1967. She is a famous Indian American author of Bengali origin and her nickname Jhumpa. She is a Pulitzer prize winning author. Jhumpa is a member of the president committee on the arts and humanities appointed by U.S. president. Jhumpa has written the first novel *The Namesake* (2003) and her second short story collection in *Hell-Heaven* (2015). Gogol is a main character in *The Namesake* and the second character name is Pranab in *Hell-Heaven*. These stories about the cross culture struggles and an American-born Indian's search for Identity. Gogol and Pranab for Bengali but they feel comfortable and influenced by American. The two people are second generation people in the stories. Jhumpa Lahiri

other works *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), *One world: A Global Anthology* (2009), *The Only Goodness: The Family Snapshots* (2013), *The Lowland* (2013), *In Other Words* (2015) and *The Clothing of Books* (2016).

The people want to yearning for their family. So they were compulsions but the diasporic people display yearning to go back for foreign countries. They were lost their origin, to imaginary homelands that they create out of memory or, in case of second generation, from fragmentary pictures they gather about their homeland from parents and elders.

The Namesake tries to capture the sense of displacement of the diasporic. In this process, the in-between's of the diasporic identity and situation, brought out in the form of clash between strong ethnic ties and New world. Its concern to depict the struggle of an immigrant who carries Indian values ingrained and is constantly struggling to imbibe the values of the new world. The story deals with two generation of the people. The first generation will be portrait Ashok Ashima parents of Gogol. The second generation will be portrait Gogol, Maxine and Moushmi.

The Namesake novel shows the importance that attaches the identity of Gogol. The naming of the main character as Gogol and later as Nikil brings in a conflict between both names and identities attached to the boy as it is neither American nor Indian. He has hard time to explaining it to his friends and others as to why such a name was given him in the first place. The problem will be started the name symbolize the problem of his identity. How he was actually whether he is an American or Indian. He fails to understand whether he should listen to his mind or his heart until his father's death titles the balance on one side. Towards the end of the story, find that Gogol grows philosophical. His marriage was failure and then his father's death was the worst accident. So he has re-

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connected himself with the family and drawn the right inspiration from his father's life. *The Namesake* discovered to the base of the immigrant society, their identity is threatened by the culture of the host country. The Indian parents, the children are known by the special name given by the purpose. Indian parents are concerned, "No parent even called a child by his good name. Good names had no place wit in a family" (165).

The title of the story is *Hell-Heaven* referred to two cultures. One is Indian and another is American. *Hell-Heaven* should give for the Bengali term, differentiating the things of the opposite pole. Indian culture should referred to Heaven because it is native place and comfortable. The Hell referred to immigrant place and search cultural identity. It is a real love story not only of the Bengalis for culture and language others too feel the same way. It deals with unexpected love, shameless love and triangular love between men and women.

The main focus on that second story is that character Pranab. Pranab and his family came from a Calcutta. He wants to study in engineering at MIT in America. So he came to America as a foreign student . He was not expecting the huge culture shock. He had to deal with before meeting Boudi and Usha. Pranab is a graduate student at MIT, Boston university is contemplating to Calcutta due to homesickness. On the streets of Boston he seems Usha, a little girl and her traditional Bengali mother Aparna. He follows them and ends up befriendng them. Aparna, herself homesick and lonely, can empathize with Pranab and she is happy to feed him. Pranab now becomes a regular visitor at Usha's house. He calls Aparna as (Boudi). Over time Aparna looks forward eagerly to Pranab's visits and develops a unique kind of love towards him. Adding to the situation is Usha's father aloof and detached attitude towards her mother. Aparna's love for Pranab turns into jealousy when Pranab brings home American women, Deborah, whom he eventually marries.

Aparna keeps blaming and criticizing Deborah and keep irritating that it is a matter of a time before Deborah leaves Pranab. After twenty-three years Deborah and Pranab finally Divorce. The reason behind divorce is revealed.

They carry the idea of '*Hell-Heaven*' oof their own ethnicity and pressure the new world of cultural pressures and contradictions. These social contradiction

and cultural difference are played out in the personal private spaces where there is no one to connect to but only loneliness to echo. The story talks about the accepting their identity and learning to embrace the identity. The resultant perspective is rich in tonal contrast, achieved by the emergence of the second generation of immigrants, the children of the first movers.

Lahiri portraits cultural identity is a common area struggle for many immigrants and children of immigrants who must adapt to one way of living, despite of belonging to a different culture or country. Lahiri described the male character in very well manner. Gogol in *The Namesake* and Pranab in *Hell-Heaven*. The author explores differences in culture between two generation and how they tear apart or bring together a family.

The Namesake and *Hell-Heaven* travelled in same path that is first generation immigrants and second generation immigrants. Lahiri's described the cultural struggles between children and society. In future generation (second generation) will be going to face the problem. In current century many people migrated to other countries. So, the children also settled with their parents. In that mean time their ready to lows their culture identity and influenced to foreign countries (culture) They are comfortable with their own culture, Now they are ready to search old culture.

The both work, male characters are come across with cultural identity problem. Even though they were born from Indian culture, they adapt themselves with western culture. Gogol is *The Namesake* ready to live in Cambridge even after death of his father and family. Pranab is *Hell-Heaven* had followed both his culture and western culture due to his fond over foreign culture. Gogol and Pranab both came from Bengali culture but they influenced by American culture. They loved American culture women. Male characters are capable of adapting culture and environment even though they tried to hard but they do so for the sake of others sometimes for male characters.

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