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**NAMING CULTURE AND TRAUMA OF DIASPORIC EXISTENCE IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S
'THE NAMESAKE'**

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ABSTRACT

An immigrant is one who comes to live in a foreign country or a region. While diaspora is collective term for people from same origin, the term immigrant is used collectively for all those come to live in a common destination country or region and settle there forever. For example people who come and settle in USA from other countries constitute immigrant population of USA. Frequently diaspora or immigrants may acquire the citizenship of the host country, leading to change in their nationality, but their status in terms of being diaspora or immigrant does not change. Expatriates are not expected to acquire nationality of country they work in as expatriate. In an era of rapid globalization, the formal and informal power of border-crossing civil society networks is increasingly pertinent for policy-makers, business leaders, scholars and the civil societies themselves. In the context, diasporas matter a great deal. They include a range of ethnic communities formed from various categories of people, such a political and war refugees, (im)migrants, and ethnic and religious minorities that have maintained a sense of collective identity away from their homeland, operating exemplary transnational network between host states and homelands. The challenges they pose and the opportunities they represent for both their host countries and homelands are neither well enough understood nor sufficiently addressed.

Key words: Diaspora, immigrant, transnational, expatriate, trauma.

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Diaspora is the term often used today to describe practically any population which is considered 'transnational' or 'deterritorialised' that is which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or indeed span the Globe. The word 'Diaspora' derives from Greek diaspeir 'to distribute' it is a compound of spear, "to sow to scatter" like seeds and dia – "from one end to the other".

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The word 'diaspora' means 'distribution'. It also means the dispersion of the Jews among the Gentiles after the period of their exile. Diaspora refers to the movement of any population sharing common ethnic identity who were either forced to leave or voluntarily left their settled territory, and became residents in areas often far removed from the former. Voluntary and involuntary movement under the rubric, and have explored the functional compatibility between the flexible allegiances of diasporas and contemporary globalization.

The Indian Diaspora is used by many writers in the context of ethnicity of Indians who migrated to foreign lands. Such Indians belongs to the first generation expatriates who still treat India as their homeland because of religious faith that they have, and the cultural heritage they possess. Rootless though they are, they still feel deep sympathy and attachment. Indian women novelists have been explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is not imposed by a patriarchal society. The image of the new woman and her struggle for an identity of her own also emerges in the Indian English Novel. Such a struggle needs support structures outside the family to enable women to survive. A number of Indian woman novelists made their debut in the 1990s producing novels which

revealed the true state of Indian society and its treatment of woman. These writers were born after Indian independence and the English language does not have colonial associations for them. Their work is marked by authentic presentation of contemporary India, with all its regional variations. They generally write about the urban middle class the stratum of society they know best.

Jhumpa Lahiri was born in 1967 in London, England, and raised in Rhode Island. She has travelled several times to India, where both her parents were born and raised, and where a number of stories in "Interpreter of Maladies" are set. She is a graduate of Barnard College, where she received a B.A. in English literature and of Boston University, where she received an M.A. in English, M.A. in creative writing and M.A. in Comparative studies in Literature and the Arts, and Ph.D. in Renaissance studies in Literature. She has taught creative writing at Boston University and Rhode Island School of Design. A winner of the Henfield Prize from the Transatlantic Review, she has published stories in The New York, Agni, Story Quarterly and elsewhere. Her stories will appear in Prize Stories: The O Henry Awards and The Best American Short Stories. Jhumpa Lahiri received the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for Fiction for collection of short stories, Interpreter of Maladies. Jhumpa Lahiri was born in London to Bengali parents. She recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship, Jhumpa Lahiri has been acclaimed a dominant diaspora writer depicting the complexities of immigrant experience of people in diaspora.

"The Namesake" is an evocative story of Ashima Bharduri, a student in a degree class in Calcutta who becomes Ashima Ganguli after her betrothal to Ashoke Ganguli of Alipre. Ashoke shifts home to Boston for pursuing his Ph.D in fiber optics. Benedict Anderson status that family has always been the "domain of disinterested love and solidarity" (1987:131) and this is true in the case of Ashima and Ashoke. Ashima's immigrant experience the clash of cultures in United States and her non-acceptance by the American society are the main concerns of the novelist in the projection of this Bangali couple and their America born children. Ashima feels upset and homesick, spatially and emotionally dislocated from her ancestral home.

Home, is a mystic place of desire in an immigrant imagination and all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces even as they are implicated in the construction of common 'they'.

Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Namesake" tells the story of the Ganguli family over the course of thirty years. The immigrant is constantly struggling with the memories of his homeland and the realities of the new world. This constant struggle is portrayed "The Namesake" as first generation immigrants and their children struggle to find their places in society. The Ganguli parents struggle with adapting to a different culture than they are used to. Their children, Gogol and Sonia, struggle to maintain their roots while adapting to American society.

Ashima arrives in America as a newly married wife to Ashoke Ganguli. The cold climate and the strange ways of American society shock her. Slowly she gets used to things there. In the hospital she feels lonely. Again she is shocked to hear that Gogol is taken to a grave yard and trace on paper the names on the gravestones. Gogol is born in America of immigrants parents from West Bengal. Though he grows up in the American cultural milieu. Studies well and becomes a successful architect, he has to struggle to discover his identity through a series of relationships and come up to the expectations of his parents.

The search for identity is one of the traits of diasporic fiction. The diaspora people face the crisis of dual identity, which makes their existence all the more difficult. In this novel practically every character struggles with his or her identity, because every character feels the tug and pull of different cultures, different traditions and different dreams. The very title of the novel shows the importance that Lahiri gives to the duality involved in the name of the protagonist. The hero of the novel has two names which results in a conflict between both names and the identities attached to them. At birth Ashoke gives his son the pet name Gogol. Later when he is to be admitted in the school, Gogol is given the name Nikhil. But he likes to be called as Gogol.

This decision made on the first day of Kindergarten causes great conflict in his mind for years. Gogol is a Russian name which seems

irrelevant to the boy as it is neither American nor Indian. He tries to reject the dual identity. Thus the importance of a namesake and indentity is brought up throughout the story and becomes an important theme of the novel. As he grows up. Gogol tries to assimilate American culture and values. He starts behaving like his American friends and doing the samethings that they do. He begins smoke, goes for late night parties and flirts with girls. But other Americans never view him an American even though he is born in America.

Ashoke Ganguli wanted to raise his children in wanted to raise his children in Bengali culture and values. But Gogol and Sonia grow up in the culture of the United States. This presents a struggle between two cultures. Thus they face the diasporic crisis of dual identity. They could not reconcile their ethnic background with American culture. Gogol is not just a name to him: it signifies all his discomfort to fit into two different cultures he grows as up. His father named him Gogol because he had a special attachment to that name. But it is different for Gogol to understand the emotional significance of his name. He is afflicted from birth with a name that is neither Indian nor American nor even really a first name at all. His friends mocked at his name. He felt frustrated of being different from other children.

The theme of alienation, of being a stranger in a foreign land, is prominent throughout the novel. Throughout her pregnancy Ashima was afraid about raising a child in a country where she is related to no one and where she knows so little. After the death of her husband, Ashima feels alienated when she is living alone in the house on Pemberton Road. Again she feel alienated and alone during the last Christmas party. She does not feel motivated to be in Calcutta with the family she left over thirty years before nor does she feel excited about being in the United States with her children and potential grandchildren she just feels exhausted and overwhelmed without her husband.

Gogol also feels alienated, especially when he realizes that no one he knows in the world, Russia or India or America or anywhere, shares his name not even the source of his mistake. He feels alienated sometimes after his marriage with Moushumi. When they go to Paris together, he

wishes it were her first time there, too, so he didn't feel so out of place while she feels so obviously comfortable. The theme of alienation appears in Moushumi's life, as she describes to Gogol how she rejected all the Indian suitors with whom her parents tried to match her up. It was the fear being married to someone she didn't love that caused her to reject Indian boys. She went to Paris, so she could re-invent herself without the confusion of where she fit in.

Ashima feels homesick, uprooted and nostalgic. She finds it difficult to cope up with the pressures of the two cultures. Towards the end of the novel as she addresses the Christmas cards, she is not happy that Sonia and Gogol did not come home to celebrate thanksgiving with her. Their need for independence is contrary to the need she felt at their age to be near her family. Gogol was always impatient with his father. But after the death of his father he begins to feel tender towards him.

At the end of the book the Ganguli family spend Christmas together. He begins to think of his family's history and think that he now free to do what he pleases without the expectations either his family or the demands of American society.

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