
Portrayal of Conflicts Between Two Generations in Select Work of Jhumpa Lahiri

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Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri's works are sometimes interpreted as depictions of conflicts between the diaspora; a careful reading of these stories reveals the author's ability to identify and communicate her own issues even in situations that are far different from her own. One of the most well-known and esteemed Indian American authors, Jhumpa Lahiri is a highly regarded chronicler of Bengali immigrant life. She has done extensive research on the significance of immigration and the difficulties they face. Her work portrays the experiences of migrants, their ties to their homeland, and their want to fit in with the established land in order to improve social and economic conditions. She was particularly captivated to their way of life. Her work clearly demonstrates her connection to Bengali culture. The author, who is renowned for her logical portrayal of immigrants' problems, cultural conflicts, and identity crises, has successfully depicted the differences between first-generation and second-generation immigrants in her individual works. This paper seeks to illustrate how the first- and second-generation immigrants in the book *The Namesake* employ different identification symbols in relation to their time in America.

Key Words: Cultural Clash, Generational Gap, Identity Crisis, Displacement, Alienation

Introduction

Jhumpa Lahiri's writing style and viewpoint distinguish her from other English-language Indian authors. The majority of Indian fiction writers who write in English were born and bred in India, despite the fact that authors like as Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Jhabvala, Vikram Seth, and Kamala Markandya really reside in either America or England. Born in London to Bengali parents and reared in Rhode Island, Lahiri is a well-known author with an Indian heart. In *The Namesake*, the novel's protagonists, first-generation immigrants, struggle to raise their kids in a foreign country while attempting to maintain their ties to their Indian heritage. As second-generation immigrants, the children struggle because they are totally cut off from Indian culture, which causes generational disputes between the parents and kids. While the kids go

through emotional contradiction, the parents feel alienated. Every Indian diaspora generation encounters cultural conflicts in a unique way.

Generational Conflict between the First and Second Generation

The Namesake, Jhumpa Lahiri's first book, was published in 2003. It vividly depicts the life of a Bengali family while echoing themes of immigrant discomfort, east-west conflict, family ties, and freedom. The book recounts the life of the Ganguli family, an immigrant family from India, in the US, with a focus on Gogol Ganguli, who was born here. Gogol struggled with his hyphenated identity, and Lahiri examines sociocultural and psychological analyses of this. In addition to the difficulty of trying to establish oneself in a new country, immigrants often struggle with issues of identity confusion, loneliness, cultural conflict and generation gap.

Jhumpa Lahiri examines the generational gap that arises as the diaspora ages in her book The Namesake. Diasporic issues differ between the first and second generations. The first generation of immigrants protects themselves from the influence of the host culture, fights against the possibility of cultural conflict, and eventually adopts the language and practices of the host nation. The situation of second-generation children appears to be reversed as they grow accustomed to the culture of their new home and distance themselves from the traditional culture and values of their parents. It is arguable whether or not they are accepted by the majority culture of the host nation.

The first generation's diasporic issue is further compounded by the fact that the ideological divide between the first and second generations is primarily founded on cultural differences.

In The Namesake, Gogol and Sonia succeed as American adults, defying the expectations of their parents. Sonia goes to dance parties with her American friends, some of whom are male, and takes part in all they do. Sonia's assimilation into American society is easier than Gogol's, but it also appears that Gogol paves the road for Sonia's assimilation. For example, Sonia doesn't have to make requests for items that she already has because Gogol insisted that Christmas celebrations start in the Ganguli home. The spaghetti and pizza have already been brought. After arriving in New York, Gogol joins a company to work on concepts for corporate headquarters, hotels, and museums. Gogol moves to Columbia to study architecture after first transferring to New Haven for further schooling. Sonia would soon follow in Gogol's footsteps by relocating in order to further her career. Sonia moves to California and then to San Francisco, where she is prepared to enroll in a law degree and works for an environmental organization. Sonia experiences less pressure to embrace the American lifestyle that her older brother has already embraced than she did during

Gogol's time, and her parents' astonishment is also less severe. Sonia and Gogol's nomadic lifestyle stands in stark contrast to their parents' stable existence. Unlike the second-generation children who move every year, Ashima views internal migration as a horrible experience when they move from Cambridge to a university town outside of Boston.

In general, second-generation immigrants typically do not take up their parents' eating, traditions, educational, or occupational habits or lifestyles. Teens in the West are taught how to be independent and make their own decisions after graduating from school. Indian children of immigrants often imitate their American counterparts when it comes to listening to their parents' instructions. Most Indian immigrants pursued jobs in engineering or medicine. Electrical engineer Ashoke moves to Boston to work toward a Ph.D. in fiber optics. Afterwards, he works as a professor at a university. After high school, Gogol chooses to enroll in Columbia University's architecture department, against Ashoke's expectations. Gogol's peculiar job concept worries his parents.

Like American children, children of second-generation immigrants feel emotionally cut off from the home as soon as they physically leave it. Although Gogol makes every effort to stay away from his parents' house, Ashoke and Ashima both long to spend weekends and festivals with their children. He feels as though he is traveling back in time when he visits his parents' home and encounters Bengali people and their customs, which he finds utterly repulsive. However, Gogol likes to travel and party with his new friends. At one of these events, he meets Maxine, who later becomes his girlfriend. Maxine resorted to Gogol because she was fed up with Russell, even though she was his ex-girlfriend. She has gorgeous blond hair and works for a publishing company. When Gogol sees her at the party, she invites him to supper at her home the next day. Maxine's parents don't mind if she dates a boy. Gogol frequently visits Maxine, stays at her house, and has sex with her as a result. Gogol has also previously dated other girls, such as Kim and Ruth. Gogol's relationships with American women contrasted sharply with his parents' views on marriage and romanticism. They don't understand Gogol's love relationships, but they wish to arrange their children's marriages in line with Bengali custom.

The Namesake also demonstrates how first-generation immigrants use cultural practices, nostalgia, and memories to retain their cultural heritage. They also keep in touch with their Indian relatives through letters, phone conversations, and sporadic trips. They look forward to getting letters from their relatives, and when they do, they read them several times to deepen their relationship with

them. In order for their children to grow up knowing and comprehending native culture, they also try to pass on their cultural history to them. They require their children to learn Bengali and take part in Bengali customs. The book claims that Ashima attempted to instruct Gogol in religious doctrine and Indian literature.

Due to the pressures of their involvement in western society, the parents also gradually grow more liberal. The Ganguli home celebrates both Indian and Western customs and holidays, such as Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Christmas. Even though the second generation is often pressured to follow Bengali customs and rituals, they reject Bengalism as adults. First-generation immigrants, on the other hand, have always highlighted the positive elements of their own nation.

Although second-generation immigrants do not have a clear link to their first-generation parents' origins, first-generation immigrants nevertheless retain deep affections for their own nation. They can only learn about indigenous culture and customs from their parents. On the other hand, people can directly access western culture without the need for a mediator. When kids get to age, they can choose between the two cultures, and because of its independence and unconventional way of living, western civilization seems more promising than local culture. As they mature, they are impacted by both cultures. The western culture encourages liberty, individualism, and the freedom of expression, ideas, and sensuality in contrast to the indigenous culture, which lays restrictions on people. Gogol and Sonia embrace the western world with pleasure. Moushumi transcends the cultural contexts of India and the US by embracing European culture and demonstrating an interest in French literature. She was born and reared in the United States, just like Gogol, but she has learned French and likes to read French-language books. For her, learning a language is the same as accepting a different culture. She moves to Paris during that period. After returning to the US, she is also pursuing a PhD in French literature at New York University. Even after marrying Gogol, she maintains her romance with German scholar Dimitri. As a result, Moushumi easily rejects the two cultures and countries that could want to claim her, and she grows into a very global citizen who is unrestricted by boundaries.

Conclusion

Jhumpa Lahiri explores the forces of resistance between the first and second generations in every aspect of life in a diasporic setting. The two generations' perspectives are constantly at odds with one another. While the first generation chooses to identify as "Indian Americans," the second generation would rather be "Americanized Indians." The first generation in the diaspora

experiences dislocation, discontent, and anxiety over losing their cultural identity. The second generation, on the other hand, faces unique challenges because they have to deal with the anguish of cultural forces from two separate cultures in addition to the ABCD identity—American born confused Desi—that they eventually acquire. The tension between two generations is expertly portrayed by Jhumpa Lahiri.

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