



Post Colonial Motifs in Jhuma Lahiri's *The Namesake*

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Abstract:

Postcolonial literature often addresses the troubles and consequences of the decolonization of a country. It questions the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people. Nowadays, Postcolonial writers often involve in the argument of immigrants' experiences and post colonial motifs such as migration, hybridity, ambivalence, trace and neo colonization and mimicry. This argument gives the response to the discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, anthropology, and linguistics. Jhumpa Lahiri, who is an immigrant writer describes the problems of immigrants such as relocation, homelessness, alienation and cultural changes in her novel *The Namesake*. This research article presents how the Lahiri's characters struggle to adopt multiculturalism, and to become hybrid. They try their best to become mimicry person like sandwich. This paper takes some supportive incidents and characters from *The Namesake* which also portrays the changing mindset of immigrants' characters such as Ashoke, Ashima, Gogol and Sonia who finally lose their home culture and host culture.

Key Words: Hybridity, Ambivalence, Trace, Multi-Culturalism, Neocolonization

In Recent times, Post-Colonial Literature plays major role. Today Post colonial Literature portrays the experiences of the former colonized people by the whites and discusses third world countries problems like expatriation, homelessness, identity crisis, alienation, isolation, exile and so on. During colonization, the people acquired the knowledge of two different cultures after that they reflect the image of another culture. Because of imperialism/colonization, the world was divided into many fragments. Due to these reasons, the people are relocated, constituted, reconstituted, established, stabilized, destabilized and examined their cultural identity.

Not only the above, the post-colonial writers evaluated the experience of the dislocated people from the third world and concerned such parameters of disintegration, exile, alienation, loss of identity, loss of values and

quest for identity. My part of research article is in Lahiri's works, due to her dislocation, she explored postcolonial motifs in her novels. In addition to, she is an immigrant, an Indian by origin, British by education and American by citizenship.

Jhuma Lahiri also earned a number of epithets to her name like Indian-American writer or Bengal-American writer, a teller of Immigrant tales and a Diaspora writer of an immigrant fiction. She acquired the knowledge of cross culturalism through the experience of her own life. She portrays attitudes of Bengali Indians in America, and how they struggle for existence, to sustain their life without forgetting their culture in multicultural environment. Her novels and short stories portray the Indian immigrant's struggles, anxieties, biases of chronicle nuisances and details of immigrant psychology and behavior. She also writes about cross cultural experience. As a result, she expresses through her characters how to enculturate their ancestral culture in appropriation and orientation and how to remain in their ethical consciousness and cultural practices.

In literature, a motif is a recurring element which means the id, ego and image, occurs again and again. When related images respect to enhance or bring attention to an idea, we know that we have identified the story's motif. One of the powerful motifs is in the novel, trains, naming and books and reading. Lahiri's themes and motifs are the Indian immigrant experience, family, Tradition & ritual, Independence, Rebellion & Growing up, Identify & naming and Love and Marriage.

In Lahiri's novels, postcolonial motifs are repeated, such as multi-cultural society, hybrid, western cultural dominance, identify and isolation, mimicry etc., Her works explored western culture dominance in *Namesake* and her characters excite about their new home but grieve the loss of their country of origin, because of emigrant to America from India. Her characters also speak the glory of common life. Ashoke Ganguli excites:

Ashoke admires new home: The job is everything. Ashoke has ever dreamed of.

He has always hoped to teach in a university rather than work for a corporation. What a thrill, he thinks to stand lecturing before a roomful of American students.(49)

Besides, during colonization people acquired the knowledge of two different cultures after that they reflect another image of another culture repeated. Owing to western culture dominance, most of the people want to go foreign countries for education, economic gain and mental ability. It will create hybridity, ambivalence, trace and neo colonization among the people. These incidents are portrayed in Lahiri's first novel, *The Namesake* appeared in 2003, In this novel, before marriage, Ganguli moved to Unites states by influence of education and earning money. Ashok has chosen America as a residential place because of his strong desire for a better career. He thinks:

Ashoke began to envision another sort of future. He imagined not only walking, but walking away, as far as he could from the place in which he was born and in which he had nearly died.

The following year, with the aid of a cane, he returned to college and graduated, and without telling his parents he applied to continue his engineering studies abroad. Onlya newly issued passport on hand, did he inform them of his plan. (20)

His aspiration leads to protest their parents for going abroad. Thus, Ashok's mind is colonized with earning money and improving mental ability.

After marriage, he has brought his wife, Ashima to America. This dislocation first affects his wife Ashima. In the beginning Ashima is shown struggling from her despair and nostalgia, miles away from the home land. She feels: "As she strokes and suckles and studies her son, she can't help but pity him. She has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived."(25)

In 1968 Ashima gives birth to a baby in America. Though she is happy about it, she misses her family and the Indian customs. During delivery time, she feels lonely, because of assembling of whole family in the hospital. But in this time, only her husband and nurse were near her. She thinks : "Without a single parent or parent or uncle at her side ,the baby's birth" (24).Whenever and wherever she goes outside, she always thinks about the Bengali community in America and forms for separate world trying to adopt to a new world and a society retaining her cultural roots in India. Ashoke's Bengali friends visit to see his son. "Apart from his father, the babu has three visitors, all Bengali Maya and Dilip Nandi, a young married couple in Cambridgethere is even a circle "Lucky boy." Ashoke remarks, turning a beautiful sewn pages"(24). These incidents explored the mindset of expatriation condition and loss of identity crisis. She tries hard to assimilate herself in her new world, but finds difficult to adjust herself to America apart from familiar Bengali world.

On account of immigrant background, influence of multiculturalism, the people give equitable treatment of other cultural viewpoints, practices and contributions. Ashima lives in America, she is bound by a strong ethnic culture. She maintains the Indian attire. But she is least influential by multiculturalism in America. In Indian culture, after thirty days, the child will be named. But in America, before leaving the hospital, the parents named their children. In this work, Ashoke and Ashima named their son before leaving the hospital. After that they named their child again. This situation leads to reach multicultural mindset. Ashoke argues with Mr.Wilcox:

The bad news is that they are told by Mr.Wilcox, complier of hospital birth certificates, that they must chose a name for their son. For they learn that in America, a baby cannot be released from the hospital without a birth certificate.(29)

Not only the above, Lahiri explored ambivalence which is also the postcolonial term, through her characters. In this story, Ashima's children, Gogol and Sonia are different. Both of them are influence by multiculturalism, they move away from their own cultural roots. They want to leave behind all their pastness of past and pursue a promising future in America with all its fancy and craze. Thus, they acquire very different cultures which inculcated contradictory attitudes and feelings in their mindset.

They want to have an Americanized way of life. Though their mother wants to bring up her children with native culture. But they are ready to castaway their original self being Bengalis in America. They feel being American in their emancipation. This leads to become cultural vultures and weighs their ancestral culture with American's hybridized one or materialistic gain. They want to integrate themselves in the fast moving culture of America. Gogol exclaims:

It is the first time he's kissed any, the first time he is felt a girl's face and 'I can't believe you kissed her, Gogol' his friends explain as they drive home from the party. He shakes his head in a 'I wasn't me' he nearly says.(96)

Though their mother wants to bring up them with host country, they assimilate and integrate with American culture. Because both of them alienated from the birth country and are struggling between two worlds. In our country parent expect their children to be, if not an engineer, then a doctor, a lawyer, an economist at the least. But in America these were the professions that are in first place. In this novel, Nikhil chooses his own life style. He ignores his parents and settles for architecture graduation from Columbia. This incident reflects that Nikhil does not consider not only an American culture but also an Indian culture. His attitudes are like pro Americans or mimicry person. Nikhil has mind set:

In May, he graduated from the architecture programme at ColombiaIt's not the sort of job he'd envisioned for himself as a student: designing and renovating private residences was what he'd wanted to do.(125)

However, the novel is fully based on native culture to western culture. Gogol does not follow native culture. His behavior is in the form of acculturation. Gogol has affairs with two girls, one is Maxime Ratliff, an outgoing ultra girl who stays or a long period. Another one girl is Moushmi Mazumdar, a Bengali girl with whom Gogol is married. Gogol activities are in the form of transnational movements. Gogol is caught in between two disparate worlds, cultural prejudice and cross culture, after that some bad incidents, following his native culture. These actions lead to mimicry. Not only Gogol, Sonia and Moushimi have no interest in their religious practices because of their hybridity and in betweenness in America. They do not like to carry their cultural burden the ancestral past. They want to mimick America, they became pro-America. It results in aversion, which corrodes their psyche and dives them to the verge of madness. In fact, the immigrants, the second generation immigrants in America, want to enjoy the culture of grip and grievances.

Finally, Lahiri adopts a new approach in diaspora writings. Her experiences and incidents of her novels explored a variety of post colonial terms. The state of mind and a sense of Identity are based on relocation than dislocation/delocation. She highlights diaspora sensibility, immigrant experience and diasporic consciousness. She also portrays how her characters are affected by migration, settlement, displacement, relocation, alienation, belongingness, cultural crisis and rootlessness. To conclude, despite getting freedom from colonizer, most of the

people mind set is assimilated with western culture. These post-colonial motifs explain loss the memory of the lost world, lost homeland, lost cultural commodities and so on.

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