

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN INDIAN AND AMERICAN CULTURE IN THE NOVEL THE NAMESAKE BY JHUMPA LAHIRI

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Abstract

The novel The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri tells the story of Gogol Ganguli, an American-Indian man who was born in Calcutta, India, and raised in the United States. The novel explores themes of identity, culture, and family. In this novel, American and Indian cultures are depicted in contrast. American culture is characterized by individualism, freedom, and pragmatism. Meanwhile, Indian culture is characterized by collectivism, tradition and spirituality. The aim of the comparative cultural analysis in this novel is to explore and unravel the complex cultural interactions depicted in the narrative. Through this analysis, the researcher aims to uncover the complexities and nuances of the journey of the protagonist, Gogol Ganguli, as he adapts between his Indian heritage and the American lifestyle.

Keywords: Indian, American, Culture

Abstrak

Novel The Namesake karya Jhumpa Lahiri berkisah tentang Gogol Ganguli, seorang pria Amerika-India yang lahir di Kalkuta, India, dan besar di Amerika Serikat. Novel ini mengeksplorasi tema identitas, budaya, dan keluarga. Dalam novel ini, budaya Amerika dan India digambarkan secara kontras. Budaya Amerika dicirikan oleh individualisme, kebebasan, dan pragmatisme. Sedangkan budaya India bercirikan kolektivisme, tradisi, dan spiritualitas. Tujuan dari analisis budaya komparatif dalam novel ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi dan mengungkap interaksi budaya kompleks yang tergambar dalam narasinya. Melalui analisis ini, peneliti bertujuan untuk mengungkap kompleksitas dan nuansa perjalanan sang protagonis, Gogol Ganguli, saat ia beradaptasi antara warisan India dan gaya hidup Amerika.

Kata Kunci: India, Amerika, Budaya

1. INTRODUCTION

A language is a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing. According to Kridalaksana and Djoko Kentjono (in Chaer, 2014: 32) language is an arbitrary sound symbol system used by members of social groups to work together, communicate, and identify themselves. The main function of language is as a means of communication between humans.

According to Hudhana&Mulasih (2019:43) novels are created by authors as a long journey or event of a character in life. Within its broad framework, the genre of the novel has encompassed an extensive range of types and styles: picaresque, epistolary, Gothic, romantic, realist, historical—to name only some of the more important ones. The novel attempts to assume those burdens of life that have no place in the epic poem and to see man as unheroic, unredeemed, imperfect, even absurd. This is why there is room among its practitioners for writers of hardboiled detective thrillers such as the contemporary American Mickey Spillane or of sentimental melodramas such as the prolific 19th-century English novelist Mrs. Henry Wood, but not for one of the unremitting elevation of outlook of a John Milton.

Comparison is the process of comparing two or more things to identify the similarities and differences between them. In the context of this research, the author examine comparison between Indian and American culture in the novel *The Namesake* by JhumpaLahiri. Comparison is differences/differences in similarities compare two objects or events as opposed to, and compare two quantities (Charlesworth, 2011).

Culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that are characteristic of a particular group of people or society. It encompasses a wide range of elements, including language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, arts, traditions, and more. According to J.P. Lederach (2005) “Culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them.”

"*The Namesake*" by JhumpaLahiri is a novel that delves into the complex themes of identity, cultural assimilation, and the immigrant experience. The narrative unfolds around Gogol Ganguli, born to Indian immigrant parents in the United States. The title of the novel itself reflects the central motif – Gogol's name, a source of both personal and cultural significance. The story begins with Gogol's unusual name, given by his father in honor of the Russian author Nikolai Gogol. As Gogol navigates his life, the novel chronicles his struggles

with identity, which are deeply intertwined with his name and cultural background. Lahiri weaves a nuanced exploration of the challenges faced by Gogol as he grapples with the dual influences of his Indian heritage and his American surroundings.

In this research journal, the author will detail the comparison between Indian and American culture in *The Namesake*. The purpose of conducting a comparative cultural analysis in the novel "The Namesake" by JhumpaLahiri is to explore and dissect the intricate interplay of cultures depicted within the narrative. Through this analysis, one aims to delve into the complexities and nuances of the protagonist's journey, Gogol Ganguli, as he navigates between his Indian heritage and the American way of life. This examination seeks to unveil how Lahiri portrays cultural clashes, identity formation, and the evolution of traditions within the context of immigration and diaspora. Ultimately, by conducting a comparative cultural analysis, the aim is to unravel the novel's deeper layers, revealing the impact of cultural influences on individual identity and societal perceptions.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative method. According to Creswell (2016) qualitative research is a type of research that explores and understands the meaning of a number of individuals or groups of people originating from social problems. The data for this research is the film entitled *The Namesake* by JhumpaLahiri. The data collection techniques in this research are as follows:

1. Find out about author JhumpaLahiri.
2. Choosing one of the films by JhumpaLahiri, namely *The Namesake*.
3. Start analyzing to look for comparisons of American and Indian culture in the film.
4. Identify the findings.
5. Draw research conclusions from these cultural comparisons.

To achieve a comprehensive analysis, the research adopts a multifaceted approach, utilizing a combination of qualitative research methods, including content analysis, thematic analysis, narrative analysis, and cultural critique. Content analysis provides a systematic and objective means of examining the novel's text, identifying key themes and patterns. Thematic analysis delves deeper into these themes, uncovering underlying meanings and connections. Narrative analysis dissects the novel's narrative structure, revealing how Lahiri constructs the characters' experiences and cultural journeys. Cultural critique examines the novel's

representation of cultural interactions, exploring the dynamics of power, identity, and belonging.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The novel *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri tells the story of Gogol Ganguli, an American-Indian man who was born in Calcutta, India, and grew up in the United States. The novel explores themes of identity, culture, and family. In this novel, American and Indian cultures are depicted in contrast. American culture is characterized by individualism, freedom, and pragmatism. Indian culture is characterized by collectivism, tradition, and spirituality. These are the comparison of American and Indian Culture in the Novel "The Namesake" by Jhumpa Lahiri:

1. Family Tradition:

- a. America: Focus on individuality, with emphasis on autonomy and independence.
- b. India: Strong family influence characterizes everyday life, often colored by traditional norms.

2. Identity and Acceptance:

- a. America: Tends toward a search for personal identity outside family norms.
- b. Indian: Identity is often closely linked to family and cultural background.

3. Intergenerational Relations:

- a. America: Sometimes there is a gap between generations in terms of values and outlook on life.
- b. India: Hierarchy and strong links between generations, play an important role in family decision making.

4. Social Value Comparison:

- a. America: Values values such as freedom and diversity.
- b. India: Maintaining social traditions and hierarchies that reflect deep cultural values.

5. Language and Communication:

- a. America: Use of language as a tool for self-expression and open communication.
- b. India: Language is often a symbol of cultural identity, reflecting strong cultural roots.

6. Effect of Migration:

- a. America: Confrontation with a new culture and adaptation to different social norms.
- b. India: The experience of migration gives rise to feelings of nostalgia and challenges in preserving cultural roots.

7. Rituals and Celebrations:

- a. America: Celebrate celebrations with American characteristics, showing inclusivity and freedom of expression.
- b. India: Celebrations with traditional activities, reflecting religious values and family togetherness.

In "The Namesake," JhumpaLahiri depicts how the characters navigate this cultural conflict, highlighting the challenges and riches that arise from comparing American and Indian cultures in the context of migration. In the novel "The Namesake" by JhumpaLahiri, the cultural comparison between America and India displays the complexity of the relationship dynamics of the main characters. Family traditions are at the heart of the conflict, with Gogol, the main character, having to reconcile with the norms of a strong Indian family while navigating the individuality emphasized in American culture. Developing identities amidst societal acceptance creates a rich narrative, explaining how the characters experiment with the boundaries of their culture. Disagreements between generations, especially in terms of values and outlook on life, provide an additional dimension to these comparisons, illustrating the cultural changes that occur from one generation to the next. In the aspect of language and communication, the novel highlights the role of language as a marker of cultural identity, with Gogol trying to find a way to convey the complexity of his identity through the language he masters. The influence of migration is a central theme, illustrating the challenges of adapting to a new environment and changing cultural values. Rituals and celebrations reveal differences in the way the two cultures celebrate important moments, reinforcing the contrast in the characters' experiences. Through this discussion of cultural comparisons, the novel opens a window into the complexities of identity and intercultural relationships that color the characters' journeys.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In the novel "The Namesake" by JhumpaLahiri, the cultural comparison between America and India displays the complexity of the dynamics of the main character's relationship.

Family traditions are at the heart of the conflict, with Gogol, the main character, having to reconcile strong Indian family norms while navigating the individuality emphasized in American culture. Developing identity amidst societal acceptance creates a rich narrative, explaining how the characters experiment with the boundaries of their culture. Disagreements between generations, especially in terms of values and outlook on life, provide an additional dimension to these comparisons, illustrating the cultural changes that occur from one generation to the next. Through this discussion of cultural comparisons, this novel opens a window into the complexity of identity and intercultural relationships that color the characters' journeys.

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