
Postcolonialism In The Novel The Namesake By Jhumpa Lahiri

Postcolonialism is defined as “the historical period or state of affairs representing the aftermath of Western colonialism, or that can be also used to describe the concurrent project to rethink the history and agency of people subordinated under various form of imperialism” (Iverson, 2020). Postcolonialism shows about identity, culture and nationality. The namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri, The cultural disparity is one among concept in literature. It focuses on culture and how people are suffered by culture because people migrate to a foreign country to earn money or something. and it also shows how this postcolonialism led to loss ones identity thus, the theme identity, diaspora, mimicry and hybridity are woven into lives of the character.

In the novel Identity like name, language and culture plays a vital role. postcolonial identity that is based on cultural interactions between different identities . As names are symbol of identity in life which helps people to communicate with each other that particularly plays an important role for people to identify themselves . In the story, the character Gogol is confused regarding his name and he want to change his name into Nikhil . He was sad where he feel indifferent since he was not able to adapt both name. People who knew him by name called him" Nick" knowing about his name change. By the end, he chooses to stick with his pet name Gogol since he realized the hope behind it as it defines who he is. Language became another issue for Gogol as their family speaks Bengali within families but speak other languages when they step out from the house In the process, he found difficulties in usage of languages and practicing of culture as his mother force him to focus more on Indian culture, That he is asked to eat with hands instead of eating with spoon making him confused with the two culture.

Diaspora is the situation in which people are scattered away from their original countries or coming together in a different place (diaspora-dictionary, 2019). Diaspora has been used as expressing the concept of hybridity. This novel tells us about the adjustment problems of Indians, both first and second generations, who have now settled in America. The pressure between adhering to Indian culture and absorbing American culture, between protecting family tradition and pledging to the individual freedom and realization that one is an outsider even though one is born there is beautifully highlighted in the novel. Ashima use to get confused between the Indian and American practices in which even her son pressurizes her about not being able to understand and feeling ashamed of practicing the Indian culture and speaking Bengali. Through the character of Gogol, Lahiri has revealed her own quest of identity and cultural hybridity. In spite of the Bengali-oriented education children receive from their parents, they get integrated to the standard American culture by schooling, university education and other extracurricular activities fundamental to American culture. They are caught between two conflicting realities – one of the host country through the socio-cultural surroundings and the other of the cultural patterns of the country of their parents. Similarly, many issues of culture difference, identity of name, language and homesick arises due to the diaspora nature caused by the Postcolonialism.

Another significant themes reflected in the novel are mimicry and hybridity. Mimicry in the colonial and postcolonial literature is “commonly seen when the members of the colonized society imitates the language, dress, politics and cultural attitudes of the colonizer” (Singh,

2009). In other words, it is also defined as being insincere and intentionally suppresses one's own cultural identity, though in some cases immigrants and colonial subjects are left confused by their culture when it encounters with other dominant foreign cultures. Likewise, though Ganguli family is initially originated from Indian Society they generate preference of foreign culture than their original culture. In the novel, cultural conflict arises because the parents of Gogol who wanted to inculcate Indian culture and values in them; however, their children prefer to follow American culture. Going to their native land is a joy for them but the two children have no attachment to either India or their relatives. Moreover, Gogol and his sister Sonia love Christmas more than Durga Puja and find Bengali cultural lessons boring. For their parents, India is their desh (country) but "Gogol never thinks of India as desh, instead he thinks of it as Americans do, as India" just like any American kid, Gogol leaves his home. While doing so, it does not mean he hates his parents but the things they say is not the one that interests him. The copying of the colonizing culture, behaviour, manners and values by the colonized contains both mockery and a certain 'menace', 'so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace' (Bhabha, 1994). Similarly, in the colonial and postcolonial literature mimicry is often seen as something shameful when the members of the colonized society imitate the language, dress, politics and cultural attitudes of the colonizer. For example, Ashima in the novel who lives in America cooks Indian dishes, wears their dress and speaks Bengali at home but whenever she steps outside the doorstep, her mind is preoccupied by the cultures and practices of new western society. There is situation where son faces so many challenges in speaking different language because he is confused between the two languages in which he later prefers to use the western language as he felt uncomfortable and ashamed to speak their native language. In that way one's own cultures are covered by other dominant cultures leading to the impacts of hybridity.

In conclusion, the identity, diaspora, mimicry and hybridity are the main themes portrayed in the novel 'The Namesake' which is mainly based on the impacts of Postcolonialism. Postcolonialism has not only made the people to move from their original place but also made people to experience the diaspora nature where the settlers began to mimicry and hybridity the cultures and religions. On contrary, the most challenging thing is people faces difficulty in differentiating their identity and often get confused it with the foreign identity.

Postcolonialism has more disadvantage than advantage over the novel where main character named Gogol has to undergo number of challenges to identify and define himself. So, whatever advent of Postcolonialism has not only affected the living styles and cultures but also the identity.