

The Issue of Racial Microaggression in Indian-American Children's Novel: *American as Paneer Pie* by Supriya Kelkar

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ABSTRACT

This research attempts to highlight the issue of microaggressions that occurs in American ethnic minority groups, particularly among Indian-American children featured in the children's novel *American as Paneer Pie*. Published in 2020, this novel is written by an Indian-American writer named Supriya Kelkar. *American as Paneer Pie* tells about the story of Lekha, an Indian-American girl who faces racial microaggressions at school. As a minority student, Lekha finds herself marginalized and often feels insecure of being an Indian American girl. This research identifies the acts of racial microaggressions that are directed to the character Lekha in the novel *American as Paneer Pie*. Lekha, who is a minority child in her school, experiences various bullying as a form of microaggressions by some white ethnic friends. The microaggressions committed by those white ethnic children to Lekha is a form of verbal discrimination which is currently better known as microaggressions. As a literary analysis, this research uses intrinsic approaches by Pickering and Hoepfer as the intrinsic analysis and the theory of microaggressions by Derald Wing Sue as the extrinsic analysis to reveal the problems. The research findings indicate

that there are found some acts of racial microaggressions faced by Lekha as an Indian-American girl such as mispronouncing her Indian name, stereotyping her Indian physical appearance and lifestyle, and marginalizing her as the minority in the class. These racial microaggressions finally influence her life, driving her to change herself to voice her right as an American.

1. INTRODUCTION

Racial microaggressions, recently, are one of big issues faced by students in America. They are caused by many aspects. One of them is diversity in culture. America is known as a country which consists of many cultures and races. There have been some immigrants coming to America to find a better life. They move to and live in America individually or in groups. Some of them finally have kids and send them to public or private schools. For some diaspora children, it is not easy being among the majority. They find themselves different from the majority. They have different physical appearances. Some people often look them in strange or degraded expression; and it can cause racism. Racism can arise not only from differences in skin color but also cultures which are brought to the boundaries of marginalization and superiority of certain cultures (The Conversation, 2020, June 8). The culture of the United States of America is primarily of Western origin but is influenced by a multicultural ethos that includes African, Native American, Asian, Pacific Island, and Latin American people and their cultures (Woods, 2018). America has experienced a cultural melting. However, the Western who are called the white dominate many aspects of living in America.

In literature, racial microaggressions become the most frequently occurring topics in some diaspora novels recently. The writers like to pour their aspiration of confronting racial microaggressions in their works. Microaggressions are now known as a modern racism and this term becomes special attention to some researchers. Microaggressions, according to Sue et.al (2007:273), are defined as daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group. Microaggressions possibly happen in school since it is the place where students can meet their various friends. In the classroom, microaggressions are not committed by spiteful and bigoted professors/teachers who want to intentionally hurt students from diverse groups, but are rather undertaken at the unconscious level by well-meaning and caring professors/teachers (Portman et.al, 2013). In a research

entitled African American Students' Reactions to the Confederate Flag, Murty and Vyas (2017) indicate that many African American students acquire repressing feelings and beliefs associated with historical experiences of slavery and racism through multigenerational socialization (post traumatic slave syndrome); and, racial microaggressions trigger those dormant feelings and beliefs to react by drawing a close parallel between historical and current victimizations. Minaj (2019) discussed with some Indian and Pakistani children in his program about their experience of being diaspora in America. They said that studying in public American school made them face microaggressions either from their teachers or friends. Their teachers and friends often called their names wrongly and some of them still thought that Indian or Pakistani people were the terrorist related to the tragedy of 9/11.

To eliminate this prejudice, diaspora children's literature books are used as the media to learn other cultures to be respectful with others. Children's literature books are also beneficially used in the classroom. It has been verified by some researchers from their research. Al-Hazza and Bucher (2010) in a study entitled Bridging a Cultural Divide with Literature about Arabs and Arab Americans explain that by introducing Arabic literature into the primary school curriculum, teachers can help Arab students develop a positive self-image and help other students raise awareness and their sensitivity to different cultures. Meanwhile, through a study of 50 books after 1990 for children aged 6-12 years which focus on multicultural themes, Monoyiou and Symeonidou (2015) explained that the function of contemporary children's literature is to provide information in the formation of a child's identity and even to learn to respect people with different individual characteristics especially in reproducing stereotypes about people who are oppressed by the dominant group. In line with the opinion of Monoyiou and Symeonidou, Junaid (2017) explained this in his research entitled Children's Literature in Empowering Children Character Building how important children's literature is. This statement is supported by the reason that children's literature provides opportunities for children to respond to literature, appreciate their cultural heritage or that of others, develop emotions intelligence and creativity of children, nurture the growth and development of children in terms of personality and social skills, and teach moral goodness from one generation to the next. Although every race in America has its own characteristics, the white still dominate the culture. It can be proved by Nensia's research (2020) entitled Racism towards African American in Peter Farrelly's Green Book: A True Story that the historical context of Jim Crow Laws, racial discrimination, the distinction of White and Colored people was reflected in the movie as it is in history. She also said that the racial injustice plot was snowballing in every state where the concert was held and the discrimination kept on increasing from bad to the worst form of racism.

The previous research previously mentioned focus on the benefits of children's literature books as the media for studying at school. Most of the problems about racial microaggressions are studied based on quantitative research which take the sample from people. As qualitative research, this research focuses on the problem of racial microaggressions at school reflected in a children's literature book. One of children's literature books that raises the problem of racial microaggression is a novel entitled American as Paneer Pie. This novel is categorized as Asian-American Children Literature which selects Indian Diaspora Novel as the representation of the Southeast Asian culture in America. Written by an Indian American writer named Supriya Kelkar, American as Paneer Pie tells the story of an Indian-American girl named Lekha who lives in a small town in America with her parents. Lekha is a cheerful and talented girl. She is good at swimming. However, she has a distinctly Indian face with a bindi-like birthmark on her forehead. She does not feel comfortable with the birthmark because she is always teased by her friends. Physical, religious, and cultural differences make Lekha a minority child in her school. However, Lekha has one male friend who is also an Indian-American in her class. One day, an Indian girl named Avantika moved to America and lives near Lekha's house. Avantika also has an Indian look. She becomes a good friend of Lekha. At school Avantika also gets the same treatment as Lekha, but Avantika was braver than Lekha to face them. Avantika motivated Lekha to face all acts of microaggressions at school. Finally, Lekha dares to express her opinion regarding mutual respect for one another as American citizens without seeing a difference as a negative thing.

Based on the description, this research aims to highlight the issue of microaggressions that occurs in American ethnic minority groups, particularly among Indian-American children featured in the children's novel American as Paneer Pie. This research identifies the acts of racial microaggressions that are directed to the character Lekha as a minority student in the novel American as Paneer Pie.

2. METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative which aims at describing and analyzing phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, thoughts of people individually and in groups (Sukmadinata, 2015). Descriptive research means that the data are expressed in verbal form and analyzed without using statistical techniques (Mustami, 2015). It means that the analysis carried out is an analysis of words, not numbers. A novel entitled American as Paneer Pie by Supriya Kelkar published in 2020 was chosen as the object of the research. This novel is one of the famous diaspora children's novels in America. It describes the life of Indian American girl with her problems of microaggressions at school.

The data sources consist of primary data and secondary data. The primary data were collected from the narration and dialogues in the novel. The secondary data were taken from journals, encyclopedia, and internet articles. The researcher did several steps in collecting the data. To obtain primary data, the researcher read the novel and classified the analysis into intrinsic and extrinsic parts. Intrinsic analysis of the novel reveals the characterization and setting supporting the theme. Meanwhile, the extrinsic analysis focuses on how racial microaggressions are described in the novel. In this analysis, the researcher classified the narration or dialogues considered as racial microaggressions. To obtain the secondary data, the researcher conducted library research, reading, internet browsing, comprehending then taking note of the information related to the subject matter.

As a literary analysis, the data were analyzed by applying intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. Intrinsic approaches are the approaches based on the analysis of the internal elements which build literary works. There are plot, characterization, setting, point of view, and theme in intrinsic approaches. Plot consists of exposition, complication, crisis, falling action, and resolution. Characterization refers to the presentation of persons in narrative or dramatic works by means of the characters' action, speech, behavior, thought, words and physical appearance (Baldick, 1991, p. 34; Pickering and Hooper (1981, p. 23). The major, or central, character of the plot is the protagonist; his opponent, the character against whom the protagonist struggles or contends is the antagonist (Pickering and Hooper 1981, pp. 24-25). There are two methods in characterization analysis based on Pickering and Hooper's theory, showing and telling methods. Showing method involves the author's stepping aside, also to allow the characters to reveal themselves directly through their dialogue and their actions (Pickering and Hooper 1981, p. 27). Meanwhile, telling methods called a direct method which describes the characterization through what the author calls to our attention (Pickering and Hooper, 1981, p. 27). In this research, the researcher examined characterization through appearance to describe the analysis of the character. In setting analysis, the researcher took setting as a means revealing character. Pickering and Hooper (1981, p. 41) explained that an author can use setting to clarify and reveal character by deliberately making setting a metaphoric or symbolic extension of character.

The extrinsic approach used in this research is the theory of microaggressions. Torino et.al (2019, p. 3) defined microaggressions as derogatory slights or insults directed at a target person or persons who are members of an oppressed group. It is also explained that microaggressions communicate bias and can be delivered implicitly or explicitly (Torino et.al. 2019, p. 3). Sue, Bucceri, Nadal, and Torino (2007) in Torino (2019, p. 103) classified microaggressions into three areas: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. It is explained that microassaults are explicit identity-based derogations, verbal or nonverbal, intended to harm the target, such as racial epithets. Microinsults, according to Ong et.al (2013) in Torino et.al (2019, p. 103), convey insensitivity toward one's heritage or identity. Microinsults can include the "model minority" myth experienced by many Asian Americans, indicating that they experience little racism, despite evidence to the contrary. Meanwhile, microinvalidations are explained by Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal, et al. (2008) in Torano et.al (2019, p. 103) as the actions which involve the denial of one's experiences with racism. Regarding to microaggressions as a verbal discrimination at school, Sue (2019:232) explained that microaggressions are simply petty annoyances, and that Students of Color needed to learn how to deal with "unpleasant offenses in the real world." He also said that Microaggression theory allow People of Color to play victims who are weak, helpless, and vulnerable, and thus require "special treatment and protection" (2019, p. 232). In this case, Sue (2010) in Torino (2019, p. 234) concluded that using race as an example, microaggressions are constant and continual in the life experience of People of Color. They can occur and recur from the moment of birth until the time of death. In contrast, non-race-based insults are time-limited and tend to be infrequent. Thus, a white person who encounters a rude service worker may be angered in the moment, but the negative impact is transitory. For People of Color, however, these encounters are frequent from the time they awake in the morning until the time they go to bed. A lifetime of microaggression leaves long-term detrimental psychological and physical effects (Sue in Torino 2019, p. 234).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

In this part, the analysis is divided into intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. In the intrinsic analysis, the researcher focuses on how to apply the approaches such as plot, characterization and setting to reveal the problems. Meanwhile, the extrinsic analysis focuses on how the researcher analyzes the problems of the research using the theory of microaggressions.

3.1.1. Plot, Characterization and Setting Analysis

- Plot

Intrinsic approaches are used in literary analysis to reveal the theme by the plot, characterization, setting etc. In literary analysis, it is important for the researcher to understand literary works from the intrinsic parts to know

how the writer presents the story. American as Paneer Pie is one of children's Asian-American novels. It is categorized as a middle grade novel. As the writer of this story is an Indian diaspora named Supriya Kelkar, this novel involves a character of Indian diaspora girl to represent the life of Indian diaspora in America. Lekha is the name of an Indian-American girl who lived in Metro Detroit. She obtained education in an American public school. During her school, Lekha never felt comfortable with her identity. She always got insulted by her friends as she had a birthmark on her forehead like a bindi. Lekha also found herself marginalized as a minority student in the class. Her teachers and friends sometimes called her name wrongly and they didn't know much about Indian culture.

This novel presents a chronological plot. According to Pickering and Hoepfer (1981), there are five parts of plot which are exposition, complication, crisis, falling action and resolution. In brief, this story tells how Lekha as the main character faces their friends and teachers' treating her as an Indian-American girl. The diversity of culture regarding to physical appearance, language, lifestyle, religion and others can influence people to do racial microaggressions. In light of the plot, in the exposition, the story tells how racial microaggressions happen to Lekha. The story begins with Lekha's feeling to be an Indian American girl with Bindi birthmark which makes her always get insulted by her friends. It is shown in the quotation below.

Most Desi kids I knew had been asked about it at some point in their lives. "Do you have a dot?" "Where's your dot?" "Why do you guys have dots on your forehead?" it was kind of annoying. (Kelkar 2020, p. 01)

The problems of racial microaggressions are continuously shown in complication by the coming of Lekha's new Indian friend named Avantika who was asked by the teacher to sit with her while he didn't realize that his doing made Lekha and Avantika feel segregated.

I was shocked. Maybe Mr. Crowe had more experience with different cultures than I thought. Maybe he was cooler than I thought.

He ran his fingers through his blond curls and pulled the empty student desk right to mine, "Come on in and have a seat, Avantika. I think you'll be very comfortable with Lekha here to help you."

Nope. I was wrong. He wasn't cooler than I thought. Putting Avantika next to the only other brown kid in the class was the furthest thing from cool he could. Noah frowned as he mouthed "racist?" to me. (Kelkar 2020, p. 38-39)

The crisis in this novel is when Lekha ventured to convey her aspiration to the Senator Winters in the old theater downtown for the town hall where everyone came for tonight op-ed presentation. Lekha spoke up and told everybody to understand and respect each other. She was American and every American had a right to live peacefully in this country.

"I am sick of being made to feel different. Like I'm not important. Like I don't matter. Like I'm less than everyone else around me. Like I'm not good enough. Like I'm not American enough.

"I am not the enemy. I am no less human than my fellow classmates. I am no less human than anyone in this room. I am not something getting in the way of what you want. We all want the same thing. Why is that so hard to understand?

...

"Yes, our country. Because it's mine as much as it is yours. I'm not a guest here. This is my home. I have as much of a say here as you. I matter as much as you. Don't like it?" I swallowed hard, wetting my throat, making sure my voice would be heard. "Too bad. I'm not leaving." (Kelkar 2020, pp. 344-345)

After voicing her aspiration, Lekha finally found herself more confident than before. Lekha became braver to show her talent. Lekha didn't care anymore of her friends calling her "Dot". She knew that everyone had their own right to live and an equal say.

"What's unbelievable is you. Teammates stick together. That doesn't mean everyone does whatever you say. It means we have an equal say. It means we help each other. If you don't believe that, I'm not swimming with you." (Kelkar 2020, pp. 349-350)

The story reaches the resolution by the winning of Lekha in swimming competition. Lekha won silver medal. She finally proved to people that as an Indian American girl who had brown skin, she could be the winner.

The silver medal over my head, I pulled my swim cap off, letting frizzy curls fall this way and that, off my forehead, revealing my bindi birthmark for all the cameras to see. (Kelkar 2020, p. 355)

- Characterization

Lekha is the main character in this novel. Therefore, the researcher only focuses on Lekha in this analysis. Lekha is described through her appearance. Lekha was a talented girl. She was good at swimming. However, she was always being teased by her friends because she had a birthmark on her forehead. It looked like she wore a bindi. She never felt comfortable with the birthmark because she always got insulted by her friends at school. In the quotation below, it is shown that the analysis of Lekha can be done through characterization through appearance. It is explained that a Desi always finds the same questions related to a bindi.

But I didn't know any Desi kids who had to walk around with bindi on their forehead at all times. I had to, though. For eleven years and counting. That's because mine was a birthmark. A bindi-size, dark-brown freckle that I couldn't take off. And that was really annoying. (Kelkar 2020, p. 01)

According to *dictionary.cambridge.org* (2022), Desi is a person who comes from or whose family comes from India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh but who lives in another country. Most Desi wear bindi on their foreheads. This is how they respect the culture. As a Desi, Lekha had to live side by side with Indian and American cultures. Her mother was very concerned with natural habits and lifestyles. Lekha sometimes felt uncomfortable when her mother always put the herbs oil on Lekha's scalp. It made her hair oily and smelled bad. She had always to scrunch her nose and close her eyes as she frowns when the cool trickle of oil began to slither down her scalp.

It was an ayurvedic oil made out of herbs, kept in an amber-colored glass bottle. When Aai poured the olive-green oil on to her hands and put the oil on my scalp, my head would suddenly go cold, like peppermint was touching it. It smelled like bitter food and gass, like when Dad kept flicking the stove dial on but the range wouldn't light. The stink was so bad, I could swear my hair still smelled like it even after a washing. This was probably because Aai made me use an all-unatural shampoo made from the Indian tree shikakai. It was ugly brown and lumpy, and nothing like the smooth, white, scented shampoos everyone else used.

...

I scrunched my nose and closed my eyes, frowning as the cool trickle of oil began to slither down my scalp. I couldn't help but relax as Aai worked her fingers into my skin. It felt calming, and for a brief instant I almost forgot why I was so mad. Almost. (Kelkar 2020, p. 83)

The quotation above shows how Lekha feels uncomfortable with her oily hair. This is as the characterization of Lekha which is also described by her appearance. This novel creates the character of Lekha through the description of her appearance. Therefore, characterization through appearance is chosen to analyze the character

- Setting

In the analysis of setting, the setting of this novel is in America. Lekha has an Indian family's tradition though she had been living in the U.S for a long time. Living in America does not mean to forget Indian culture for her parents who still carry on the Indian tradition well. Physically, Lekha has an Indian identical face. She has a birthmark like bindi on her forehead. Bindi is a colored dot worn on the center of the forehead. Indian people wear bindi to enhance the powers of chakra (the existence of areas of concentrated energy), specifically by facilitating one's ability to access their inner wisdom or guru, allowing them to see the world and interpret things in a truthful, unbiased manner as well as forsake their ego and rid their false labels (Shuvi Jha, 2018, June 5). Indian people really respect this tradition. However, this tradition is not common in America. All American children do not see their parents wear bindi because it is not a part of their tradition. Consequently, when they meet their Indian friend with a bindi on her/his forehead, they find her/him weird. This is what happened to Lekha. She is called "Dot" by her friends and it make her ashamed. America is the setting of this novel while Indian tradition is still applied by Lekha's family. The quotation below shows how the setting can reveal the character of Lekha.

I couldn't believe it. Another Desi family in our tiny little town! There would finally be someone to get it. To know what it's like to feel different but want to be the same as everyone else. To love your Hindi movie star posters all over your bedroom wall but to be modified when a teacher asks you to say a word in Hindi. To know how it feels to be asked once a week where your dot is, or if you shower, or if your parents can speak English. To know what it's like to have two lives, your Indian life at home and you American life at school. (Kelkar 2020, p. 23)

Through setting as mean revealing character, the quotation above explains how this novel reveals the situation of how microaggressions possibly happen in children lives. Therefore, in this research, the researcher will describe the actions related to racial microaggressions in the novel *American as Paneer Pie* through the character of Lekha.

3.1.2. The issue of racial microaggressions presented in *American as paneer pie*

In this part, the researcher discusses the acts of microaggressions practiced by white ethnic children towards Lekha as a minority girl in *American as Paneer Pie*. In a public American school, racial microaggressions become

a recent problem faced by students. Racial microaggressions are daily verbal which shows how people insult the other by problematizing a race. Since America is dominated by the white, people can see that the white students have a better privilege than the nonwhite students. In *American as Paneer Pie*, Lekha represents a non-white student. Schooling in American public school, Lekha had to adapt the circumstance of the white students. She often got insulted by her friends because of her physical appearance and her lifestyle. The way she spoke and behaved were influenced by her Indian culture. For some white students, it seemed weird as they never did the same as Lekha did.

Sue explained that microaggressions are divided into microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. The categorization of them helps researcher to understand how the acts of microaggressions can be classified based on the areas. The analysis below shows the acts of microaggressions which happens to Lekha as a minority student.

- **Name and Physical Appearance-Based Microaggression**

As an Indian-American student, Lekha does not appear as the American white students. Her physical appearance is different from the other. Lekha had a brown skin, long curly hair, and Indian face. Lekha had a dot on her forehead. The dot was like a bindi. Since it was permanently on her forehead, Lekha sometimes did not feel comfortable with that dot. Moreover, Liam, her classmate, often called her "Dot" rather than called her name. She wanted to be mad of him, but she could not. She knew that Liam had some friends who would stand behind him. Finally, she was just being quiet.

"What's your friend eating, Dot?" asked Liam as he and Mikey walked by us to throw their trash out.
(Kelkar 2020, p. 49)

Lekha did not like to be called as "Dot". A dot on her forehead which was like a bindi was a birthmark which God gave her. For Indian people, it is very important to wear a bindi. It signifies piety of Hindu people as well as serving as a constant reminder to keep God at the center of one's thoughts. When someone teasing another through her physical appearance and it relates to some people's belief, he is confirmed doing racism. In this case, Liam does a verbal violence. Microaggressions includes verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities. Verbal indignity might not be invisible, but the effect is possibly worse than the other indignities. Sue (2007:232) explained that students of colour claimed that microaggressions made them feel "unsafe" in class and college campuses, that they represented traumatic forms of oppression, and that they were psychologically harmful. Based on Sue's statement, it can be seen that verbal indignity leaves traumatic to the victims. It is seen in the story that Lekha felt unsafe of being herself. She couldn't even say anything to face this microaggression as it is shown in the quotation below.

I had an answer to my question from beginning of lunch. I knew exactly how loud my voice would be when facing a bully. It would be totally silent. (Kelkar 2020, p. 50)

Name and physical appearance based microaggression can be categorized as a microassault. *American as Paneer Pie* describes how the white students do a microassault to the Indian student. A microassault is explicit racial derogations characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions in this story, teasing someone by her physical appearance (Sue et al, 2007:271). Microassaults are most similar to what has been called "old fashioned" racism conducted on an individual level (Sue, 2007:272). Lekha was never called as her name by her friends. They showed how they didn't like Lekha's present by calling her "Dot". This is a kind of microassault to her.

Not only getting a bad nick name, Lekha often found some of her teachers and friends mispronounced her name. Pronouncing Indian names might not be easy for some American, but Lekha had studied in that school for long time. However, some of them still couldn't call her name well and didn't even recognize her.

I wanted to correct her. I wished my mouth would just open and say, "It's Lekha, Lay-khaa. You've known me since fourth grade, but you still can't say my name right. (Kelkar 2020, p. 10)

- **Ethnic-Based Microaggression**

There is an environmental indignity in this novel. Lekha was a good swimmer at school. One day, she got the same fast time as Harper, her white friend. Although she reached the same fastest time, her friends flocked to Harper but avoided her. This behavior relates to a distinction made by a group of people on the basis of ethnicity. As humans live in a social environment, there is always a tendency to face various conflicts among them. This is what happens to Lekha. When she was in the middle of the major ethnic, she knew that people would always underestimate her.

Lekha Divekar: 1:09:30. My fastest time ever.

“We tied!” exclaimed Harper from my left. I scanned the scoreboard. Harper Walbourne: 1:09:30. She was right. We had tied. Although it may not have seemed like it in school, the way kids flocked to Harper but avoided me. She and I were equals. (Kelkar 2020, p. 15)

People can experience ethnic based-microaggression when they feel differentiated based on their ethnicity. In addition, people commonly generalize other groups based on their ethnicity. In this novel, Avantika, Lekha’s new Indian neighbor, came to school as a new student. The teacher asked her to sit beside Lekha. He thought that by sitting beside Lekha, she would feel more comfortable. However, Lekha and Avantika felt different. They thought that it was segregation among the students.

He ran his fingers through his blond curls and pulled the empty student desk right next to mine, its steel feet groaning as they scratched the hard floor. “Come on in and have a seat, Avantika. I think you’ll be very comfortable with Lekha here to help you.” (Kelkar 2020, p. 38)

Segregation is one of racial microaggressions which is as an environmental microaggression while a subtle discrimination occurs within society. People who do a segregation sometimes do not realize what will happen to the segregated person. The teacher might give the best place for Avantika sitting beside the person with the same culture as her. Distinguishing someone in one environment will make him/her feel isolated. He/she will not think that he/she is the part of them. Based on the kinds of microaggressions, segregation can be classified as a microinsult which represent subtle snubs, frequently unknown to the perpetrator, but clearly convey a hidden insulting message to the recipient of color (Sue, 2007:272)

Ethnic based-microaggression can include the culture and religion of a particular group. an ethnic group does not fully understand how the culture and religion of another group as a whole. as a result, there are often misunderstandings that occur in social life between them. This case occurs in Lekha when she was invited to come to Harper’s house to celebrate Christmas. While her friends happily celebrated Christmas, Lekha was shocked and gasped as she saw the large navy-blue magnet on the open refrigerator door said “Don’t Like It?”

***Young ladies want anything else to eat?” asked Mrs. Walbourne from the kitchen.
“No, thanks,” I said as the fizz from the pop tickled my throat.***

***...
I gasped when I saw the large navy-blue magnet on the open refrigerator door. It is said, Don’t Like It?***

“What’s wrong?” asked Harper.

“Bit my tongue,” I lied. My third lie of the night. I was getting to be a little good at this. But, if Mrs. Walbourne had a Winters magnet up, did that mean she didn’t like me? That she thought my parents were stealing everyone’s jobs? I tried to figure out a way to casually mention the fact that Aai no longer worked at the plant, but Harrison spoke up first. (Kelkar 2020, p. 133)

The quotation above is categorized as a behavior indignity to Lekha. Behavior indignity refers to how people behave intolerantly to the other. In this case, behavior indignity happened to Lekha is not a harassment or physical abuse. Lekha was just feeling unacceptable as a guest because there was a sentence visibly seen said “Don’t Like It?”. It was pointing to her. It might be she was Indian and she was minority there. She could see how most Americans did not like Indian people living in this country. And they always tried to marginalize her and all Indian people she knew there. Her friends think of her as the American, but they still define the difference between them and Lekha.

The quotation below also shows how Lekha’s friends mentioned wrong word to her. When one of her friends asked her about Christmas, Lekha tried to explain that she never had it at home because she was not a Christian. The other friend tried to explain why she did not celebrate it because of her religion. It is a respect to her. But the way she explained is wrong. She mentioned the wrong word to say. She said Hindi for Hindu which Hindi means the people from India while Hindu is their religion.

“What do you want Santa to bring you, Lekha?” asked Aidy. “Sorry, Is it against your religion to celebrate Christmas?”

***...
“Yeah, Hindi people celebrate Diwali,” said Harper, trying to show off what she had heard in Mr. Crowe’s class, not realizing she had said the language, Hindi instead of the religion, Hindu. (Kelkar 2020, p. 134)***

Based on Sue’s theory, what Lekha’s friends did to her is a microinvalidation. It is explicit racial derogations characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions.

The issue of microaggression is illustrated in the novel's narrative by describing the interrelationship between the plot, setting, and interactions between characters in the novel. As the main character, Lekha provides an understanding of her experience of microaggression through her feelings, thoughts, and voices that are depicted in the forward narrative flow. America as a setting in the story also supports the atmosphere of the story that places the characters in the novel in a country with diverse cultures and ethnicities. In America, microaggression has become an increasingly recognised issue in recent years as it can affect interaction patterns between individuals and groups in social and cultural contexts. The impact of microaggressions can involve feelings of insecurity, stress, anxiety and discomfort for the targeted individual. Microaggressions also create inequalities and differences in treatment. As in *American as Paneer Pie*, experiencing microaggressions makes Lekha feel injustice as an Indian-American child. She experiences racial discrimination that causes her to be treated differently from her peers. As an ethnic minority, Lekha does not get equal recognition from her white American classmates. Her different physical appearance made her feel intimidated because of the insults made by some of her friends. The differences in skin colour, name and cultural identity make Lekha have to experience behaviours that make her feel the weight of being a minority in America. This shows that the novel *American as Paneer Pie* is a reflection of the lives of Indian-American children who today face unique challenges and experiences.

3.2. Discussion

The issue of microaggression is illustrated in the novel's narrative by describing the interrelationship between the plot, setting, and interactions between characters in the novel. As the main character, Lekha provides an understanding of her experience of microaggression through her feelings, thoughts, and voices that are depicted in the forward narrative flow. America as a setting in the story also supports the atmosphere of the story that places the characters in the novel in a country with diverse cultures and ethnicities. In America, microaggression has become an increasingly recognised issue in recent years as it can affect interaction patterns between individuals and groups in social and cultural contexts. The impact of microaggressions can involve feelings of insecurity, stress, anxiety and discomfort for the targeted individual. Microaggressions also create inequalities and differences in treatment. As in *American as Paneer Pie*, experiencing microaggressions makes Lekha feel injustice as an Indian-American child. She experiences racial discrimination that causes her to be treated differently from her peers. As an ethnic minority, Lekha does not get equal recognition from her white American classmates. Her different physical appearance made her feel intimidated because of the insults made by some of her friends. The differences in skin colour, name and cultural identity make Lekha have to experience behaviours that make her feel the weight of being a minority in America. This shows that the novel *American as Paneer Pie* is a reflection of the lives of Indian-American children who today face unique challenges and experiences.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

American as Paneer Pie is an Indian-American Children Novel which uncovers the issue of microaggressions. This novel also gives readers a new perspective in viewing culture problem in American life. Raising the issue of racial microaggression, this novel shows how an Indian diaspora girl experiences microaggression. Racial microaggressions are believed as derogatory slights or insults directed at a target person or persons who are members of an oppressed group. This research finds that kinds of microaggressions are revealed through the story of Lekha, an Indian American girl. Lekha faced microinsult, microassault and microinvalidation which are reflected as name and physical based-microaggression and ethnic based-microaggression. Microassault happens when her friends call her "A Dot". Microinsult happens when Lekha and her Indian new friend are sitting near together as if they are being segregated. The last one is microinvalidation. It happens when Lekha visits her American friend's house where they talk about Christmas which Lekha does not celebrate it. They do not even know the difference between Hindi and Hindu. As a children literature research, it is hoped that this research can be beneficial for other researchers who can elaborate more about microaggressions' issue through a literature works. It is also possible for the researchers to use Sue's theory of microaggressions to help a researcher formulate the problem and find the right theory in analyzing this issue.

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