



ROOTS OF PAST AND BRANCHES OF PRESENT INTERWINED- JUMPA LAHIRI'S EXPLORATION OF DIASPORA OF THE SECOND-GENERATION IMMIGRANTS IN *THE NAMESAKE*

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Abstract: This One generation's move to a foreign country starts a Diaspora lineage that can affect the successive generations. More often, we talk about the sufferings and homelessness that the first generation experiences, but the second generation's inherited Diaspora, which contributes to their fluid identity, is just as traumatic. The second generation of immigrants goes through cultural hybridity, exposing them to two different cultures and entrapping them between two extremes—one where they belong and the other where they wish to belong—which makes them uncertain about their identities. Since the first generation has stronger ties to their homeland, they try to impart to their children the same values that their parent country instilled in them. Their offspring born and raised in the host country are more likely to absorb the culture there. This causes a divide in the young children's psyche, leaving them unable to decide whether they belong to the culture their parents promote or the one they observe in the community around them. This paper aims to examine the transnational identities of second-generation immigrants and delve deeper into the trauma experienced by these immigrants with hyphenated identities. Homi Bhabha's postcolonial criticism of cultural hybridity will help the researcher to show how the second generation, trying to balance two cultures, often ends up in a psychological conflict that leaves them in limbo.

Key words- Cultural Clash, Diaspora, Home, Hybridity, Second Generation Immigrants, Third Space, Unhomeliness

One generation's move to a foreign country starts a diaspora lineage that can affect the successive generations. More often, we talk about the sufferings and homelessness that the first generation experiences, but the second generation's inherited diaspora, which contributes to their fluid identity, is just as traumatic. The second generation of immigrants goes through cultural hybridity, exposing them to two different cultures and entrapping them between two extremes—one where they belong and the other where they wish to belong—which makes them uncertain about their identities. Since the first generation has stronger ties to their homeland, they try to impart to their children the same values that their parent country instilled in them. Their offspring born and raised in the host country are more likely to absorb the culture there. This causes a divide in the young children's psyche, leaving them unable to decide whether they belong to the culture their parents promote or the one they observe in the community around them. This paper aims to examine the transnational identities of second-generation immigrants and delve deeper into the trauma experienced by these immigrants with hyphenated identities. Homi Bhabha's postcolonial criticism of cultural hybridity will help the researcher to show how the second generation, trying to balance two cultures, often ends up in a psychological conflict that leaves them in limbo.

In light of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, this paper discusses Diasporic peoples feeling of belonging, cultural conflict, rootlessness, and the ongoing struggle to be oneself or the other. The research will also explore how voluntary migration and globalization become catalysts for hybrid identities in the current world while examining the possibility of return for second-generation immigrants. Another critical research undertaken in this paper would be to see if Homi Bhabha's theories, such as "Third Space," "Cultural Hybridity," and "Unhomeliness", traditionally used for the postcolonial realm, can converge with neocolonialism. The paper will also look at Diaspora community as a community with resilience and strength having a better stamina at adaptability.

Migration is a multifaceted phenomenon that has been studied by scholars from various disciplines, including political science, anthropology, sociology, and economics. It refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one location to another with the objective of settling in a new place. This movement can be voluntary or involuntary depending on various personal, social or political reasons. Diaspora, on the other hand can be defined as an aftermath of the process of migration. It is usually used to define the migrated people living in a constant identity flux because of their detachment from their roots. The community that migrates from one country to the other finds immediate assimilation difficult. Diaspora communities may experience a sense of dislocation and alienation from their culture and traditions, as they struggle to maintain a connection to their homeland while adapting to the norms and expectations of their new location. Migration has played a significant role in the history of humanity, and in the current era of globalization, the interconnection of countries has become more substantial, leading to a break in the monopoly of space by a specific group. People typically relocate for better job prospects or a better quality of life. However, it is strongly disputed to what extent migration can guarantee a person's psychological stability. Within the complex context of global migration, the idea of the homeland has lost much of its stability, which over time also contributes to the fragility of self-understanding. A "Third Space" is ultimately created for the immigrants due to the negotiation between their home and outside environment. This area's primary purpose is to dissolve the dichotomy between inside and outside, creating a complex framework of floating identity. The formation of a hybrid cultural identity among second-generation immigrants also makes way for exploring ideas like "unhomely home", which Homi Bhabha talks about in his *The World and the Home* (141). The experience of living in diaspora is one that encompasses a complex duality, often resulting in conflicting emotions and perspectives. The interplay between one's original identity and the challenges of navigating a new cultural environment can lead to feelings of dislocation, alienation, and other significant issues for expatriates. However, amidst these challenges, diaspora offers an opportunity for the creation of new identities that are uniquely adapted to the context of a new cultural space. In this way, diaspora represents a dynamic process of self-discovery and growth that can be both challenging and transformative.

Jhumpa Lahiri is a second-generation Indian Immigrant whose family migrated first to England and later to America. This firsthand experience of growing up with a hyphenated identity helps her construct her characters veraciously. Lahiri's *The Namesake* chronicles the experiences of Indians and Indian Americans torn between two identities and two countries.

Lahiri, in her novel, focuses on the struggles of second-generation immigrants rather than only pinning attention on the difficulties of the first generation. While the central issue for the first generation can be assimilation, for the second generation, it becomes the sense of belonging, for they remain suspended between the country in which they are born and the country of their origin. The first generation, having spent their formative years in their parent nation, finds it difficult to give up their traditions. They continue living according to their culture even when abroad. Their children, on the other hand, grow up seeing one culture inside the house and the other outside, which causes a split in their self-identification. In her detailed character construction in *The Namesake*, Lahiri divides her characters over two generations. Ashok and Ashima Ganguli stand for the first generation of immigrants who struggled to assimilate into America, while Gogol, Sonia, and Moushumi allow us to delve into the minds of those raised with a dual cultural heritage of India and America. Ultimately, there comes the point of navigation in understanding the chasm between these two generations where the older generation begins to accept the host culture, and the younger generation begins to recognize its roots.

Hybridity across cultures creates a welcoming environment where members of different backgrounds can interact freely and naturally. The ability to successfully navigate cultural differences is a strength in hybrids as it helps them assimilate and gradually overcome their identity crisis (Hoogvelt 158). This process becomes inevitable when we talk of people relocating to a new country and settling in countries other than their own. Recent scholarship on hybridity has focused on the ideas of Homi K. Bhabha, who defines it in terms of the colonizer/colonized binary. Bhabha stated in his postcolonial theory that colonial powers impose a hegemonic identity over the colonized, which causes hybrids to arise, where the colonized people finally produce something new that resembles a fusion of two cultures. In *The location of culture*, Bhabha states that a space generates when two or more cultures interact; he called it the third space of enunciation (37). All cultural values and systems get articulated in this area. Instead of focusing on either the parent or host country, as in the bipolar model, Bhabha instead favours the tripolar model, which emphasizes the middle ground, or what Bhabha calls "the third space" (Kral 12).

In *The Namesake*, Lahiri explores the concept of cultural blending and how it creates individuals who are neither fully Indian nor thoroughly American. At first, Gogol's animosity toward his native country is glaring. Gogol and Sonia prefer Christmas to Durga Puja, reflecting their Americanisation (Lahiri 58). However, as Gogol matures, he appreciates the best of both Indian and American traditions. Acceptance of both the names, Nikhil and Gogol, reflects his acceptance of himself as an Indian and an American. His war ends when he creates a single cultural contact zone where both cultures meet. Another clear illustration of how cultural expectations from an immigrant frequently lead to their collapse is the divorce of Nikhil and Moushumi. This divorce becomes crucial for comprehending why it is vital for immigrants to forge a third space of enunciation rather than tying themselves to the expectations of a single culture.

Different generations of immigrants take different approaches to the question of their identity. While the early immigrants look at their heritage for maintaining their identity in a new world, those of later generations try to become fully integrated citizens of the country where they were born. Lahiri's *The Namesake* explores the problem of immigrant identity crisis through the characters' conflicted feelings about their sense of self. Like Lahiri, Gogol's life also veers dramatically from one extreme to the other, embodying an inner conflict regarding identity.

Through Gogol's quest for self, Lahiri explores the challenges faced by Indian immigrants who try to develop a cohesive sense of self while juggling contradictory loyalties and identities. When Pamela, the white neighbour of Maxine, tells Gogol, "But you're Indian" (Lahiri 134), she reveals much about how Americans perceive people of different ethnic backgrounds. Even after spending his whole life in America, Gogol remains an Indian to his fellow citizens. All their relatives in India look at Gogol and his sister, Sonia, as outsiders due to their westernized worldview. Gogol views his relationship with Maxine as the height of his "American-ness" so far in his life. His choices are a way of solidifying his American identity, and as he does so, he loses more and more of his Bengali identity. Thus, living with a hyphenated identity becomes inevitable for these immigrants who remain suspended between two ends. Gogol's name, kept on the name of a Russian author, becomes a metaphor for his identity as this name had nothing to do with India or America. He objects to being called Gogol and instead goes by Nikhil and then the Americanized form, Nicky. Gogol's name change was simply a means to establish a consistent persona. He does not want to end up like every other "American-born, confused Deshi" (ABCD) who struggles to find their identity in America.

In his *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha says that some spaces exist between fixed identities, and these spaces open up the possibility for hybridity (13). As the novel *The Namesake* draws to its closure, we witness Gogol coming to terms with his dual identity and creating a hybrid space where he feels secure. He gave up attempting to distinguish himself as either Gogol or Nikhil and just became both. In light of this realization, it is clear that immigrants need to accept their "In Between" status to create a healthy psyche. It is not that being an immigrant causes a crisis of identity, but rather that the immigrant's struggle to assert a singular identity causes chaos. When the two cultures are appropriately negotiated, a new hybrid identity emerges, which creates psychological balance in the immigrants.

First-generation immigrants have a sense of being uprooted from their homes and placed in a new environment which is uncommon for second-generation immigrants, who are always searching for a place they can call home. Their idea about home remains vague because of their identity crisis and cultural hybridity. Homi Bhabha uses Sigmund Freud's idea of the "Unhomely" or "Uncanny" in his essay "The World and the Home" (141). For Freud, unhomely or uncanny meant something familiar but dangerous. Drawing upon this idea, Bhabha said that unhomely did not mean the absence of a home. It means that public and private life gets merged, and the essence of a home is lost. This feeling of loss of a home is what the second generation of immigrants suffers. Many immigrants spend their entire lives abroad, hoping to return home eventually. For many, this return becomes a myth, and they end up living dysfunctional lives. With successive generations, the idea of home evolves, and so does the concept of return. In transnational communities, the myth of return transforms into the myth of home, and the idea of home becomes transitory. This population generally has a house, but no place to call home, for their idea of a home is as arbitrary as their identity.

Similarly, the idea of homeland also becomes complex for these people. In her book, Lahiri raises the issue of what a homeland should entail. Should it be the nation where one is born or the nation of our ancestors? The distinction between homeland and home is even more difficult for second-generation immigrants since they are conditioned to think that their loyalties must be split between two countries. Gogol knows that his parents and relatives refer to India as "Desh", which has a patriotic fervour to it. For Gogol, it was only India, just like it was for Americans (Lahiri 100). Gogol eventually begins to identify India as his home, but it takes him a lifetime to reach this point. Thus, it becomes essential to understand

that transnational communities do not have a fixed idea of home. Just like their identities, home is a relative construct.

Cultural hybridity, ambivalence and identity crisis, typically associated with postcolonial philosophy, can be just as applicable to neocolonial thought. In the contemporary era of redefined imperialism, the term postcolonialism has emerged to describe neocolonialism. There appears to be far greater interest in the past's colonialism than in the present's imperialism (Ahmad 93). Neocolonial influence includes the economic factors that encourage individuals to move from the East to the West. This effect is starting to show up in our globalized age. The hybridity of fictional characters like Gogol, Sonia, and Moushumi directly results from the neocolonial worldview. The concept of ambivalence is a key to understanding the postcolonial world, which in the age of globalization, can also be connected to neocolonialism. From a postcolonial perspective, the colonized subjects are ambivalent because they wish to adopt the ways of the conquerors. Similarly, in *The Namesake*, characters like Gogol and Maushumi, second-generation immigrants, are also ambivalent due to their split identities. In the neocolonial world, we can no longer see Gogol and Maushumi as the colonized subjects, but owing to their disputed identity, they try to mimic the American culture to assimilate, making them the embodiment of how neocolonialism is in itself a mimicry of the colonial world. Therefore, it is not entirely off-base to say that in today's rapidly evolving world, some postcolonial theories can also be used to study the neocolonial sphere.

In *The Namesake*, Lahiri moves from one generation of immigrants to the other creating spaces of introspection about our idea of fluidity and identity. Instead of focusing on the plight traditionally associated with diaspora, we are made to look at the third space, which is a relatively positive realm to look at the migrated population. The bildungsroman of second-generation immigrants like Gogol demonstrates how these individuals progressively gain a more profound sense of self and decide to be transcultural rather than becoming trapped in a single culture. The second generation of immigrants has a chance to rise beyond nostalgia, typical in the first generation, and become stronger because of their flexible identities, which offer them the power of easy adaptability. With time, the diaspora population's sense of dislocation is replaced with more accommodating and adaptable in-between zones, which makes their assimilation easier.

No one disputes that diasporas experience trauma, but they also emerge from it more resilient than those who have always lived in a monotonous culture. What emerges from the diaspora is a generation that witnesses the rawness of life and struggles to find identity rather than being gifted with it. This fight makes these individuals more robust and more resilient. This paper investigates cultural hybridity, identity crises, and homelessness and concludes that, rather than viewing diaspora solely through the lens of bleak subjectivity, one should consider alternative frames of reference, such as third space, in-betweenness and multiculturalism.

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