

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The issue about immigrant at the moment is still a very important matter in the United States of America. The variety of ethnics in the USA reflects the terms of “Salad Bowl” which means that the ethnics still embrace their own culture, values and beliefs. However, as immigrants these people also face the new culture in the new country and most of them try to mix their original cultures to the new one. This situation is called hybridity. One of the groups of ethnics in America is the South Asian-immigrants. In this thesis I would like to focus on South Asian immigrants, especially Indian immigrant and how American values affect their lives and their beliefs. “Hybridity refers in its most basic sense to mixture. Hybridity became a useful tool in forming a fearful discourse of racial mixing that arose toward the end of 18th century.” (Wikipedia). From this citation, I conclude that in the end of the 18th century the racial mixing, or hybridity, is considered as forbidden. It is because in that age, the Europeans who colonize Africa and Asia are considering themselves as a superior race. The Europeans are considering African

and Asian as weaker and inferior race. This happens because European is afraid their culture will be polluted by Eastern culture so European wants Asian or African to just stay with their own cultures. “However, the social transformations that followed the ending of colonial mandates, rising immigration, and economic liberalization profoundly altered the use and understanding of the term hybridity.” (Wikipedia)

However, the cultural mixing can occur in many ways. It occurs through migration which means that people from other countries bring their culture and it influences the natives or the culture of the natives influences the foreigner’s ways of life. Besides, the cultural mixing can occur through media such as books, radio or television. Those media contain thoughts and messages that can influence the life of people. We have knowledge about other cultures through books that we read or television and internet. It means that cultural mixing or hybridity not only occurs to immigrants but it can also occur to all people. “The occurrence of contact typically involves movement of some sort, and in international communication contact entails the movement of cultural commodities such as media programs, or the movement of people through migration.” (Cultural Hybridity and Communication 5)

The United States of America is a country which promises American Dream and many chances. Thus, America becomes the destination of Indian immigrants to improve their lives. The immigrants themselves enrich America in many ways, including American literature, especially in the late 20th century. Many Indian-American writers produced masterpieces in literature. Most of them write about Indian-American life in the USA. From some names of South-Asian American writers, Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the most well-known and talented Indian-American writer at

this time. She is one of the Indian-American writers that know quite specifically about the life of Indian-immigrants in the United States. Her experiences as an immigrant daughter who is taught about Bengali heritage from an early age make her know about the life of Bengali immigrants who still embrace their ancestral culture in detail.

Lahiri knows the terrain like the back of her hand: the community of expatriate Bengalis in the Boston area; their peculiarly lonely lives with ersatz extended families made up of fellow expats; the customs and world view through which they see their own everyday experience; and the struggle of their American children with their own questions of identity and belonging.(Apte).

Moreover, Lahiri also has won some awards such as Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, National Magazine Award for Fiction, O. Henry Award, PEN/Hemingway Award, etc. She is also named by The New Yorker as "one of the 20 best writers under the age of 40". (SAJA-Diasporadics). With all these achievements she has accomplished in the world of literature, I believe that her work is worth discussing.

The Namesake is the first novel written by Jhumpa Lahiri. It tells about a South Asian-immigrant family in the United States and discusses "the theme of immigration, collision of cultures and the importance of names."(VG Artist Biography). In this novel, "Lahiri demonstrates how much of a struggle immigration can be." (VG Artist Biography). The Namesake was also turned into a film by an Indian director, Mira Nair, in 2006.

Another famous writer in Asian-American literature is Bharati Mukherjee. She writes many works about Indian-American especially about Indian women who live in the United States. She creates works that are related to American and Bengali in the

form of essays and novels. Her works has been addressed by many figures in postcolonial studies even has been the subject of studies. “In addition, her writing has been the subject of significant scholarly engagement in recent years: many of the most recognized figures in postcolonial studies have addressed, often vociferously, the goals of Professor Mukherjee's critical and creative project.” (Chen&Goudie)

In her work, Jasmine, Mukherjee portrays an immigrant woman who has to struggle and faces some troubles in her life. The novel also shows how Western thought can impact the life of immigrant in detail. “...the author is masterful at describing the difficulties faced by immigrants and the extraordinary ways in which they create new identities for themselves.”(Barnejee)

Knowing that the focus of the two novels is about the life of an immigrant, I would like to analyze the portrayal of immigrant characters. In my thesis, Jasmine in Mukherjee’s Jasmine, is an Indian woman who moves to America after the death of his husband and Ashima in Lahiri’s The Namesake is an Indian woman who moves to America after her marriage. As immigrants, they share some similar experiences yet they have different characteristics and different family background. From these two characters, I want to reveal the purpose of the authors to depict the life of immigrant as closely as possible.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. How do the authors portray the characters?
2. What is the purpose of the authors in creating such characters?

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1. To show how the author portray the characters
2. To show the purpose of the authors in creating such characters.

IV. METHODS OF RESEARCH

The method I use is library research. I begin with reading Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake and Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine. After that, I look for some references and materials from the Internet which can support the analysis. Finally, I draw some conclusions of what has been discussed.

V. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

I divide the thesis into four chapters. In Chapter One, I present the Introduction, which contains the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. In the second chapter, I analyze the portrayal of an immigrant in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake and in the third chapter I analyze the portrayal of an immigrant in Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine. In the last chapter, I draw the Conclusion of the analysis. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices.