

A Migration to Self-Actualization: A Theoretical study on the characters Ashima and Dolly

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into the theoretical study of the characters Ashima and Dolly as they navigate their migration journey towards self-actualization. Ashima's character is taken from the novel *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri, while Dolly's character is from the novel *The Glass Palace* by Amitav Ghosh. The article explores the psychological mindset of migrants, their lifestyle, and the challenges they face in a new land. It focuses on the transformation of these characters through the process of migration, highlighting the struggles and suffering they endure. The article portrays the hardships faced by women during migration and how they confront these challenges in their lives. To analyze the characters' psychology, Abraham Maslow's self-actualization theory is utilized. This theory examines the characters' physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and ultimately, their journey towards self-actualization. The characters' progression from migration to self-actualization is thoroughly analyzed, providing a detailed insight into their lives. Both characters experience numerous struggles, pain, suffering, and self-identity crises. The primary objective of this article is to assess whether they achieve self-actualization by the end of the novel. It explores what motivates them to make decisive choices and how they strive towards self-actualization to lead fulfilling lives in their respective novels.

Keywords: Self-actualization, migration, suffering, needs, transformation.

INTRODUCTION

This article delves into the theoretical study of the characters Ashima and Dolly in the context of their journey towards self-actualization. Indian literature in English has made a significant impact on the literary world through the outstanding works of Indian authors. Specifically, we will be examining the theoretical study of Ashima and Dolly from the novels *The Namesake* and *The Glass Palace* written by Jhumpa Lahiri and Amitav Ghosh. Women have been portrayed in various forms by Indian writers for centuries, with many women writers depicting them as strong individuals in their novels. It has taken years for women to be represented in literature, with female

writers making their mark on the literary world. Indian literature in English has introduced numerous women writers to the global stage, providing a platform to address women's issues and the struggles they have faced over the years. This article sheds light on the struggles women face during migration through the lens of the Self-Actualization theory. The characters Ashima and Dolly serve as representatives of women caught in the midst of migration. The main focus of this article is to illustrate how women become victims of circumstances during migration and how they navigate through their challenges as they move from their homeland to a new land "*Indian immigration is the most peaceful migration which sets it apart from any other migration. the first wave of migration started as early as 5000 years ago by saints, who moved in various directions to spread their profound knowledge of philosophy and rich Indian cultural heritage*" (Ranjini and Ramakrishna, 64).

Furthermore, this paper explores the concept of self-actualization and its five key aspects: Self-Actualization, Esteem, Love and Belonging, Safety and Security, and Physiological Needs. By utilizing these aspects, we will analyze the journey of Ashima and Dolly towards self-actualization during and after their migration experience. Migration has been a prevalent issue in this century, and this work aims to delve into the experiences of the two main characters, Ashima and Dolly, as they navigate through self-actualization during and after their migration journey. As they settled in their new land, they initially faced challenges during the migration period without a clear understanding of what was happening. However, as time passed, they began to comprehend the situation and fought back with a sense of self-actualization. The female author of the novel skillfully depicted the women characters as independent individuals with a strong spirit to resist suppression and oppression during migration. These women overcame obstacles and emerged as resilient figures, demonstrating that women have the ability to effect change and pursue their desires. The novel is centered around the theme of strong women, showcasing their diverse forms and highlighting their equality with men. Over time, female writers have increasingly portrayed women as equals to men, emphasizing their rights to equality, independence, education, freedom, and political participation. This article underscores the strength of women even in the absence of male support, emphasizing their resilience and self-respect. Women are capable of standing on their own two feet throughout their lives.

In the journey towards self-actualization, individuals often start off dependent on others for support. However, as they progress through the stages, they begin to demonstrate independence and lead their lives on their own terms. The five aspects of self-actualization play a crucial role in helping individuals understand their true selves. For instance, Ashima found the strength to live without her husband, while Dolly chose to lead a life in a monastery without her husband's support. Throughout their struggles, Ashima and Dolly underwent a transformation that allowed them to see themselves clearly in the final stage of self-actualization "*not only are the illusion broken, but the heart too is broken by the harsh and cruel consequences of war. Raj Kumar and Dolly's son, Dinu, fall in love with Alison, Saya John's grand-daughter. Alison also died in world war II before she can get married to Dinu*" (Nara and Ghanshyam, 115). Their physical migration from place to place marked the beginning of their journey, but it was the inner migration of their souls and hearts towards self-actualization that truly defined their growth. As they navigated through difficult situations, they learned valuable lessons about life and survival. The changes in their mindset and their ability to protect their families during the migration period exemplified their commitment to self-actualization. Despite their initial reluctance to migrate, family circumstances forced Ashima and Dolly to adapt to unfamiliar surroundings both mentally and physically. Their experiences in the new environment not only transformed them but also forged strong bonds with those around them. Every moment of their journey brought about a transformation, as they had to care for themselves and their children without the support of their families. The challenges they faced along the way tested their resilience and determination to achieve self-actualization in their migrant lives. Through the lens of self-actualization, we can see how Ashima and Dolly's needs were met and the obstacles they overcame to reach their full potential. Their story serves as a testament to the power of personal growth and self-discovery in the face of adversity.

Literature Review.

In order to identify gaps in the research, a selection of secondary sources was gathered and analyzed to inform the direction of the study.

Jatin Kapadiya's article "A Critical Study of Indian Diaspora through The Namesake" delves into the Indian diaspora, a diverse group from British colonial origins, and the impact of professional migration to developed nations. The novel explores cultural hybridity and transnational identity, challenging traditional

national and cultural boundaries in a globalized world. Kapadiya encourages readers to reflect on the diverse tapestry of cultures in our global community.

The article "The Namesake: Living Between Two Cultures" by Chandel and Arti explores the novel's theme of migration, focusing on the experiences of individuals leaving their home country to settle in a foreign land. It highlights the diaspora, social dynamics, and family relationships, with a focus on the evolution of female characters. The article also compares the book and movie's character names, highlighting their connection to cross-cultural experiences and identity struggles.

Shanmuga Priya's article "Conflicts and Challenges of Ashima Ganguli Across Two Cultures in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*" explores Ashima's journey of navigating the complexities of living in two different cultures and grappling with an identity crisis. After her migration, Ashima faces numerous challenges, including her pregnancy and her relationship with Ashoke. The unfamiliarity of the new culture overwhelms her, leaving her disconnected from her roots. Her pregnancy is particularly challenging, as she lacks support from loved ones. Ashima's immigrant status exacerbates her feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Narendra Kumar's article "Displacement and Identity Crisis in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*" explores the theme of displacement and the challenges faced by Ashima, a woman in a foreign land, navigating loneliness and managing her family despite her own feelings of isolation. The novel highlights the significant struggles and stress faced by its characters.

The article "A Psycho-Feminist Study of Dolly in *The Glass Palace*" by Sasi and Usha examines Dolly's life, focusing on her struggles and challenges. It uses a feminist lens to examine her role in managing her family and ensuring others' well-being. Despite her efforts, Dolly eventually breaks down and seeks solace in a monastery. The author argues that Dolly's journey transcends boundaries and defies *The Glass Palace's* confines.

Beryl and Maheswari's article "The Awakening: A Study On Uma Dey and Dolly in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*" examines the experiences of the Indian and Burmese Diaspora during Burmese colonization and the Indian freedom struggle. The study focuses on the female protagonists, Uma and Dolly, who find comfort and fulfillment in their friendship despite facing displacement. The article emphasizes the importance of women securing their space and voice within a male-dominated society.

Uma and Phil's article "Women's Obstacles in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*" explores Amitav Ghosh's 2000 novel, *The Glass Palace*, which portrays the challenges and compassion faced by women. The novel delves into cultural constructs, with Dolly as a central figure representing resilience and acceptance. It emphasizes equality and the agency of women, transcending cultural and geographical boundaries. *The Glass Palace* delves into the lives of three generations, offering a profound exploration of women's experiences.

Khamarjahan's article discusses Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Glass Palace*, focusing on the character Dolly. The novel showcases the essence of a complete woman, highlighting endurance, acceptance, courage, honor, hope, compassion, and sacrifice. Ghosh skillfully uses fiction to celebrate women's iconic status, introducing unique, strong, reliable, and extraordinary female characters. The novel explores the lives of women from all Indian societal backgrounds, revealing similar experiences for upper-class and lower-class women.

Paul and Jyoti's article on Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* highlights his masterful portrayal of women in a bygone era, weaving together time and societal complexities through meticulously researched narratives. Ghosh elevates the iconic status of women through a diverse array of strong, reliable, and extraordinary female characters from various Indian society strata, presenting them as independent spirits with grace and resilience, and bringing them to life with imaginative detail.

In their article "Self-Actualization" in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Lifespan Human Development*, D'Souza and Jeevan discuss Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, which posits five stages. They argue that individuals experience satisfaction when all their needs are met, but if unfulfilled, they may resort to criminal behavior. They emphasize the importance of addressing needs before they become overwhelming, as failure may lead to inappropriate actions. Maslow believes that individuals are driven by their needs, not biological urges or egos. However, only about 1% of individuals achieve self-actualization in their lifetime.

The article by Francis and William explores Abraham Maslow's self-actualization concept, a psychological theory developed by psychologists like Adler, Fromm, Horney, and Harlow. Maslow's pyramid of needs consists of personal needs at the top and lower needs at the bottom. The article emphasizes the importance of satisfying psychological needs for a fulfilling life, as it reduces destructive behaviors. Maslow's approach identifies individual needs and aspirations, as the human mind is naturally driven to pursue dreams and goals.

Theoretical backup of the study.

This study uses self-actualization theory to analyze the psychology of characters during and after migration. By examining their mindsets and navigating through pain and sorrow, the study reveals Ashima and Dolly's transition from migration to self-actualization. Their strong ties to their culture and family lead to feelings of alienation, resulting in an identity crisis. Through the lens of self-actualization, the study explores how their needs are met and how they achieve self-realization or self-actualization in their lives. This approach provides insight into the characters' journey towards self-actualization and their journey towards self-realization.

Ashima, a highly educated woman, struggles to resist her parents' wishes for her marriage and fulfill her higher-level needs after migrating. Despite her education, she allows others to dictate her choices, highlighting the challenges faced by women in earlier times. Ashima's story serves as an example for women who have faced similar situations *"Indians like Ashima and Ashoke, are negotiating this at two levels, cultural and political. As Lahiri says in an interview: "for the immigrant the challenge of exile, the loneliness, the constant sense of alienation, the knowledge of and longing for last world, are more explicit and distressing than for their children."* (Singh, 10). After her migration to America with Ashoke, Ashima and Dolly experience self-actualization, with two distinct parts: before marriage and after migration. Both parts significantly impact their attitudes as they fulfill their needs independently. This study aims to compare the experiences of both migrant characters with the self-actualization theory, aligning them on a parallel line. The self-actualization hierarchy of needs, a pyramid structure with five stages, reflects the stages of human life: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Ashima and Dolly navigate through these stages, fulfilling some needs independently and others with the support of family members and children.

Self-actualization is a crucial concept in understanding the lifestyle and mindset of migrants, particularly those like Ashima and Dolly. This theory explores the complexities of human character and life experiences, drawing parallels between different eras. The study focuses on the progression of characters through stages, culminating in self-actualization later in life. Ashima and Dolly face obstacles at each stage, but ultimately overcome adversity to reach self-actualization. Maslow's hierarchy of needs emphasizes the importance of meeting these needs for personal growth, with failure to meet these needs hindering progress to the next level.

Migration of Ashima and Dolly.

This section explores the migration of Ashima and Dolly from their homeland to a new land, with Jhumpa Lahiri focusing on female characters and their experiences. Lahiri effectively captures the struggles faced by women, drawing from her own experiences. Amitav Ghosh portrays Dolly as a courageous and resilient woman who takes on the responsibility of caring for her family. Both Ashima and Dolly experience their first migration experience.

Ashima, an Indian woman, was deeply rooted in her culture and family. Her needs were fulfilled by her parents, including food, water, shelter, and clothing. However, after marrying Ashoke and migrating to America, she found it difficult to adjust. She missed her family, culture, and food, feeling insecure and alone. Ashoke's focus on work and the household left her feeling neglected. Ashima's need for love was unfulfilled by her husband and children, who were preoccupied with their own lives *"Deploying an ecocritical methodological lens helps read the social production of the natural and the physical world while being aware of the dark spots that render the rights and values associated with nonhuman creatures, oppressed humans, and processes pertaining to ecology as invisible"* (Samkaria ,28)

She longed for companionship, respect, recognition, and confidence, but found herself lacking in these areas. Ashima's journey in America was marked by isolation and unfulfilled needs, leaving her yearning for the warmth and connection she once had in her homeland. Ashoke's neglect and disrespect towards her as a wife and mother led to her feeling isolated and struggling. She lost confidence, struggled to find work, and struggled to assert herself as a strong woman. She was content with household chores but never achieved self-actualization. After Ashoke's death, she became comfortable with the American lifestyle and viewed India as a foreign land. She never attempted to rediscover her old self, resulting in a lack of confidence and self-actualization in her life *"The Namesake deal with the universal motif of love, the individual's effort to surmount the change, primeval traditions of ancestors and the impenetrable prospects of the new world matters which seem fleeting and yet impinge on the whole life"* (Sahu, 42).

Dolly, a young girl who served the Burmese royal family, was forced to flee to India when the British army invaded Burma. Despite the challenges, she remained resilient and determined, adapted to her new

circumstances, and continued to serve the princess. The royal family provided her with basic needs, but the invasion disrupted her sense of safety, forcing her to constantly move. Her marriage to Raj Kumar brought stability and protection to Burma. Dolly longed for love and belonging, and while serving the princess, she found a sense of family and acceptance. After marrying Raj Kumar, she experienced a shift in relationships, as he became her primary source of love and support. Raj Kumar prioritized her well-being and created a family unit with her and their children, providing her with the love and belonging she had always sought. However, her need for esteem was never fulfilled, as she was treated as a servant while with the royal family *"Indeed, as Amitav Ghosh's The Glass Palace, published in 2000, suggests some native subjects saw the potential for transcending the limits of their historical condition of colonial servitude through the adaptation of modernity"* (Mujumdar, 166).

After marriage, the woman's feelings were ignored, as she was primarily responsible for her family and Raj Kumar. She struggled to gain confidence, especially after colonization and relocating to Burma and India. Her talents and potential were not acknowledged, leading to frequent relocations and eventual fleeing to Burma with Raj Kumar. The family's expectations hindered her self-realization, as she was burdened with family and child responsibilities. *"The Glass Palace is primarily the story of three generations of a family spreading over three different countries forming a part of the British empire. The novel is set against the background of political turmoil resulting from the cruelty and oppression exercised by the British imperialists"* (Neb, 24).

The text delves into the experiences of Ashima and Dolly, who relocated from their homeland to a foreign land, grappling with self-actualization due to family and child responsibilities. Their shared desire for love and acceptance was unfulfilled, leading to disappointment and disrespect from those around them.

Migration to Self-Actualization.

This discussion explores the internal migration of individuals seeking self-actualization in a new land, focusing on Ashima and Dolly's experiences. The journey towards self-actualization leads to a clearer perspective on life, shifting priorities and outlook. By understanding self-fulfillment and recognizing one's needs, they liberate their souls and reach the highest level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Despite facing struggles and loneliness, Ashima and Dolly learn to live with courage and hope, independent of others. Ashima strengthens herself and leads her life without expectations, while Dolly's migration to Burma with Rajkumar burdens her with multiple responsibilities, hindering her full potential. This highlights the impact of inner migration on Ashima and Dolly's lives through self-actualization theory *"The Glass Palace, then, clearly interrogates the imperialist epistemology that exclusively works through the central western consciousness. It is animated throughout by a strong postcolonial impulse"* (Vinoda, 78).

Ashima, an educated woman, moved to America with the hope that her husband, Ashoke, would provide for her. However, Ashoke seemed to be more focused on his work and neglected her feelings, leading to frustration and feelings of inadequacy. Ashima's basic needs and love were fulfilled by her parents in India, but after moving to America, she struggled to meet her basic needs. Her physiological and safety needs were met, but her love and esteem needs were not met. Feeling isolated in a new country with unfamiliar food and culture, Ashima found solace in being alone and stopped expecting anything from others *"Immigrants adopt cultures of new countries and create a new hybrid culture not only in the private sphere but also in the public one. The depiction of the experiences of a Bengali-American family in the namesake highlights the necessity of promoting their Bengali culture as well as adapting to the main American one"* (Islam, 125).

As her children, Gogol and Sonali, grew older and became more independent, Ashima realized that no one would always be there for her in every situation. In the end, Ashima found liberation in accepting her life as it was, even though her needs for love and esteem remained unfulfilled. The story of Ashima teaches a valuable lesson about independence and self-discovery.

After Ashoke's death, Ashima shifted her perspective and became more open-minded, realizing that a woman's true status lies in her ability to live freely both internally and externally. She realized that pain and suffering are temporary and achieved a sense of self-attainment similar to a free bird. Ashima made confident decisions, restoring her self-respect and status. She had to choose between remaining confined or breaking free, and by recognizing her true potential and worth, she refused to be held back by limiting beliefs. Through perseverance and resilience, she achieved self-actualization, emerging stronger and more liberated than ever before. Ashima's life was marked by freedom and autonomy, free from any barriers *"Like immigrants of other communities Ashima and Ashoke too make their circle of Bengali acquaintances, get known through one another"* (Karu, 36).

Dolly's life is a testament to resilience and self-actualization for women in foreign lands. Ghosh portrays her as a woman who endures hardships and makes decisions independently, free from Rajkumar's influence. This portrayal highlights the harsh reality faced by women who feel overwhelmed by life. True strength emerges during these trying times, as women become determined to take control of their destinies. Dolly's life is a testament to the struggle faced by women in Burma due to British colonization.

Dolly, a woman who has been displaced by the British occupation of Burma, embarks on a journey to India with her royal family. Her journey towards self-actualization begins after her marriage to Rajkumar, who provides her with a sense of security and love. Despite constant threats and challenges, Dolly finds solace in Rajkumar, who provides her with a sense of security. However, their constant relocation due to conflicts poses a significant danger to Dolly and her family. Despite this, she remains focused on caring for her loved ones, neglecting her own needs. Tragically, her son Neel is killed in a bombing, prompting her to leave India with Rajkumar, her daughter-in-law Manju, and granddaughter in search of safety. Her second hope is shattered when her daughter-in-law dies by jumping from a cliff. Despite these challenges, Ghosh portrays Dolly as a resilient and brave woman who confronts every obstacle head-on. Her decision to retreat to a nunnery without informing her husband, Rajkumar, signifies her unwavering dedication to protecting and caring for her family "*The Glass Palace is an epic saga of three generations, the novel talks about the Burmese life and Indian life. the Burmese king Thebaw who was arrested by the British people and take to Ratnagiri, a place near Goa*" (Mahendranath, 197).

Her mindset is characterized by freedom and liberalism, allowing her to pursue self-actualization by reflecting on her past struggles and pain. As Dolly reaches the final stage of self-realization, she yearns for a peaceful existence free from the turmoil that has plagued her and her son. Her resilience and ability to endure hardship both mentally and physically shape her into a woman capable of overcoming any challenge. The fulfillment of her unmet needs marks a significant turning point in the novel, as Dolly finally achieves her desire for a tranquil life, embodying the roles of mother and wife with grace. Dolly's story serves as a poignant reflection of the struggles faced by women in migrant communities, offering a compelling example of strength and resilience. Her journey towards fulfillment underscores the importance of perseverance and self-discovery, inspiring others to pursue their own aspirations with unwavering determination.

Conclusion

This paper examines the experiences of individuals like Ashima and Dolly, who face suffering, pain, and migration, ultimately leading to self-actualization in a foreign land. Initially, they had their basic needs met in their native land, but upon migration, these comforts diminished. Ashima and Dolly are resilient individuals who navigate the challenges of their new lives, understanding the true meaning of life and finding strength to persevere. Their journey towards self-actualization involves facing adversity head-on and realizing their full potential. A common thread between them is their roles as mothers and wives, who prioritize their children's well-being and safety in their new environment. This demonstrates their ability to fulfill their higher needs as women, even when they are overlooked or disregarded.

Ashima and Dolly, two migrant women, undergo significant personal growth and transformation as they adapt to their new environment. Ashima faces numerous challenges in raising her children in a foreign culture, but ultimately succeeds in creating a fulfilling life for her family. Their journey towards self-actualization involves recognizing their strengths, capabilities, and resilience amidst adversity. Their suffering and pain serve as catalysts for achieving self-realization. This paper focuses on their internal journey towards self-actualization, with Ashima understanding the true meaning of life and living independently in a foreign land. Dolly faces numerous challenges from a young age, which intensify after her marriage. Despite these hardships, she bravely manages to take care of her family and eventually enters a nunnery. This paper highlights the strength of women to overcome even the most difficult circumstances, and serves as an example to other migrant women through their resilience and hardships.

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