

Inexpressible Emotional Pain in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

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Abstract: Nilanjana Sudeshna -Jhumpa Lahiri a post colonial, worldwide notable, diasporic, insignificant, South Asian woman writer and a Pulitzer Prize winner Indian American author. Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* is much more apprehensive with the growth of the Indian Diaspora in a changed world than dealing with the tradition and culture of India. Indian English literature circulates the conventional and literary legacy of India within India and also insinuates to the entire humankind. The diaspora writers like Nirad Chandra Choudhary, Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, Baapsi Sidhwa, Chitra Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri are only to name a few who have announced and patronized a new drift in Indian English Literature creating a room for themselves in world Literature. This paper examines the soreness concerned with being tucked between two contradictory cultures with extremely dissimilar religious, communal and ideological differences. The lifeblood of an Indian American novelist, Lahiri's craft portray the lives of characters of Indian Immigrants which are rebellious in America. Ashima experienced emotional pain at a heightened level, a pain caused by loneliness; lack of familial support, apart and isolated. She and her husband make every endeavour to keep their children intact with their ancestry. Lahiri through her different types of characters has confirmed that separation is a universal dilemma of immigrants in the modern era which is an unlikeable reaction of a mental, non bodily derivation causing the bewilderment and hopelessness in characters. To avoid emotional pain the expatriates must always prefer for propinquity, connectedness and strong emotional bonds.

Keywords: multi-cultural, anxieties, unusual, hopelessness, alienation, expatriation, shrewdness and extraordinariness.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nilanjana Sudeshna -Jhumpa Lahiri a post colonial, multi-cultural, diasporic, insignificant, South Asian woman writer and a Pulitzer prize winner Indian American author. She is the brood of Indian expatriates from the state of West Bengal with whom she has immigrated to United States at the age of two. She is a Professor of artistic writing at Princeton University. She is an alert listener and charming communicator. Indian English Literature which is a moderately current observable fact accomplishes the global status is challenged by many writers. It circulates the conventional and literary legacy of India within India and also insinuates to the entire humankind. It is Indian in perceptiveness, consideration, emotion, and understanding and also makes accountable itself to the order of English for countenance. Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* is much more apprehensive with the growth of the Indian Diaspora in a changed world than dealing with the tradition and culture of India. The diaspora writers like Nirad Chandra Choudhary, Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, Baapsi Sidhwa, Chitra Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri are only to name a few who have announced and patronized a new drift in Indian English Literature creating a room for themselves in world Literature. Themes like experimentation in politics, consciousness, aspirations of man, artistic constructs, challenges on growth, industrialism, symbolism, legend, Hindu-muslim affiliation, diasporas, motherland, class, Indian financial system have made Indian English novel rich and electrifying, vivacious and diverse. Her prominent works are *Interpreter of Maladies*, *The Namesake*, *Unaccustomed Earth* and *The Lowland*. Her stories gaze at India from the western approach and tackle insightful dilemmas in the lives of Indians or Indian expatriates. The novel portrays the struggle and adversity of a Bengali couple who immigrate to United States to shape a life exterior of the whole thing they are habituated to. This paper examines the soreness and pain concerned with being tucked between two contradictory cultures with extremely dissimilar religious, communal and ideological differences.

II. DISCUSSION

Lahiri contemplates her characters struggles, anxieties, and biases to record the subtleties and niceties of immigrant psychology and behaviour. The novel *The Namesake* reveals that Lahiri brings alive the multiple selves constructed meticulously to make sense of the unknown world that is much a land of opportunities as it is of disagreement and bewilderment. The novel is written with emotional simplicity and is benevolent in tone. Lahiri's managing of the complexities of the colonist endangerments in their assorted nuances in a plain, simple and clear style in her inceptive novel emphatically confirm her as a perfect developed immigrant novelist. For instance Mukherjee also a colonist writer portrays her characters as mobile, inquisitive travellers and observers of a new luminal space in which they try to stay alive. Each and every individual's life is full of emotional jolts,

assaults, sickness and burden. The characters in Lahiri's novels pass through a pain of self change on their way to the road of Americanisation. According to the study, the Indian diaspora is a philosophical hybridity commencing from an unambiguous artistic background. The lifeblood of an Indian American novelist, Lahiri's craft portray the lives of characters of Indian Immigrants which are rebellious in America. She through her different types of characters has confirmed that separation is a universal dilemma of immigrants in the modern era. Lahiri scrutinize her characters hostile inquisites and chauvinism to chronicle the implications and a fact of immigrant psych and conducts, which helps her to develop into a familiar and esteemed young author. She is a daughter of Bengali parents, her legacy and mores are prejudiced by India and the United States. *The Namesake* a piece of remarkable sarcasm is unbeaten because it marvellously and considerately highlights both worldwide facet of individual understanding and late twentieth-century post colonial and Asia American politics. This paper describes the emotional pain, the disposition of the characters suffered in the novel, which are coupled with their Indian line, habits and customs. The Press reporter, Writer and a Scholar Nexhat Peshkepia in his book *A heart in migration* depicts yearning experience of each human being for his motherland.

"Bitter is migration and bitter is its road. Love for the homeland is an element of human nature, of each creature that is called human. It is born with the human itself like a celestial breath; this love is unexplainable and is not extinguished until the body melts with the earth."¹(Peshkepia 2005:70).

In the novel *The Namesake* Lahiri exposes the conventional resettlement adumbration, unfolding it as a bodily experience, a pious sensual and harsh experience. Denunciation, lonesomeness and failures are excruciating experiences caused after immigration to people. She is also not so far away from such pain in her childhood, she admits:

"I wanted to please my parent's and meet their expectations; I also wanted to meet the expectations. I placed myself to fit into American society. It's classic case of divided identity, but depending on the degree to which the immigrants in question are willing to assimilate, the conflict is more or less pronounced. As a child i felt that the Indian part of me was acknowledged and therefore somehow negated, by my American environment and vice versa, I felt that I led two separate lives."²(HMC).

Lahiri's state of mind is well explained in her work and her name is well related to the name of Gogol which she thinks as unusual. The Characters mentioned in the novel Ashok and Ashima left Calcutta, India in the late 1960's and with difficulty they reconcile in Central Square, in Cambridge, Massachusetts in United States of America. Ashok works as an assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering at the University. In the beginning of novel only he has been rescued from the traumatized train accident and remembers it because at the time he was reading a Russian author Nikolai Gogol. The Character Ashima is the most ethnically conformist element of the family. She is the bond that keeps the family as one. Ashima feels even more alienated since she has moved away from her Bengali friends and also missed her close relatives. She is gloomy because she feels deep distress for the life she has left behind in India. They were away from their parents the important people of their lives; hence they were devoid of mutual love, power and support. The protagonist mother Ashima suffered from pain to deliver her first child in a strange land away from her family. She expounds that the twinge of distancing in an adopted land is more awful for the first generation migrants than the labour pain, which signifies that she can somehow, tolerate physical pain, but it is hard to defy the psychological ache. It is her maiden experience to give birth to her first child. She tells:

"Throughout the experience, In spite of her growing discomfort, she'd been astonished by her body's ability to make life, exactly as her mother and grandmother and all her great-grandmothers had done. That it was happening so far from home, unmonitored and unobserved by those she loved, had made it more miraculous still. But she is terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare."³ P.6

In India first delivery is probably done at girls' parents' home and it was very painful for Ashima to deliver without her close relatives to take care of her. She experienced emotional pain at a heightened level, a pain caused by loneliness, lack of familial support, apart and isolated. Emotional pain is an unlikeable reaction of a mental, non bodily derivation. An American Suicidologist and Thanatologist Edwin S. Shneidman illustrated it as:

"How much you hurt as a human being. It's a mental suffering; mental torment"⁴ (Shneidman Es. 173).

Emotional pain brings about nasty sentiments in the person. It also incites disagreeable recollections that ground you to experience fearful, gloomy, irritated, unsettled or trapped.

Ashima was also disappointed to study her son entering the world lonely, impoverished without a single grandparent, uncle or aunt at his side. The exigencies of America hospital administration insisted that the child be given a name before he is free from hospital. They were asked to name the baby before the discharge from the hospital as it was needed for the official record and to make birth certificate. The couple was displeased as the name was to come from Ashima's grandmother and the letter didn't arrived and soon after that the grandmother dies, thinking the emergency they named him after the Russian author as Gogol.

Ashima was inconsolable for few days when she came to know through the letter that her grandmother suffered from stroke. She further learned and was shocked to hear about her death from her father's letter:

"Ashima's grandmother has had a stroke, that her right side is permanently paralyzed, her mind dim. She can no longer chew, barely swallows, remembers and recognizes little of her eighty-odd years." She is still with us, but to be honest we have already lost her."⁵.p.37.

Ashima was also alone on the rice ceremony of her son associated with some Bengali families in America. It was the first formal ceremony of their lives centres around the consumption of solid food. Dilip Nandi played the part of Ashima's brother, to hold the child and feed the cooked rice. At this ceremony Ashima felt very sad as there was nobody from her and her husband's side. She searched the face of her mother in the crowd. At this moment she expected her own brother to feed Gogol and her own parents to bless him with their hands on her head. Ashima's brother Rana calls with the bad news that her father has suffered a heart attack and died. While living in America they get saddened by hearing the death news of their aunts and Uncles via letters. Ashoke's parents were died due to cancer and Ashima's mother from kidney disease. They seemed to be both orphaned within decade in America, lost, deprived, embarrassed and seemed extremely aged and were survived and consoled by memory of their near and dear ones. They were chilled down their spines by knowing the news of births and weddings. She transparently and deliberately misapprehends the problems that immigrants meet constantly. The second pregnancy of Ashima was a difficult one and she used to spend most of her time in her bedroom while leaving Gogol and Ashoke to eat together. Gogol hates his name and even cried in front of his parents why they have named him so in haste and obstinately changed his named as Nikhil. The fears, the uneasiness, the confrontation, which his mother had experienced, when he was in the womb, passes right away to him and he wanted to establish his own identity in America and thought not to be like his mother always crying for her motherland. The Indian Diaspora is a contextualistic hybridity which arises from a precise cultural milieu. Shobha Jain writes:

"Just as diaspora settings of Indian living abroad provide a window to understanding process of social transformation in India, We may say that looking at diaspora Indian women may give us an insight into situations of our own fast changing social fabric in India."⁶. (Sahu, Nandini.2007. p.xxiv.)

Jhumpa Lahiri has concentrated more on the nostalgia about the homeland and cultural differences in her novel. It's an immigrant writing which is characterized by distanced and unsentimental attitude towards homelessness. Anita Desai's *Bye bye Blackbird* (1970), Buchi Emechet's *Second class citizen* (1974), Salman Rushdie's *Satnic Verses* (1989) are also examples of immigrant writings.

Jhumpa Lahiri inaudibly manages to describe the bewilderment and hopelessness of Ashima feels while staying far from home. Ashima speculates estranged in the suburbs, this estrangement of being an outsider is correlated to a type of enduring pregnancy, as it is an unending hang around, an invariable load a constant sense out of sort...somewhat that evokes the identical inquisitiveness from the strangers, the same mixture of disappointment and honour. One can discern the pain of Ashima and Ashoke who make every endeavour to keep children intact with their ancestry. Lahiri's literature gives the chance to grapple with the problematic mores of culture and edifying nationhood.

During the visit to Calcutta the motherland from Boston, Gogol and Sonia get terribly ill. As they recover they had to leave Calcutta. Ashima and Ashoke used to cry in front of the photo of their parents, head bowed down use to weep like children. After returning back to home in Boston they feel somehow in transit, disconnected from their lives, an intimacy only four of them share. Ashima used to cry while rereading her parents' letters in bed. Her hairs became thin, gray and she has to wear the bifocals. She works at the library part time to pass the time. Surprisingly, the predicaments of colonization were prominent and they were depicted as pain.

Lahiri brings immense compassion to Gogol as he stumble along the first-generation path, speckled with inconsistent loyalties, humorous detour and with wrenching love relationships. With trenchant insight, she reveals not only the significant authority of the names and expectations bestowed upon by the parents, but also the means by which gradually, sometimes painfully, become to define one. Due to his scrupulous intellectual background, Gogol's loving relationships are also stimulated. He has to relentlessly struggle with conflicts arising due to his Indian origin for that reason he does not have long-lasting affairs with the girls. These non-permanent relationships annihilates him of having a sense of stability and thus a permanent and recognized personality and individuality.

Gogol dumps his love with Maxine, breaks with her and started to give quality time to his family. The protagonist father Ashoke went to Ohio to complete his research fellowship and while teaching in Ohio, he dies before Christmas due to a massive heart attack and left his family in great shock. When Ashima comes to know about her husband's death from a young hospital woman, she became shocked and panic. It was a very hurtful time for Ashima to lose a treasured one, her husband. The heart attack was so immense that all endeavours to revitalize him were unsuccessful. Incomprehensibly, She utters:

"Expired. Word used for library cards, for magazine subscriptions. Word which, for several seconds, has no effect whatsoever on Ashima."⁷p. 169.

She shivered violently, grief incapacitated, consoled by all relatives on phone. She mourns her husband's death totally. She felt lonesome unexpectedly, badly, eternally unaccompanied and for a short time turned away from the mirror. Their throats turned weak to explain again and again to all people about the death. For ten days she and her children ate mourner's food, forgoing meat and fish and turned off television. Grief has exaggerated their body, psyche, emotions and courage.

The Protagonist Gogol is a rigid character who links with Moushumi Mazoomdar, a childhood friend and a year of dating they got married and after sometime they get hitched. At the time of marriage the tension of life versus death of his father is apparent to him as he gets ready for his wedding. The unsteadiness, the incitement of the arrangements depresses him, all of it emphasizing him that his father is deceased. Gogol's emotional pain increased because Moushumi was having an affair with a guy Dimitri Desjardins and he was once again unaccompanied. Parting and split-ups of Gogol were also emotionally difficult events in the novel. The word Divorce; it is one of the basic elements in the works of Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya, Virginia Woolf, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Anita Desai and Shobhaa De. In De's novels nuptial bond was splintered due to extra-marital relationships of the partners and created emotional pain in them. In *The Namesake* marital discord of Gogol was due to his Indian legacy which resulted in nervousness, separation, solitude and unfriendliness in him causing an overload to his psychological pain. Gogol Sister Sonia was also prepared to marry her fiancé; an American based named Ben and was good in luck.

The erstwhile incident which was very painful for Ashima was that her house in which she had lived for the past twenty-seven years, which she has occupied longer than any other in life, has been sold to a young Professor named Walkers. As she was free, she has decided to ramify her stay to live six months in America and six months in India, Ashima became more panicky and outpours:

"The Walkers are planning renovations. They will knock down the wall between the living and dining rooms; put an island in the kitchen, t rack lights overhead. They want to pull up the wall-to-wall carpeting, convert the sun deck into a den. She wants to retract her offer, wanting the house to remain as it's always been, as her husband had last seen it."⁸p.275.

Ashima abruptly get through with a mood of unfathomable lonesomeness, missed her husband and the bereavement of her move out of the house where she had made a home jointly. She waits for her children to disembark back at the house. She immediately felt fatigued and besieged devoid of her husband's presence. She was upset, stricken by grief, felt lonesomeness, powerlessness and had undergone a traumatic experience resulting from her husband's death. This great loss shattered her into pieces, desolate her relationships and undermine her identity. She wishes her children to be with her at the time of Christmas or at thanksgiving but her children needed independence which according to her is contrary of her time. Children wanted to live their life according to American standards but also Gogol emotionally moved closer to his mother and sister. He felt kind-hearted towards his father after his death. Ashima left America for India and will miss the country in which she had lived for thirty- three years, grown and know to love her husband. Like Ashima many characters in the novel are discontented in their lives because they don't equalize to their imaginativeness. Their sensitiveness of isolation passes into their relationships with their relatives and their lovers and grounds all types of dissatisfaction which brings inexpressible emotional pain in them.

III. CONCLUSION

Jhumpa Lahiri's sense of remoteness and expatriation during her childhood is well portrayed by her in her immigrant fiction *The Namesake*. It seems that emotional pain is an inexorable facet of human survival. The characters that migrated practised various stresses that impacted their realistic well being. Ashima was subjected to all the nuisances in the line of her expedition from her own realm to a changed one very noiselessly and learns to subsist life that way. She comprehended herself adeptly and prepared herself competently in creating her very own, a type of personal journey of arriving at her own native place. The foremost and major reason for Ashima's disarticulation in the American civilization is the dissimilarity between two very dissimilar variables America and India and the homesickness. Gogol,s everlasting pain of discomfort with his unusual name also created a tension to his parents.

It is inferred that migration brings frustration, resentment and stress in characters in the novel because they moved parallel with their notion. Ashok dies of heart attack, Gogol suffers from marital discord and Ashima was depressed and felt less pleasure in life and became a widow soon. Though they became economically rich but they had lost themselves in this immigrating process internally. It is correct that the grass is greener on other side. The immigration was for worldly benefit and in that process they had lost everything and achieved the contemporary success. To avoid emotional pain the immigrants must always prefer for propinquity, connectedness and strong emotional bonds with the dear ones. Consequently, Lahiri stands for opaqueness, shrewdness and extraordinariness.

IV. REFERENCES

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