

FOOD AS A CONCEPT OF CULTURE AND INDIAN CODE IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S WRITING

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DOI: 10.32342/2523-4463-2021-1-21-9

Key words: the "food" concept, transculture, Indian immigrants, marginal character, dual consciousness, ethnic identity, tradition.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the culinary concept with Indian gastronomy code analysis in the context of the transcultural paradigm in Jhumpa Lahiri's writing (an American writer of Bengali origin). In the article we used the following *methods*: cultural and historical (defining the role and place of Lahiri's writing in US literature of the twentieth century), historical and typological (determining the specifics of themes, motifs, images, story features of the writer's works), functional (clarifying the features of Lahiri's poetics), hermeneutic (interpretation of various aspects of the literary text), narratological analysis (specifics' analysis of Lahiri's narrative manner), biographical (revealing the reflection of author's personal experience in her writing), the principles of postcolonial and decolonial criticism (rethinking the problem of "otherness" in transculture discourse).

The author of the article notes that food serves as conditional language for characters and as cultural code that interprets by "ours" only – Indian culture representatives. It is indicated that in the context of transcultural understanding, food and the process of its preparation are of particular importance: usual home-cooked dishes are synonymous of protection, security, peace, belonging to one's home; instead, the presence of "other" exotic dishes makes it possible to get acquainted with the culinary preferences of another culture, as well as to trace the basic similarities and differences. Therefore, cultural culinary differences are found in the kitchen, where the characters are accustomed to spend most of the day and especially carefully prepare the dishes. An interpretation of cooking as a true art is associated with Jhumpa Lahiri's marginalized / border characters: you need to remember how much, when, and what kind of spices add to the dishes. As a true Bengali women, the characters skillfully prepare "their" traditional dishes. As a result of cooking of two dozen dishes, the smell of mutton curry and pulao (a traditional Indian vegetable pilaf) is especially heard in the rooms. There is a "cultural mix" in the kitchen: Indian dishes are prepared with the help of American household appliances. The "food" concept embodies a cultural phenomenon and allows understanding the features of national Indian cuisine; it is a cultural code that gives meaningful information. The semantic structure of lexical units that fill the "food" concept in Lahiri's works, as well as cultural and value aspects of this concept are widely represented. It is important to distinguish between home-made daily food or holiday treats, and food as an element of Indian national culture. The writer describes in detail the traditional Indian dishes and the usual, hastily prepared, daily American ones. The reader gets a complete picture of the traditional festive dishes of Indian cuisine. Thus, the structure of the "food" concept can be represented as follows: the names of traditional everyday food (Americans and Bengalis) and traditional American and Bengali holiday dishes. Food is directly connected with gender issues. Eating habits and the way of cooking determine a woman's identity as well as her difference. Food emphasizes woman's cultural affiliation: in Lahiri's writing it is shown that food serves as sacred ritual and art for Indians, in contrast to the American habit of hunger satisfying with semi-finished products. It is noticeable that within Lahiri's texts the verb "to eat" has a lot of synonyms: to consume, to guzzle, to have, to lunch, to be full of something, to throw down, etc. Using such a variety of lexical and semantic series of one verb, the author reveals the characters' attitude towards traditional Indian cuisine. But what important is not what synonymous series of the word "food" the author uses, but that it conveys Indian culinary customs and traditions. Expressing not meaning but sense, food continues to be an element of Indian national culture.

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Одержано 20.02.2021.