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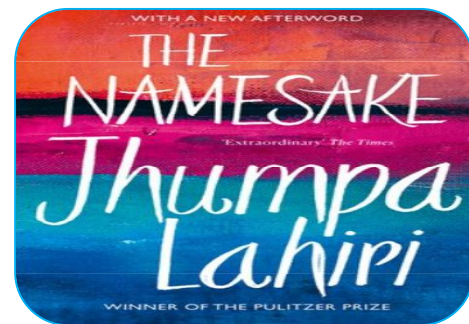


THE NAMESAKE: A STORY OF CULTURAL ADAPTATION

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Jhumpa Lahiri American novelist, short story writer and Pulitzer Prize winner for her very first novel *The Namesake* writes about immigration experience of East Indians. *The New Yorker* publishes the book as novella which was later expanded into a novel and was published in 2006. Set in the backdrop of Kolkata and the US *The Namesake* illuminates the search for an identity. We people come across several identities in a lifetime an identity with which we are born, identities forged in foreign lands and an identity expected by us for ourselves. This novel deals with identity crisis of Gogol, Ashoke Ganguli's son. Ashoke has moved to Cambridge Massachusetts along with his pregnant wife Ashima from Kolkata in 1968.



Ashima gives birth to a baby boy in US. Ashima and Ashoke had to wait to name the child because in Bengali tradition respected elder chooses the name of the child. Ashima's grandmother was supposed to decide the official name of the child. In the meantime, Ashoke names the child Gogol which was the name of Russian author full name being Nikolai Gogol whose short stories he had read. Ashoke and Ashima Bhaduri migrants to the US settle in Cambridge but "with a continuous feeling of sorts" (Lahiri 49). Ashima pines for home and tries to hold her traditional values while coming to US her parents have advised her – "not to eat beef or wear skirts or cut off her hair or forget her family." (37)

Ashima has come as an immigrant as wife but unable to overcome her nostalgia for home she keeps reading her parents letters and gradually learns to cope up and accept the situation. To overcome her distress and nostalgia she visits Kolkata for six weeks. Ashima can't give up the love for Bengal she sticks to the traditional way of dressing, celebrates her son Gogol's annaprasan, sends him to Bengali language & cultural lessons & makes him memorize poems written by Tagore. Side by side she learns to make sandwiches and celebrates American festivals.

Gradually Ashoke and Ashima befriend many Bengali families They begin having get together on ends of the week and celebrations and various services with Bengali families. Bengali outsiders in US attempt to resuscitate their customs in an outsider land wearing conventional clothing types and develop a feeling of local area in an outsider land attempting to adjust their at various times by adhering to their way of life.

The second-generation immigrant i.e., Gogol refuses to be known as Nikhil on the first day of his Kindergarten. Growing in the US Gogol is full of conflicting ideas inside and outside the walls of his house. Gogol does not like to be identified with a name which is neither Indian nor American. Gogol finds himself in the midst of two opposite cultures. He has to carry his name unwillingly like the Bengali traditions which he is forced to follow at home. Gogol reflects his longing to cast off his awkward name

along with the inherited values of his Bengali parents. Gogol has good name Nikhil Gogol for school but he wants to be Gogol only. Gogol's condition of namelessness plagues him. He refuses to be identified with a name which is neither Indian nor American. Gogol's sister Sonia has only one name.

Gogol does not realize the importance of his name until his father Ashoke reveals the tale of his accident while reading short stories by Nikolai Gogol a Russian author. In the accident locomotive engine and seven bogies were derailed but he was found in a nearby field by rescue workers. After knowing this Gogol's name becomes a legacy for him. He is neither a complete American nor a complete Bengali. Being the second-generation immigrant, he never experiences the problems, crisis and exhilaration of relocation.

Second generation immigrants Nikhil and Sonia try to create their own identities. Gogol turns out to be an American teenager having relationships with American women. Gogol's sister Sonia knows everything about her brother but parents never suspect him. To stay away from conflict Gogol and Sonia conceal their social relations from their folks. The story mirrors a correspondence hole among guardians and youngsters. Kin share a similar feeling of disarray and languishing.

Ashoke is inclined to classical Indian music whereas Gogol likes American music and has an aversion to Indian culture and tradition. Gogol falls in love with an American girl Ruth. Gogol's folks are against this relationship as they have seen conjugal disharmony and separation of Bengali men wedded to American ladies. Gogol begins dating Maxine when his issue with Ruth ends Gogol starts to live in "delightful Greek Revival house" (Lahiri188) with Maxine subsequently moving away from his parent's reality. He does not even visit his parents on weekends or accompany them for Bengali get togethers. Gogol and Sonia the second-generation immigrants find American life very normal and have no problem eating beef, drinking and having live in relationships. Both siblings dislike visiting their relatives in Kolkata due to their great inclination to western culture.

Sonia in high school has boyfriends, goes to dances and gets trendy haircuts. Gogol and Sonia are neither fully American nor fully Bengali. All their lives they stay in US with least realization of the crisis and exhilaration that comes with relocating to a foreign land. Gogol never finds a home. He remains homeless identity less throughout his life. Throughout his life he keeps trying to adjust to a world, to a culture and lifestyle.

A turning point comes in the life of Gogol and Sonia as the story falls into a cliff after the sudden death of Ashoke Ganguli due to heart attack. Gogol's new journey of Introspection begins. Till now Gogol has been looking inside and searching outside for his identity. The shock of his father's death makes him conscious of his duties towards his dead father. Gogol is reoriented and he acknowledges the relevance of shaving head after the death of a parent. After his grandparent's passing Gogol was baffled when he needed to eat vegan diet for ten days, however on his dad's demise Gogol himself surrenders meat and fish for ten days. He gets back to his family to help his mom. Now of time Gogol understands the social contrasts among Maxine and himself. Maxine is least influenced by his dad's demise. Egotistical Maxine is least worried about others and she loathes his mom and sister. A change comes in Sonia's conduct as well, she begins investing more energy at home to offer organization to her mom.

Gogol's mom compresses Gogol to get into a masterminded marriage with Moushumi. His marriage with Moushumi causes him to comprehend the common worry of local area. Shockingly, their marriage doesn't keep going long because of Moushumi estrangement from Bengali personality and her guilty pleasure in sexual undertakings. Gogol, a broke man presently visits his bereft mother and sister on ends of the week and addresses them. He spends time driving to the University where his father taught and visiting his parents' Bengali friends. Ashima's departure to Kolkata makes him more uncomfortable as no one was left to name him 'Gogol' "no matter how long he himself lives; Gogol Ganguli will vanish from the lips of loved ones...". (Lahiri 239)The novel shows Gogol is unable to erase his past.

A contrast can be seen in the familiar tradition of the first-generation immigrants with the western style of second-generation immigrants. The process of searching identity in foreign country can be seen.

Gogol family's two generations exploring their new American identity side by side retaining their Bengali heritage forms the basis for Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Namesake". The author makes us understand the depth of character and their experiences in relationships. The newly immigrated parents try to build a parallel sense of the Bengali life which they had left behind. They try to satisfy their yearning for India by following their Bengali traditions and cultural practices.

Children, Sonia and Gogol being born in America have a different experience of establishing their identity. They learn of their Bengali heritage as they grow up. children have family trips with parents to the country of their origin. The author depicts the internal struggle for cultural heritage. The struggle for cultural heritage is joined with son Gogol's struggle with identity. Throughout his childhood Gogol is seen struggling with his name unable to understand the rare opportunities his father gives him to understand his namesake.

Ganguli's family life as Americans forms the cornerstone of "The Namesake". In this period of transnationalism, the level of belongingness and personalities reinscribes limits of country. In the globalized economy transnationalism assumes a key part. Jhumpa Lahiri inspects the impact of diasporic development on human personality when individuals move starting with one spot then onto the next. Lahiri's original gives a foreknowledge into the social act of the foreigners. Lahiri demonstrates that past is an indispensable piece of the present and there can be no future without a past. Relocation compares various societies and ethnicities prompting a battle for personality. The outsiders being hostage of two societies look for options. They bring about new transnational characters because of their social dissemination.

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