



Diaspora Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Name Sake*

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the sense of identity and diaspora elements in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The NameSake*. Jhumpa Lahiri as a child has crossed the borders from Indian England [where she was born] and then to America, It makes her both a migrant and Diaspora writer. *The NameSake* Portrays the best kind of reference to Diaspora and it gives the prime role in this present era. As the title indicates "*The NameSake*" is a novel of identity, the life of first and second generation immigrants. The struggle for the immigrant's identity and belongingness are well articulated by the writer through the characters. At the beginning of the novel the issue of names and identity portrayed by Jhumpa Lahiri mirrored the life of the Indian Diaspora, who are Struggling for their Identity. They construct unhomely home in the foreign land. This paper is an analysis of the efforts of the diaspora faced by the characters in *The NameSake*.

Keywords; Identity, Diaspora elements, Jhumpa Lahiri ,immigrants.

The Namesake is a novel from the author Jhumpa Lahiri which was published in 2003. She is born on July 11,1967in London.She is the daughter of a Bengali Indian Immigrant .Jhumpa Lahiri moved with her family to the UnitedStates when she was Three years old.

A diaspora is defined as a community of people who do not live in their country of origin, but maintain their heritage in a homeland. Inclusion of emigrants or people who have left their homelands to settle permanently in a different one, Is a major characteristics of a diaspora. The term Diaspora was thus integrated from Greek into English in the middle of 20th Century. The diasporic culture is essentially mixed and a unification of the two cultures. It is a voyage towards self-recognition, self – definition and self – realization.The Indian Diasporawriting contributes on a world wide scale, the cultures of different societies. Diaspora literature thus builds information which results in solving many cultural and psychological problems.

As its title suggests, at its core *The Namesake* tackles the question of forming one's own identity, andexplores the power that a name can carry.**Gogol's** decision to change his name to Nikhil before leaving home for college demonstrates his desire to take control over his own identity. The name Gogol, which "Nikhil" finds so distasteful, is a direct result of the literal identity confusion at his birth, when the letter sentfrom India that contained his "true name" was lost in the mail. "Gogol" is also a name that holds deepmeaning for **Ashoke**, since it was a book of short stories by Gogol, the Russian author, that saved his lifeduring a fateful **train** crash—but this meaning is not conveyed to Gogol/Nikhil during his childhood.As theother theme outlines make clear, the main tension that drives Gogol/Nikhil's identity confusion is the divide between his family's Indian heritage and his own desire for an independent, modern American lifestyle.Theepisodes in Gogol/Nikhil's development on display in the novel reveal a constant striving for a clear identity,a struggle which is made difficult by the divided world in which he grows up. Many of the choices that hemakes seem motivated by a desire to live life as a "normal" American, and to escape the influence of his family. Gogol's relationship to **Maxine**, for example, an upper class New Yorker who lives at home with her stylish and modern parents, evolves to the point of offering Gogol an alternative home. He vacations with Maxine's family instead of returning home to visit his own, and embeds himself in their rituals. The identity that she and her family represent is clearly a very seductive one.However, there are also moments—like after the death of his father, or when he decides to marry **Moushumi**—that Gogol seems to be reaching back toward his roots. Although his marriage to Moushumi ends in divorce, the book's conclusion, as Gogol sits down to finally read the book of his namesake's short stories that his father had given him long ago, suggests a new acceptance of his past, and a willingness to allow his background to become a part of his identity.Naming, and nicknames, is also a symbol of the bonds shared by different characters throughout the novel, and they carry weight as markers of those bonds. When Ashoke and Ashima return to Calcutta on family vacations, they become "Mithu" and "Monu," and are transformed into more confident versions of themselves. **Sonia** calls Gogol "Goggles," **Maxine** is "Max" to Gogol—whom she knows as Nikhil—and to **Dimitri**, Moushumi is known as "Mouse." This abundance of names is also a sign of the various worlds that the main characters of Lahiri's novel inhabit simultaneously—often in a way that causes internal division, but

which can also provide a form of comfort.

The first diasporic element of the story is nostalgia which means reminiscing over the past. For Instances, at the beginning of the novel Ashima Ganguli is preparing an Indian snack which Results in lacking the original taste and then she compares the food in Massachusetts and India. This notion reflects the element of nostalgia. Another incident is that Ashima having a Watch which is gifted by her family at her wedding she often looks at it and calculates the time in India and then she fully immerses herself in her homeland. This incident shows the term of Nostalgia. During Ashima's labor, Ashoke walks around the hospital and often limps, habit he has carried from his childhood. At that time he remembers about his childhood event when his Grandfather called him and read Russian English translated books. This is also an example of nostalgia. Ashoke is thinking about his past in which is he was once injured during a train accident but was saved by the rescue team. Gogol feels nostalgic when his mother and Sonia have come to receive him at the railway station; he remembers that the whole family would see him whenever he returns from Yale as a college student. Another example for nostalgia is that Astrid and Donald invited Gogol to attend the dinner party. When he goes there he was thinking about his first date with Moushumi during which both are designing their ideal house. As Sonia Ben, Gogol and Ashima assemble on a get together during which Gogol remembers decorating the first plastic tree his parents had brought at his insinuations. Next diaspora element of the story is identity crisis. For instance, the importance of identity is brought up throughout the story and it becomes a central concept in the novel. On Gogol's fourteenth birthday his father gifted him Nikolai Gogol's short stories. His distaste for his name becomes very prominent that day. He becomes oppressive because his name is neither Indian nor American. Later in the novel he understands the importance of his name and Bengali heritage and staying here for few days. Experiences of the first generation immigrants contrast with the second generation. Second generation immigrants like Gogol who is the protagonist and Sonia sister of Gogol in Lahore's *The Namesake* really enjoy the fruits of immigration in the dream land of America but the first generation characters like Ashima and Ashoke, parents of Gogol and Sonia really have bitter experiences in the alien land because of advanced education, easy inculcation, second and third generation immigrants enjoy rather than first generation. Gogol and Sonia are likeminded people so that they easily inculcate the new things such as change in the eating habits, dressing style and the way they communicate in the native accent with the native people. Easy mingling with all kinds of people who settled from various countries is also an added advantage for the second generation immigrants. Gogol and Sonia wear western costumes without any hesitation but Ashima, their mother even after long stay she is traditionally wearing sari which shows her strong sense of belongingness with native land. Her children habituate eating pizzas and burgers. This difference are between them because Gogol and Sonia born and brought up in the alien land therefore, they do not have that much of association with mother land even though they come to their mother land. It is clearly reflected a feeling of in-between's, nostalgia, displacement problem in every character of Lahiri because Lahiri also experience the same which is visible in her characters. First generation immigrants never easily accept the change due to their past background. Gogol parents often attend parties which are celebrated by the Bengali families on the occasion of either Durgapuz or Vinayachaviti where the children are getting boredom with the unknown customs but they do not realize it is their mother land rich treasure. So, immigration for the first generation in the alien land causes various problems such as conflict between two cultures, confusion in the multi cultured world. First generation immigrants try to accustom the new land but physically successful not spiritually because their souls are there with mother land only. Being isolation is another major problem for Indian immigrants in the United States. As there is joint family system in India, all the members of family of different generations live in one home. They share everything among themselves. They habituate living with crowd both in and out. Once they migrated to any other country, they cannot bare the isolation because the family ambience in the alien land is not like in India. Everyone is busy with something. They don't have much time to spend with other family members except weekends that to they spend weekends predominantly with tours by eating in restaurants and sea coasts. Ashima in *The Namesake*, being first generation immigrant, getting isolated because her husband goes out to MIT, she does not know any neighbours for her accompany. So she stays back at home all the days without doing anything which causes for her isolation. Not only Lahiri's Ashima but also Dimple in Bharati Mukerji's novel *wife* experienced the same. *The Namesake* illustrates many issues of belonging by contrasting the relationships in the lives of the parents, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli (an anglicized pronouncing his real surname, Gangopadhyay.) with those of the generation of their children Nikhil and Sonia. The parents, born in India, in their twenties, migrated to America, where they only partially begin to integrate and assimilate new culture, while their children born in America more readily adopt the American values and lifestyle. The power of the book stems from the ability of the composer to tell a credible compelling and poignant story highlighting the conflicts between the generations and cultures without becoming judgmental. Her objective portrayal of Indian culture is counterpointed with a realistic dispassionate depiction of sophisticated, affluent but hollow American lifestyles. *The Namesake*, thus, illustrates the lives of both first generation and second generation Indian migrants in the USA. Alienation is the part of experience of the Indian Diaspora and even if people are at home in part of the world, it does not mean that they will not become victims of the sense of alienation. The novel also shows how the immigrants face culture dilemmas in the foreign system. Lahiri has tried to answer all these questions in her own style through the quest of identity of her characters. Diaspora is all about the creation of new identities, resolution of conflicts and a new culture.

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