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Cultural Conflict in Lahiri's Jhumpa's The Namesake

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Abstract

The present paper focuses on the life and works of Lahiri's Jhumpa, a major contemporary diasporic Indian - American writer and her debut novel, The Namesake. The major themes of the novel are – Quest for Identity, Cultural Conflict and Death. The present paper reflects cultural conflict in this novel. The novel represents both Indian and American culture. Ashima Ganguli is a representative as a typical traditional Bengali, Indian Woman on the other hand, Gogol dislikes Indian culture. He appreciates an American culture.

Gogol and Sonia both become victims of cultural conflict. Though they live in America, they follow Indian life-style, traditions and customs in their home. Outside the home they are American. They feel difficulties when they are in American society. The clashes in their minds about two cultures are presented deeply in this paper. So the present paper describes cultural conflict in a novel The Namesake as major theme through various incidents.

Key Words: Globalization, Cultural Conflict,

Lahiri Jhumpa (1967) is a major contemporary diasporic Indian – American writer, whose real name is Nilanjana Sudeshna, was born in London. She is the daughter of Bengali Indian immigrants. She was brought in South Kingston, Rhode Island. When she began kindergarten in Kingston, Rhode Island, Lahiri's teacher decided to call her by her pet name, Jhumpa because it was easier to pronounce than her "good name". Though Lahiri's mother heritage and her family often visited relatives in Calcutta (now Kolkata). Lahiri considers herself an American. Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* was released in 1999. The stories address sensitive dilemmas in the lives of Indians or Indian Immigrants with themes such as marital difficulties, miscarriages and disconnect between first and second generation United States Immigrants. *Interpreter of Maladies* received pulitzer prize for fiction. In 2003, Lahiri published her novel *The Namesake*. A film adaptation of *The Namesake* was released in March 2007, directed by Mira Nair and starring Kal Penn as Gogol and Bollywood stars Tabu and Irfan Khan as his parents. Lahiri's second collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* was published in 2008. After its publication *Unaccustomed Earth* achieved the rare distinction of debuting at number 1 on the New York times best seller on list. She has published a number of her short stories, mostly fiction, and a few non-fiction including *The Long Way Home*, *Cooking Lesson*. Lahiri received many awards for her short story collections. In 1991 *The Interpreter of Maladies* got O Henry Award and PEN/ Heming way Award for short story. Her second collection of short stories, *Unaccustomed Earth* received Frank O' conner International short story Award in 2008 and Asian American Literary Award in 2009.

The novel 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. The story begins as Ashoke and Ashima leave Calcutta, India and settle in Central Square, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Through a series of errors, their son's nickname, Gogol, become his official birth name, an event that will shape many aspects of his life in years to come. Ashima Ganguli is a young bride about to deliver her first child in a hospital in Massachusetts, It is 1968, and her husband, Ashoke, is an Engineering student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). New to America, Ashima struggles through language and cultural barriers as well as her own fears as she delivers her first child alone. Had the delivery taken place in Calcutta, she would have had her baby at home, surrounded by family. The delivery is successful, and the new parents are prepared to take their son home they learn they cannot leave the hospital before giving their son a legal name.

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attracted to one another and eventually are married. However, by the end of their first year of marriage, Moushumi becomes restless. She feels tied down by marriage and begins to regret it. He also feels like a poor substitute for Graham. Eventually, Moushumi has an affair with Dimitri, an old acquaintance, the revelation of which leads to the end of their marriage. With Sonia preparing to marry her fiancé, an American named Ben, Gogol is once again alone. He is nonetheless comforted by the fact that Ashoke, prior to his death, finally told his son why he had chosen that name for him. Gogol comes to accept his father had given him as a birthday present many years ago. Ton. Out exactly where Calcutta is and what the exact mileage is from Calcutta to Boston.

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