

Navigating Diaspora And Familial Resilience: Akhil Sharma's *Family Life*

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ABSTRACT

"Family Resilience" can simply be cultivated through the bolster, flexibility, and strength that a family showers in times of hardship. A well-constructed family can be a base or establishment to overcome all the challenges, cultivating the development of the family. Akhil Sharma's *Family Life* narrows down to the complexities of relationships in the mise-en-scene of displacement and integration in the United States. My paper endeavors to portray the sacrifices, the cross-cultural nuances, and the loss of identity in the Mishra family, after they got hit by a tragic incident. This study explores how the Mishra family sailed across the challenges of cultural displacement within the relocation of their American dream.

In a chase for a distant life and new opportunities, they immigrated from India to the United States. But an awful mishap turns their life upside down, throwing their child, Birju, extremely brain-damaged. Now they had to confront all the harsh realities of life and stand up unwaveringly to face guilt and uncertainty. This is the time when they were left with no hope or shared help, thus feeling vulnerable in the new society or culture. Despite their unsalvageable state, they bound together to back one another through their collective trauma. This article sheds light on the vitals of affection, giving up, and social personality among emigrants. It explores how familial ties serve as a cornerstone, furnishing a sense of belonging amid the chaos in the unused life in America. Furthermore, this study explores the complexities of disgrace and bitterness that followed the Mishra family highlighting the frailty and suppleness of familial bonds in the face of adversity.

Finally, this article gives a clear-cut idea of how a family works and how the strength of the family members cultivates a sense of positivity in their living environment. It projects how the universal truths of human relationships, and their complexities help in shaping an individual or a community.

Keywords: cross-cultural identity, hardships, reality of life, challenges, mis-happenings.

Introduction

When in Rome, do as the Romans do; goes the saying. How far is this possible? Is it practically possible to adapt to the new world completely irrespective of the tradition in which you have been brought up? Is it possible to follow and adapt the norms and values of a foreign land ignoring their tradition? The answer is No. One cannot completely ignore the beliefs and values of their tradition when exposed to a new land. But definitely, there is a chance of forging a new identity. In this state of displacement, there can occur identity crises, cultural infringement, and psychological challenges.

Akhil Sharma's *Family Life* is a survival story of the Mishra family when they migrate to America from India and leave the family to a depth of suffering. After when they migrated to America, they were in a plan to get settled. But before their reconciliation, the family meets with a tragic accident leaving their son severely brain-damaged. *Family Life* is a poignant narrative with an element of suppleness and a thirst to strengthen the

family in the face of unanticipated adversity along with the theme of diaspora. It deals with the theme of the capacity of the human mind to accept challenges and thrive in times of misery. By highlighting the immigration of the Mishra family from India to America, Sharma delves deep into the complexities of cultural displacement, identity formation, and the resilience required to sail across when exposed to a foreign land.

This paper deals with the family intersecting with diasporic challenges in their resilience phase along with the character formation of the Mishra family after they get hit by misfortune. It gives a glimpse of how the Mishra family experienced diaspora and how it affected and shaped their family resilience by pointing out how they negotiated with the cultural heritage while establishing new identities in an unfamiliar environment.

Diaspora and cultural Displacement

Diaspora, the word means displacement or migration of a group of people to another or unfamiliar land due to many reasons such as for employment stability, political instability, or social upheaval. As these individuals or communities move, they keep up their cultural traditions, languages, and identities which help them to shape their interactions and experiences in the new world. Cultural displacement on the other hand refers to the dislocation when they get uprooted from their traditional or familiar environment to a new or unfamiliar environment.

In Akhil Sharma's *Family Life*, the context revolves around the theme of diaspora and cultural displacement when they move to a foreign land. The Mishra family is forced to leave behind their cultural tradition and get forged into the new values and rules of American culture for their survival. This transition leaves them in misery when they fight with issues like language barriers, unfamiliar social customs, and the loss of native family support. Most importantly, the Mishra family has to navigate the issues of maintaining Indian identity while adopting the American culture, which can lead to feelings of nostalgia about their homeland and a sense of cultural misplacement in the new environment.

Throughout the novel, Sharma makes a keen effort to vividly explain the traumas of diaspora and cultural displacement. Their effort to merge their Indian culture with American culture creates cultural ambiguity and tensions of identity crises. Ajay and Subha are in a dilemma as they want to move forward with the new American culture for the sake of their children's future, but at the same time, they do not want to leave behind their Indian culture which shaped them from their childhood. Meanwhile Birju and Ajay, in their age of adolescence find it easy to grasp the challenges of cultural differentiation. Through the eyes of the Mishra family, Sharma poignantly explores the issues of identity crises, cultural hybridity, immigration, globalization, and adaptability to forge into a new culture.

Identity Formation and Adaptation

Identity is formed by negotiating a sense of self with the outer world. A person's identity is tamed by the after-effects of his interactions with the society. When a person migrates to a foreign country, he/she gets exposed to another world of interactions and the person tends to change the character to adapt to the current situation. Thus, adaptation refers to adjusting to the new environment by meeting all the standards of beliefs, values, and cultural affiliations. Thereby, it can even lead to psychological challenges as well. Identity formation and adaption are two other themes discussed in the novel in the context of diaspora and immigration. This transition forces them to tackle questions of cultural identity, belonging, and assimilation, as they find it difficult to preserve their Indian heritage and move forward to embrace new opportunities offered by the new land.

Ajay and Subha, the parents of the Mishra family, face the challenge of merging their Indian culture with the American culture for their success and prosperity. They must navigate the complexities of adaptation, balancing their cultural traditions with the demands of integration. For example, Ajay is left to cultural inadequacy and displacement when he tries to establish a good rapport with his colleagues and social circle. Similarly, Birju and Ajay also struggle to undergo identity formation and adaptation. When Birju is met with an accident, he loses his cognitive ability and dreams of his future, leading to profound identity crises. Meanwhile, the younger son Ajay, in his adolescent age navigates through the complexities of all teenagers when he is exposed to American adolescence. He is in a dilemma when he tries to uphold his Indian heritage under the pressure of American adolescence. Akhil Sharma through his novel tries to highlight the challenges of people who are exposed to multiple cultures at a time and strive to forge new heritage embracing the opportunities of the adopted homeland.

Resilience and Cultural Hybridity

Resilience and Cultural hybridity are two interconnected themes in Akhil Sharma's novel *Family Life*. Through the Mishra family, Sharma tries to reflect the capacity of an individual or a community to adapt or adopt a new culture in the face of challenges in the context of migration and diaspora. Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back from adversity showing perseverance, strength, and the ability to stand up, in the face of hardship. Throughout the novel, the Mishra family lives in resilience trying to adapt to the cultural displacement and complexities of immigration. Though the younger son gets traumatically injured, the family lives in resilience

to rebuild their lives, support one another, and find meaning in adversity. Ajay, in the novel, becomes a resilient figure, shouldering the pain of the family and helping them to navigate through the adversities and complexities of immigrant life.

Cultural hybridity refers to the merging or blending of two cultures, thereby giving space for the third culture to arise, resulting in the emergence of forged cultural identities and expressions. For example, the Mishras celebrate traditions of Indian culture maintaining connections with their homeland while adapting to the new American culture, norms, and values. The Mishra family navigates through the American culture underscoring the norms and values keeping in mind the Indian traditions.

Language formation

When the Mishra family spoke Hindi at home they were forced to speak English to the outside world, for which they had to come out of their comfort zone to mingle with foreign people. The language barrier is a main aspect faced by the diasporic community, as sometimes the miscommunication may lead to cultural misunderstandings. When exposed to the outer world, they tended to mix up both their home language and the adopted language. This is another challenge that the diasporic community has to navigate. Therefore, this experience highlights language acquisition and the challenge of maintaining linguistic ties to keep up with the new land and culture. As an immigrant in America, the Mishra family had no other choice than to take up the challenge and tackle it. Thus, a factor of resilience and diasporic tinct can be visualized in language or communication.

Conclusion

Diasporic culture plays an important role in the shaping of humankind. When exposed to double cultures one can indeed fall into a dilemma of what to choose. But the ability to choose what is good for themselves is important. It's not mandatory that we have to accept the new life completely. By keeping our traditions in mind, it is possible to navigate through new cultures like how the Mishra family did. Through the journey of the Mishra family, the author has tried to pull out the common cultural conflicts faced by the diasporic communities who leave their homeland in search of better opportunities but must navigate through cultural belongings. But in one sense we can say that, in this interconnected world, the diasporic community's interactions and cultural exchange help the globalized world to progress in every aspect, be it culturally or economically. It helps to create more human experiences and shape society in a better manner.

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