



SETTLING IN NEW LAND IN HA-JIN'S SHORT STORIES COLLECTION *A GOOD FALL* (2009)

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Abstract

The purpose of this analysis is to expose the issue of settling in new land which is done by Chinese immigrants in United States and to know the contribution of character, plot (conflict), and setting in revealing the settling in new land. This analysis is related to the adaptation concept by William Butler Yeats in postcolonial approach that is supported by the text and context based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows two different characters succeeds to settle in new land that can be seen through their ways of self-adaptation and hard work.

Key words: Settling, immigrant, land, adaptation

A. INTRODUCTION

United States is the biggest land of immigrant. There are million people with their own purposes come to United States. It is ranging from tourist visiting for a couple weeks to workers coming for a job to refugees escaping persecution. The biggest reason why people migrate to United States is looking for a better life. They have American Dream that they believed it can change their life to be better. The number of immigrants in United States is drastically increasing every year. China is the second country that makes the most widely number of immigrants in United States. China have several reasons why Chinese people decided to migrate to United States. Their reasons are for pursuing the economic opportunities, escaping the political unrest, seeking the higher and better education and living in better environment.

Being immigrant is not easy. People who migrate must adapt with new aspects in their life. This is called as settling in new land. According to Meriam-Webster dictionary (2018) the word of settling means to move a place and make it your home. In the process of settling in new land, the immigrants will certainly experience the unpleasant struggles with themselves and the society. They have to

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survive while facing the challenges between pursuing their dreams of better life and their old life they have been left behind.

They had to experience the disillusionment toward the society and themselves. It is simply just because the environment, culture, and another life aspects in United States are different from their homeland. They feel displacement, lonely, and emotionally disfigured. They also being inequality treated by society. They were discriminated, oppressed, exploited, underpaid.

Because all of the dissilusionment toward the expectation they had experienced, the immigrants surely do anything to be accepted in the new society. They do not easily give up to the struggles because they have many considerations to think of. They do it by their ways' of settling in new land. There are several ways of settling in new land that is done by the immigrants. The first thing must do as an immigrant is assimilating the new culture. To start a new life in new land means the immigrants have to adapt the new culture as their part of life. They also should behave like an indigeneous. They have to speak and communicate with the new language. They will eat the local food that is different with their food in hometown. They have to follow the indigeneous' mindset and way of thinking. They also have to adjust themselves with the new environment such as the places and streets of the city.

In order to survive in new land they have to make money as much as they can do. They have to make sure that the income is bigger than outcome. They often overwork by spending their time mostly for working or even having the double job. They take any kind of job even that job is not their passion but as long it can make money they will take that job. They upgrade their skill as a way to make more money. They also reduce their living expenses even they know that living in new land is costly. They save more money. Especially for Chinese immigrants they have obligations to send money back home while trying to create a decent life in new land.

The immigrants' life, struggle and the effort are also exposed in many literary works such as poem, novel, prose and drama. This analysis focuses on two short stories entitled *A Pension Plan* and *Choice* in *Ha-Jin's* short stories collection *A Good Fall* (2009). The short stories expose how immigrants bear their life in new land, survive and pursue their dream with all the problems they have. That is why the short stories collection are interesting to be discussed.

B. DISCUSSION

This chapter analyses the fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict), and setting to reveal the issue of settling in new land. In this analysis, settling in new land refers to the efforts done by Chinese immigrants in order to be accepted in the new society. This analysis shows that the different backgrounds of Chinese immigrants can settle in the new land that is extremely different from their homeland. In this analysis, both characters has different ways of settling in new land through self-adaptation and hard work.

1. First Character

First character's ways of settling in new land can be seen through her way in assimilating the American culture. She learns English through watching the American soap operas. She adjusts herself with new environment such as streets and public places. She accepts to have a lower payment of her job that requires her to be patient. Though she is sexually harassed and being exploited with underpaid.

Self-adaptation is one of the strategies in settling in new land that is done by two characters. In this analysis, they have different ways to do the self-adaptation process. First character's self-adaptation can be seen through her way in assimilating the American culture. It is started by learning English through watching American soap operas. It helps her to communicate and blend with the new society easier. It can be seen from the following quotation:

“For several days I stayed home watching TV. I liked Korean and Taiwanese shows, but I wanted to learn some English, so I watched soaps, *All My Children* and *General Hospital*, which I could hardly understand. Using a friend as an interpreter, I talked to Father Lorenzo of our church about my job loss; he said I shouldn't lose heart. God will provide, and you'll find work soon,” He assured me. “At the moment you should use the free time to attend an English class here.”
P. 93

Through the quotation above, the setting refers to a hard and tense situation which leads into the external and internal conflict. The setting refers to the difficult and different condition between her lack of skill and the high oppression of the society. The external conflict is her struggle of losing job. Then it leads to her financially and mentally unstable as her internal conflict because she feels confused and stress about her life as immigrant in United States. To overcome those problems, she releases it into two ways; learning English and going to church. She learns new language because she realizes that speaking English fluently is important to survive in United States. She changes her habits through switching her favorite Asian shows into American soap operas. She chooses American soap operas because the program is shown everyday with long duration. It also to accustomed her ears to listen to the English and helps her to pronounce it easier and clearly. Through learning English by watching soap operas everyday she expects the input and improvement. The phrase “*For several days*” shows her determination because she deliberately makes time to learn English. While the sentence “I could hardly understand” shows that learning a new thing is not easy. It also shows her struggling and inconvenience feeling. Besides upgrading her language skill, the first character also calms her mentally unstable through spiritual way by going to Church. It can be seen through the sentence “*I talked to Father Lorenzo of our church about my job loss; he said I shouldn't lose heart.*” It shows her dread of her uncertainty life as immigrant and

needed of someone else to makes herself calmer. It also shows that she doesn't want to lose her hope in having a better future in United States.

Another quotation that supports her determination is shown through the quotation below:

“From now on I'll live differently. If I can't speak enough English to work for a unionized company, I'll starve and die.”
P.97

“To be honest, I'm not sure if I'll be able to learn enough English to live a different life, but I must try.”
P.97

The text above shows her commitment and determination to learn and speak English fluently. The setting refers to the difficult situation that character feels as an immigrant in United States. The external conflict comes from the high social economic pressure. It is proved through the statement “*I'll starve and die*” which means if she can't fulfill the society's demand she will not survive in United States. The internal conflict comes from her lack of confident and belief toward herself in learning English because of her age. Despite of her lack of confident she has a strong determination and commitment to change her life to be better as shown in the statements “*but I must try*” and “*From now on I'll live differently*” that she does not want to give up easily toward the hard situation that she faces. The text above also shows the exploitation toward the immigrants that happens in United States by giving no pension plan for them. The exploitation happens to the immigrants who have lack of knowledge and undocumented immigrants.

Besides learning a new language, the first character also adjusts herself with new environment such as streets and public places. It is important to avoid disoriented or feel shocked and unsettled. Another reason why the first character adjusts herself to new environment because is part of her job. It is shown through the following quotation;

“After lunch we often went out for some fresh air, to do a little shopping and get that day's world journal; I pushed him in a wheelchair.” P.88

The setting here refers to discomfort situation because of her job pressure. This situation then creates the internal conflict. It makes her stress. She releases the stressful through refreshing her mind. It can be seen through the sentence “*We often went out for some fresh air*” which means she needs to relieve stress and anxiety. Breathing the fresh air makes having oxygen which affects the level of serotonin released in the body and creating the feeling of happiness and relaxation. It also is her part of her daily job. She has to buy her patient's needed while his patient knows nothing about the neighborhood because of his senile

dementia. The phrase “*day's world journal*” shows her willingness to know the updated news.

Another quotation that supports that condition above can be seen through the following below;

“The fish store was nearby, and we bought a large whitefish, a two-pounder.” P. 89

The setting here refers to her familiarity environment toward the neighborhood. It is proved that she already knows where the public place is such as the fish store. Feeding her patient and keeping her appetite stable are her part of job. She needs to give her patient with his favorite foods.

Besides assimilating to the American culture, the first character also does the hard-work as her way to survive in the new land financially. She accepts to have a lower payment that requires her to be patient. Even she is sexually harassed and being exploited with underpaid.

Having a stable job as immigrant in United States is not easy. The immigrant needs to have skill and knowledge. The high social and economic pressure makes United States as the highest competitive nation. The number of immigrants is increasing drastically with the limited job vacancy. It can be said that living in United States means the immigrant is ready to live a risky life mentally or financially. It is especially for low skill immigrants. That's why the first character accepts to have a lower payment that requires her to be patient. It is shown through the following quotation;

“Whenever we ran into a friend of his on the street or in the library, Mr. Sheng would say I was his girlfriend. I was embarrassed but didn't bother to correct him. There're things that the more you explain, the more complicated they become. I kept mum, telling myself I was only doing my job.” P.94

The setting here refers to the inconvenience situation because she was embarrassed. The external conflict comes from the disrespectful men. This situation makes her angry and worthless as her internal conflict. Despite of her anger, she still shows her calmness and patient as it is shown through her utterance “*There're things that the more you explain, the more complicated they become*”. It also shows that she can manage her emotion well and being positive even in the worst situation. She chooses to let it be rather than make it as her matter because she knows that her patient sometimes can act out of control. She releases her anger through her effort to being professional as it is shown through the sentence “*telling myself I was only doing my job.*” She does not want her anger dominates herself. She knows that it is her risky job and she needs to accept it.

Another quotation that supports the condition above can be seen through the following quotation;

“He could have been interesting and charming if he weren’t so sick. I felt sorry for him, so I tried to be patient.” P.92

The external conflict comes from her patient who acts out of her control by making the job more difficult for her. This leads into her internal conflict that makes her angry. To calm her anger then she tries to be patient. The condition of her patient is described as bad in mentally but physically well as shown in the sentence “*He could have been interesting and charming if he weren’t so sick.*”

Being an immigrant with lack of skill and knowledge will make the life in United States harder. The bad experiences such as unequally treated or even discrimination will be faced by the immigrant. The first character is sexually harassed and being exploited. It can be seen through the quotation below;

“He pressed my hand on his hairy belly, then down to his genitals. Before I could pull it back, he began mumbling.

About a week later, he began to touch me whenever he could. He’d pat my behind when I stood up to get something for him. He’d also rest his fingers on my forearm as if to prevent me going away and as if I enjoyed this intimacy. Finally one afternoon I removed his hand from the top of my thigh and said, “Take your paw off of me. I don’t like it.” P. 92

The setting refers to the tense condition. The tense condition can be seen through her utterance “*Take your paw off of me. I don’t like it*” which means she tries to express her dislike and anger. She does not accept her self being treated like that. The external conflict comes from her patient’s disrespectful treatment toward her. He sexually harassed her. The sentence *He pressed my hand on his hairy belly, then down to his genitals* shows his sexual harassment actions. He does sexual objectification toward the character’s body. It is because he treats her body as his mere object of his sexual desire. It can be said even he is mentally sick, he knows what he should do when he has sexual desire. It can be seen through the way he guides what the first character should do to make him satisfied. While the sentence *about a week later, he began to touch me whenever he could* means that his patient can’t control his sexual desire toward her. It leads to her internal conflict that makes her mad. She does not want her body to be objectified. Her utterance “*Take your paw off of me. I don’t like it*” shows her rejection and anger.

She is unwilling to be sexual harassed and has right to express her dislike about something.

Briefly, being an immigrant in United States with lack of skill and knowledge is not an easy life to live. It needs a strong commitment and determination to survive. The dominant setting refers to the difficult situation that the first character experiences. The conflict refers to the external conflict because of the high social and economic pressure. The conflict then evokes the first character's awareness to learn more by upgrading her language skill. It shows that the first character is a person who does not give up easily, patient and positive in every situation.

2. Second Character

Unlike the first character, the second character's ways of settling in new land can be seen through his self-adaptation by utilizing his knowledge. He applies to the American top University and becomes a PhD student program. He also changes his name into more sounded American name. He changes his lifestyle. He minimizes the outcome to reduce his living expenses and saves money. He works hard by having the double job. He teaches the student privately and does his professor research.

Knowledge and skill are important things that immigrant needs to have to survive in United States. Skill and knowledge are requirement for job position. It will open the opportunity wider in having a stable job with a good payment. Second character's self-adaptation is utilizing his skill and knowledge by entering American top University and becomes a PhD student as it is shown in the quotation below;

“My mother had called a week before and said it was not too late for me to go to a professional school, for which my parents would happily pay. I had again rejected the offer, saying I intended to apply to PhD program in American history.” P.27

The setting refers to tense situation. The tense condition can be seen through his opposite condition with his mother. It creates an external conflict which his choice does not fit with his parents' choice about the major he should take. He prefers to take a major that suitable with his passion while his parents' choice on how much money he will make after graduation. The internal conflict is his discomfort feeling. He expresses his discomfort and dislike through the utterance “*I had again rejected the offer*”. It also shows that he is confident and determined with his risky choice. He does not mind to sacrifice himself to do more efforts because his parents will not support him financially. The text above also shows his obsession toward America. He wants to know deeper about America that's why he chooses American history. Choosing history will make it easier to understand how the society changes. It will give him an idea how to settle and live in America society.

Another way to embrace the America done by the second character is by changing his name into more sounded American name. It is shown through the following quotation;

“Thank you for helping me, Mr. Hong.”

“Just call me Dave,” I told her. P. 29

The setting here refers to the discomfort feeling that the character has and the inconvenience atmosphere. From the conversation above he feels more comfortable and confident being called with his American name. It is proved by his rejection to be called by his Asian name. He’s obsessed about America. That’s why he tries to adept what American cultures that fits him. The purpose of changing name is also to make himself less outsider.

The life as an immigrant in new land is not an easy option. The differences between the good previous life and the struggle new life are obviously to be experienced. Living in new place involves the feeling of loss. It forces immigrant to leave the previous life behind while the journey about future is not easy to do. The biggest difference is on living cost in the new land is more expensive than the homeland. The second character then changes his lifestyle by minimizing the outcome and reducing his living expenses. It can be seen through the following quotation;

“I wouldn’t mind becoming a poor scholar.” P.27

His utterance above shows his commitment to achieve his dream as a historian even forces him to be independent financially. He commits to live differently with less money but United States is a nation with high cost living expenses.

Another quotation to support that condition also shown in the following quotation;

“I enjoyed spending time with the Mins in their warm and comforting home. My own small studio apartment was lonely.” P. 29

The setting above refers to the new condition of living in America. The external conflict comes from the character’s new life is difficult that is shown from his inability to buy a proper apartment. His home does not give him happiness. He prefers to spend his time in a better and larger home. He chooses the small apartment because he wants to reduce his living expenses. The cost of renting a small apartment is cheaper. Then he can allocate his money into another thing effectively. The internal conflict happens when he feels lonely because living alone as immigrant in a small apartment is not easy. Another problem as

immigrant in America is loneliness. The People in America are described as individual and focus on their own matters. While human is a social creature that needs someone else to talk and share to. This opposite condition between himself and society caused the feeling of loneliness.

To overcome the high cost of living expenses, the immigrant must have a stable financial. The immigrant is forced to make more money to survive in new land. That's why the immigrant often spends their time mostly for working. It happens to the second character, he works hard by having the double job by teaching student privately and doing his professor research. It can be seen through the quotation below;

“THE FLYER SAID, ”The applicant must be able to teach various subject, including the preparation for the SAT. Payment is most generous.” I answered the ad in the morning and was told to come for an interview that evening. The woman on the phone, Eileen Min, said her daughter needed a tutor right away. -----

I was being paid to do research for the professor directing my master's thesis, but I needed another job for the summer to make enough for my tuition and living expenses in the fall.” P. 27

The setting here refers to the second character's difficult condition financially in new land. The external conflict comes from the high social and economic pressure. This condition then creates the internal conflict which is his confused feeling. He must have more money to survive. The text above shows the character is a strategic person and a hard-worker. He knows what he should do for his future plan. To solve his financial problem, he utilizes his skill and knowledge for having the double job. As it has stated above, he was given a chance to do the research and being paid at the same time which means he is a smart person. He also teaches the student privately for several subjects. He needs to master it and give the best effort to ensure his student understands. Those two ways are the survival ways by utilizing his skill and knowledge done by the second character.

In summary, settling in new land is not easy. It needs strategy to face the complicated society. The strategy involves the way the immigrant behaves and lives in the new society. The immigrant is forced to live a different life from their homeland. The immigrant also needs skill and knowledge to survive in new land mentally and financially. Skill and knowledge gives contribution to shape the immigrant's mind how to survive. The dominant setting refers to the hard and different situation from his homeland. The external conflict that is high social economic pressure is shown mostly. To solve the problem, the second character utilizes his skill and knowledge to have financial stable.

C. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Short stories collection *A Good Fall* (2009) by Ha-Jin, reflects the issue of settling in new land. The analysis of this short stories collection deals with adaptation concept by William Butler Yeats in postcolonial approach. Thus, settling in new land refers to the efforts done by two different characters Jufen (48) a middle age woman in *Pension Plan* who and Mr. Hong in *Choice* in order to be accepted by the new society. Both characters' ways of settling in new land can be seen through self-adaptation and hard work. Short stories collection *A Good Fall* (2009) reflects how the Chinese immigrants are settling in new land by assimilating the American culture and hard work. Both characters have different ways in assimilating the American culture and hard work. The first character's ways of assimilating the American culture are learning the new language (English) and committing to understand and speak English fluently. She also adjusts herself with the new environment such as street and public places to avoid the disoriented. She is a hard worker. She accepts the job with lower payment that requires her to be patient while she is sexually harassed. Unlike the first character, the second character's ways of assimilating the American culture are utilizing his knowledge and skill. He enters the American top university as PhD student in American urban history. He also works as teacher and researcher. He does the double job in order to survive in new land. Briefly, to settle in new land immigrants have to be responsive toward the changes in their new life by assimilating the new culture and hard work.

Note: This article is written based on the Asih Anggraini's thesis under the supervision of advisor Dr. Kurnia Ningsih, MA.

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