

LIVING BETWEEN NATIONS, WITH HYPHENATION: A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY OF THE CINEMATIC GOGOL

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Introduction

In the socio-cultural context of migration and multiculturalism, today one is left with dichotomies of a variety of range. These dichotomies range from being sociological to psychological to cultural. The geographical shifts have made us come across situations which deprive and enrich us at parallel paradigms as social relations are both constituted through and constrained by space, giving rise in the process to a socio-spatial dialectic (Guha, 2004, p.19). So, these are not just displacements of place but also displacements of space and culture that contribute to the existent dualities in identity. Such situations construct hyphens which cater to the identities of individuals dwelling between nations – the parent nation and the host nation.

The parent nation holds ones roots and the host nation gives one the opportunity of job, education, and much more. These places contribute to one's collective memory and become powerful emotional and cultural symbols (Knox, 2013, p.5) thereby

compelling one to remain obliged to both; neither can one leave the host nation nor can one stop being nostalgic about the parent nation which includes a collective memory or myth about the homeland including its location, history, and achievements (Cohen, 1997, p.26). This migration emergent socio-cultural phenomenon gives rise to 'hyphenated identity'.

Objective

The current article aims to study the spatial organization of human activity and people's relationships with their environment (Knox, 2013, p.4) by tracing the hyphenation in identity of the character Gogol Ganguli from the Mira Nair directed cinematic adaptation of Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake*.

Material

This paper will surface the cinematic version of Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* as its primary data. As a film, *The Namesake* (2007) gained both critical and commercial acclaims. Upon its release in 2006, it received approving reviews from film critics

from all over the world. Based on 128 reviews worldwide, 86% of the critics gave the film positive reviews with an average rating of 7.4/10 (Rottentomatoes, 2007).

The Namesake (2007) centres on Gogol Ganguli, who is named after Nikolai Gogol, his father's favourite author. By the time Gogol is old enough to attend school, he insists upon not being called Gogol, and displays little interest in his Indian heritage. Gogol grows up to become a thoroughly Americanized teenager, openly rebelling against his parents, smoking marijuana in his room, and dating Maxine, a preppy blonde from a wealthy family. Ashoke and Ashima (Gogol's parents) are uncertain about how to deal with their son's attempts to cut himself off from their culture, but Gogol (who now prefers to be called Nick) begins to change with the changing contours of relationships and circumstances as the story builds up (Rottentomatoes, 2007).

Methodology

Through inter-textual analysis, this paper intends to divulge into the diasporic reflections that are lived and experienced by Gogol in his socio-cultural contexts, which together would form an exemplary anecdote of humans being lost in the process of living between nations. While 'diaspora' is sometimes used interchangeably with 'migration' it is generally involved as a theoretical device for the interrogation of ethnic identity and cultural nationalism (Gandhi, 1998, p.131). This paper would include immigrant experience as an aspect of socio-cultural displacement that serves to the fractured identities and hyphenated

nationalisms to help us understand how it is not only space that is a socialconstruct, but that social relations are constructed over space (Massey, 1985, pp.9-19).

The film puts forward some cardinal questions that are significant to the plot in particular and the immigrant experience in general: What contributes to hyphenation in Gogol? What makes Gogol seek for a different identity? What are the socio-cultural parameters that shape Gogol? Is Gogol able to overcome the loss that he encounters in his journey of self discovery? This paper proposes to find the answers to these questions through layers of analysis and interpretation of several facets of the film *The Namesake* (2007) which would help one understand the dichotomies faced by the *Gogols* (immigrants) living between nations.

Results

Through visual and critical interpretations this paper aims to yield results that would aid one to draw similitudes between the cinematic character's (Gogol's) milieu and his/her own; and would also make one relive the identity crisis that Gogol undergoes in his journey of self discovery. Thus, through the analysis of the film *The Namesake* (2007), this paper intends to represent the socio-spatial compulsions of identity, home, dislocation, relocation, rootlessness, and belonging (Sharma, 2006, p.5) in socio-cultural contexts which divide an individual in the process of geographical migration that includes cultural and psychological migrations in disguise.

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