

Exploring Transculturalism in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee

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The present article aims to show the relationship between multiculturalism and transculturalism. Globalization, migration, colonization are the reasons for multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is where the various ethnic groups collaborate with one another without sacrificing their identity. This raises the question on the effects of multiculturalism on each ethnic group because the influence of one culture on the other will definitely create identity crisis and culture shock. Transculturalism is where the ethnic groups find a common ground in the progress and get accustomed to it. Globalisation connects people from all across the world and it helps to understand the culture background of different countries. India stands as an evidence for multiculturalism and transculturalism. After independence, we adopted the qualities of British and this still hinders the question whether it has removed the native culture. And English does play a major role in the era of globalisation. Bharati mukherjee's "*The Tiger's Daughter*," and Jhumpa Lahiri's "*Namesake*" portrays the effect of multiculturalism and transculturalism. The characters in these novels take the readers through the journey where there are conflicts, necessity, and revolution in slow progress.

Each and every country has its own cultural practise and ethnic group, but in the era of globalization people connect across boundaries. Due to the migration of people to different nations, and improvement of technology the cultural values of a society is becoming hybrid and heterogeneous. It is not just migration but colonization also plays a major part in becoming multicultural society. In India, British colonization left its trail as they showed the people of India the new kind of culture which is considered to be sophisticated and luxurious till date. Even after the departure of British, India used the systems introduced by them. India on its own has mixed culture as it has 29 states and 22 official languages spoken all over the country. After colonization, English managed in becoming the common communication language in India now. In all the conflicts against the acceptance of other cultural practice, people are finding common grounds to live in peace. Multiculturalism creates a confusion amongst human beings which does not allow to looking back at the native culture from which the transculturalism evolves. The

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concept of transculturalism, also known as cosmopolitanism, is becoming target for unfavourable opinion by the critics. The results of transculturalism and multiculturalism are entirely different. Trying to assimilate different cultural diversity is difficult to achieve. Transculturalism is seen as the solution to the pitfall of multiculturalism. Claude Grunitzky says, Transculturalism is about identity, and the modern quest for belonging in these troubled times of conflict and war. The basic premise of this optimistic book is that some individuals go beyond their initial culture in order to explore, examine, and infiltrate alien cultures and these people are called as “transculturalists”. Donald Cuccioletta in his article Multiculturalism or Transculturalism: Towards a Cosmopolitan Citizenship, He acknowledges the importance of multiculturalism as a social and political policy mentioning both its merits and its flaws. Transculturalism offers a breakdown of cultural boundaries, as it does not emphasize the culture like multiculturalism.

The aim of this article is to explore the novels, “Namesake” by Jhumpa Lahiri and “Tiger’s Daughter” by Bharati Mukherjee, as they deal with more complex ethnic and cultural issues as it depicts the life and problems of immigrants. The characters in these two novels hail from Bengal. In *The Tiger’s Daughter*, at the historical conjuncture, the protagonist, Tara Banerjee, returns to India after marrying an American and faces a different India than the one she remembers as it was seven years before. This novel reflects the difficulties of being caught between two worlds, which is her two homes and two cultures. In the same way, characters Ashima and Ganguli in the novel *Namesake* face culture shock in the beginning. Ashima also might feel the same as Tara if she returns back to homeland. As first immigrant, Ashima and Ganguli live in a place which their parents considered out of league. Gogol and Sonia, the second generation children are complete transculturalists. Tara of *The Tiger’s Daughter* has been educated in Western ways and her ideas are different from traditional Indian culture. From her point of view it is hardly possible to restrict herself inside the four walls of the house. She has been trained to adhere to the western ideas. Despite her Westernization but she does not cut herself from the past. Tara, remembers the collection of little gods and goddesses her mother used to worship at home and prays to Kali, the Hindu goddess of power, at critical times to surge over her many awkward moments with the polite and cryptic Americans. She marries an American, and when she visits India years after, she experiences a strange discomposure to accept her homeland because she is prone to transculturalistic ideas. Jhumpa Lahiri also refers to food and dining in her novel to ensure that they are still adhered to their culture despite of the modernization. Gogol of the novel *Namesake*, the second generation immigrant does not pay attention to his roots. Mukherjee in her novel constantly expresses idea ‘newness’ as survival strategy survival strategy which Tara adopted

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ignoring her hostile state in that educated Bengali society and returning to her adoptive country and American husband. Gogol changes his name to Nikhil and he dates a fellow student named Ruth from yales. He attends a panel discussion about Indian novels written in English, where the panel members talk about ABCD's (American-born confused desi's). This creates confusion about his identity.

Claude Grunitzky comments, "Transculturalism goes beyond race, religion, sexuality, class, and every sort of classification. Transculturalists think, consume, date, or marry outside of their race, religion, or nationality. They are comfortable listening to, creating and criticizing music outside of their original cultures and often display high levels of creativity in various progressive disciplines. Some call transculturalists heretics; many call them the future." Tara marries an American and Gogol dates an American without being pulled down by the pressure of the roots. Tara finds it difficult to re-relate to her family, culture, and city and her experiments to reconcile these two complete opposite worlds in her mind and heart but fails. Every character in these two novel struggles with his or her identity, because practically every character feels the tug and pull of different cultures, different traditions, and different dreams. Tara and Gogol, in particular, are torn between two cultures – the Indian traditions of his parents and the mainstream American culture in which they grow up. Despite of all the conflicts, they are the transculturalists who live their lives on their own choice.

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