

INFLUENCE OF JEWISH CULTURE IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Abstract: The present paper deals with the impact of culture on Jewish Literature towards its change to Jewish American Literature. The reflection of past experiences like immigration, adjustment to culture of Jews in new adopted Literature in the United States is highlighted here. The sufferings of Jews due to Holocaust and the exhibition of its impact in Jewish American Literature is spoken here and how these circumstances affected the Jewish life in United States in the present day life is also projected in this paper. Totally the paper delivers the pain of Jewish people who were affected physically and mentally in their own land as well as in the other land like America. The following content displays the involvement of culture in changing the Jewish Literature into Jewish American Literature.

Keywords: Culture, Jewish, Migration, Immigrant, Isolation.

The term culture is applied to all of the theory and duties that we train as representatives of society and this connect the members of any society together. Culture helps in bringing understanding among people of different categories and also to analyze what other people are involved in. When different expectations are involved in different cultures, there is normally a communication gap. The implement of culture in all the fields make the people to interact with one another.

The culture influences experiences of an individual, aim to view the knowledge, duties and organizations of the people.

Jews have played a vital role in describing their traditional themes and presenting them into American Literature. The poem of Emma Lazarus *The New Colossus* and the play of Israel Zangwill *The Melting Pot* exhibits:

“two early attempts to introduce ethnic issues into literature, with the addition of a pronounced political agenda: to place emphasis on the social equality and the immigrant past common to all Americans; to keep the ‘golden door’ to the United States open for immigrants from Eastern Europe; and to reaffirm loyalty to the ‘American creed’ and stress the willingness of all Eastern European immigrants to fully integrate into the mainstream of white Anglo-Saxon protestant American society” (Spevack, 32).

The culture of the Jews enables us to analyze the study of Jews in depth. This results in the compilation and description of behaviors, languages and customs of a

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distributed subject. The study of culture of Jews makes us to learn their methods and practices. Many disciplinary headings like linguistics, sociology, cultural studies, folklore highlights the anthropological study of Jews.

The cultural study of Jews deals with the issues of how Jewishness is described, negotiated, disputed, communicated and transformed. The cultural and characteristic representations of Jews have accepted the form of popular literature, museum exhibitions, theatrical exhibitions, publications, journals and ethnographies. In order to get detailed description on the study of Jews, a bridge anthropology and history is very important.

The culture of Jews makes us to understand the quality of people and their flexibility in adjusting to the other culture during some circumstances. The study of Jews highlights us that they are not the people without history. The identity of the Jewish American Community is explained through Literature with religious, culture and community input. It narrates the past experiences, the customs and conflicts of the Jews which is related to the daily life of an American.

A piece of Literature depends upon the origin of the author and the subject of the writing. We cannot decide that the work written by a Jewish-American subject. Jewish authors directly or indirectly deal with Jewish topics but not totally on Jewish subjects.

For example:

Malamud's *The Natural* partly deals with a Jewish theme but it speaks totally about American them even though Malamud is a Jewish. His writings come under American-Jewish genre. Though the author is Jewish, his topics mostly deal with American pat time. His works come under Jewish-American fiction. This brings the desire among American Jews in order to take part in the history and the proud of the nation. His novels indirectly focus on the desire of American Jews to combine, assimilate and fit into American society.

The Jewish literature is explained as:

“always been the fruit of culture of exile, diaspora, homecoming; of a literary world in which Jewish authors from one country read and interact with Jewish authors from other countries; of a community in which Jews from America are intimately concerned with the European Holocaust and with the fate of the State of Israel” (Wirth-Nesher and Kramer, 7).

Even though the culture of the Jews was different, they expected to follow the culture of Americans. Due to their migration to America, these Jews adopted a new culture and formed as Jewish American Culture. This culture influenced even the writers too. So the impact of the culture became a spark in the Literature. The growth of writings and fame in Literature is depended on the culture of the people.

The people not only Chang's their attitude, style and language according to their culture, they even change their writings and exhibit it as a new one through

combining with the other culture. The work of Jewish writers often has an effect in the American Jewish community. Their work is reflected directly or indirectly on the experience of the Jewish people in America.

A non-Jewish writer can never deal with Jewish_American topics. As these writers don't have a Jewish background, they do not have awareness and exposure to exhibit the stories, culture and threats granted to American Jews.

This makes the Jewish community and non-Jewish community of America to learn from this rearrangement of ideas and their replacement of views. A non-Jewish writer should research regarding the topic in deep and gain knowledge in writing the Jewish based story. Thus the culture makes the writer to change their style as well as their genre.

The writings of an author depend upon the culture in which they live. The Jewish writers along with modifying their culture they modified their writings too for the benefit of people as Jews migrated to United States.

The Jewish - American Literature has hold a high esteem place in the Jewish-American community. An important role is played by Jewish-American Literature in projecting the history, feelings, experiences and thoughts of Jewish Americans and Jewish immigrants over the past two hundred years. From the original Jewish arrivals to the growth of the Jewish community, Literature has enacted a vital role in story telling, stimulating and memorializing.

During the colonial period of American history, literature's role is important in framing Jewish identity in America. After the massive Jewish immigration, there was an enormous growth of Jewish-American Literature. This dealt with emptiness, urbanization, anti-Semitism, division between the customs, rules and traditions of old traditional Jewish Community and the new American plans.

This is an important part of Jewish Literature in which the culture diverts to Jewish community and relates to American traditions. The Jews after migrating to America, they had a dilemma of following which value. As they were Jews, they did not have total rights in following their culture and tradition likewise they did not follow the culture of Americans completely. They struggled in following their values.

The Jewish settlers moved from rural community to the large American city. This gave them a new experience. They totally changed their culture and tradition on which they depended and settled completely in America. This lead to many problems like forming tenement housing, bondage among neighbors and the poverty as there were limited number of jobs in the city.

Jew Without Money is a work written by Michael Gold. This novel directly deals with the problems of newly arrived immigrants and their children in New York City. Gold exhibits the relationship between the surrounding neighborhood and the Jewish neighborhood. He even highlights the prostitution and the worst conditions of profession in the Lower East Side.

He even explores the relationship between parent and the child in the new Jewish-American culture. The narration of Michael Gold is very important in the literature of Jews as it contains the experience of the Jewish people.

The parent-child relationship and the old country-new world warfare indicates Jewish-American culture and Jewish-American literature. There comes a change in the control of the family, in religious duties, relationship in Judaism as well as the bondage among Christianity and other religions. The feelings and thoughts of the Jewish community have been represented through Jewish-American Literature during the second half of the twentieth century.

The main reason for the rebirth of Jewishness is the Holocaust. The impact of Holocaust and the tragic murder of innocent Jewish lives focused in Jewish-American Literature. The Holocaust was not taken place in American soil but it affected the families of the innocents, immigrants who migrated to this country after the war, the Jews who did not have any attachment rather than the worldwide Jewish communities.

Jewish-American literature is used to motivate replacement within the Jewish community. This literature used to nurture and to dignify political and social change inside the society. The circumstances and the environment of the Jewish-American writers has always remained different from other origins of America and it remains the same till now. A number of contemporary Jewish-American writers like Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, Joseph Heller, Bernard Malamud, Arthur Miller, and Philip Roth had a lot of success in Literature.

These writers were accepted by Jewish as well as non-Jewish spectators as the language used by these writers is standard American English. There is a comparison with the African-American writers. One difference is projected here. The insignificant position of black authors has vanished on the book display in America. But the subject related to their alienation and anger will never disappear from their works. The blacks wished to reply the question of their bondage with white people's culture through implementing a multicultural approach. This was a motivation for the Jewish-American writers to boldly exhibit their ideas.

Werner Sollors points out the fact that:

“Americans perceive themselves as undergoing cultural homogenization”
(245).

The collective experience of the Eastern-European Jewish immigrant and the fiction engendered by that experience has given particular intensity to this essentially American conflict between history and desire. The pull of the past and the urge to the present, the American Jewish novel took its first place between 1880 and 1930. The threat to Jewish life was coming both from within and without.

A Jewish immigrant Abraham Cahan wrote the most important novel *The Rise of David Levinsky* in which the protagonist has the desire to possess the West and

its promise. Being trained as a Talmudist, but fatally exposed to currents of change reaching his Russian village, David Levinsky expresses euphorically this readiness to be reborn in America. Having the leisure to write fiction, and write it in the language of his adopted land, meant, of course, the immigrant author had achieved a measure of success in America, had undergone some degree of assimilation

The identity of Jewish American writer is understood through American fiction and nonfiction. Along with the Jewish novels even the poetry paved its way in American Literature. The twentieth century American poetry in English contains the presence of Jewish identity. The American poets of Jewish origin proved their identity even in poetry.

According to David Bleich, Jewish American poetry represents:

“an inquiry into history and society, done privately and modestly, with humor and dignity, without frivolousness or solemnity, within a tradition of American poetry that is already marginalized” (Bleich 2000: 179 = 80)

Jewish American poetry is a major augmentation and it is a part of success to American literature. The Jewish culture not only had a big change in its tradition and society, it brought change even in literature where novels and poetry played a vital role. The sufferings of Jewish people due to their immigration are proved clearly in Jewish American novels and poetry. The Jewish people's collaboration with Americans created Jewish American literature with Jewish background.

It is very clear that the American Jewish literature is identified as a unique part of American literary history. The growth of American Jewish literature has been the responsibility of abundant studies concentrating primarily on the authentic forces that described the lives of Jewish immigrants to America. The conclusion of this development is an enormous collection of literature exhibiting the individuality of a particular culture in multi-cultural America.

The difference between American Jews and the few writers on the one side and between Jewish American culture and the standard culture, on the other side, focus the fact that the Jewish may be considered in their duties as contemporary novelists in America. The Jewish writers left behind their theme of isolation, their personalities and writing styles into the American literature.

John Hollander expresses about the existence of an original Jewish American Poetry as:

“the essence of true poetry is originality of a mode of expression; that is, poets will express or figure forth in language not only something totally unique in themselves, but as a kind of general metaphor for the holiness of human individuality, will thus reinvent expressing, or poetic telling” (1994: 38).

The culture of Jewish people made them to get change in all their aspects. This brought a great change in the field of Literature. Many writers presented quality

books with the basement of Jewish literature. It emerged to a great height in the name of American Jewish literature.

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