

## **PORTRAYING IDENTITY CRISIS IN THE NOVEL “THE NAMESAKE” BY JUMPA LAHIRI**

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### **Abstract**

The redundant boundary of the Diaspora is moving very fast in the globalization. The encountering of the problem regarding Diaspora belong to two different cultural background that which meets but still the issue of equation is a problem of the country that which remains as a problem is a problem. When the bias is developed then the expectation and the reservation are more and more in growth. The persons like Homi K Baba, Anita Desai, and Kamala Markendaya to some extent accept the discriminatory compromise. Identity crises is a fact that no one does not want to change or suffer but they expect the other to change by all means in undergoing various cultural, religious and dislocation of land from one to another. The focus of this paper lies in the complete effort on understanding the conflict of the Indian diasporians and losing their identity in their society. In this novel it is Ashima as a child of Bengal resembles the proof of immigrant where the ongoing quest of identity crises arises. She has been sandwiched between the birth of her country and has adopted the ideologies of alien country. The main proposition of this paper is to put in nutshell the perpetual dilemma faced by the second generation as to protest against their identity with their children conflicting realities and also their culture. The paper reveals that in the novel how the parents talk about the shared history and the children are stressed in critical pacts of deep depression.

Key Words: Diaspora, Identity Crises, Conflict, Depression, Dislocation

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## INTRODUCTION

Nilanjana Sudeshna 'Jhumpa Lahiri' is an American author. She was born on July 11, 1967 in London, native of Bengali, has been selected as winner of PEN award for her excellence in the short story. Her debut short story collections like "Interpreter of Maladies" were published in 1999 and in 2000 her first novel published. She was awarded multiple degrees from Boston University .She got fellowship at province town's Fine Arts Work Centre; Her short stories got rejected from the publishers for years. Later, she had association with the 'The New Yorker'. Her novel "The Namesake" has been adapted in to a popular film which brought her name and fame. She was the member of president's committee by U.S. president Barack Obama. She is currently working as a professor of creative writing at Princeton University.

She quite often says, "I wasn't born here but I might as well have been. Lahiri's debut short story collection "Interpreter of Maladies" won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and Lahiri was born to daughter of two Bengali Indians Emigrants. They moved to Rhode Island, in the United States. When she began kindergarten, in Kingston, Rhode Island, Lahiri's teacher decided to call her by her pet name. Jhumpa, because it was easier to pronounce than her "actual name" she denied that she always felt embarrassed by her name. Lahiri's identity was the inspiration for the ambivalence of Gogol, the protagonist of her novel "The Namesake" over his unusual name.

## DIASPORA

Diaspora retains element of the culture of origin, but remakes them entirely imposes that difficulty raises whenever people of two different cultural backgrounds meet. Hiral Macwan gives her opinion that Diaspora is a large group of people with a similar heritage or homeland who, have since moved out to places all over the world. Rajeswari sunder rajan puts forward that Diaspora is a multi disciplinary field, and on writings in anthropology, geography, psychoanalysis, and cultural studies it will reveal the migration of one place to the other insist that the upcoming generation was about to learn adaptation and learning culture and also discovering new things about themselves. David Chairlady states that "Diaspora" has highly emerged favoured term among scholars, whom we might associate with contemporary post-colonial studies... Diaspora has metamorphically does not refers to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs

return, even it means pushing other people in to the sea. Diaspora came in to under spread usage in the Jewish case when scholars in Alexandrian translated the first five books of the Hebrew by Kevin Kenny David chairlady state that Post-colonial Diaspora would closely attend to specific articulations of Diasporic identity, how it registers the contemporary stigmatization of peoples. Diaspora is now being used, whether purists approve of this or not, in a variety of new, but interesting and suggestive contexts. Diaspora is dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more. Hiral Macwan states that “The Diaspora features of homelessness, dislocation and alienation are well represented through the character of Ashima in “The Namesake”.

### **IDENTITY CRISIS:**

The identity crisis is that which Ashima underwent of severe mental phrenic trauma and she called this a period of confusion. Her sense of identity also becomes insecure, and she struggled a lot to make herself to feel as an American, with emotional dislocations and heavy heart she tries to settle in their home in a new land. She compares the American culture with Indian culture, which gives dilemma experience and makes her survival more difficult. At one such occasion, Ashima felt that living in foreign land is like a lifelong pregnancy.

### ***“THE NAMESAKE”:***

Ashima, after her marriage leaves India for America as she feels lonely in the deserted area .Her Indian way of life differs from the present one, Ashoke her husband is busy with his studies. She becomes pregnant, not a soul to give her suggestions. She gives birth to Gogol, She could not find any solace in the society. Her son and daughter got adapted to the foreign society. Ashima feels a sort of constant burden something more complicated and demanding in her life after she loses her husband. She spends her time with her son Gogol, who tucked away in his old closet, the copy of the stories of nikolia” Gogol” given to him, many years before by Ashoke. Gogol’s new job was at a smaller architectural firm, where he will have more responsibilities as a designer. When Gogol reads stories he realizes it is his opportunity, finally to connect more fully with his father’s life and to learn more deeply what the name “Gogol” meant to Ashoke .Although Ashoke is no longer he is still present in the minds of all, by looking his childhood

room one last time by Gogol, when he was a teenager, Ashoke had wanted, long before, to tell him the story of Gogol, and to reveal that his first name was 'Nikhil'

It is an emotional story Lahiri tactfully maintained the good level and the bad level, happy and sad situations, the lost and the still-present. Ashima is very happy to see her children. Ashima's son-in-law Ben and her daughter Sonia were pleased to run a western culture traditional way. On the other hand, Ashima was worried about her son Gogol, in the wake of his divorce. The entire family misses Ashoke, whose presence can never be replaced; Ashoke writings are on the first page of the book Gogol, which always make Ashima to remember Ashoke forever.

### **IDENTITY CRISIS IN THE NOVEL "THE NAMESAKE":**

How simple yet painful migration can become and one neither loses one's culture nor accepts the other. How migrants feel about the solid lack of ground where they are on foreign land, a feeling of exile in one's own home. It's a strikingly painful in beautiful atoms of three generations in foreign land.

Through Gogol, Lahiri presents identity crisis several conflicts explore due to cultural practices before the children of Indian parentage. Ashima struggles a lot to put in to Gogol who never likes to be called by this name. The crisis faced by Gogol is the agony of Ashima.

Gogol name is the chief causes which make him feel alienated. Gogol loneliness started from the second he entered the World. The word "Identity Crisis" is otherwise called as "a period of uncertainty" and a period of insecurity" when their expected aims come to change. This Identity Crisis develops through experiences of each and every person to accustom to the situation and to overcome the difficulty faced by them in the present world.

Identity has remained a source of conflicts. The elements of Identity crisis narrate the assimilation of Bengali family in to American culture. Ashima's expectation and reservations become an amount of conservation. The main identity crisis lies in this novel is that of the Gogol name that which symbolizes the problem of his identity. Because of the peculiar link between his

name and his father's salvation, he discovers a sense of identity in his namesake, through the survival of the family, in an alien land which gives the essence of their native.

Lahiri's writing is notable for its restraint and understatement. She resists lyricism, just as she avoids obvious drama. Instead of writing about death, betrayal and violence, she concentrates on the minutes of relationship - between, brothers, between husband and wife and between parents and children - and on the effect these dramatic moments create in ordinary lives thus creating a masterpiece with her emotions and sensibility.

Diaspora literally expresses the spread of a group of people from one place to another place paving the way to misplacement of identity and belongingness. It's a Greek term "Diaspora" meaning to "Scatter about or disperse". Jhumpa Lahiri says that she is creeping into this world of Diaspora as an intruder to unveil the character of immigrants portrayed in the novel "The Namesake".

The Indian born in England and migrated to USA has narrated her Indian characters in the sense of identity and cultural differences. Writer herself the child of Indian Immigration expressed the root feelings of the inconsistency of the concept of identity and cultured multicultural difference when she migrated from to England to American thus she portrayed herself as migrant and Diaspora writer.

Indian Diaspora defines migration of people from India to places for educational and economical; they were experiencing a commercial identity crisis that forced them to ask questions like who are they? There was a six month period of lying on the floor and staying at the ceiling and really having an identity crisis nearby under of 'Identity crises'. Identities like identity card, identity crises, identity dement, identity hyphen true and libel picture of their "grandson".

The arrival of a new comer is welcomed by friends, colleague's known and unknown personalities but the feeling of joy is tinged with unhappiness of the couple. In Bengali, singly "deknam" meaning that one which is called by friends, family and other ultimate's at home.

Every pet name is paired with a good name “Abhalanam” for identification pet names are meaningless, but by which the person is frequently called, remembered and easily identified. There should be a linkage between a “Nickname” and “Real Name”, which does not make a deep difference in realizing it. The crisis makes Ashima to get away from homeland thus brought a set up homeland in a foreign land by the people from same nativity. This new life is nurtured by the people of same culture, customs followed in their homeland.

The novel ‘The Namesake’ portrays the cultural gap experienced by the Diasporas’ striving to enrich the adopted country through traditional, cultural blend without losing district identity of their land of origin. The author expresses the deep feeling of Indian custom of Christening the new born baby with the name of the oldest suggest family member on an auspicious day, whereas, in foreign land, the couple if forced to name the child for getting discharged with birth certificate from the hospital. In Bengal, the new borns are named supporting individuality and sacred names. Here, Ashok names his son as “Gogol”.

The first impression made by Mr.Ashoke made her to come up with a decision of sharing her entire life with Ashoke After coming to a new place which is entirely from the home land the way she tries to fit herself is beautifully portrayed image. Meanwhile Mr.Ashoke who is passionate on reading books talks about the beautiful and horrifying experience he faced named after the Russian writer “Nikolas Gogol”, but, the Couple was in dilemma to select a good name, which has to be selected by their family members Ashima feels that her son’s name, should be selected by her “Grandmother”, and she was eagerly looking for mail from Calcutta. The naming of a child is, in Bengali tradition, a solemn affair, which gives the significance of the boy’s great grandmother’s decision. The tender age may leave deep lines of happenings in life and in Gogol new name. Nikhile which restricts to enter into his brain to Ashoke disappointment, as holding the name ‘Gogol’ is the legal name as the immunization and birth certificate bears the same.

Gogol” enters the new world, out from the hospital the family occupies a new apartment which is a ten minutes walk to MIT building where Ashoke studied his master degree. Ashok returned to

his routine to work and Ashima with the new comer starters her difficult course of life she bather him in the sink with warm water, dressed and feed him with motherly love and passion.

Things that we see don't remain the same. People do change their thoughts when time moves on, like the way things change. As the baby was born they both get excited when they both saw him as a part of their virtual. They asked their grandmother to say a name. But the name she said hasn't reached them. So Ashoke and his wife named their child as 'Nikhile'. Ashima was very sad because of the loneliness she felt in alien land. Ashima heard about her father's death when they shifted their trip to fair weeks ahead and they took the flight to return to India. Peoples prove that kindness does exist in the alien nation also for Ashoke met with accident and he was bedridden. His ribs and pelvis broke. After a long time of struggle in the bed Ashoke, went and pursued his graduation. Not worrying about the opposition of his parents he goes abroad and continues his further graduation. All of a sudden he saw a man in the hospital who was waiting with him like all graduates who are waiting for their graduation degree they waited for their children.

It deals with full of both lovely and deadly memories of two people. This talks about Ashima and Ashoke who faces both the joy and pain that happens with in the women is about to undergo the delivery for the first time. She then travel a few years back, were she was 19 years old. She remembers the incidents on how she was getting ready to meet a person historical, political expecting for future emerges in a prosperous for survival with specific identity. Migration itself describe the exact meaning concealing the place of origin and accomplishing to the new culture, shouldering the sorrow and social adaptability with cheerful face, thus allowing multifaceted personality, but with inseparable traces of origin.

Immigrants struggled in foreign soil for development of self and the society, balancing the inconsistency of identity. After giving birth to a male baby, Ashima returns home, and from the first time she was sitting all alone with the new born. Feeding, patting, him and making him to sleep was her daily chores. Tears rolled on her checks, for not receiving any mail from Calcutta. The Diaspora life gives on a new world entire simultaneously up- rooting their native land bond. Ashima, friends circle grew larger and she began to stick to her new life. The new comers learnt

from Ashima about cooking dressing and other things. Ashima affinity towards newcomers was mainly they hailed from Calcutta.

Ashoke cherishes his childhood, that he didn't engage himself with his brothers instead he ran silently into his grandfather's room and when his grandfather went blind he asked his grandson to read some of the books he loves to read with a promise that Ashoke would be gifted with a set of books Ashoke's desire for her to reach the journey that Ashoke made to reach his uniqueness. Becoming a "Mother" is a graceful adorable status of a woman, America or India, the depth of their every woman all over the world.

In "Namesake" the author vividly picture the characteristic features of a claim, pious Bengali mother, In her nature guide the new mother has to follow the traditional customs to bring up the child. Starting from christening to the toddling time, everything, will be a functional period to the child, gradually changing from stage to other stage. Ashima longed to meet her grandmother for getting her son blessed with a Bengali name. "Gogolis day to - day activities are recorded by Ashima in her mail lette to Calcutta.

Ashimas mail to her relatives and they are filled with Gogol's blooming activities, which gives her parents and Grandmother, enjoyment through Ashima's letter written to them. When Ashoke saw his child he felt himself too heavy. There was a ceremony for the small boy Gogol as he was about to be his first food feed. It's a period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person's sense of identity becomes insecure, typically due to their unexpected aims or role in the society. It is someone's struggles to maintain their identity while trying to shake them off at the same time. A state in which a person experiences uncertainty about who they really are and their proper role in life is

1. A state in which a country originated etc is subject to disorientate and uncertainty about their time role.
2. The condition of being uncertain of feelings about oneself, esp. with regard to character, goals, and obliges, occurs in the identification of crisis in the novel.



**CONCLUSION:**

Jhumpa Lahiri's efforts is that which reveals the conflicts before the second generation of Indian Diaspora with special reference to the book 'The Namesake' which is difficult to get out of the characters she weaves so break fully with the nuances of complex human mind and behaviour that which happens in our real life. Although she depicts various emotions and aspect in her characters but personally one can find her work and human behaviours most intimidating. She brings a sense of uncertainty in her writing that human mind is possessed with dilemma in her first novel. "The Namesake" she writes about immigrant issues. How migration is happening from inception but takes generation for one to become a part of other culture.

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