

The Second Generation Adaptation in Lahiri's W

Abstract

The second generation's approach to their state of being in someone else's home is not as emotional as that of first generation immigrants. In the first generation Diaspora, memory and nostalgia play an important role. They cherish and retain all the memories of their homeland but the second generation feels isolated not only because they have their roots in some other lands but they have no land to enroot themselves again for them, homeland is just an idea and nothing much. Jhumpa Lahiri herself has been the second generation immigrant to South Asia very well explored the difficulties of establishing a sense of self for this generation.

Keyword: Diaspora , Second Generation, Homeland

Introduction

Jhumpa Lahiri's connectivity with India and Indian people is borrowed from her grandparents, books and other NRIs. At a press in Kolkata in January of 2001, Lahiri decided this absence of belonging, "No country is my motherland. I always find myself in exile in whichever country I travel to. That's why I was tempted to write something about those living their lives in exile."¹

United State of America is popularly known as a melting pot of all cultures. People from different cultures all over the world have been immigrating to America since the last centuries and have created a totally new culture which is made of all the different cultures. In fact, immigrants are expected to assimilate themselves into this culture as soon as possible. This poses interesting challenges to people who come from other cultures which had a strong influence on their way of life, like people from the Indian subcontinent.

This influence is not only limited to the first generation migrated people to their children also in a somewhat different manner. "The pain of assimilation lasts not just a generation; the children feel it as much as the parents do."²

Lahiri herself felt diasporic childhood and so she draws on children in a number of her stories. In the story when Mr. Pirzada comes to Dine she uses the view point of a ten years old daughter of Indian émigré to accentuate the psychosomatic remoteness of the second generation from their parents' land and culture. Lilia muses, "Like my parents, Mr. Pirzada took off his shoes before entering a room, chewed fennel seeds after meals as a digestive, and drank no alcohol. For dessert dipped austere biscuits in successive cup of tea. Never the less my father insisted that I understand the difference."³

Lilia's mother is convinced with her ignorance of south Asian history rather than her father. She accepts the necessary distance of second generation from their cultural heritage, as they are actively forming their identity as Americans. The Lahiri tackles the different and awkward conflict between national identity and geographical boundaries. The absence of Indian history on school syllabus makes it even harder for a second generation child born and bred in America to understand the political affairs in her parents' homeland and thus potentially widens the generation gap. The degree of acculturation is higher among the second generation immigrants than that of the first generation.

Sometimes the discovery of history, geography, customs, rites and rituals of their parented homeland causes a kind of bewilderment, amazement and wonder among the later generation. This is what gets reflected through Lilia. Having visited Calcutta only once at a very young age, she has very little memory of the city. That is why India which her parents like other first generation immigrants, imagined and remained as their homeland means no more than an orange colour space on the map that her mother once told her. It resembles to her a woman wearing a sari with her left arm extended.

There is a lot of importance given to children in Lahiri's collection with a few the act of transforming between cultures, serving as a catalyst

Rashmi Nagwanshi
Asst. Prof.
Deptt in English
Govt. College Junnardeo
Distt. Chhindwara, M.P

for giving inter cultural message in Mrs. Sen's When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine and Sexy, Lahiri's child is an onlooker. The three children in the of Interpreter of Maladies don't feel India like "at home".

Being groomed in American culture they face a big cultural gap in India and hence feel displaced on their parents' motherland. Thus we see that Lahiri has shown so dynamically shifting concepts of in the "home" and 'displacement' in the successive generations of migrants.

For second generation South Asian Americans marriage is sternly challenged characteristic. The relationships are mostly crumbling for this generation. Lahiri depicts both types of marriage in her fiction but eventually privileges neither Sanjeev and Twinkle, Who have met at the appeal of their parents, are more alienated towards American style and habits.

The couple in The Third and Final continent changed themselves according to the requirements of the new culture other than this arranged marriages, the couple in A Temporary matter decides the values of their life according to the free and independent social arena in the adopted land. Thus the marital relations are influenced more with the culture of adopted land rather than the parents' homeland and its traditions.

Lahiri's spotlight is on the disarticulation and its significances which can be seen at two levels, first from the point of view of the parents and second from that of American born second generation children. "The Namesake is a Novel that offers a Chekhovian an exploration of father and sons, parents and children, as it resonant and its exploration of what is acquired and lost by immigrants and their children in pursuit of American Dream".⁴

Thus Lahiri shows how later generation depart from the constraints of heir immigrant parent who are often devoted to their community. Lahiri's shifts to the fact that succeeding generations become increasingly assimilated into American culture and are comfortable in constructing perspectives outside their country.

Reference

1. Houghton Mifflin company, press release The Namesake: A conversation with Jhumpa Lahiri May 18, 2006
2. Agrawal, Malti, New Perspectives in Indian English Writings. New Delhi; Atlantic Publishers, 2007, P, 42 Jhumpa Lahiri's aim is to show the complexity of emotional journals, also defined as culture mission.
3. Ibid, P.25
4. Sinha, Sunita, Post colonial women writers: New perspectives. New Delhi : Atlantic publishers, 2008, p. 192