

**DIASPORIC CONSCIOUSNESS: A STUDY OF JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *THE  
NAMESAKE***



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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “**Diasporic Consciousness in JhumpaLahiri’s The Namesake**” submitted for M.A. degree is entirely my original work. All the ideas and references are duly acknowledged and it does not contain any other work for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university.

**Name and Signature of the student**

**Dated:**

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## Certificate

This is to certify that the work reported in the M.A dissertation entitled “Diasporic Consciousness in JhumpaLahiri’s*The Namesake*”, submitted by **S. NoyingbeniYanthan** at **Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, India** is a bonafide record of her original work carried out under my supervision. This work has not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree or diploma.

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## ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with the adequate issue of the migration to present the pain and the problem that are faced by the immigrants by contrasting the subject of diaspora in JhumpaLahiri's *The Namesake*. In this paper we examine how Lahiri deals with subject matters like identity, dilemma, nostalgia and alienation faced by the immigrants. She presents the pain through her writings and this makes us understand the problems that are faced by the immigrants. In *The Namesake*, Lahiri writes about the Indian immigrants who face alienation, nostalgia, dilemma and consciousness of being an outsider.

In the first place, Lahiri in *The Namesake*, presents the character of Ashoke and Ashima where they feel nostalgia as they migrate to a new land and through the feeling of diaspora, they recollect the memories back at home especially in the character of Ashima. It also deals with the cultural identity crisis which is faced by both the generation of the immigrants. In the case of the first generation, the immigrants faces dilemma, consciousness of being an outsider and cultural identity crisis due to the language, dressing essence and food habits. But the second generation immigrants they mainly face the crisis in relation to the personality, identity and adjustment in an alien land.

In the period of globalization and with the fast moving of the development of technology, many people migrate to foreign land for one or the other reason but mostly for better opportunities. In a way to connect and come closer to that place, but the closeness to the culture, the native language and the rules evoke a psychological oppression resulting to dilemma of cultural clash and identity. JhumpaLahiri, a daughter of an immigrant is one of postcolonial writers who face clashes between the two cultures. Her very novel, *The Namesake*, reflects the condition of the diaspora and the sense of alienation through its Bengali immigrant couple and their son, Gogol. Lahiri lays down by all means the feeling of alienation through the adventures of her characters. The feeling of alienation is also shown in the character from *The Namesake* in various forms. Thus the novel goes through deep into the immigrants' experiences of their problem with regard to the feeling of dilemma and diaspora in the foreign land. This preoccupied feeling of nostalgia and alienation creates a sort of imaginative writing. The following thesis presents an in-depth discussion of diasporic consciousness on a greater scale.

**Keywords:** Nostalgia, identity, dilemma,immigrant, diaspora, andalienation.

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## CHAPTER I

### **Diaspora: Issues and Perspective**

Over the last few centuries there has been an increase of literature among members of racial/sectional groups and as well as among academics, surrounding the concept of diaspora. The word “Diaspora” has been derived from the Greek *diasperio* which means to distribute. It is a compound of *sperio*, to sow to scatter like seed and *dia-* from one end to the other. The formation of earth after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden was the opening outlook in history, when this great odyssey of diaspora began. When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, the word diaspora was used to refer to the population of Jews exiled from Judea in 586 B.C by the Babylonians, and from Jerusalem in AD 136 by the Roman Empire.

Twentieth century saw huge population movements. Some of these were due to natural disasters and some ensued because the people accepted, or could not avoid, the consequences of political decisions (such as Stalin’s desire to populate Eastern Russia, Central Asia and Siberia; or the transfer of millions of people between India and Pakistan in the 1947 partition). The term diaspora was thus integrated from Greek into English in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and refers to anybody of people or ethnic population who are either forced or induced to leave their traditional homelands, the dispersal of such people, and the resulting developments in their culture. The people having arrived in a new environmental and cultural situation, they try to negotiate two cultures: one which they possess and the other the new one. The diasporic culture is essentially mixed and a unification of the two cultures.

The Oxford English Dictionary(1989) defines Diaspora as anybody of people living outside their traditional homeland. Under Colonialism, diaspora is a mixed movement; it involves the European’s temporary or permanent movement in all parts of the world, which further leads to colonial settlements. Consequently, the increasing economic exploitation of the already settled places necessitated large amounts of labor that could not be fulfilled by the local population. This led to diaspora resulting from the enslavement of Africans and their removal to places like the British colonies. After slavery was outlawed, the continued demand



for workers created indentured labor. This produced large bodies of people from poor areas of India, China to the West Indies, Malaya, Fiji, Eastern and Southern Africa, and South East Asia, etc.

Diasporic consciousness is an intricate term as it contains idea including exilic existence; a sense of loss; realization of being an outsider; longing for home; dilemma; burden of exile; dispossession and relocation. The first step out of one's country is a brave one and one has to take risk, because without it, one cannot hope to get anything. The lives of immigrants do not have straight lines. They live centuries of history in a lifetime and have several lives and moves. They experience a sense of uprootedness and un-belonging in the host countries. In spite of their attempts of acculturation, they do remain at the outside and are treated as others. Diasporic people are formed out of the unification of accounts about journeys from the old country to the new and where people belonging to the first generation immigrants incline to remember the old land or country more than the children born to the people of migrant.

Salman Rushdie in the *Imaginary Homeland: Essays and Criticism* 1981-1991 stated migrants to "straddle two cultures ... fall between two stools" and they suffer "a triple disruption" (Rushdie 5) containing the loss of roots, the linguistic and also the social displacement. Trishanku, an epic Indian character in Ramayana, who was neither accepted in heaven nor earth and had to settle midway between the two realm, serves as a metaphor for the modern emigrant inhabiting the contested universal native space.

Bharati Mukherjee of the *Jasmine* fame has spent much of her career exploring issues involving immigration and identity with a particular focus upon the United States and Canada. Shashi Tharoor's famous work is *The Great Indian Novel* (1989). His work as a UN official living outside India has given him a vantage point helps to construct an objective Indianness.

Anywhere in the world diasporic groups are immigrants who recognize that their traditional homelands are reflected deeply in the languages they speak, religion they adopt, and the cultures they produce. They remember their past through memory, imaginary, narrative and fairytale and their search for ethnic individuality make them as "individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colorless, stateless, and rootless- a race of angels." (Hall 226) They are put in a state of 'being' and 'becoming' and they think of the difference between 'what we really are' and that of 'what we have become' as 'the lost origins' in a

foreign land. As a result, a new person is born as a diasporic person of the 'New World. (Misra148)

Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through change and difference. The spatial move contains a loss of territory and addition of territory connected by journeys/travel. Diasporic writing across the world, in order to make a wide overview is concerned with places, journeys and lands since diaspora encompasses a change of place through a journey. But what is also important is that the loss of land is almost always accompanied by the gain of new ones. In a way dislocation is always followed by relocation.

The main distinguishing features of the Diaspora culture would include the following themes:

1. The dilemma of the immigration
2. The recollection of home including the details of childhood and the past events
3. The clash of cultures and the twisted ties between generations
4. The search for identity, moving and re-rooting
5. The feeling of alienation in a new land and society
6. A sensible attempt to emphasize cultural identity in terms of the homeland while at the same time seeking acceptance in the new cultures.

Diasporic writings explore the identities that are forged in the torment of several cultures, places, and races rather than just home and unknown land. Indeed, identity is not simply a matter of race but that identities are built through several: origin, race, gender, language, history. Diasporic writing, especially in the stage of globalization, is a perception raising sort where political issues of cultural nationality, multicultural fairness and worldwide inequality goes together with the themes of nostalgia, imaginative restoration of the homeland and identities. Exile and displacement descriptions often combine a sense of concern with the feeling of longing and recollection. Considerably diasporic writing explores the subject of an original/unique homeland. This original homeland as now is lost due to their outcast/exile is frequently functioned into an imaginative and fairytale/myth of the exiled individual/communal. Nostalgia is therefore one of the main theme in diasporic writing.

Samir Dayal's in his article, *Diaspora and Double Consciousness* "speculates on some theoretical conjunctures between the concepts of diaspora and double consciousness". (Dayal46) He also commented on the "contemporary debates about multiculturalism and transnationalism demand and retaking of diaspora beyond the state-centrist model of elegance to the host versus the whole country". (Dayal46)

Diaspora led to the flourish of literature. Many Indian writers who resides abroad or foreign lands tends to express themselves through creative writings. The scenario is quite opposite as since earlier for an Indian writer to have a good perception of creative writing he would often take the help of a foreign visitor to India. The Indian Diaspora writers wrote on loss of identity, feeling of isolation, sense of changes, flexibility, and movement. The theme of diaspora caters a very significant role in the Indian literature, and furthermore it helps to contribute the theory of diaspora from a very general sense. From a broader perception we can see that the study of such themes in literature like Diaspora helps us to gather around information on the cultural outlook between different countries. It provides us more vivid information that borders different customs and traditions. Good fiction enhances facts and adds interesting layers to hold readers' attention and makes people aware about the contemporary society. Likewise the subject of Diaspora advances some definite questions which embark the definition between homeland and foreign land. Thus Literature as being a product of culture becomes a great source which helps us to know about the worldwidesituation and multiculturalism. Another aspect of literature is to question the bond between the work of the writers and literatures of the country of their origin and to observe the different plans they adopt in order to discuss the cultural space of the countries of their adoption. Thus literature works as a bridge which strengthens the bonds between India and other countries.

Diasporic literature could be examined using several significant features. Firstly, it is based on the knowledge of a homeland; a place from where the displacement occurs. Secondly, diasporic literature provides descriptions of rough journeys undertaken for various reasons. Thirdly, diaspora provides accounts of another intellect of place away from home land. Fourthly, one could read how homeland made characters behave in a far of land either accepting or rejecting new cultural codes of their new intellect of place. Therefore, when reading diasporic literature, we can learn how and why some people choose to migrate to another country either voluntarily or due to other reasons, and how they get used to living

peacefully elsewhere, but losing home and homeland. Diasporic literature may also signify and examine with concepts such as nostalgia, memory and even lamentation of losing one's inherent language, homeland and friends and so on.

It is an stimulating contradiction that a great deal of Indian writing in English is produced not in India but in widely distributed geographical areas of treaty (Indian Diaspora in the South Pacific, Caribbean, South Africa, Mauritius) and the contemporary Indian Diaspora in the U.S.A., the U.K, Canada and Australia. They have dealt with diasporic consciousness in their works with great comfort. The wave started with R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand but the trend setter was Salman Rushdie. His *Midnight's Children* won the 1981 Booker prize and *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism* primarily deals with the dilemma of immigrants.

V.S.Naipaul, a third generation Indian from Trinidad and Tobago and a Noble laureate, writes about living in continuous exile and impossibility of ever having a home. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* at sociological level deals with the cultural complexities of post-independence Pakistani cultures and the diaspora they have occasioned. Amitav Ghosh's central figures are travellers and diaporic exiles. *The Shadow Lines* makes a unique contribution to the debates over difference and otherness that have spurred the contemporary post-colonial world. Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is about migrant Indians in the England of 1960's. The protagonist Adit lives in London with his English wife Sara but suffers from Identity crisis and finally decides to return to India. Tilo the protagonist of Dr. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* dispenses spices not only for kofta and curry, but also for the homesickness and alienation that plagues the Indian immigrants that utilize her dusty shop.

Due to communication skills and willed immigration of people from their home of origin in search of well life Diaspora has not been a new sense now just as exile or expatriate in our globalizing world. Diasporas are uprooted population leaving cultural and cultural derivation in a motherland other than where they presently live. Their financial, societal and political relationships cross limits of nations. Diaspora studies presume the existence of displaced groups of people who retain a collective sense of identity. The Indian Diaspora writer use different literary forms and represent an extraordinary diversity of societies, languages, and religious traditions. Emmanuel S. Nelson writes in the "Writers of the Indian Diaspora: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook" that:

Writers of the Indian Diaspora share a Diaspora consciousness generated by a complex network of historical connections, spiritual affinities, and unifying racial memories, and that this shared sensibility is manifested in the cultural productions of the Indian Diaspora communities around the world. The element of homesickness, longing and a, " Quest for Identity" or "Roots" mark the Diaspora fiction.(Macwan46)

As Terry Eagleton writes in, *The Idea of Culture* (2000) that the very word 'culture' contains a tension between making and being made most Diaspora writers concentrate on generational differences in exploring how new and old Diasporas relate to their land of origin and the host culture. Often their major concerns in works are divided and flowing nature of individual identities. The rootlessness, coupled with the unconcerned attitude of host culture adds to sense of otherness and isolation. Indians of almost all Diasporas have sought to record the manner in which they have reformed to their environment. They have tried to prove how they have experienced both identification with new world and isolation from their old homeland. Jhumpa Lahiri has said, "The question of identity is always a difficult one for those who are culturally disengaged, or immigrants with dual world."(Macwan46) Due to the dislocation, Diaspora's search for identity, a sense of inability to belong becomes all the more difficult and distressed. Diaspora's sense of loss becomes tragic when they think of returning to their homeland. The homes to which they want to return endures complete transformation and turns out to be a romantic deception. An immigrant longs for the world left behind in his inborn land but does not manage to belong to neither world. When he sees a new place, he sees some connection to the old place, forever searching for his old home in his new home. His devotion, friendliness, culture are all a mix bag of old and new and always in an unclassified state. He lives a double life- his life outside his house; he tries, without quite successive, to belong to the new world, while his life inside his new home, he attempts to imitate his old home, without much success either.

The situation of a migrant is always in dual state in the beginning. While struggling to be still on a foreign land, he is always portable. He is a migrant while trying to be motionless. He is in transfer mode while struggling to settle down. He never knows how to balance in, always going somewhere without getting anywhere. He tries very much to become a 'new self', without really letting go of 'old self'. Metaphysically life of human beings turns out to be

eternal outcast. Man does not have a lasting home anywhere since his birth. Often life is called a journey towards death. Coffin is considered as the final home. It is this dislocation which gives Diaspora writing its strange qualities of loss and nostalgia. Alienation is another element of Indian diaspora, it occurs in the life of all the people, either residing at foreign place or at home, the effects of alienation is a universal phenomenon. Increasing acceptance into the host society does not show that the Diaspora characters can feel at home. Social isolation is replaced by metaphysical isolation. Diaspora writing becomes significant biographical sketch of the writers who describe in their writings an immigrant's effort to belong to two places and fails to belong to either place, try to preserve hints of old identity, while struggling to obtain a new identity, lose both the identities in the process. As Rushdie has said in *Imaginary Homelands* they are indulged to deal in broken mirrors, some of wreckages have been lost. Literature emerging from the background of Diaspora has led to two distinctive types of writing.

The first of these is more narrative with references to the narration of self. The second is more intellectual dealing with studies on Diaspora. And such features can be found in many diasporic writings. Many of the works discuss the single/groups attachment to the homeland and the need to get accepted in the new settled area, this lead to a result of dual existence. A migrant, who has become now a stranger in his own lands, is also a stranger in the new lands. He is a man of many appearances while without belonging to any of those faces or appearances. Diaspora writing mostly becomes an answer to the lost homes and to issues such as displacement, nostalgia, discrimination, existence, cultural change and identity. The migrant is uprooted, overturned and tries hard, without quite succeeding completely, to put his roots down again. He tries to connect to the new world while not quite disconnecting from the old world. An immigrant, even though westernized, has a painful experience. He is upset with identity disaster; his native culture automatically interferes with the reasonable clutch of foreign culture. He has a tendency to do continuous remembrance, always imagining himself in the old world as well-preserved and frozen in his memory. He is frozen in time, values, culture of the old world, a world which has since transformed and does not exist anymore; it lives only in his memory. He continues to adhere to the old world or at least to the idea of the old world. His sense of belonging to their homeland results in loneliness and feeling of insecurity. Identity and sense of displacement plays very important role in Diaspora writings.

Monica Balyan in her article, *Quest for the past in an Alien Land: A Study of Jhumpa Lahiri's Namesake and Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine*, speculates about the immigrants that draw them back to their roots. She also brings out how the “complication arises out in an alien land and how they start searching for roots in an alien land to find a meaning” (Balyan499) She also commented about the roots, the element of nostalgia, alienation and identity crisis but she did not try to identify the similarities and differences that define the identity of a transcultural person.

In *The Namesake*, identity crisis plays a vigorous role. The novel extends more than thirty years in the life of a fictional family, the Gangulis. The parents Ashima and Ashoke, each born in Calcutta, immigrated to the United States as young adults. Their children, Gogol and Sonia, grew up in the United States and the novel examines the distinctions involve with being caught between two conflicting cultures with their highly distinct religious, social and ideological differences. The novel uses Gogol's struggle over his name as a jumping off point to explore large issues of combination, integration and cultural identity. Gogol, the protagonist is often in a confused state because of his identity, it is his name which symbolizes the dilemma of his identity. For instance in the novel when the students were taken to a graveyard for projects Gogol after seeing the names encrypted on the tombstones wants to procure such name so that he may feel more American. He feels that the only obstacle that is blocking his American culture was his name. Upon entering Yale as a freshman he replaces his name from Gogol to Nikhil. This name change makes him feel more American and confident. In Yale no one knows his real name, Gogol, he is known as Nikhil. Thus a metamorphosis occurs in his life along with the new name. Gogol began to live a complete American lifestyle, he starts to do all those activities which he dare not being as Gogol. He even dates and American girl and shares in a live in relationship. Gogol habits tentatively changes from everything, his dressing, food, and even the minimal things of life and this was all brought about with him changing his name to Nikhil. However the past still taunted him. He changes his name but “he does not feel like Nikhil” (Lahiri 105). Gogol is not completely cut off from his roots and identity. He tries not to link up with his past and so he hides his past identity but with a fear of people discovering it one day. With the rejection of Gogol's name, Lahiri rejects the immigrant identity maintained by his parents. But this outer change fails to give him inner satisfaction. “After eighteen years of Gogol, two months of Nikhil feels scant, inconsequential.” (Lahiri 105) He hates everything that reminds him of his past and tradition. The loss of the old name

was not so easy to forget and when alternate weekends, he visits his home “Nikhil evaporates and Gogol claims him again.” (Lahiri 106). He was Gogol when his parents call him on phone. He tries to put a wall between his past and his present, but it is not easy.

Study of the diasporic writings reveals that the common features observed in the writings of the old diaspora and the new diaspora are nostalgia, homesickness, and the sufferings due to being far off from their homeland. The mental disturbance and torture caused due to the pull and push factors of belonging to the land of adoption at the same time, retaining their cultural traditions thereby maintaining their attitude towards their motherland, made them reject everything Indian adoring west and criticizing India. The basic problem of diasporic writings is the feeling of dislocation without roots. The Diasporas feel homeless and isolated in the foreign land. Scattering of roots involves pain, alienation, identity crisis and other feelings to the uncultured ones.

The experience of outcast, the tendency to remember the past may bring an uncertainty, which in turn determines a kind of writing that, excels geographical and national literatures. An exile writer at every step is called upon to imaginatively create and reconstruct his home, his roots, sometimes consciously and more often unconsciously while engaging in creative writing. He has to search his tie-ups when he chooses to write while living among aliens in an alien land, with an alien culture and in an alien tongue. They have an endless desire to return

... to their roots as the lost origins, which had the overwhelming nostalgia for times past.

Such return to the beginning is symbolic representation of desire, memory, myth, search and discovery which cultivates the sense of cultural identity in the diasporic writers. they appear as a broken self and sometimes appear as strangers to themselves which express their diasporic consciousness. (Misra 149)

Most of the characters in diasporic literature according to Jaydeep Sarangi,

... suffer from cultural shock syndrome. It includes four sequential psychological developments. First is the honeymoon stage- the initial admiration for the foreign culture.

Then there is the crisis phase- when one discovers the socio-cultural and socio- linguistic



differences. In this stage they suffer from a sense of anxiety and loss. The next is the recovery stage when the puzzle is resolved. In this phase, one tries to pick up alien conventions, including cultural and linguistic behavior. The last is that of the adjustment. In this stage one tries to overcome the preliminary shocks of alien culture. (Sarangi 142)

Globalization and traditional hybridity are the fruits of large scale of diaspora. In recent time, migration of people for work, research, freedom and materialistic life has brought the world so close that national borders are just retreating and the whole world is shaping into a global village. From Gladstone coolies to the estates to computer code professions in Silicon Valley, the Indian Diaspora has come of age as the educated, brainy tech Maharaja of the world. The Indian diaspora is currently estimated to number over 20 million composed of NRIs and PIOs.

Collective memories of the original nation/homeland disturb the spaces of exilic writing. Postcolonial diasporic literature can be read as presented by looking backward to the past and facing forward to the future. Looking backward at the past contains the wide use of remembrances of the old country, that is the place of origin and home. Facing forward to the future contains a point of insecurity at the eventual of a new location and life. But however in most of the cases, the memory of the old country is untrue in the sense that the exile tends to overlay a memory that may not necessarily be adjacent with the real one. That is, the exile idealizes the old homeland through pictures and memories. Spatially speaking, displacement invariably means a move away from home. But in a diasporic literature, it also means a move towards another destination, perhaps another home. This is often caught between the loss of place and finding a new place.

## Scope

The proposed study will explore the issue of migration and to present the pain, problems and trauma faced by the immigrants by focusing on identity crisis, language barrier, nostalgia, and alienation. The novel presents about the life of a fictional family, the Gangulis. After an arranged marriage, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli leave Calcutta to settle in United States. Their children, Gogol and Sonia were born and brought up in the United States. The novel analyzes the fine details that are being caught up between the conflicting American way of life and the

traditional Indian customs. The novel uses Gogol's identity as a jumping off point to deal with the issues of cultural identity. Gogol is so named after his father's favourite Russian author, Nikolai Gogol. It was Nikolai's book "The Overcoat" which saved him when the train he was on wrecked and most passengers perished. However for Gogol growing up in an Indian family in Suburban America, he starts to hate the awkward name and itches to cast it off, along with the inherited values it represents. Determined to live a life far removed from that of his parents, Gogol embarks on a sole journey only to discover that the search for identity depends on much more than a name. Thus Jhumpa Lahiri had carried forward her Pulitzer Prize winning short stories of Indian acquisition into her first novel.

## Objectives

A modest attempt is being made in this dissertation to delve deep into the issue of migration and to present the pains, problems and trauma faced by the immigrants by focusing on such issues as identity, rootlessness nostalgia, homelessness etc. Apart from these off repeated themes the concept of identity and homelessness is dealt in a different perspective by dividing identity into a personal and cultural. The objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze the issue of migration
2. To analyze the pain, problems and trauma faced by the immigrants
3. To analyze how identity and differences are created and defined in the context or in reaction to the construct of globalization
4. To analyze the relation between parents and children in a new country
5. To analyze the socio-linguistic and socio-cultural difference
6. To analyze how the migrants overcome the shocks of alien culture.

Hiral Macwan's in his article, *A study of Diasporic sensibility and acculturation in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake* speculates on the dilemma of name and sense of identity and belongingness of the immigrants. He also commented that "Diaspora is located between cultures, between majority and minority, nation and non-nation, citizen and foreigner, original and hybrid." (Macwan111)

The shift, contrast, and the relation between ancestors/ parents and the outside where they dispersed show the effects of diasporic consciousness in literature. The proposed study will also research on the influences of the writer in the next chapter.

In conclusion, this chapter explores the concepts of the cultural identity, the rootlessness, nostalgia and the diasporic consciousness faced by the immigrants. Apart from these repeated subjects or themes the concept of homelessness and identity is dealt in a diverse perspective by dividing identity into cultural and individual. As we see that the cultural identity crisis is mainly faced by both the generation of immigrants because of the language, foodstuff and the dressing style in the diasporic world but on the other hand the second generation immigrants mainly face the crisis in relation to individual identity. Thus a close study of both the generations offers a more vivid idea on the situations relating to the diaporic issues and perspective.

## CHAPTER II

### Shaping Influences of the Writer

Jhumpa Lahiri is a contemporary American writer of Indian origin. She was born in London, on July 11, 1967 to Bengali parents. She is a graduate of Barnard College, where she received a B.A. in English literature, and of Boston University, where she received M.A. in English, M.A. in Creative Writing and M.A. in Comparative Literature and Ph.D. in Renaissance Studies. She has taught creative writing at Boston University and the Rhode Island School of Design. The plan of writing first visited Lahiri in Primary School and at an early age she began co-authoring books with a classroom friend. She applied to various graduate English programs but was rejected from almost all of them. While waiting to apply again, she took a job as a research at a non- profit institution in Cambridge. What Jhumpa Lahiri likely means to propagate through her work is that the difference between human cultures is strictly due to human's wants. Her works which is often characterized by the use of plain language deals mainly with the scenario of Indian immigrants to America who are caught up between the two cultural influences and are finding various means to settle themselves in the new habitat. Her ability to bring about the aspects of earliest cultural conflicts in relation with the current cultures and bringing out the voices of different characters are among the unique abilities that have captured the attention of a large audience.

On April 10, 2000, she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her debut collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*. She is also the first person of South Asian origin to win an individual prize. The collection of short stories was translated into twenty-nine languages and became bestseller both in the United States and abroad. Besides the Pulitzer, Lahiri has won many awards for her debut collection which includes The TransAtlantic Award from the Henfield Foundation in 1993, the O'Henry Award for short story in 1999, The New Yorker's Debut of the Year award in 2000 and the Addison Metcalf Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2000. Lahiri also received a nomination for the LA times Book Prize as well as the Guggenheim Fellowship in 2002. In 2001, she married Alberto Vourvoulias- Bush, a journalist who was then Deputy Editor of TIME, Latin America. Lahiri currently lives in

Brooklyn with her husband and two children. She has been Vice President of the PEN American Center since 2005.

Jhumpa Lahiri expands her Pulitzer Prize-winning short stories of Indian acquisition into her lovely first novel, *The Namesake*. The novel was published in 2003. It was originally a novella published in *The New Yorker* and was later expanded to a full-length novel. The film, *The Namesake* was released in March 2007 in the United States and the United Kingdom. It is directed by Mira Nair and a screenplay adapted from Lahiri's novel by Sooni Taraporevala. The film stars Kal Penn and the Bollywood stars Tabu and Irrfan Khan.

The book presents the fictional family of the Gangulis. The story rounds up in more than thirty years. The parents Ashoke and Ashima, each born in Calcutta, migrates to America when they were young. Gogol and Sonia their two children are born and brought up in America and the novel examines the tones involved with being caught two conflicting cultures with their highly distinct social, religious and philosophical differences. The novel focuses on Gogol's struggle over his name as a jumping off point to explore large issues of cultural identity, integration and assimilation.

Gogol is so named after the Russian novelist, apparently his father believes that sitting up in train reading Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" rescued him from a train accident back in 1961. Gogol finds his strange name a constant nuisance, and eventually he changes it to Nikhil. Throughout the novel Gogol has had issues with his name. At one point of time when his father presented him a book of short stories by Nikola Gogol for his fourteenth birthday, Gogol simply tosses it showing a disinterested attitude. Later when he is a senior at Yale, his father finally reveals him the story of his name. As Gogol moves to New York to work as an architect, he meets Maxine, his first real love, but they separated after his father dies. Later, his mother reintroduces him to Moushmi and they fall in love and eventually got married but their union does not last. At the end of the novel we find that Gogol has come to terms with the issues of his own identity, he does not disregard the traditional Bengali customs anymore. The role of fate that played upon his life made him realize the importance of one's own tradition and families. After losing his father he is saddened and begins to regard the ways his father taught him. The tale comes full circle when the protagonist heads home for a Bengali Christmas and rediscovers his father's gift of Gogol's short stories.

Therefore Jhumpa Lahiri has carried forward her Pulitzer Prize winning short stories of Indian acquisition into her first novel. The conditions of immigrants in the host country are usually due to cultural misunderstanding and loneliness. The cultural identity crisis is faced by generations of immigrants due to language, food habits, dress code and personal identity. In Gogol's case it is due to his name. The feeling of nostalgia, loneliness and homelessness is also divided systematically. In Ashima's case it is due to migration. Gogol and Moushmi face it due to cultural hybridity. Ashoke and Ghosh are permanently dislocated from the world. They leave all homes behind and reach the other world.

Due to the dislocation, Diaspora's a sense of inability; search for identity to belong becomes all the more difficult and distressed. The rootlessness, coupled with the indifferent attitude of host culture adds to sense of otherness and alienation. Diaspora's sense of loss becomes tragic when they think of returning to their homeland. The homes to which they want to return undergoes complete transformation and turns out to be a romantic illusion. Identity crisis or the search/quest for identity is no longer confined to the individual it can describe a group, an institution, a class, a profession or even a nation. An individual's sense of identity is neither completely conscious nor unconscious although at times it appears to be exclusively the one or the other. Quest is also one which symbolizes the human search for attaining whatever is distant and dreamlike, a search which skews from the deepest layers of one's soul, emotions and sub conscious desires. In a way man's quest is meaningful and universal. The recurring theme in Lahiri's writing is the bitter- sweet experience of emigrant to America from India. She mostly presents the characters who immigrates to different countries and thus are caught up between the cultural clash, though excited with their new land yet they faces the loss of their original homeland. Gogol is obsessed with the matter of his name. His hatred for his name is explained thus: "But instead he takes a deep breath and tells the people in the courtroom what he has never admit to his parents. I hate the name Gogol. I've always hated it." (Lahiri 102) Gogol by now, he hates everything that matters pertaining to his name and he hates that his name is both absurd and obscure.

In Indian view decent names represent distinguished and progressive qualities. Pet names are sometimes worthless and meaningless. The title *The Namesake* reflects the problem that Gogol goes through with the identity of his rare name. Lahiri in an interview says that she herself growing up as an immigrant, she could not fully achieve the identity of a single place.

*The Namesake* has number of interesting counterparts with Gogol's *The Overcoat* especially regarding the naming. The story models with obscurity with the prospect of namelessness, it is a perfect reference for Lahiri's story about the strangeness of the Indian immigrant experience in the United States and that's somewhat true also because the child of immigrants begins in a kind of nowhere place. Gogol or even Lahiri is definitely of America but is not quite an American in part because they are not recognized as such by others. The child may have privileges, access to education, better opportunities but still he/she has to first discover and then adjust to American values and life concepts which are firmly resisted at home.

Jhumpa Lahiri, as a writer of Indian diaspora, she inspects the problem of identity, nostalgia, alienation and the clashes between different cultures. As an Indian immigrants she bring her own experiences and relate it to the crisis that are faced by the immigrant and present it through her writings with the help of the characters. For her, writing is a place of freedom and exploration and not the place for obligation.

Diaspora is a site for cultural contrasts, parents do their utmost to create Bengali atmosphere for Gogol and Sonia by arranging all Bengali get-togethers, but the two as they grew in mixture culture, part Bengali, part American, gingerly respond to their parents efforts to create a homeland in America, an oasis of Bengali culture. Ashima tells Gogol about Durga Puja, she also makes him memorize four line children's poem by Tagore. But at the same time she is conscious of her child being American student and makes him watch Sesame Street and the Electric Company in order to match with English he uses at school. So Gogol is always sailing in two boats simultaneously, one with his parents at home speaking Bengali and living in Bengali style and the other of American Indian. But being too small to understand the impact of these things he is least bothered about his hyphenated existence as long as he has not stepped into the outer world which is alien to his parents but not for him as he is born American Indian.

His identity as Gogol, namesake of Nikolai Gogol, Russian author, appears over longer period of his life, creating a divide self which can't reconcile with his past present or future, always drifting like a rudderless boat from one shore to another without ever realizing its true self. The main problem with Gogol is that he is a hyphenated character living in two totally different worlds, the stress of which he can't cope up, he is lost and floats away from his

parents and culture. He wants to be an American living in America, rather than as Indian living in America. He belongs to second generation of Diaspora which is born and bred in America and whose values have been defined by American culture for whom India is an alien country to be visited once a year to spend holidays and meet relatives with whom you don't have any have any close contact except for two or three month they spend in India in the houses of different relatives who are always fawning upon these NRIs (Indian citizens not residing in India). Therefore Gogol stands out as unlikely man in the chaos that surrounds him, and his distinctiveness strikes us to the point of distinctiveness. He is the product of immigrantresponsiveness emerging out of the clash of lands and cultures, a child of unexpected historical journey forms, a representative of generation with torn hopes and consciousness. He can say, he is ametaphorical man whose life summarizes a whole collective historical experience. The search for identity in his case can be said as a driftingsearch for life boats of survival. Philosophically it is a deep examination to reach a stage of conviction about value of life which eroded against the forces of history and events.

Sujata Rana in her article, *Diasporic Crisis of Dual Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake* talks about diaspora and the dual identity crisis faced by the immigrants in the process of settlement in the new country. She posited how the "immigrants change their identities with the changed global economic, political and cultural scenario". (Rana178) she also deals with the problems of dispossession faced by the immigrants. She tried to highlight the identity crisis of Gogol and his subsequent change of name to Nikhil.

Multiculturalism proposes the co-existence ofanamount of different cultures. It also does not encourage openly different cultural religious, lingual or racial citizens of a particular society to destroy and isolate each other so that such a culture is broken or destroyed permanently. In *The Namesake*, characters are constantly making contrasts or comparisonbetween the two Indian and American cultures. The two Indian Immigrants Ashima and Ashoke draws many comparison between the two cultures, everything is foreign to them when they first came to settle in America. Though back at home they are atleast known by their friends and families, but in America they both are like complete strangers to the people. As immigrants, they both have mixtures of Bengali and American features. They are keen to celebrate Christmas just for the sake of their children who are accustomed with the American culture. Gogol and Moushimi faces the foreignness in bothe society; they often feel like travellers who have no chance to return.Though they try to adjust with their new cultures



yet the elements of alienation and loneliness are visible regarding their origin society. It is not only the identity crisis which they face but alienation and loneliness becomes a part of their sufferings. It is the sight and feeling of their original homeland which does not allow them to completely acknowledge their new land cultures. It is a bitter fact to know that they still consider their new land as another country. The key reason why Gogol is not adhered with his name is that right from the birth he was born and brought up in America and so this feeling captivated him in loving the American tradition more than the Indian traditions and cultures. *The Namesake* describes the cultural displacement at its depth. For instance Ashima is upset when Gogol tells her that he has rented a room three months and also she is upset because their children could not visit her quite often. Ashima suffers a lot: "Having been deprived of the company of her own parents upon moving to America, her children's independence, their need to keep their distance from her, is something she will never understand." (Macwan 122)

Ritu Bhardwaj's in her article, *Identity and Diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri's, The Namesake* has commented about the identity and diaspora in detail. She broached that "due to the displacement, diaspora's quest for identity, a sense of inability to belong becomes all the more difficult and desperate. The rootlessness, coupled with the indifferent attitude of host culture adds to sense of otherness and alienation." (Bhardwaj 11)

Through *Namesake*, Lahiri exposes the trauma and pains in migrating to a different country, she sends a clear message to people who are dreaming to settle in different countries for a better life. Lahiri notes that people without realizing the effects of migration tends to look upon only on the luxurious side, they forget that displacement demands a greater flexibility in terms of climate and culture. On the other hand the problem of name cannot be solved by the name on record. The problem faced by the individual regarding his/her identity takes a process of reflections and discovery. When one is born in his motherland then the question of identity does not arise much, in fact not at all, since the individual has quite a familiar society around him. He is nurtured around by people like him, he is a son of a father who has a social status. He eventually is not concerned about his identity because he has the trust of being known by people in that society. However if he is born on a foreign land, the question of identity starts to round up, he feels like a total stranger on the new land. The differences in skin colour, language, cultures form a unique blend where he starts to search for his own identity. Being a second generation immigrant the crisis of identity perpetuate all through his life. The quest to find his own identity marks the diasporic consciousness in

Gogol's life. Thus Diaspora creates a place for growth, resolution of conflicts and most importantly a new identity. Every Diaspora movement holds a historical significance, as it carries within itself the core of the nation's history.

Diaspora is a voyage towards self-recognition, self-definition, and self-realization. There is an element of inventiveness in diaspora writings which paves the way for many losses. The Indian Diaspora writing contributes on a world wide scale, the cultures of different societies. Diaspora literature thus builds information which result in solving many cultural and psychological problems. It helps to re-discover the unity and completeness of India. *The Namesake* works as a network to solidify the different parts of the states in India and also in relation with the other parts of the world like America. The Indian philosophy has its notion that the world is a family to an extent. Thus with reference to the context multiculturalism presents a mixture of various cultures setting up a world peace, harmony and universal communal. Lahiri's *The Namesake* is an example of the Modern-day immigrant narration which doesn't place the idea of an American drama at the center of the story, but rather situations the immigrant ethnic family within a communal of international travellers. She accounts dislocation and social discomfort in a fresh manner. She balances the two cultures and creates inner chaos for many of her characters who struggle to balance the Western and Indian influence.

In a way, *The Namesake* simply spans the first three decades of a young man's life - but it would be misleading to suggest there isn't a theme of types running through it. Ashoke survives in the fatal train accident and he is pulled from the wreckage with a much-loved copy of Gogol's *The Overcoat* in his pocket. In the months of agony and wound that follow, both author and book take on a peculiar implication. So when he and his wife have a baby boy and that needed a temporary "pet name" while they wait for the "good" one.

But unfortunately, the grandmother expires before she could name the child, so they decided to make up a pet name that could be used until they officially name their child. As the novel progresses we learn that the child is given the name "Gogol". Later, Gogol is finding his strange name that is neither Bengali nor American - a burden, discomfort and a bore. He makes an official, legal change to Nikhil and is relieved when college friends and, more importantly, girlfriends - don't question it. And, though he can't ignore a deep-rooted sense that he has somehow betrayed his parents, "It is as Nikhil that he grows a goatee, starts

smoking Camel Lights at parties and while writing papers and before exams, discovers Brian Eno and Elvis Costello and Charlie Parker." (Lahiri 105)

This novel certainly explores the thoughts of cultural identity, rootlessness, tradition and familial expectation as well as the way that names finely and not so finely vary our observations but it's very much to its recognition that it never yields to the commonplaces those themes so often need. Instead, Lahiri turns it into something both larger and simpler: the story of a man and his family, of his life and hopes, loves and sorrows.

The unstable devotions of Gogol brings onward abundant of his dark skin pushing the white mask by allowing it to downgrade. Since the names Nikhil and Gogol gradually come to signify two separate spaces that Gogol seems to inhabit, an interesting wit builds up in the fact that later on Gogol easily bids goodbye to his girlfriend but he sticks with his parents and their tendencies despite himself. He tends to adapt himself more as Gogol than Nikhil. His identity as Gogol becomes more of himself than that as Nikhil. Nikhil though an Indian name represents the American space that Gogol inhabits outside of his parent's home, while Gogol comes to stand for his Indian identity. Like his author Gogol's affinity to the American culture is only part and at the same time he cannot call India home as it plays a significant yet marginal role in his life. This instance also reflects Lahiri's perception and her agony. Thus the second generation is more in a nowhere state than the original immigrants. Name becomes such a big issue with Gogol that participating in a light friendly discussion he flares up at the prospect of finding a perfect name. Lahiri does not play this name game with Gogol only but goes on to prove the impact of name on a person's personality and behavior.

Asha Choubey's in her article, *Jhumpa Lahiri's Gogol: In Search of Identity for the Nowhere Man* talks about that the "Immigrants they find themselves unable to adapt to their adopted country failing to adjust to the substitute culture but however, their predicament is not as pathetic as that of their children." (Choubey1) With a dual identity they are neither here nor there but it is their children who are nowhere which makes them a pitiable victim.

The Diasporic fiction explains the maladies and experience of diaspora in their various tinges and symptoms and provides them with a new potentiality, approaches and directions of ideas. Some writers such as V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Bharti Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, Chitra B. Divakaruni, Meera Sanyal etc reflects the themes of

diaspora in their works which helped them to achieve credible place in the realm of fiction. These writers deal with diasporic consciousness which strongly witness social realities, longings and feelings. They experience diasporic problems and portray different aspects of sensibilities and concerns, although these vary as per their generations, perceptions, attitudes and specific identities. There are many writers who write in their mother tongue in order to let their own people read, for instance in the Middle East or diaspora community while others switch over themselves to write in the language of host country. In both the cases, the distance from the homeland often encourages these writers to tread new grounds, experimenting and exploring with new themes and forms, breaking taboos prevailing in their countries and developing new ideas.

In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* she immensely throws her perspective on the effects of diasporic consciousness, whereby she herself at the age of two years moved from India to America. Thus with a first-hand experience on diasporic consciousness, she clearly writes the story of Gogol who had trouble with his name just like Lahiri had trouble with her own name when she immigrated to America. Lahiri's ambivalence over her identity was the inspiration for the character of Gogol in the novel. She intensifies her perspective with her own personal occurrences and brought up vividly the diasporic images in the novel.

Even in other works of Lahiri we find that her characters are mainly Indian immigrants to America who undergoes the trauma of new settlements, they tend to make themselves more habituated to the new immigrated place. Adaptations are a necessity and it acts as a daily job for them. Her characters in the novel mostly live on a dual identity and she tries to let them find their own identity, be it inherited or new. Lahiri is a great writer when it comes to finding the emotional verges of her characters. But the evidence to what makes Lahiri's writing interesting is by bringing a person to life through her characters. All Lahiri's observations blow out emotion with their freshness and truth. Her skill at arranging small physical details as a path into character is as exceptional as it is enjoyable.

## CHAPTER III

### Diasporic Elements

Every literature embodies the concept of its soul and it is the writers through their masks that give us a knowledge based on such concepts. Just as many great writers like Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Samuel Beckett, T.S.Eliot etc. they all have their own heroes who helps exposes their thoughts. In the same way we see many Indian writers like Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, V.S.Naipaul, Amitav Ghosh, and Salman Rushdie who are concerned with their Indian environment; as such we find the element of Diaspora as a common theme in their writings. In relation to the Indian Diaspora writers, we see that the effects of globalization results in migration of many Indian people. It is thus because of this migration which brings forth the diasporic feeling to those individual, the confused name identity, alienation, loneliness, isolation, nostalgia, language barrier, uprootedness, cultural clashes, homesickness, hybridity, and tension between life and death are some few elements which defines diasporic consciousness.

#### Roots of Diaspora

Globalization has been a key feature which produced new patterns of migration and provoked divergent, responses worldwide. The seemingly homogenizing effect of globalization cannot hide the different responses it has prompted in the various regions within its reach. Questions of diaspora arise with particular force: tensions between internationalism and nationalism; the relationship between place and identity; and the ways cultures and literatures interact. New patterns of mobility are being drawn on the familiar landscape of migration and exilic exclusions. In case of Indian people who mostly migrates to America, mainly for a more luxurious life. However they all face the strangled concept of a new identity. Though America is a more advanced country than India but still the feeling of one's own home is something which cannot be exchanged. The migrated people thus tend to miss the comforts of their home.

Migration from centers of capitalist economies to cosmopolitan pockets in the margins ('first' to 'second' or 'third' worlds), migration from deprived economies to lands of opportunities ('third' and 'second' worlds to 'first' world, or margins to the cosmopolitan centers within the 'third' world), seem fertile ground for new forms of identity politics. New articulations of diaspora, necessarily overlapping with familiar ways of conceptualizing it, have found their way to literary writings.

Elements of diaspora:

### Identity

As the world advances the migration of people from one country to another seems like a common phenomenon. The very first crisis an immigrant faces on entering a new land is his/her identity. When an individual moves to a new place with his inherited identity, the social, political, economic and most importantly the cultural identities occurs drastic changes. The new environment infuses to the individual a sense of new identity. In order to adjust with the new environment an individual is often cited to compromise with his/her inherited identity. Thus the individual will most probably have a dual identity. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* almost all the characters faces problems regarding their own identity, firstly Ashima who moved from India (Calcutta) to America after her marriage with Ashoke is seen stucked between her new identity and her inherited identity. New to America, Ashima struggles through her language and cultural barriers. She is tensed to find out that her new home offers her new path to life, traditionally and culturally. As being from a very traditional country, India, Ashima is no less a victim of a loss identity. The cultural and traditional difference between the two countries is seen clearly as we read the novel, Ashima is with no job and is just a mere housewife, she thus is seen wondering about the new environment in a confused manner where everything seems new to her. On contrary to her actual home in India where she has families, relatives and friends, however in America she is just an individual unknown among millions. As she wonders around the streets, there is none who knows her. As the novel progresses we find that she tries to cope up with her new found environment, her Indian identity is now just a namesake identity. She begins to realize that to adapt to the new environment she must overcome the notion of a traditional Indian customs. Ashima thus starts to speak better English and make friends with her neighbors. She is now more outgoing and

outspoken then the first time she moved to America. Ashima thus gradually begins to find her identity in a new environment.

The case of confused Identity can also be seen in relation with the main protagonist of the novel, Gogol. He is born and brought up in America itself and is thus torn between the two cultures, Indian and American. As the two cultures greatly differ from each other, the Indian culture carries hard bound restrictions on individual whereas the American culture is a more relaxed mainstream. Gogol being born to parents who immigrated from India to America, he begins to adapt more to the mainstream American's culture. However he is also confused with his own mark of identity, for instance we see that his birth name was Gogol but he seems more comfortable with his other pet name, Nikhil. In Chapter 3 of the book we find that Gogol during his kindergarten, his parents intend his name to go by Nikhil at school and Gogol to be used at home, and this creates a great confusion to Gogol and he was in no mood to change his name. Gogol is afraid to be Nikhil so as to say he could not compromise with the fact of a new identity. During his childhood days he is not much bothered about his name, it was only when he turned eleven during his class trip to a cemetery he began to ponder upon his unique name. He makes rubbings of the *other* gravestones with names he has never heard before because he relates to them. By the following year, Gogol and Sonia are informed by their parents that they will be going to Calcutta for eight months and at the same time they have to remember what they should call to their relatives over there

There are endless names Gogol and Sonia must remember to say, not aunt this and uncle that but terms far more specific: *mashiandpishi*, *mama* and *maima*, *kakuandjethu*, to signify whether they are related on their mother's or their father's side, by marriage or by blood. Ashima, now Monu, weeps with relief, and Ashoke, now Mithu, kisses his brothers on both cheeks, holds their heads in his hands. (Lahiri 81)

Gogol dilemma with his identity continues further during the college party when he introduces himself to Kim as 'Nikhil'. He doesn't want to introduce himself as Gogol, it is his name Nikhil which evokes confidence to kiss Kim.

P. Dhivyapriya and M. Jagadeswarivin in their article, *Cultural Dislocation and Culture Shock in Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Namesake" And Bharati Mukherjee's "Wife"* commented that

Dispersal of roots involves identity crisis through the names and other feelings to the accultured ones." They also speculate how the "immigrants face cultural dilemmas in the foreign land and how most of the diasporans consciously choose to migrate to an alien country of their choice, with the hope of permanent settlement. But though they migrate to live a happy life, yet in reality they struggle a lot for survival trying to adjust with their mixed identity. (33)

#### Language barrier

One can also see language barrier as an element of diasporic element. Different parts of the country speaks different languages, thus immigration goes along with learning or adapting a new language of that particular place. Similarly in the novel we find the struggle for language barrier between Ashoke and Ashima. When Ashima was about to give birth to Gogol, he and her husband was given a bed at the hospital, unlike other American couples where the wives were being comforted by their husbands. However incase of Ashoke, he simply stepped behind the curtain and says to Ashima "I'll be back" in Bengali language. This particular scene could not be understood by the American nurses and doctors. The curtain thus is a symbolic barrier created by speaking Bengali in America. The effects of language barrier could also be seen in the characters of Gogol and Sonia, though every Saturday they were sent to Bengali Language and Culture class by their parents yet their mother Ashima could not fully understand how her two children's accent followed the normal American accent. Both the parents most of the time could not properly understand how their children speaks of the American accent in a fine manner, their conversation never really settles the thoughts of their parents. Gogol and Sonia being brought up in America, they tend to follow more of American way of speaking, their thoughts and cultures are less Indians as they grow up. The second generation immigrants do not have much language barrier problem as they are already brought up being accustomed with the culture in which they live in. However when they visit their own original place then the problems of language barrier will surely come along. In the



novel Ashoke and Ashima immensely tries to cope up with their language barrier after they immigrated to America from India. A language barrier sets apart people from different countries or places, different countries have different way of speaking and sometimes this barrier affects people upon entering a new land. It would be difficult to cope up in a new place where no one understands them and thus this leads to a diasporic feeling.

Ambika Sharma's in her article, "*Dilemma of Cultural Identity and Belongingness in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake*" presents that the immigrants wants to connect themselves to that new inhabitant place where they migrated but their connection to native language, culture, food and traditions stimulate an emotional and distressing burden resulting in a problem of individuality and clash of culture and barriers of communication. She also talks about the character,

Ashima in the United States faces the plight of language and cultural barriers as well the fear during the delivery of her first child. In addition to their miseries Ashoke and Ashima were forced to name their baby from the hospital itself before leaving, thus making a compromise with their customs. Due to the strange set of circumstances, the couple names their first-born 'Gogol' in remembrance of a Russian author Nikolai Gogol, whose book saved Ashoke's life years ago in an unfortunate train accident communication. (Sharma 43)

### Alienation

It is certain that no people can escape diasporic feeling after their immigration, as such in the beginning an individual may feel alienated due to the sudden changes that gets around him/her. Alienation is the feeling of being a stranger in a foreign country. As being the daughter of an immigrant couple Jhumpa Lahiri carefully reflects the feelings of alienation in the novel *The Namesake* through the characters present. From the first scene we find that Ashima who was pregnant was cooking an Indian meal but it did not give her a homely taste and she was dissatisfied with it. Being pregnant, alone, and a dissatisfied meal, it all sums up the physical and psychological trauma of a migrant. Though she had all the ingredients, the homely taste was not there, she was frustrated at the sight that she was alone and had nothing

to do or no one who could accompany her. The effects of displacement brought an alienated feeling to her, everything was new to her. Lahiri tries to compare her pregnancy with the effects of alienation. And it is more tragic that Ashima after the death of her husband feels more alienated. She feels both 'impatience' and 'indifference' for the days she must live on. The pains, sufferings, discomfort, and moods are all the symptoms of an alienated feeling.

Throughout the novel, Lahiri presents the characters alienated feelings, like in the case of Gogol though he was originally born there he was still feeling alienated at some point of time. Even with his name, Gogol which was given as pet name by his parents in relation with the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol, he still had another name, Nikhil. Ashoke chose two names for Gogol because the Bengalis are supposed to give two names to their child. Gogol thus was the pet name and Nikhil was his real name. The name Gogol is derived with the influence of famous Russian writer Nikolai Gogol, the father decided to name his son Gogol because it was the book written by Nikolai Gogol "The Overcoat" which saved him from the train accident. Little did Gogol know that his name had such a big impact on his father's life. Gogol, thus not knowing his pet name influence upon his father always went with the name Nikhil. We see that he changes his name into Nikhil before he start the college life and this embodied the new persona he was to carry about. Gogol represents the pure traditionalist Indian culture whereas Nikhil allows him to be more independent and offers him to leave a more conscious free life. The change in his name sums up the kind of confusion Gogol was being subsided into, he was lost and alienated. In the end of the novel we find that Gogol is all alone again. Two reasons can be explained as regard to Gogol in the end; either he embraces both the past and present life in a more mature way or either he is taken up the road of a new and refined personality. Thus a metamorphosis in his character could also be seen in the end. As in the beginning Gogol was finding hard to follow the guidance of two cultures and two identities and also his struggle to find acceptance by his American friends, these feelings made him a victim of alienation to its core. Thus in the case of Gogol it his name which made him alienated because he felt no one in this world shares his name.

Dr. Mehmet RecepTas, in her article, "*The Feeling of Alienation in the Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri*" examines about the feeling of alienation of the immigrant people and also how they feel all around the world as they migrate to a new habitation. He also relates with Lahiri saying that, "the re-embracing of roots requires a philosophical journey because of the immigrant experiences of powerlessness and meaninglessness, i.e. alienation." (Tas 19)

## Nostalgia

As the novel progresses, we learn that almost all the characters have a nostalgic feeling. The increased migration and diaspora in modern society made nostalgia develop from a personal malady to a social disease. As it is seen that the main character Ashima who represents a diasporic element of nostalgia. After immigrating to America she starts to feel isolated and lonely. With her husband not around, she is mostly all alone and this leads her to reminisce about the good old days at home in India. She misses her parents and relatives. Ashima was feeling isolated because of the new environment, she had nowhere to go and even the part time job which she felt was too old to learn any skills. She was pregnant and alone, this made her to think more about the companies back at home. While during the delivery of Gogol, Ashima was wishing about how the Bengali relatives would be surrounding her during her delivery time. As in America she had no one besides her busy husband. And being from a traditional Bengali background, Ashima misses the feeling of everything back at home. As in America she was isolated between the four walls of the house.

Nostalgia in this novel has the dual visualization of yearning backward and looking forward. The characters feel homesick for their homeland with a purpose of grasping the present life and having a better future. Jhumpa Lahiri longs for personal identity for herself as well as her imaginary characters in this novel. As Indian Americans, space the characters occupy between two cultures determines that their identity is not fixed and static but hybrid and mobile. Jhumpa Lahiri permits nostalgia to intertwine in and out of the pages of *The Namesake*, particularly as Gogol's marriage comes to an end and Ashima prepares to leave her house and move back to her home. As they celebrate the winter holiday season and the beginning of a new year, Ashima reminisce about the times how the entire family celebrated from the past years.

YUN Ling in her article, *Restorative Nostalgia and Reconstruction of Imaginary Homeland in The Namesake* describes about the characters longing for their past. He also examines how the characters feel homesick for their homeland with a purpose of seizing the present life and having a better future. He also relates through Jhumpa Lahiri yearning for personal identity for herself as well as her imaginary characters in this novel. He later states that, "nostalgia can keep the diaspora's own ethnic heritage and meanwhile facilitate the

diaspora's assimilation into mainstream society by constructing an imaginary homeland to release the pressure of assimilation and sooth the pain of rootlessness.” (Ling74)

### Foreignness and ‘The Other’

For Ashima, migrating to the suburbs feels more drastic, more distressing than the move from Calcutta to Cambridge had been. She wishes Ashoke had accepted the position at Northeastern so that they could have stayed in the city. She is stunned that in this town there are no sidewalks to speak of, no streetlights, no public transportation, no stores for miles at a time. She has no interest in learning how to drive the new Toyota Corolla it is now necessary for them to own. Lahiri (49)

In the novel *The Namesake*, we see that the characters are constantly making a comparison between American and Indian life. For Indian immigrants as in the case of Ashima and Ashoke, many views of American traditions are completely different and new to them which make them more of a stranger in the American society. Ashoke got a new job as an assistant professor of electrical engineering at a university town outside Boston and so the Gangulis moves to a new environment. Ashima feels that migrating to the suburbs is more harsh and distressing than moving from India to America had been. The distress caused by the moving to suburb made Ashima wonder why her husband Ashoke did not accept the job at Northeastern. It was also because she wanted to stay in the city. After seeing that the town had no sidewalks, no streetlight and not store within its radius, Ashima longed for a more city life. Moreover she has no interest in learning how to drive even though it would help her in many ways.

In foreign land, the Indian immigrants struggle to maintain certain traditions while adapting American customs, such as the celebration of Christmas for the sake of their children as it is also seen in the family of the Gangulis. Likewise in the Indian-American characters, Gogol and Moushumi they are lost between the two cultures, to them their identity is neither their original home nor the society they were born in. They often feel like visitors in both the places.

### Cultural clashes

Cultural clash is a common source of diaspora. When people migrate to a different place the obscurity remains, whether to follow the inherited cultures or how to cope up with the new cultures. However a hard fact remains that if an individual moves to a new place it is certain that the individual will have to get accustomed with his/her current environment cultures and traditions. The individual gets hold up between the two cultures and this creates a source of diasporic feeling.

In the novel we see a great deal of differences between the two American and Indian cultures, hence the characters are often a victim of cultural clash. The American culture has more modernized set of values, whereas on the contrary the Indian culture flows to more conservative values. Thus the characters who immigrated to America find themselves in an aura of pure dilemma. The Gangulis family tends to celebrate Christmas on the pretext that they are in America and should follow certain cultures it represents. Also the sort of lifestyle the two children of the Gangulis, Gogol and Sonia adapts is more of a westernized culture. Their accent, dressing and behavior signifies the changes brought about by the American culture in them. As the novel progresses we find such scenarios where the characters like Gogol is in a confused state of mind because of this cultural clash, he is found to be in between the two cultures which makes his life delusional. The cultural clash is more of a problem for the second generation immigrants than those of the first generation immigrants. Though the first generation also faces some of its dilemma yet they are more habituated towards their inherited culture but for the second generation immigrants we see that their home land culture has fewer effects on them.

Thus cultural clash in diaspora is a common phenomenon whereby all the immigrants are either forced to comply with their new habitant and in doing so they most of the time goes into a diasporic state of mind.

MeenuKumari in her article, *A Diasporic Dilemma: Cultural Variance in Jhumpa Lahiri's Interpreter of Maladies* examines the cultural difference in the space of diaspora. She also describes how the characters are displaced from their ethnic roots and that the characters in a new land struggle to settle down in a land where they feel strange to them. The characters are prone to this subject of diasporic consciousness; it is the distance from their roots which makes them vulnerable to the ever ongoing pressure in their new land. (Kumari 127)

In conclusion, this chapter explores the elements of diaspora in details and also makes a close study of the problems faced by the immigrants as they migrate to foreign land. Therefore the key elements of a diaspora are the forced moving or migration of the people, alienation, and a yearning on the part of that people to return home. These diaspora elements can be brought to an end only when these features are removed.

## Chapter IV

### Conclusion

This thesis makes a close study of the Diasporic Consciousness in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, with a view to describe the concept of diaspora in a wider sense. Lahiri's *The Namesake* encompasses the diasporic consciousness through the study of diaspora, isolation, and loneliness, outcast and also involves the features such as displacement, construction of native land and adjustment. With a view to describe the features of various complexities, diasporic consciousness also fixes close to the post-colonial theory. Likewise over the last two decades of the twentieth and current twenty first century, we have witnessed the distinction between national literature and global literature. The distinction brought about many ground breaking possibilities which helped analyzed the complex themes in post-colonial diasporic studies.

This thesis has also look into various aspects of the diaspora and the diasporic consciousness which are faced by the immigrants. Further it also looks into the ability of the term 'diaspora'. The work is divided into four chapters giving its modest attempt to delve on the issue of the migration, the elements of diaspora and also the influences of the writer which makes a comparative and overall assessment of this work.

The introductory chapter of this thesis briefly describes into the reflection of diaspora. The introduction of this thesis understands the word "diaspora" as a wide term, which involves many views and understand into the human sensation. Diaspora begins with the settlement of the immigrants. It begins with a desire to settle permanently in a no-home place. Through the outlook of the history, the world has seen several dispersions of the immigrants. Some of these were due to natural disasters and on the other hand some of them are either forced or induced to colonial shifts or postcolonial in search for more better chance and opportunity, and at one or the other hand all of these have contributed to the formation of diaspora. Due to the several moves, the world has anticipated several changes in its society. The state of being diasporic indeed keeps on changing from time to time. This sense of diaspora originally began with the exile of the Jews from Judea by the Babylonians; the period however has undergone several effects.

This chapter even introduces the diasporic consciousness which has developed various effects containing the idea of exile; a sense of loss; realization of being an outsider; longing for home; dilemma and burden of exile. On the contrary, immigrants who are settled in a different state within the homeland have now come to be recognized as a symbolic of diaspora. The result of migration is diaspora in its most inner sense. It is the nature of the individual to keep their past life and past home interconnected with their new land. In doing so the individual recognize the gains they received as a result of their migration. However the main feelings of alienation, displacement, loneliness etc. always forms a major part of diasporic subjects as the individual moves to a new land. The individual is not only subjected to diasporic elements but they are trapped between loyalty to the homeland and host land. In addition to that, this chapter also distinguishes the features of the diaspora culture like the dilemma of migration, searching for identity, moving and re- rooting and the feeling of alienation and nostalgia. Among these many themes the diasporic writings mainly explore the theme of identity.

As the stage of globalization increases, the perception of diasporic writing where political issues, cultural nationality, multicultural fairness and worldwide inequality goes together with the themes of nostalgia, imaginative, restoration of the homeland and identities. The diasporic writing also explores the subject of an original and new homeland. An individual may lost its original homeland due to many circumstances like exile, globalization, and displacement and so the feeling of nostalgia would be common among the migrated individuals and so also in diasporic writings.

From the very first diaspora has been an influence to literature. So much so that diaspora has led to the flourish of literature. The effects of diaspora thus paved the way to many writers to express themselves, especially the Indian writers. Diaspora provides a creative set of writing for the writers. The Indian diaspora writers write on the loss of identity, isolation, flexibility, which are the key elements of diaspora. The prospect of diaspora in literature thus enhances more in understanding various breaking the walls between different countries, globalizing and spreading universal peace. Thus the Indian diaspora literature is certainly helping the bond between India and other countries. And it is through this diaspora in literature that helps us to know the reason why some people choose to migrate either voluntarily or for other reasons.



Some of the prominent Indian diaspora writers are, Kiran Desai, Anita Desai, V.S Naipaul, Amitav Ghosh and Salman Rushdie. They helped in bringing the issues and perspective of diaspora which is mainly the result of globalization. Thus this chapter opens up the common notion which revolves around diaspora.

The second chapter of this thesis deals with “Shaping influences of the Writer”. This chapter exposes the biographical sketch of Jhumpa Lahiri, born in London to Bengali parents; she represents a contemporary American writer of Indian version. She has spent almost all her life in the realm of literature. Her writing is marked by her plain language and most of her characters are often Indian immigrants to America who must find their way across the cultural values of the original land and their land. As a writer Jhumpa has the ability to bring about many cultural conflicts in respect with the most immediate culture. She also achieves the voices of many different characters through her works which sets her an epitome from among many diasporic writers. Thus Lahiri has the ability to capture the hearts of the audiences with her own unique style of writing.

Lahiri’s one of the most respected award the Pulitzer Prize came about with the publication of *Interpreter of Maladies*. Apart from this she has also achieved a great deal of acknowledgement for her works in literary firmament. What Jhumpa Lahiri likely means to explore through her writing is the fact that the contrast between human cultures is man-made. Jhumpa Lahiri also expands her Pulitzer Prize winning short stories of Indian accomplishment into her first novel, *The Namesake*, where she presents the life a fictional family the Gangulis. The whole story revolves mainly around this family. The migration of places among the characters which brought about diasporic feeling like, identity crisis, loneliness, isolation, alienation etc forms an abstract of the novel. It is this diaspora theme that Jhumpa deals about in the novel and is a sort of autobiographical note of her. Being an Indian origin Jhumpa lived in America, yet she faced the same problems and scenarios which the character in the novel faces. Indian society being a very conservative society has its own traditions regarding names. And this is shown by Jhumpa in her work *The Namesake*. The title itself reflects the problem that Gogol faces with the identity of his rare name. Gogol the protagonist is named after his father’s favorite author Nikolai Gogol after the train accident as his father believed that it was this author’s very book which saved him.

With instances from *The Namesake* we find a similar blend of relation between Jhumpa and her characters. Just as Jhumpa was occupied at a very early age with diasporic feelings, the crisis of dual identity etc., it was hard for her to distinguish the perspective that was being created between the two traditions, i.e., her inherited traditions and her newly settled traditions. This sight of diaspora has had a great influence on her life and more on her as a writer. She could narrate the depth of the character's pain with confidence. Also in Lahiri's *The Namesake*, much of her perspective throws on the effects of diasporic consciousness, where at the very young age she moved from India to America. She deepens her viewpoint with her own personal incidences and brings about vivid diasporic images. We find that the other works of Lahiri's characters are mainly immigrants to America. It is thus partial to say that Jhumpa's influence on her writings is parallel to her own life and has immense influence on her works.

In the third chapter of this thesis we study the different kinds of elements of diaspora such as identity, alienation, language barrier, nostalgia and cultural clashes which combines the realm of diaspora. These elements are commonly found in most of the immigrants, and are described vividly by Jhumpa Lahiri in her novel *The Namesake*. It is through the characters in the novel that helps Lahiri in briefing the elements of diaspora

As the world advances every people want a better life, some are either forced or exiled, such people are called immigrants. They move to other countries and this result to many changes in their own life. However it is the beginning phase of their new life where they miss their home, as no one can quickly adapt to a new environment at once. It is universal fact that everyone faces the diasporic feeling upon moving to a new environment.

The characters in the novel such as Ashima, is a representation of diasporic character. Through her, Lahiri profuse the elements of diaspora such as alienation, isolation, loneliness, and nostalgia. Other characters such as Gogol and Sonia are the victims of crisis of identity. They are at a loss regarding their own identity, especially Gogol who is strangled with his rare name.

Thus this chapter points out various elements concerned with diaspora and the effects it paves to the immigrants. And in a way all these chapters together gives the idea of the meaning of Diasporic Consciousness in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*.

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