



Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of English Language and  
Literatures

# Master Dissertation

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## Studying In-Betweenness in Jhumpa Lahiri's

### *The Namesake*

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Submitted by:

**ATIL Zahia**

**Board of Examiners:**

<b>Dr. El Hamel Lamjed</b>	<b>MCA</b>	<b>Biskra University</b>	<b>(Chairperson)</b>
<b>Mr. Chemmouri Mourad</b>	<b>MAA</b>	<b>Biskra University</b>	<b>(Examiner)</b>
<b>Dr. Hamed Halima</b>	<b>MCB</b>	<b>Biskra University</b>	<b>(Supervisor)</b>

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{بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ}

**Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my lovely family, my husband Ahmed and my kids Yahia, Katre Ennada,  
Kaouther and Soltane who is obsessed of Spider-man

To my dear parents Habiba and Bouzid and my dear parents in law Messouada and Ibrahime May  
his soul rest in peace. Thank you all for your unending compassion, understanding, and confidence  
in me even during the times when I questioned it.

To my siblings: Ali , Aymen , Yacine and my only sister Hibat Errahmane . And to my friends, for  
their support and company during difficult times.

To my sisters and brothers in law.

This study has been greatly influenced by the advice and insight of my instructors and mentors, to  
whom I also dedicate this work.

To Soumia who supported me a lot and a special thanks go to my sister in law Afaf who encouraged  
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“...home is the place where you have family”

(Lahiri 188)

## Studying In-Betweenness in Jhumpa Lahiri's II

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## Studying In-Betweenness in Jhumpa Lahiri's III

### Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri is among the postcolonial writers who have experienced the different difficulties and complexities of being a diasporic individual. Her experiences have been reflected in her work *The Namesake* where she is portraying the diasporic life of two immigrant-generations who are struggling with the state of In-Betweenness. The study focuses on the second-generation Diasporas who are caught in between two divergent cultures, their culture of origin and the other culture of the host land. Thus, the dissertation investigates the cultural conflicts faced by the second-generation diasporas and how they find themselves confused about their real cultural identity and lack of the sense of belonging as well. The dissertation depends on Homi Bhabha's cultural theory of In-Betweenness where the diasporic individuals find themselves caught in between two different cultures, the theory intends to analyse the issues of cultural hybridity and how hybrid identities are transformed in the postcolonial era. The study aims to display the difficulties and complexities faced by Gogol, the male protagonist in the novel *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri. Gogol who finds himself lost in between his culture of homeland and the other culture of the host land which makes him confused about his real cultural identity. This study is based on the postcolonial theory that is represented by Homi Bhabha's cultural theory of In-Betweenness to examine and analyze Gogol's problems with identifying his real cultural identity. The dissertation demonstrates how diasporic individuals are affected with the state of In-Betweenness that leads to cultural hybridity.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Bhabha's The Location of Culture Theory, In-Betweenness, Cultural Identity, Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*.

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## General Introduction

Postcolonial writers have focused in their writings on issues related to immigration which is considered as the main theme of their narratives because of the problems and the difficulties that they faced in being in between two different cultures what caused the problem of cultural identity or what is called the in-betweenness according to Homi Bhabha.

The Indian-American writer "Jhumpa Lahiri" is among the postcolonial writers who solved the immigrants problems. In her diasporic novel *The Namesake*, Jhumpa Lahiri is tackling an important issue which is strongly faced by immigrants: the state of being in between two different cultures. She is depicting the diasporic life of a Bengali family which immigrated from India to the United States of America and how its members struggle with the state of being in between their native culture and the one of the host land and how they can find a balance between them through maintaining their culture of origin and assimilating the main stream culture.

One major theme of the novel is hybrid identity where the protagonist male, Gogol, who is an Indian-American born is suffering the in-betweenness where he is mingling in between two different cultures, his native culture that he inherited from his parents and the other culture of the host land and so to what culture he should belong to. This confused attitude pushed him to assimilate the main stream culture, what caused alteration not only on his name Gogol which becomes Nikhil but also on his cultural identity and created therefore a sort of inner conflict between the two personas, Gogol the most hated name and Nikhil the newly adopted name. The question that should be posed: which of them should he adhere to be fully accepted?

In the *Namesake*, the male protagonist is searching for a third space to identify his true cultural identity and hence find a space for long lasting peace. In so doing, he seeks to make a



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balance between his parents native culture and the host land culture and how he can find his inner peace as a diasporic individual standing in between two different cultures.

Thus, this dissertation focuses on the study of the notion of Hybrid identities which are inbetweenness, they are mingling in between two different cultures. The study then sheds light on the postcolonial theory which is an important critical approach that examines issues such as cultural hybridity and how cultural identity is transformed in being between two different cultures.

Homi Bhabha is one of the most influential scholars who contributed to the postcolonial theory through his concept "hybridity" which has become as a cultural subject to be used to describe the in-betweenness of two different cultures and its influence on shaping cultural identity. According to Homi Bhabha, the experience of being in between two different cultures creates what he refers to as a "Third Space" which is a contradictory and ambivalent space. It is also an imaginative space where new hybrid cultural identities are shaped, these new cultural identities are neither stable nor pure. Thus, they are mixed of the Western culture and the Eastern one as well and they help to overcome the difficulties of being in between two different cultures.

The study will focus on Gogol's hybrid identity that is transformed due to the circumstances surrounding him, using the postcolonial approach and focusing mainly on Homi Bhabha 's cultural theory of hybridity and his notions: Cultural identity, Cultural assimilation and the Third Space/and investigating the notion of being in-between. Therefore, the main question that should be first posed is:

How does Gogol the protagonist struggle to find his third space to create his new hybrid cultural identity?

Based on this general question, other sub-questions must be answered in this research and they are as follows:

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1. What are the major problems faced by Gogol as a diasporic individual standing in between two different cultures?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being in between two different cultures?
3. How could Homi Bhabha's cultural theory of hybridity be used to solve the problem of being with a hybrid identity?

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is concerned with the theoretical and conceptual framework. It deals with an overview of postcolonial theory and postcolonial literature. In addition, defining diaspora and diaspora literature. It also focuses on Homi Bhabha's cultural theory of in-betweenness and the most important concepts of cultural identity, hybridity, the Third Space and cultural assimilation. The second and the third chapters are analytical.

The second chapter deals with the analysis of the novel "The Namesake" Focusing on Homi Bhabha's cultural theory of in-betweenness to analyze the disadvantages of being caught in between dual identities within two different cultures whereas chapter three also deals with the analysis of the novel in which the focus is on the advantages of being in between dual identities within two divergent cultures.

## Chapter One:

### Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

#### Introduction

Diaspora literature is seen as a mirror that reflects immigrants difficulties, problems and complexities that they are compelled to face since they are living in an unfamiliar place far away from their lands, which they have used to be familiar with. Diasporic literature also portrays and depicts their uncanny feelings that they are experiencing because of being in a different land where they are treated as the other or as an outsider.

This chapter then focuses on the diasporic literature from a postcolonial perspective. Diaspora literature has emerged as a new literary genre in postcolonial approach due to many postcolonial writers who have crossed borders of their nations to the west. These writers have focused in their narratives on issues related to cultural conflicts that they themselves have experienced. Identity formation has been the central theme since immigrants, mainly, second generation immigrants who are suffering the state of being in-between their inherited culture and the host land's culture that is dominant and seen as a supreme culture. They easily absorb it since they were born there whereas they deny their indigenous culture and consider it as the other culture or a strange one. Thus, they struggle to create a balance between them and so a third space emerges where they transform their new hybrid identities.

The first chapter is concerned with the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research. First, the research deals with an overview of postcolonial theory and postcolonial literature and the different issues discussed. Then, moving to define diaspora and diaspora literature and the major writers in this field and the different themes they have examined. At

the end of the chapter, the focus is on the cultural Indian theorist Homi Bhabha's thoughts to the postcolonial theory through his "Third Space Theory and Cultural Identity", focusing on the notions of in-betweenness, cultural identity, hybridity and other concepts related to them which are: the Third Space and cultural assimilation.

## **1. 2. Postcolonial Theory and Postcolonial Literature: An Overview on**

### **Postcolonial Approach**

#### **1. 2. 1. Postcolonialism**

According to Neil Lazarus, postcolonial studies did not appear in the academic studies before the 1970th. However, many journals have published many anti-colonial writings for example "*African Literature Today*" which was produced in 1968(1-2). At present, this new field of literary studies is presented in many universities in different erstwhile colonized countries (1).

Postcolonialism has gained more prominence since the 1970s due to the publication of Edward Said's influential book "*Orientalism*" (1978) which has contributed to the development of the postcolonial studies (Ashcroft et al. 168). In addition, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin have also contributed to the emergence of the field through publishing their work *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) where the term postcolonial was first used. Their book deals with the theory and its concepts as well (Bahri).

As a result, colonialist discourse theory has developed in the work of some critics such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. However, the term 'post-colonial' has not actually used in the studies above though they have centered on the impact of 'colonial representation' as an example, Spivak who first used the term in her collection of interviews and recollections entitled *The Post-Colonial Critic* which she published in 1990 (Ashcroft et al. 168). These theorists have greatly contributed to the postcolonial theory formation and development.

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Ashcroft et al. state that post-colonialism (or often postcolonialism) is concerned with the colonial impact on societies that have been colonized and their cultures as well since the arrival of colonization till now (2). In other words, colonization effects on formerly colonized peoples are still continuing till the present days. Ashcroft et al. Add "All post-colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem" (1-2). It denotes that the colonized countries have got only their political independence, they are still culturally colonized and affected by the colonial power till now. The colonial power effects are still there in all the domains of life: politics, economy, sociology and so on.

Moreover, post-colonialism is defined as a new academic interdisciplinary field that is closely related to other disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, psychology (with its subbranches), international affairs, economy, history . . . etc (Türkmen 188). Turkmen adds that post colonialism has moved from examining issues such as: the lost identities, labors, languages, ...etc, to analyzing new issues and concepts such as :nationalism, race, identity, language and marginality, using new approach and views(188).

Post-colonial theory is concerned with examining different experiences including: "migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender place and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being" (Ashcroft et al. 2).

To conclude, post-colonialism has emerged as a reaction to the colonial discourses that produced by colonizers and to focus on their effects that are still exist now. Colonized countries have always tried to restore their culture and history that have been distorted by the colonial power. Post colonialism can be seen as a tool that defends those oppressed societies that they are dominated by supreme powers.

### 1. 2. 2. Postcolonial Literature

Postcolonial literature is defined as literature that produced by formerly colonized countries that have experienced the bitterness of the European colonization mainly by countries related to the Third World Countries such as: Africa, Somalia, South America, and other formerly colonized countries (Dar 34). Those colonized countries have produced their own national literature that really reflects the realities of the oppressed people who have experienced colonization. According to Ashcroft et al. postcolonial literature is defined as:

...literature of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka are all postcolonial literatures---what each of these literatures has in common beyond their specific and distinct regional characteristics is that they emerged in their present form out of experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power... (2)

In the light of this quote, Ashcroft et al. explain that postcolonial literature is that literature that has been created by erstwhile colonized countries as a reaction to the imperial domination to show their difference from the colonizer and proclaim their resistance against the ideology of imperialism. Ashcroft et al. argue that postcolonial literature is concerned with all literatures that have been overwhelmed by the imperial power since its arrival till now (Empire and Postcolonial).

Boehmer defines postcolonial literature as "...writing that sets out in one way or another to resist the colonialist perspective" (3). Postcolonial writings have existed as a reaction to the colonial discourse that has intended to distort the national history and culture and to produce literature from their point of view rather than the colonial one. Boehmer adds "postcolonial

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writers have sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourse which supported colonization – the myth of power, the race classification and the imaginary of subordination” (3). Colonization has always attempted to appear as a supreme power whereas others or colonized people are primitive. It has tried to keep them subservient. Postcolonial writers' essential aim is to reconstruct their lost cultural identities that have been deconstructed by the imperial process and to restore their native history as well as culture.

Moreover, postcolonial writers have always centered in their narratives on themes related to formerly colonized peoples' experiences with colonization and its continuing effects till now. They have focused in their writings on the concept of hybridity and how identities are shaped in being in between two different cultures. They have also written about marginalized and subaltern groups whose sounds have been voiceless, and depicted their suffering and attempts to resist the colonial power violence. Among the major themes that have tackled are the ones related to diaspora and globalization, where they have focused on the experiences of diasporic communities and the complexities in transforming their identities. Issues such as: displacement, migration, and cultural adaptation are strongly reflected in postcolonial writings (Dhirubhai 74). Among the most influential writers who have flourished the postcolonial literature are Chinua Achebe, Franz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Salman Rushdie, Michael Ondaatje, J. M. Coetzee, Li-Young Li, Derek Walcott, Jamaica Kincaid, ...etc (Thamarana 538). These writers have attempted to retell their societies experiences during the era of colonization.

To conclude, postcolonial literature can be understood as a means that used by postcolonial writers to transmit the realities of colonized people and to revive their national culture and history that the colonizer has attempted to distort them and to impose its culture as a central one.

### 1. 3. Postcolonial Diaspora Literature

#### 1. 3. 1. Diaspora Definition

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Diaspora is defined as 'the process by which people of a particular nation become scattered and settle in other countries, esp the Jews who left ancient Palestine this way' (Hornby 320). Ashcroft et al state that the concept of diaspora is derived from the "Greek meaning 'to disperse'(OCD)". They define Diaspora as the movement of peoples from their lands of origin into new lands either forcibly or voluntarily. They confirm that Diaspora is a basic fact in the history of colonization. Diaspora is also concerned with the temporary or permanent movement of the European colonizers from their homeland to settle all over the world (Ashcroft et al. 61).

Laxmiprasad defines Diaspora as "a process of people migrating frequently from one place to another for various reasons" (99). Diasporic communities that have resulted due to the process of diaspora have found themselves caught in-between two contradictory cultures, their culture of origin and the culture of the host land. Thus, the state of being in between two oppositions creates the sense of unhomeliness where diasporic communities have been confused to what culture they should belong (Amjad and Albusalih 1126). In addition, the diasporic people try to adapt themselves to the new situations through creating "cultural, ethnic and political identities". They try to adopt the new way of life in the host land and so concepts such as: assimilation, adoption, accommodation and acculturation arise (Laxmiprasad 99).

Moreover, the United States of America has witnessed an enormous movement of immigrants, mainly from Asia, due to "the Amendment to the Immigrant Act" that was issued in 1965 to cancel "national origin quotas". There has been a huge growth of population especially by the coming of a huge number of Indian immigrants. Thus, cultural diversity has



emerged in the American society and it has had a great impact on immigrants' identities and in particular on their children who are treated as second-generation Indian Americans. Thus, the struggle starts with the two generations, the first generation immigrants try to maintain their indigenous culture whereas the second generation immigrants find themselves acculturate the host land culture (Reka and Haisler 1).

Furthermore, the process of assimilation is necessary to enable immigrants to adapt the new life in a strange world and make balance between their culture of origin and the other one of the host land. However, the process seems hard for those who belong to the second – generation immigrants who find themselves in between two different cultures, their parents' native culture and the culture of the nation where they born, Thus, identity crisis evolves within them and in particular identity formation (Reka and Hasler 2).

To sum up, immigrant communities have faced many difficulties and complexities because of the dual cultures they are living in between. They have struggled with identifying themselves and so they have been obliged to live in between mingling cultures. Thus, new hybrid identities are shaped to be able to coexist with the new changes. Identity crisis and the quest for cultural identity have become the central themes in diaspora literature.

### **1. 3. 2. Diaspora Literature Definition**

Writers who have left their native lands towards new lands have struggled with the state of being in between different cultures. They have struggled with identifying themselves to what culture they should belong. They have suffered many difficulties and complexities which are reflected in their writings. Writers who have left their homelands to other foreign lands have always experienced the sense of nostalgia for the roots and being guilty towards homeland. They have always quested for their identities. These emotions and feelings have never left their psyche (Sarangi).

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The diasporic writers have always tried to find out who they are in being surrounded with new cultures. They write about their original culture with an attempt to adapt themselves in the new cultural space (Sarangi). Sarangi adds that these literary works are considered as ‘a bridge ‘towards different cultures in order to understand them. Hence, Diaspora literature is produced in purpose to link between cultures belong to the homeland and the host land as well (Sarangi). Furthermore, Sarangi argues that diasporic writers intend to represent refugees who need security as well as ambassadors who defend the motherland’s culture. They are faithfully trying to be fair with both of them. In this context, Laxmiprasad adds that all diasporic communities are struggling in being in between their motherland and the host land. Thus, they are obliged to generate different cultural, ethnic and political identities (99).

Thus, Diaspora literature can be defined as all the literary works that have been produced by writers who have left their homelands to live in foreign lands where they have experienced the state of being in between dual cultures, traditions and customs. Their writings have reflected these experiences and depicted all the feelings of being as a stranger in a strange world. Those writers have focused on themes and issues that the diasporic communities have suffered and struggled with mainly negotiating new land and new culture. Main themes that diasporic have written about are: nostalgia, alienation, imaginary lands, new identities and hybridity’s. In addition, other themes have arisen due to globalization for example: political issues of cultural citizenship, cosmopolitan justice and global inequality (Dash67-68).

There are many Indian diasporic writers who have shared the sense of nostalgia to their native lands and they have created great literary works. Among these writers are Salman Rushdie and V. S. Naipaul who are considered as international writers. In addition to them other writers like Anita Desai, Bharti Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Amita v Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Sunetra Gupta, Rohinton Mistry, JhumpaLahiri, Abraham Varghese and the list is still long(Laxmiprasad 100 -101) .

## 1. 4. Homi Bhabha's the Location of Culture Theory

Homi k. Bhabha is considered as one of the most influential critical thinkers and theorists who have contributed to the development of the cultural theory that is called post-colonial criticism. Bhabha is famous for his important work "*The Location of Culture*" in which he has developed a number of very interesting concepts which are workable in post-colonial theory. These concepts are: hybridity, mimicry, difference and ambivalence (Huddart 1).

Homi Bhabha has used these concepts to describe how colonized people have faced and resisted the colonial power which has been considered as a threat (1). Huddart adds that Bhabha argues that colonialism histories and cultures still have constant effects on the colonized till the present time because of the complexities of "counter-globalization movements, colonial and neo-colonial wars, and the widespread of cultural confrontation" that have marked the world (1-2). Thus, Homi Bhabha 's work is very important to explore these complexities within the twentieth century where we should change our understanding of cross-cultural relations (1 -2).

The study focuses on postcolonial people who are caught in between divergent cultures due to the process of diaspora. Thus, their cultural identity is not stable because it is affected by this cultural confrontation which leads to difficulties in redefining it. The study is based on Homi Bhabha's Theory of In- Betweenness and the concepts which are associated with: Cultural identity, Hybridity, Third Space and Cultural Assimilation. These concepts are inevitable with the study of diaspora.

### 1. 4. 1. The Concept of In-Betweenness

In-between, in Cambridge dictionary, means "between two clear or accepted stages or states, and therefore difficult to describe or know exactly" ("IN BETWEEN"). Homi Bhabha has coined and developed the concept of In-betweenness which is related to hybridity

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and the formation of identity. According to Bhabha, the colonizer has tried to change the colonized identity through imposing its culture as a central one whereas the other culture or the colonized culture is an inferior one. Thus, new identities are shaped through the process of hybridity. These new hybrid identities are mixed and not original (Bhabha 112).

“... literary speaking In-Betweenness is composed of **in-between** and **ness** which reforms spatial and temporal realms, that means the continuity of things which cannot be separated or rejected totally. In-betweenness refers to the physical dimensions and concrete boundaries, however it denotes a thing, state or condition situated between initial binaries such as (West, East), (colonizer, colonized), and (oppressor, oppressed) ... which means that A has no function without B, if we consider the binary consists of (A, B) therefore it must be used together A and B, or neither A nor B, because without the existence of B there is no utility for A, they function closely together; theoretically speaking, in-betweenness status is a position in which the diasporic subject feels attached to two diverged communities, the first community is considered as the original home and the second is the host home, from this position the researcher may find two different types according to the diasporic subject reflection towards both worlds, in the first type the migrant faces a severe confusion concerning both places and how he identifies himself with each one of them, in this case either he chooses to adopt and assimilate within the foreign world and constructs a sense of inferiority towards all what is about his original world, this kind of groups may find in Arab and Black communities; or the diasporic person detaches himself from the host society and remains preservative towards his origins traditions and religion, he feels self-sufficient and self-satisfaction by his own identity, this example emerges clearly in Chinese, Japanese and Pakistanis migrant groups; the second type, in which the diasporic subject makes physical and spiritual balance between his home land traditions and communicates and interacts freely with the host home, with a sense of responsibility towards it. Thus, he adopts the sense of belonging to both cultures” (Qtd . In Laouichi 20- 21).

### 1. 4. 2. Cultural Identity

“Cultural identity is the identity of belonging to a particular group, so that it is a part of individual's self-conception and self-reception; it is related closely with the concept of nationality, ethnicity, and religion in addition to the social class and any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture. Clem claims that “cultural identity is a subset of communication theory of identity that consists of four elements: the personal frame, enactment of communication frame, relationship frame and communal frame, this later that refers to the cultural constraints or the so called the Right which people live by” (Qtd. In Louichi 23).

Thus, researchers assure that cultural identity has an important role in shaping individual's self-conception and self-reception. It helps individuals recognize who they are and how they should interact with the surrounding community. Unfortunately, migrant people face difficulties in redefining their cultural identities because they are mingling in-between two contradictory cultures and so what culture they should belong to. Therefore, they have to maintain their culture of origin and assimilate the mainstream culture leading to the process of hybridity to enable them cope with both cultures.

### 1. 4. 3. The Concept of Hybridity

Hybridity is one of the most useful and applied concepts in postcolonial theory. Generally, hybridity is defined as the emergence of new transcultural forms that produced due to the intersection between the colonizer and the colonized. It is used, in biology, to refer to “the cross-breeding of two species by grafting or cross-pollination to form a third, hybrid species’ ” (108). According to Ashcroft hybridization can appear in different shapes such as linguistic, cultural, political and so on (108).

Ashcroft et al. write that Homi Bhabha has used the term of hybridity to examine the interaction between the colonizer and colonized and how this interrelation forms their

subjectivities. Bhabha assures that there is a space where all cultures are shaped, this space is called 'Third Space of enunciation' (1994 :37) (Ashcroft 108). Thus, cultural identities are born in this space that is characterized by ambivalence and contradiction. Bhabha proclaims the incapacity to make a hierarchical 'purity' of cultures According to him, this space is very important in order to go through the "exotics of cultural diversity" (Ashcroft et al. 108). According to Bhabha, Hybridity is defined as:

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. (112)

In the light of the quotation above, Bhabha assures that the colonizer attempts to transform the colonized identity through the process of hybridity. Thus, new hybrid cultural identities emerge in between the old culture of the colonized and the new culture of the colonizer. The new cultural identities lack purity and originality because they are mingling in between two different cultures.

To sum up, hybridity can be seen as a process that oppressed people use to overcome the burden of being in between distinctive cultures and how they can create balance between them. Thus, a third space is created where new hybrid identities are shaped.

### **1. 4. 4. The Concept of the Third Space**

The third space is another term that introduced by the Indian theorist Homi Bhabha in his seminal work "*The Location of Culture*". The term has become a useful term in postcolonial studies and theories (Abou-Agag26).

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According to Bhabha, all cultures are transformed in a space which he calls the Third Space of enunciation. This space is an ambivalent and contradictory state where new hybrid cultural identities are born with less of 'purity' and 'originality'. He adds that cultural meaning'' have no primordial unity or fixity'' in that Third Space which cannot be represented (Bhabha 37 ; Ashcroft et al. 108). Thus, cultural identities are not stable and are in a continuous change.

Moreover, Bhabha has used the term of the 'third space' or the 'interstitial space' to describe how hybrid cultures emerge in this space due to the overlapping of different cultures of the colonized and colonizer. The third space is used as a tool by the colonized in order to defeat the oppression stressed by colonization and free his psychology and mentality as well, and so 'the binary of the self and the other, the colonized and the colonizer, or the east and west'' has been dismantled (Bhandari 171). In this context Lazarus describes Bhabha' third space as "a fighting term, a theoretical weapon, which intervenes in existing debates and resists certain political and philosophical constructions" (Qtd . In Bhandari 172). Flatlander adds that the notion of third space can be described as 'a metaphor, analytical tool, which primarily signifies as a virtual space not a physical room" (Qtd. In Abou-Agag 27). Therefore, the third space is not a real space that is characterized by ambiguity.

To conclude, the overlapping of different cultures leads to creating new hybrid identities within this space that Bhabha calls Third Space. It is seen as a space where the burden of the cultural meaning is hold (Bhabha 38). The Third Space has been created by colonized people to challenge the dominance of the colonial power that intends to blur their indigenous identity and culture as well (38-39).

### 1. 4. 5. The Concept of Cultural Assimilation

Assimilation is a derivative of assimilate which means "to absorb ideas, information, etc in the mind" in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby 61). In the context of cultural assimilation, it occurs when immigrants integrate to the new nation's culture, values and social behaviors. Thus, through assimilation the tension between cultures can be decreased ("Cultural Assimilation").

A simple definition of cultural assimilation can be a process that enables immigrants to adapt and adopt the host land's culture and traditions which are dominant rather than their original culture ("Struggle for Cultural Assimilation"). According to Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, assimilation can be defined as "a process of interpretation and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and by sharing their experience and history are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (Qtd. In Hirsch 35).

To sum up, assimilation can be understood as a way that immigrants need to enable themselves to adapt to the new surroundings with new culture and traditions. Assimilation helps them feel as if they belong to the host land.

### Conclusion

The first chapter has dealt with the conceptual and the theoretical framework of the research. First of all, focusing on defining post-colonialism which is the study that deals with the continuous effects of colonization on the colonized countries till now and postcolonial literature which emerged by writers from formerly colonized countries in order to restore their original history and culture which the imperial power has always tried to distort, dealing with the most prominent writers and the different themes they have examined. Then, moving to define diaspora which is the movement of immigrating from the homeland to settle in a



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foreign land and how diasporic literature has emerged due to the impact of being in diasporic communities in order to transmit their suffering and problems in being caught in between two divergent cultures, and the different issues that diasporic writers have tackled.

At the end, concentrating on the Indian thinker Homi Bhabha 's Theory of the Location of Culture and the major concepts that he has developed. These concepts are the in-betweenness, cultural identity, hybridity, the Third Space and cultural assimilation which are essential terms in his cultural theory, and how new hybrid identities emerge in the third space due to the state of being in between two overlapped cultures.

## Chapter Two:

### Disadvantages of Being In-Between Two Names and Two Cultures

#### Introduction

The Namesake (2003) is a notable work by the American-Indian writer Jhumpa Lahiri who portrays the struggle of two immigrant-generations, the first immigrant-generation which is represented by a Bengali couple that dislocates from the homeland India to relocate in a foreign land America seeking for a better life, and the second immigrant-generation which is represented by their children who suffer the in-betweenness of two different cultures, their culture of origin which they inherit from their parents and the culture of the adopted land where they are born.

The novel depicts how the immigrants, who belong to the second-generation diaspora, are suffering with the state of being in between two cultures which are completely different from each other and how they struggle to create a balance between them to live peacefully. Thus, the study focuses on the male protagonist Gogol who belongs to the second immigrant-generation. Gogol suffers with the state of being in between two distinctive cultures with different traditions, customs, lifestyles and languages, where he faces difficulties in redefining his identity especially with a strange name that is neither American nor Indian, a name that is in all a last name rather than a first name. Mingling between two different cultures and two different identities causes him the feeling of the otherness, belongingness, the uncanny feelings of the unhomeliness and being marginalized. Chapter two then attempts to analyze Gogol's character in the light of Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory of in-betweenness, shedding light on his struggles with redefining his identity and finding his real self.

## 2. 2. Naming Gogol a Bless or a Curse

Gogol was born in a strange world, in a hospital in America surrounded by strangers, where he belongs to no one, unobserved by those his mother loves and is loved. "That it was happening so far from home, unmonitored unobserved by those she loved, had made it more miraculous still. But she is terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare" (Lahiri 12). He is supposed to be born in his land of origin India, in his grandparents' house where "household care, retreating briefly to childhood when the baby arrives" (10).

Gogol Ganguli is the first child of a Bengali couple, a father Ashoke who is a doctoral candidate in electrical engineering at MIT (8) and a mother Ashima who is educated too (13). His father is fond of reading books especially Russian ones like his grandfather who always invites him to read them "Read all the Russians, and then reread them" (18) and a mother fond of cooking in particular mincemeat croquettes which "are one of her specialties" (279).

The parents have received a baby boy. "Baby Boy Ganguli" (28) waiting for a name, a name to be chosen by his great maternal grandmother and to be sent in a letter by mail as a sign of respecting ancestors' cultural traditions and customs to name a baby. «Names can wait" (31), but not in America where the parents are obliged to fill in a birth certificate. In the American society, they cannot wait for a good name to cross the borders to name a baby in America. They cannot understand this tradition to name a baby with a good name. It is not their way to name babies. Thus, they have to choose a name for their first child a name that they have never thought about.

Bengali practice nomenclature in which Bengali families have to choose two names for their children, a pet name "*daknam*" (31) to be used inside the house to be called only by his

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family and relatives, a name which is meaningless, has no aspiration and dignity and never registered(32), and a good name “*a bhalonam*”(31) to be used outside the house by strangers and to be written” on envelopes, on diplomas, and in telephone directories and in all other public places”(32). Good names are very important to the Indians because they represent an important part in shaping one’s cultural identity. They “tend to represent dignified and enlightened qualities” (32), for example “Ashima means “she who is limitless, without borders” (32) and Ashoke which means “he who transcends grief” (32).

Jhumpa Lahiri stresses the importance of names to Bengali families who take care in choosing meaningful good names for their children because they shape someone’s cultural identity which is a very important issue that has been discussed along her novel *The Namesake* where she clarifies the importance of the individual’s culture and backgrounds. The fact that Bengali culture gives more importance to nomenclature in naming their children with two names which are associated with a person’s life till his death. The significance of names is well depicted in the novel where Ashoke and Ashima are waiting for a letter carries a good name for their new born, but unfortunately the letter never arrives. A letter is lost between India and America. And that denotes the great importance of names in the Indian culture because names which make individuals recognize their belongingness to their culture of origin and so their Indianness.

Eventually the baby boy was named Gogol, a name has been chosen, a name which is neither American nor Indian, a Russian name has been chosen by his father for the sake of his favorite Russian writer Nikolai Akaky Gogol. Ashoke is fond of his short stories “*The Overcoat*” that he inherits from his grandfather. Ashoke has a deep relation with the Russian writer who is considered as his savior from an inevitable death in a rail train accident.

At last, a last name is given to the baby instead of a first name. “Gogol enters the world” (35) with a pet name which is meaningless. A strange name that creates a gap in redefining

his cultural identity later on. A name that cannot be taken seriously (35). But in fact, Ashoke the father chooses the name with gratitude (34). According to him Gogol does not remind him of the accident but he reminds him “of everything that followed” (128). A name that symbolizes life and aspiration for Ashoke, a name that has inspired Ashoke to cross the borders of his nation and settle there in America for a better life, in a world where he has reinvented himself.

Ashima's grandmother is dead and so “Gogol will never meet his great-grandmother, the giver of his lost name” (49). Gogol starts his life with his strange pet's name that makes him in a continuous struggle in redefining his cultural identity which is lost in between two worlds with different cultures and traditions.

### **2. 2. 1. Gogol's Conflict with his Name**

Names are very important because they identify the individual's identity. They denote their existence and belongingness to such a society (Sharma and Bakhshi). Gogol the male protagonist of the *Namesake* is suffering in defining his true cultural identity, struggling with a name he is given when he is born. A name that makes him dislocated from the world he lives in. A name that is neither American nor Indian and so Gogol is confused about what culture he should belong to, to the Indian society that represents the minority or to the American one that represents the majority. Jhumpa Lahiri comments:

The question of identity is always a difficult one, but especially so for those who are culturally displaced, as immigrants are, or those who grow up in two worlds simultaneously, as is the case for their children. The older I get, the more aware I am that I have somehow inherited a sense of exile from my parents, even though, in many ways, superficial ones, largely I am so much more American than they are. In fact, it is still very hard to think of myself as an American. For immigrants, the challenges of exile, the loneliness, the constant sense of alienation, the

knowledge of and longing for a lost world, are more explicit and distressing than for their children. On the other hand, the problem for the children of immigrants, those with strong ties to their country of origin, is that they feel neither one thing nor the other. The feeling that there was no single place to which I fully belonged bothered me growing up. It bothers me less now. (Qtd . In Sharma and Bakhshi 78 - 79).

Jhumpa Lahiri asserts that questioning identity becomes a main issue that is discussed in her novel "*The Namesake*" since identity crisis is the major problem that is faced by the first-generation immigrants and their children who are living in between their native culture and the western culture. Gogol, the male protagonist of the namesake and the representative of the second generation of diaspora, is born in America of Bengali parents who give their child a pet name to be a temporary name. A name that they think can be changed in a later stage, but not in America. Gogol is named after his father's favorite Russian writer Nikolai Akaky Gogol that is considered as a symbol of survival. Gogol has got a pet name that is supposed to be used only inside the house by his family and relatives according to their Bengali nomenclature. As Gogol starts his official studies, his father decides to change his name into Nikhil as a good name to be used outside by foreigners, teachers and schoolmates (Lahiri 61, 62). According to this Bengali practice, changing his name is considered as "a sign of cultural belonging, a ritual which accompanies the passage from infancy to childhood" ( Munos 109).

Gogol as a little child cannot understand this Bengali ritual. He cannot accept his new name. He cannot understand what good and pet names mean. Gogol "is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know. Who does not know him" (Lahiri 62). He reacts to his denial to the new name by staying at home and not going to school. Lahiri writes 'There is a reason Gogol doesn't want to go to kindergarten' (61). Gogol cannot accept a name which is unfamiliar. He cannot understand why his parents want to change his name. He is questioning "" Why do I have to have a new name?" (62). That is his first struggle with his dual identity

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that his father has created because of giving him two names, a pet name and a good one, living in between two names symbolizes two identities. That is the first sign of identity crisis that Gogol has to struggle with.

Gogol is growing up and “the peculiarity of his name becomes apparent” (73). At school, teachers oblige him to raise his voice to understand his name and his peers call him as “Giggle” or “Gargle” to make fun of him (72, 73). Gogol becomes more interested in names, in a school trip to a graveyard wandering between graves, he discovers that the names which are written on the tombstones” “...are some names you don't see very often these days” ...names die over time...they perish just as people do” (75). Unexpectedly, Gogol notices that he “has never met another Gogol” (75). That assures him the ambiguity and unfamiliarity of his name.

As Gogol grows up, his identity crisis becomes more complicated because of his name that is unfamiliar and does not relate to him neither as American or Indian. He gets bored of explaining the meaning of his name which is in fact meaningless as Lahiri states below:

For by now, he's come to hate questions pertaining to his name, hates having constantly to explain. He hates to tell people that it does not mean anything “in Indian”. He hates having to wear a nametag on his sweater at Model United Nation Day at school. He even hates signing his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian. (80)

Jhumpa Lahiri assures the importance of names in creating one's cultural identity. “His identity as Gogol, namesake of Nikolai Gogol, the Russian story teller, looms over a longer period of his life, creating a divided self which can't reconcile with his past, present or future, ” Gogol is not able to realize his real self (Sharma and Bakhshi 80). His strange name causes him the feeling of non belonging to the American society that he considers as his land of

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origin, Gogol sees himself as American not Indian. "He feels a lack of culture, and he feels like he does not belong to anywhere" (Qtd . In Nordgren 10). Thus, Gogol isolates himself from his peers, he cannot shorten girls 'names and invite them to parties or date them, "...he can't imagine saying, "Hi, it's Gogol" under potentially romantic circumstances" (Lahiri 81). Gogol is embarrassed by his name; he thinks that he cannot be accepted by his American friends because of his name that seems strange and unfamiliar. " ...to extricate ourselves from the past – from family and obligation and the curse of history' – Boston Globe (Qtd . In the Namesake). "In America anything is possible" (Lahiri 104).

At high school, Gogol rebels against his family and decides to change his name into Nikhil which he is supposed to be named when he is at kindergarten. "Sharif points out that " Adolescence is commonly known as a time of peer identification with an ethnic name. Situational and cognitive factors during adolescence create a disconnection and shift in the identification with an ethnic name" (Qtd . In Neha ). Therefore, Gogol changes his formal name as Nikhil, a name that has first been chosen by his parents. His new name sounds more American, easy to be pronounced and can be shortened as well (Neha). "Sharif elaborates...the differences between the Imaginary and the Symbolic to show us the difference between how we see ourselves and how others see us" (Qtd. In Neha). According to Bhabha, Gogol wants to create a third Space where he can escape from his family that represents the minority of society to America that represents the majority of society where he can live as a free American. By changing his name, "...it is easier to ignore his parents" (Lahiri 108), he excludes himself from his family and his roots that represent the boundaries that restrict his life, he is free from his family expectation. Gogol is living in a new creative space which Bhabha calls the Third Space of enunciation that he defines as "The meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity and fixity" (37). Thus, Gogol transforms his new cultural identity that enables him to participate in the American mainstream, living in a safe space and accepted by others.



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As Nikhil, he feels as ‘an obese to become thin, for a prisoner to walk free. ‘I’m Nikhil’ (Lahiri 106). Gogol is satisfied now by his new life where he has shaped his bicultural identity, he is half American as Nikhil and half Indian as Gogol. He is ready to start his life without feeling embarrassed as before. As Nikhil, he is more American rather than Indian in spite the name has an Indian resonance rather than American. He “is not reminded of his heritage and backgrounds”, he is not reminded of his “Indianness” (Verghese 89). By changing his name, Gogol has opened a space where “he can negotiate his notion of self” (Bran 157).

### 2. 2. 2. Unhomely Gogol

According to Bhabha unhomeliness is used to describe the uncanny feelings associated with someone who is in between two different cultures, the original one and the other of the foreign land. He adds that the unhomeliness refers to the state of being confused where someone has to select either his original culture or the other culture. Thus, the state of being in between two oppositions creates a sense of uncanny or unhomely. The concept of unhomeliness can be applied on diasporic communities where individuals are experiencing the state of being in between two contradictory cultures (Amjad and Albusalih 1226).

Gogol has been always in between since his first sign of life. Gogol has been born to Bengali parents in an American hospital which assures that he is an Indian with an American nationality. Since his first existence he is mingling in between his Indian cultural heritage and his American cultural heritage. Gogol is born as Indian-American citizen. He has been raised in an Indian family where his parents are doing their efforts to keep their traditions and transmit them to their kids because they are afraid to lose these customs in a strange world.

On one hand, Jhumpa Lahiri depicts well that sense of unhomely which is associated with the male protagonist Gogol who is caught between two contradictory cultures, his original

culture that he inherited from his parents and the other one of the country where he was born. At home Gogol is exposed to his culture of origin where his parents are doing their best to maintain it and transmit to their children through practicing their Hindu rituals and ceremonies, celebrating their ancestors' festivals and using their Bengali language as well. Outside Gogol is exposed to the other culture of the host land where he is supposed to be affected by his peers. Thus, Gogol is mingling between two divergent cultures, customs, lifestyles and so on. His cultural conflicts make him confused with a hyphenated identity, and so to what culture he should belong to. According to Bhabha "to be unhomeless does not mean to be homeless" (13), but to belong to nowhere.

Furthermore, Ashoke and Ashima are doing their efforts to make their children love their country of origin and be closer to their relatives through arranging trips to Calcutta. But unfortunately, Gogol and his sister do not show any interest to their homeland. Gogol always considers "India as a primitive setting" because it is less civilized than America. The trips to Calcutta do not help them feel closer to their land of origin. As their trip to India is seen as a "cumbersome". They do not like the food and cannot adjust themselves to the Indian setting. Gogol feels himself as a foreigner in India. He feels that he does not belong to his homeland. His American-accented English also makes him different from his relatives who sees him as an outsider and so he is alienated from his Indian society (khras 5). Lahiri clarifies how Gogol does not feel the sense of belonging to his country of origin "But Gogol knows that eight months is no vacation. He dreads the thought of eight months without a room of his own, without his records and his stereo, without friends. In Gogol's opinion, eight months in Calcutta is practically like moving there, a possibility that, until now, has never even remotely crossed his mind" (88). She adds "They are unaccustomed, after all these months" (89). At India Gogol and his sister cannot adapt the new circumstances "they were not made to survive in a poor country" (90). They prefer to be in their adopted land America where they feel more comfortable "Gogol and Sonia sleep for as long as they want" (91).

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On the other hand, Gogol as a child does not care about his unusual name that his parents have chosen for the sake of his father's favorite writer. But growing up he starts hating his name because he is forced to call out his name when teachers reach his name in the list". In addition, his schoolmates start calling him "Giggle " or "Gargle " in order to make fun of him (72). Gogol is wondering why he is named such an "absurd and obscure" name, a name that is neither American nor Indian but Russian. He hates a pet name becomes his good name (Lahiri 80). Gogol hates a name that he cannot shorten like his American peers do, his name is already short (80-81). Gogol is so depressed by the weirdest nickname that his parents have chosen, a name which has no dignity or gravity. Gogol regrets why he refuses to be Nikhil a name that is chosen by his parents to start his kindergarten (81) He cannot read the book "The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol" that his father has given him as a gift in his fourteenth birthday since because he discovers that his name is not just a pet name but a last name that is turned into a first name, "this double difference marks his othering" and that he is excluded from the American society.

Gogol is not able to accept his odd name as "a sign of uniqueness but rather he "feels like a heavy overcoat to Gogol Ganguli", he is not ready yet to accept his Indian heritage but prefers his "mainstream American identity" (Bran 164) Another reason that makes him feel "his lacking American roots" (161) when he discovers that there is no Ganguli buried in an American cemetery "Gogol is old enough to know that there is no Ganguli here. He is old enough to know that he himself will be burned not buried" he feels that he is not like his American friends. Even though Gogol is born in the United States but he feels that he is not fully American, he is always in a continuous negotiation between his "family space and the American social space " (162). In the cemetery he discovers that his name is strange and no one shares his name, he is an outsider like the other dead bodies whose names are strange (162).

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Gogol becomes more frustrated at high school when his teacher invites them to read 'The Overcoat'. 'Either that or 'The Nose', Nikolai Akaky Gogol's short stories, his grandfather favorite stories than his father. Lahiri describes his uncanny feeling by writing "With growing dread and a feeling of slight nausea...The sight of it printed in capital letters on the crinkly page upsets him viscerally" (93). According to Bhabha, this state describes Gogol troubled psychology because of hearing the name that he is named after, the name that he detests. Gogol becomes voiceless, has no desire to know about the writer or his stories. He hopes if he can say "that's not really me" (93). Gogol hates his name more when he realizes that the writer that he is named for his sake "was reputed to be a hypochondriac and deeply paranoid, frustrated man (95). Gogol is suffering with a name that he unconsciously thinks that he reflects the Russian writer, Nikolai Gogol.

Throughout his childhood, Gogol struggles with his odd name which makes him not able to identify himself, questioning who is he? Gogol is lost, unhomey and feels with lack of belongings. This sense makes him try to change his name for a while in order to be able to date a girl in a party. "' Aren't you going to introduce yourself to me?'" (99). It is his first time to introduce himself as Nikhil, "the other name" that his parents have chosen before to be his good name. Being Nikhil makes him happy and free of restrictions. But in fact, being Nikhil makes him feel as another person not him "' It wasn't me'" (100).

Moreover, Gogol grows up and decides to change his name officially into Nikhil. A name that can make him feel the sense of belonging. But:

There is only one complication: he doesn't feel like Nikhil. Not yet. Part of the problem is that the people who now know him as Nikhil have no idea that he used to be Gogol. They know him only in the present, not at all in the past. But after eighteen years of Gogol, two months of Nikhil feel scant, inconsequential. At times he feels as if he's cast himself in a play, acting part of twins, (Lahiri 109)

Even though Gogol changes his name into Nikhil, he cannot feel as Nikhil. Gogol is struggling with the dual identities he has created by having two names. According to Bhabha's concept of unhomeliness, that reflects his psychology and how he is suffering to adapt and adopt the new situation and surrounding (Amjad and Albusalih 1226), Gogol is struggling in between two identities where he is not able to redefine his real self and who he really is. Gogol has grown with a hyphenated and divided identity.

In addition, the protagonist male Gogol in Jhumpa Lahiri the Namesake is struggling the state of being in between his native culture that he cannot accept and the dominant culture of the host land that he would like to be part of. Gogol cannot accept his native culture that his parents are doing their best to keep. He is more obsessed with the American culture and way of life. It symbolizes freedom whereas his original culture is conservative. The first struggle is with his name that is not neither American nor Indian, a name which is Russian after all. "He feels he is neither here nor there –a truly in-between space" (Qtd . In Batra 59). As Gogol, he cannot feel as an American. He cannot be free in his relationships with girls. He has struggled with his name since his adolescence. At high school, he cannot date girls simply because he cannot say " "I'm Gogol"" (Lahiri 106). Thus, at Yale as a freshman, Gogol decides to change his name into Nikhil which seems like an American name. As Nikhil, he is a new person who seems as an American citizen.

He is free and can engage in relationships with American women. According to Bhabha Gogol is moving from one stage to another, he is moving from being Gogol which represents his past to being Nikhil which represents his present and can build his future. "The new people he met don't know about his old name. Nikhil is his present" (109). Gogol is trying to extract his family from his life because it reminds him of his past, it reminds him of Gogol. In addition, after graduation he moves to live by himself away from his family. Gogol starts his job career as a successful architect. Now he is able to start new life and to date women. Gogol

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meets Maxine who is a white American and makes a strong relation with her and her family. Jhumpa Lahiri clarifies how Gogol is obsessed with her life and her relation with her parents the Rattlifs, who are over in their conversation with each other. He adores their lives because there is 'no sense of obligation' (142) that he feels towards his family. Unlike his family which is very conservative. Lahiri writes:

This, in his opinion, is the biggest difference between them, a thing far more foreign to him than the beautiful house she'd grown up in, her education at private schools. In addition, he is continually amazed by how much Maxine emulates her parents, how much she respects their tastes and their ways. At the dinner table she argues with them about books and paintings and people they knowing common the way one might argue with a friend. There is none of the exasperation he feels with his own parents. No sense of obligation. Unlike his parents, they pressure her to do nothing, and yet she lives faithfully, happily, at their side. (142)

Gogol wants to dislocate himself from his family that represents the minority of society and to relocate himself in the American life which represents the majority of society. According to Bhabha, Gogol is trying to negotiate a space in the dominant society through assimilating the American way of life. In fact, he wants to appear as a white American, forgetting about his origins and neglecting them by cutting his relation with his family who represents that primitive society. Gogol uproots himself from his past life "He didn't want to go home on the weekends, to go with them to puja and Bengali parties, to remain unquestionable in their world" (Lahiri 130) and roots himself in the American society that represents his present. He has excluded himself from the category that is called "ABCs" which means 'American-born confused dashi' He does not want to have ABCD friends because they remind him of his past (Lahiri 121- 123). He is Nikhil now (122), he

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belongs to his present as American not Indian. He would like to be alienated from his origins and to be included in the Western society.

Even though Gogol is now Nikhil but his old name is still as a shadow follows him wherever he goes, he is always reminded by his old name. He is still standing in between two spaces where he is mingling in between his old identity represented by his old name Gogol and his new identity represented by his new name Nikhil. Jhumpa Lahiri is clarifying how he is mingling between his dual identity, he is not able to move forward or to go backward. Outside, he is called as Nikhil by those who do not know about his past. But, at home he is still Gogol, he is still his father's sign of life. "Nikhil evaporates and Gogol claims him again" (Lahiri 110). Gogol is not able yet to escape his past, he cannot fully extract his origins, inside himself he is still Gogol. "Even startling when those who normally call him Gogol refer to him as Nikhil...making him feel in that instant that he is not related to them, not their child" (109). He feels as a stranger to his parents who call him as Nikhil use English instead of Bengali in their conversation when they come to visit him at Yale. In addition, when his father calls him as Gogol in front of his girlfriend Maxine when they come to visit his parents "" Drive safely, Gogol "" (155), a name that he never tells her about, afraid of not being accepted by the dominated society she belongs to. Even though, he is trying to be a part of the American majority, Gogol is still "a part of a minority, an Indian American" (Bran 162).

Throughout the novel, Jhumpa Lahiri is depicting how Gogol is struggling with the state of being in between two different cultures and two identities that have been shaped by his pet's name and good name. She is describing his struggle to discover himself, his true self and how he is trying to reconcile his native culture with his adopted culture. According to Bhabha, diasporic characters are negotiating a space where their identities are transformed, it is the Third Space as Bhabha calls where new hybrid identities are born (Sharma and Bakhshi 83).

## Conclusion

The Namesake novel depicts how the diasporic characters are struggling with the state of being in between two different worlds and how they are fighting to adapt to the new society. It also portrays how they are standing in between two distinctive cultures and how they are attempting to create a balance between them. The focus in chapter two is mainly on the struggle of the second-immigrants generation who are lost in between their native culture and the foreign culture.

Thus, chapter two sheds light on the male protagonist Gogol trying to analyse his character who is lost in between two different cultures and dual identity that is created by two names and how he is trying to find his real self, depending on Homi Bhabha's theory of in-betweenness. The chapter attempted to examine and analyze the disadvantages of being in between two different cultures where Gogol has found himself lost in between them what has caused him to struggle with his identity as he navigates between his Indian heritage and his American upbringing. He has felt then with lack of belonging and the sense of cultural alienation and dislocation from both cultures. He feels neither fully American nor fully Indian.



## Chapter Three:

### Advantages of Being In-Between Two Names and Two Cultures

#### Introduction

Jhumpa Lahiri, in her novel *The Namesake*, is depicting the struggle of Gogol, the male protagonist of the *Namesake* and the representative of the second generation diaspora, who is caught in between two different cultures has caused him the confusion about his real self, he is questioning his real cultural identity, is he American or Indian? Mingling between two cultures, his culture of origin and the culture of the host land, has transformed his hybrid identity. Thus, chapter three attempts to analyse Gogol's hybrid character through Homi Bhabha's in-betweenness theory and how the tension between his conflicting identities can be resolved by creating a balance between his culture of origin and the culture of the host land and how being in between two different cultures can be positive.

#### 3. 2. Gogol in Between Indian and American Heritage

Homi Bhabha defines the in-betweenness as the state of being in between two different cultures, the overlapping of cultures where one culture dominates the other. According to him Gogol is in-betweenness since the first sign of his life " "He's here...a short-lived cry" (Lahiri 28). A boy of Indian origins is born in America and has the right of the American nationality that presents him as an American citizen.

In her novel, Jhumpa is demonstrating the state of being in between two divergent cultures, the experiences of struggling with acculturation, adaptation, assimilation and integration in a foreign society. She depicts how the male protagonist is experiencing the state of being in between his Indian culture of origin that he inherits from his parents who leaves

India to settle in America searching for better opportunities, and the other culture of the host land where he was born. Those experiences reflect Jhumpa Lahiri who herself has experienced.

According to Bhabha, the male protagonist male Gogol is caught between two contradictory cultures with different traditions, customs, languages and different lifestyles. Inside home he is expected to be a pure Indian as his parents wish. They are making efforts to maintain their original customs, traditions and way of life. At home parents use Bengali to deal with their conversations, prepare Indian food, wear traditional clothes for example Ashima is always dressed in her 'sari'. At home she is teaching her son how to say some words used to call family members in the Indian society such as: "Dida, Dada and Mamu" (50). She teaches him "a four –line children's poem by Tugore, and the names of the deities adorning the ten-handed goddess" (59). He is sent to Bengali courses to learn how "to read and write his ancestral alphabet", he and other Bengali children" read handouts written in English about the Bengali Renaissance" (71).

In addition, Gogol is taught how eat food with his fingers without speaking while eating and the plates should be finished, "Ashoke is pained by the half-eaten "food (60). In addition, parents keep their tradition of their ancestors when Gogol is six months, the parents celebrate his 'annaprasan' where the child is feeded solid food which is rice (44).

Bengali parents try to keep their children close and faithful to their religious celebrations: the worship of Druga, Saraswati and pujas (70) and take them to attend the Apu Trilogy and the Kathakali dance performance (71) to make their children learn about their culture of origin and keep them much closer to their origins. Moreover, the Bengali couple takes their children on trips to Calcutta to discover their land of origin, their habits, traditions, customs and the way of life of their ancestors. When Gogol is in the tenth grade, he goes with his family on a

long vacation that lasts eight months in order to be closer to their ancestor's home, be able to accept their origins and meet their relatives who they do not really know (Lahiri 83).

On the other side, when Gogol is four, he is sent to a nursery school where he learns the English alphabet. At home Ashima invites Gogol to watch "*Sesame Street and The Electric Company*" because he needs to keep with his English that he uses at nursery school (57), to be able to communicate with his teachers and peers. His parents celebrate American festivals, feasts and deal with American habits for the sake of their children. They celebrate Christmas, Fanfare the birth of Christ, Easter and prepare a roast turkey for Thanksgiving (70). They allow them to buy American items they like to consume like: cheese, tuna, fish, mayonnaise and hot dogs. Ashima makes them some typical American dishes for example sandwiches with bologna or roast beef and decides to make "an American dinner once a week" (71).

According to Bhabha, "hybridity is a tendency in the confrontation of cultures and not a conscious strategy" (Qtd In. LeBlan). Thus, due to the overlapping of cultures, hybrid cultures emerge. Gogol's hybrid cultural identity has been transformed unconsciously, a mixture of both cultures features the western culture and the eastern one. As Gogol has accepted his belongingness to both cultures, the tension between the two cultures have been resolved.

### **3. 3. Gogol's Hybrid Identity a Cultural Bridge**

Bhabha defines hybridity as "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone" (Qtd. In Al-Thabhawee 23). Thus, being caught in between two different worlds with different cultural heritages, traditions and lifestyles, customs and ways of life, Gogol has transformed his identity as a result of the contact between his native culture and the adopted culture. Bhabha adds that "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity" (37). Gogol has accepted both cultures signs that have shaped his hybrid cultural identity. His identity is a mixture of the cultural elements of each culture.

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Gogol grows as bilingual and bicultural. He masters both languages Indian as well as American and aware of both cultures "My son is perfectly bilingual" (Lahiri 63) which enables him to communicate easily in both societies. Since his childhood Gogol has been exposed to both cultures due to his parents who have always tried to keep their traditions alive and assimilating the host land 'traditions, customs and lifestyles as well for the sake of their children. Thus, Gogol is able to negotiate a space in his private society that represents the minority as an Indian, and to negotiate another space in the public society that represents the majority as American. According to Bhabha, Gogol has transformed his dual identity in that third space in between, a hybrid identity that is mixed of the western culture features and the eastern culture features as well. His hybrid identity has enabled him to overcome the exotic of the contradictory cultures and so create a balance between his culture of origin and the adopted one.

Gogol born to Bengali educated parents who have crossed the borders of their nation to Settle in America that seen as a land of dreams, searching for better opportunities "Who had forsaken everything to come to this to come to this country, to make a better life" (184). Gogol's father has always dreamt to be "as an assistant professor at the university" and so he has been able to achieve that dream "'Professor Ganguli'" (54), a job that has "gained him security and respect" (108). As Gogol was born and raised in such a developed country, he has had a better opportunity for a better education and so for a better career future. Gogol has grown as a brilliant individual since his childhood, "" Gogol is an outstanding student, curious and cooperative, "" his teachers write year after year on report cards" (72) till his career as a successful architect, the job that he has always dreamt to achieve. As a child, he has always been interested in drawing, a gift that he has inherited from his maternal grandfather "his own grandfather was an artist" (Lahiri 108). At school, he has had drawing classes which he enjoys more than the other classes. "In art class, his favorite hour of the week...below paintings" (66).

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American schools encourage students to discover their hidden talents and so they can be able to decide their career since childhood, "The drawing class is held on the top of floor of the public library; on nice days they are taken for a walk the historic district, carrying large sketchpads and pencils, and told to draw the facade of this building or that "(71) .In addition, another trip has been made for the sake of art in a graveyard where students have been asked to rub the surfaces of the gravestones, "to Gogol surprise they are not told to draw "(74) . Gogol has been always interested in art "...draws a floor plan of his maternal grandma's flat ...along the verandas and the terrazzo floors...the chalky blue walls, the narrow stone kitchen, and the sitting room ...He draws in confidence, thanks to the drafting course he is taking this term "(114). He has always been attractive and affected by the architecture of all the different sites he has visited for example in a trip to Calcutta he has been inspired by the architecture of the marble mausoleum found in "Taj Mahal" in Agra, India, "No other building he's seen has affected him so powerfully" (89).

Gogol grows with the ambition of being an architect. At university, Gogol has registered for "Intro to the history of Art [and] drawing class" as well which indicates that he is obsessed by architecture rather than other occupations that his parents have always dreamt their son to be "an engineer, then a doctor, a lawyer, an economist at least" (108). Later on, Gogol has been able to achieve his dream career "he is preparing to take his registration program...enable him to become a licensed...and design things under his name" (193). His career has brought him dignity and so he is able to navigate a secured space within the dominant society "...professions that have earned them security and respect" (108). Lahiri clarifies how he can navigate a place in the majority society and to participate in the white world in spite of all the difficulties that he has to go through searching for his real cultural identity and how he has made himself as an independent individual. Lahiri writes:

...he graduated from the architecture program at Columbia. He's been working since then for a firm in midtown, with celebrated

large-scale commissions to its name. It's not the sort of job he'd envisioned for himself as a student designing and renovating private residences was what he'd wanted to do. That might come later, his advisers have told him; for now, it was important to apprentice with the big names. (129)

In addition, Gogol has grown in a family which has always tried to maintain its original culture's traditions, customs and lifestyle and adopting the mainstream culture as well. Gogol is bicultural par excellence. He is aware of both cultures' traditions, celebrations, rituals of the different stages of human life mainly his Hindu rituals concerning: annaprasan, marriage and death besides to being able to deal with American celebrations as well as Indian ones. Lahiri clarifies:

...a live Christmas tree or an artificial one... They learn to roast turkeys, albeit rubbed with garlic and cumin and cayenne, at Thanksgiving, to nail a wreath to their door in December, to wrap woolen scarves around snowmen, to color boiled eggs violet and pink at Easter and hide them around the house ... they celebrate, with progressively increasing fanfare, the birth of Christ... the worship of Durga and Saraswati. During pujas ...to throw marigold petals at a cardboard effigy of a goddess and eat bland vegetarian food... Christmas, when they hang stockings on the fireplace mantel, and set out cookies and milk for Santa Claus, and receive heaps of presents, and stay home from school. (70)

Studying in American schools where they have different classes "honors U. S history" (92) and having Bengali class at the same time has enriched his knowledge about both countries' cultures and histories "They read about . . . the Bengali renaissance" (71). The school trips and the other trips that his father has always planned to make his kids closer to their relatives and culture of origin have also been beneficial in spite of being not interested in. Through these trips, he has learnt about the rituals of death for each culture. While dead

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bodies in India are swallowed by flames and then the ashes are scattered “in the Ganges” (192), dead bodies in America are “applied lipstick to their corpse and buried in silk-lined boxes” (75-76). “He is old enough to know that himself will be burned not buried” (74). He has also learnt that “the burning ghats” in Calcutta “are the most forbidden places” (76) whereas in America has not that sense since children are taken there for the sake of art, wandering between graveyards (74). He has also discovered his cultural heritage concerning food, habits, sites and so on. Even though he feels discomfort with his Indian heritage he is able to discuss it with his American friend Ruth without being hesitant of doing so (Nordgren 11). Lahiri clarifies how he is able to describe his Indian heritage in details:

He tells her about the tea, how it was bought through the window from me on the platform who poured it from giant aluminum kettles, the milk and sugar already mixed in, and how it was drunk in crude clay cups that were smashed afterward on the tracks. Her appreciation for these details flatters him; it occurs to him that he has never spoken of his experiences in India to any American friend. (115)

Being caught in between two divergent cultures, he has learnt the differences between them differences which enable him to go beyond the boundaries and enjoy these cultural differences. Gogol grows as a bilingual and bicultural individual who is able to live as an American and Indian as well. He can incorporate in his Indian society and the American one as well due to his dual identity. Thus, he is able to participate in both societies.

As growing in a hybrid society, half Indian half American, Gogol is able to succeed in his life and to manage it carefully. He has been accepted by the white society “But you’re different” (142). He does not look like the other Indians, Maxine and her family have accepted Gogol to integrate easily in their lives, to participate in their parties and be part of it. “Within six months he has the keys to the Ratliff’s house” (143). He is able to navigate a place within their lives. “They are at once satisfied and intrigued by his background, by his

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years at Yale and Colombia, his career as an architect, his Mediterranean look" (137). He recognizes that his profession as an architect would make him more accepted by Americans. He has learned the different lifestyles of Americans. He has recognized the difference between both cultures' traditions, customs and lifestyles. Lahiri clarifies these differences:

.... His own mother would never have served so few dishes to a guest. She would have kept her eyes trained on Maxine's plate, insisting she have seconds and then thirds. The table would have been lined with a row of serving bowls so that people could help themselves. But Lydia pays no attention to Gogol's plate. She makes no announcement indicating that there is more. (136 – 137)

Gogol has learnt the differences between his family eating habits and the one of the Americans. That they have their meals "in a complete silence, the television turned off" (185), Indians do not speak while eating whereas Americans have their meals with unfinished conversations about different topics. He has also learnt the difference in celebrating such an occasion, how their parties are crowded. His parents invite "close to forty guests" bringing all of their children, women in traditional clothes "sari" and men "sit in a circle on the floor and...start a game of poker" (77). Serving Indian food that his mother has prepared days before because there have been many people to be served. Unlike American parties which are different from theirs, "...only a dozen or so guests sitting around the candlelit table" (144). He has learnt that as an Indian, he should use his fingers instead of using the fork and to put on slippers indoors (86) instead of keeping in their shoes like Americans do, wandering with his running sneakers inside the house and using a fork from time to time (80).

Bhabha argues that "'The fluidity of the hybrid' is finally uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self / other, inside / outside (116)'" (Qtd in LeBlanc). Being hybrid, Gogol has broken the dichotomies of being neither the other nor the self and being neither insider nor outsider. He is in-betweenness, mixed of Western and Eastern cultural identities.



To sum up, although Gogol has suffered his hard experiences in being in between two different cultures searching for his belongingness and struggling with the complexities of his cultural identity, he has created his hybrid identity which has enriched and strengthened his character. His dual identity has helped him to live peacefully in between his culture of origin and the received culture. Gogol has redefined himself with an Indian-American identity. He is then neither fully American nor fully Indian, he is part of both territories. Thus, the tension between cultures has diminished.

### **3. 4. Gogol's Consciousness of his Indianness**

Ultimately, Gogol is able to recognize himself and find the real self of being an Indian born in America. His father's death is the turning point in his life that makes him discover his real identity. After his father's death, Gogol is ready to go back to his family and "finds the 'Gogol' inside himself" (Khrais 8).

Gogol is able to root himself in his Indian identity. He is able to recognize his authentic identity after a long struggle with assimilating the western culture, distancing his family and neglecting his culture of origin. He is less interested in the American life that he has obsessed throughout his life. He has distanced himself from Maxine who represents the white-dominant society "He stepped out of Maxine's life for good" (Lahiri 192) because "His father's death doesn't affect her" (186). Gogol has changed his tendency towards his culture and he is ready now to belong to his Bengali community that represents the minority of society (Mohamed and Solomon 188).

His father's death is considered as a shock to Gogol who cannot imagine his life without his father (Lahiri 173). Gogol, who has already known about the real reason of his name, a sense of life for his father, cannot believe that his father is really dead, he is "still thinking that perhaps it's a mistake that a tap on his father's shoulder will wake him" (176). He is not able

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to accept his father's death, his father who has called him by his old name Gogol for the last time when he has come to deposit his family for a trip "Drive safely, Gogol" (155). He hopes if he can "touch his father's face...to see if he had a fever" (177). He feels the guilt that he has distanced himself from his family.

Jhumpa Lahiri clarifies how Gogol accepts his self as an Indian, as a real Bengali son who starts practicing his hideous rituals for the wake of his father's death. According to Bengali customs, the son has to shave his head, it is a duty of a Bengali son that he has not been able to understand as a child. It reminds him of his father who has shaved his head for the wake of his father's death (183). Another Bengali custom is that the members of the family have to eat a mourner's diet consisted of only "rice and dal and vegetables" there should be no fish or meat (185). This Bengali habit reminds him of his mother who has been angry since he has had a hamburger because his grandparents have died. He has not able to accept such a ritual "no one else he knew followed" (185). But now he is able to accept his Indian rituals, customs, traditions and his Bengali language through practicing them without feeling ashamed. At last, Gogol "accepts the new signs of his hybrid identity" (Qtd . In Mohamed and Solomon 190). These symbols denote his acceptance and belongingness to his native culture.

Gogol is getting matured and he can understand the significance of these hindous rituals. He can understand how his parents have suffered the state of being far away from their families and how they have not been able to attend their parents' funerals "He knows now the guilt his parents carried...when their parents had died in India, of arriving weeks...months later ...nothing left to do" (Lahiri 183). He is able to understand how his parents have struggled to integrate in a new society and assimilate its traditions, language, customs and ways of life, a sense that he has experienced due a trip with Moushumi to a foreign land Paris that he has never visited before, "...he feels more apologetic...useless...mute...a language he

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doesn't understand ...he feels the slight nostalgia" (236 -238). "He realizes ...what their parents had done in America. What he, in all likelihood, will never do" (238). As a matured man, he can recognize the difficulties that his parents have to overcome to be able to live in a strange land and how they have been marginalized because of their strange English accent "...in stores, of cashiers, smirking at his parent's accent, and of salesmen who prefer to direct their conversation to Gogol" (73). He knows now why they have isolated themselves from the others and stayed closer to their Bengali friends who share the same past and so they represent their solace in such a strange land. They have not been fully accepted by others "He struggles to grasp the topic of conversation" (236). Although their sever struggle but they have succeeded in creating a balance between the two cultures and so they have negotiated a secured space in the host land.

His parents have always maintained their native culture through celebrating their Indian customs, traditions, and using their Bengali language that Gogol has been bored by them. On the other side, they have integrated the host land 's customs and tradition and they have learned how to celebrate Christmas, Easter, and how to cook some typical dishes like the roast turkey for Thanksgiving and using English as well. Gogol feels guilty to be late to understand "that his parents had gone to the trouble of learning these customs. It was for their sake" (290). Gogol is able to realize that his parents have faced a lot of difficulties to move from one culture to another and how they have struggled to adapt the new world (Verghese 89).

Mohamed and Solomon argue that "immigrants are always immersed in expectations and uncertainty often which makes them shift between identities" (189). Gogol reflects that state in which he is shifting between two identities as Indian and as American at the same time. He is still in the between space. He is so closer to his family after his father's death but at the same time he is back to his ordinary life as an American participant (189). "He still lives in New York, rents in his apartment... works for the same firm" (Lahiri 192).

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Gogol is now aware of his Indian traditions and customs that he has willingly accepted them. He is the obedient Bengali who respects and accepts his mother's perspectives. He is closer to his family and he is ready to accept an arranged marriage, his mother suggests him to have a Bengali wife Moushumi "...he wants to make his mother happy...He refuses to go that far" (196). He is the one who is responsible for his family after his father's death. Jhumpa Lahiri shows how he is able to accept his Bengali marriage rituals surrounding by a lot of Bengalis (225) and some closest Ganguli (226) that he has rejected before, serving Indian food (225). And wearing traditional clothes, Gogol wears "a parchment-colored Punjabi top that had once belonged to his father a prepleated dhoti with a drawstring waist, a pair of nagrai slippers with curling toes" (226). He is ready now to:

...join the crowded party, photographing the people in his parents' life, in this house, one last time, huddled on the sofas, plates held in their laps, eating with their hands. Eventually, at his mother's insistence, he will eat as well, seated cross legged on the floor, and speak to his parents' friends, about his new job, about New York, (Lahiri 294).

Eventually, Gogol recognizes his Indianness. He is able to reconcile his Indian heritage with his American one. According to Homi Bhabha, Gogol permits the overlapping of "the two cultures in one cultural Zone" (Khrais 8). Thus, Gogol has created his dual identity in a space that Bhabha calls the Third Space of enunciation where he redefines himself with an Indian-American identity. In the point view of Bhabha, Gogol's hybrid identity has helped him to overcome his conflicting identities and decrease the tension between his native culture and his adopted culture. He realizes that he belongs to Indian origins but born and raised in America. He recognizes that he has been affected "mentally and subconsciously by his western world", his schoolmates, university colleagues and" coworkers. Gogol can realize how it is valuable to be in between two cultures that make him "genuinely a symbolic

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embodiment of the new hybrid generation" (Khrais 8). He is able to live as an American citizen of Indian origins. Gogol is able to redefine himself as "a descendent of a Bengali family within a white-dominant society" (8).

In addition, Gogol's mother decision to leave America and go back to live in India has proved him how his mother is important in his life particularly when he and Moushumi have decided to end their marriage. He recognizes that his mother is not just his "home" but she symbolizes "India" whereas his apartment symbolizes America. His mother who has never given up his indigenous culture since her first day in America as Indian citizen till her decision to go back to India. Gogol can understand the value of his mother who has a great role in shaping their lives in America (Mohamed and Solomone 190). Gogol is aware of the importance of his family and the double burden they have carried along their lives in a strange land far away from their home land starting from his father's train wreck, moving to the loss of a letter carrying his good name, his marriage's failure, his father's death and finally his mother who decides to go back to India. "And yet all these events have formed Gogol, shaped him, determined who he is" (Lahiri 290- 291).

From the point view of Homi Bhabha each identity is "productive and innovative" (1). Thus, Gogol is able to transform his hybrid subject within the interaction of the two cultural spaces and accepts his new hybrid identity signs (Khrais 9). "Peterson and Rutherford (2003) suggest that the search for one's roots can be positive or may lead to narrow nationalism", (Qtd. In Khrais 9). Lahiri clarifies that is Gogol is able to find his "Third Space" where he discovers that searching for his native roots is "a positive force". Gogol finally decides to search for his roots and identify himself as an Indian-American citizen. "He is now a part of two cultural horizons" where he joins "the two different spaces of the American culture and the Indian heritage in one-third space" (Khrais 9). "But you're Indian" (Lahiri 162), is considered as a "loud" objection by the white woman Pamila who is one of the Ratliff's

friends. She categorizes him as the "Other" who can never be sick or affected because he belongs to India. Thus, Gogol accepts his real self as an Indian born in America (Khrais 9).

Gogol is ready now to read his father's favorite book "*The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol*" (Lahiri 292) that he has been given as a gift for his Fourteenth birthday. Gogol is "The man who gave you his name, from the man who gave your name" (192). "The name he had so detested, here hidden and preserved—that was the first thing his father had given him" (293). Eventually, Gogol has understood how much his name is important to his father. He has recognized the significance of his name that indicates a sign of change to what it is better. His name is a sign of aspiration and ambition. His father's survival of the train's accident due to Gogol the Russian writer has changed his father's destiny to go abroad searching for a better future "... he applied to continue his engineering abroad" (26) and so he has been able to achieve his career dream to be a lecturer at university. "Read all the Russians, and then reread them ... they will never fail you" (18). Russians have never failed his father; Russians have survived him in fact. He is aware now of the real reason of his father's limp that he has thought it has been just a "consequence of an injury playing soccer in his teens" (79).

Gogol or Nikhil is still one person, an Indian born in America. "But you're Indian" (162), it assures that Gogol has never been seen as an American as he has thought, he has been always seen as an Indian who belongs to the ABCDs category that he has never thought to be part of them. Even though he has had an American citizenship, it has never confirmed his belongingness to America "Nick's American...He was born here ... Weren't you" (162), he has always belonged to his land of origin, India. Nikhil "who is entire, encompassing all total" (61) is ready to continue his life with the spirit of Gogol without the people who have used to call him as Gogol. Lahiri writes:

... The givers and keepers of Gogol's name are far from him now. One dead. Another, a widow, on the verge of a different sort of departure,

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in order to dwell, as his father does, in a separate world. She will call him, once a week, on the phone. She will learn to send e-mail, she says. Once or twice a week, he will hear "Gogol" over the wires, see it typed on a screen. As for all the people in the house, all the mashes and meshes to whom he is still, and will always be, Gogol—now that his mother is moving away, how often will he see them? Without people in the world to call him Gogol, no matter how long he himself lives, Gogol Ganguli will, once and for all, vanish from the lips of loved ones, and so, cease to exist. Yet the thought of this eventual demise provides no sense of victory, no solace. It provides no solace at all. (293 – 294)

Gogol has understood that he cannot forget about his past and live just in his present. Both of them have shaped his cultural identity, his past that represented by Gogol and his present that is represented by Nikhil. He has understood that the one cannot ignore or neglect his culture of origins because it is a part of the human's psyche. He has recognized that each culture is unique and has its particular characteristics that should be respected and accepted by others. Gogol has decided to continue his life in-betweenness, in between his Indian heritage and his American heritage getting benefits from both cultures. Now, Gogol belongs to everywhere he goes, either here or there, he is a part of both spaces. At the end of his journey searching for his real self, he recognizes that his name Gogol which "has held the key of self-knowledge", he is able then to reconcile "himself to his unique position as a diasporic individual situated on a strategic border zone between cultures" (Bran 157). Gogol is "ready to put the pieces together and generate a new, all-encompassing self" (Bran 192).

## Conclusion

Chapter three has analyzed the character of Gogol, the main protagonist of the Namesake, who is struggling with the overlap of two different cultures through Homi Bhabha's cultural theory of In-Betweenness where he finds himself in a continuous search for his lost cultural identity. Thus, being in between two divergent cultures has shaped Gogol's hybrid cultural identity. This cultural identity, which has been transformed in the third space, is neither pure nor stable but in a continuous change seeking to negotiate a space in both cultures. Thus, chapter three dealt with the advantages of being in-betweenness and how Gogol can get benefits from both cultures. His experiences with two different cultures have allowed him to overcome cultural gaps and differences.

The chapter has concluded that Gogol is able to accept himself as a diasporic individual who is situated in between two different cultures, his culture of origin and the culture of the host land. Gogol is able to create his hybrid cultural identity as Indian -American in the Third Space of enunciation as Bhabha calls, in which he has joined the two parts of his self. His new hybrid identity is a mixture of both cultures, the Western culture and the Eastern one as well. Gogol grew up as bilingual and bicultural par excellence. By accepting his hybrid identity, he is able to overcome all the difficulties and the problems that he faced along his journey searching for his true cultural identity. Finally, Gogol accepts himself as an Indian-American born, he is matured enough to understand that he belongs to his Indian origins and that he was born and raised in America.



## General Conclusion

This dissertation investigated the notion of in-betweenness in Jhumpa Lahiri's "*The Namesake*". The dissertation focused on solving the problems and difficulties that faced by the male protagonist Gogol who belongs to the second-generation diaspora and caught in between his Indian heritage and American upbringing. In addition, his dual identity that was shaped due to having two names which caused him to be confused about his real self and to feel with lack of belongingness. His cultural conflicts between his native culture and the adopted culture led him to struggle in identifying his real cultural identity and to feel with the sense of non-belonging to any culture.

Thus, the dissertation tended to solve these problems through dividing the work into three chapters. The first chapter dealt with explaining the post-colonialism theory which first used by Homi Bhabha in which he emphasizes on the binary opposition of colonizer-colonized, superior-inferior, civilized-bject and subject. In addition, defining post-colonial literature, diaspora and diaspora literature that has emerged to tackle the various issues faced by diasporic communities.

Moreover, chapter one focused on Homi Bhabha's cultural notion of in-betweenness focusing on his major concepts of: hybridity, cultural identity, the Third Space and cultural assimilation in order to analyze Gogol's hybrid character in the novel "*The Namesake*". Chapter two dealt with the disadvantages of being caught in between two different names within different cultures. This cultural conflict caused him struggling to redefine his true cultural identity and suffer a sort of inner conflict because of his dual identity that was transformed due to his two names, his pet's name and his good name. Whereas chapter three dealt with the advantages of being caught in-between two names within two contradictory cultures where Gogol tried to reinvent himself and recognize his real cultural identity.

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Furthermore, the analysis of the novel "*The Namesake*" in chapter two and three based on Homi Bhabha's cultural theory of in-betweenness focusing on his concepts of hybridity, cultural identity, the Third Space and cultural assimilation, concluded that Gogol Ganguli found his third space where he transformed his new hybrid cultural identity that is not pure but mixed of both cultural features, his Indian culture and the American one as well. Gogol found his inner peace through accepting himself as a diasporic individual standing in between two different cultures. Although Gogol faced many difficulties and troubles in being in between two cultures which are completely different, he succeeded to create a balance between both of them. He could reconcile his native Indian heritage with his American one. Therefore, his new hybrid cultural identity helped him to overcome all the difficulties and accept his two parts of the self as an Indian - American citizen.

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**Appendix**

**Biography of Jhumpa Lahiri**



Jhumpa Lahiri (born July 11, 1967, London, England) is an English-born American novelist and short-story writer whose works illuminate the immigrant experience, in particular that of East Indians.

Lahiri was born to Bengali parents from Calcutta (now Kolkata)—her father a university librarian and her mother a schoolteacher—who moved to London and then to the United States, settling in South Kingstown, Rhode Island, when she was young. Her parents



nevertheless remained committed to their East Indian culture and determined to rear their children with experience of and pride in their cultural heritage. Lahiri was encouraged by her grade-school teachers to retain her family nickname, Jhumpa, at school. Although she wrote prolifically during her precollege school years, she did not embrace a writer's life until after she graduated (1989) with a B. A. in English literature from Barnard College and obtained three master's degrees (in English, creative writing, and comparative literature and arts) and a doctorate (in Renaissance studies) from Boston University in the 1990s.

While in graduate school and shortly thereafter, Lahiri published a number of short stories in such magazines as *The New Yorker*, *Harvard Review*, and *Story Quarterly*. She collected some of those stories in her debut collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). The nine stories, some set in Calcutta and others on the U. S. East Coast, examine such subjects as the practice of arranged marriage, alienation, dislocation, and loss of culture and provide insight into the experiences of Indian immigrants as well as the lives of Calcuttans. Among the awards garnered by *Interpreter of Maladies* were the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the 2000 PEN/Hemingway Award for Debut Fiction.

Lahiri next tried her hand at a novel, producing *The Namesake* (2003; film 2006), a story that examines themes of personal identity and the conflicts produced by immigration by following the internal dynamics of a Bengali family in the United States. She returned to short fiction in *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), a collection that likewise takes as its subject the experience of immigration as well as that of assimilation into American culture. Her novel *The Lowland* (2013) chronicles the divergent paths of two Bengali brothers. The tale was nominated for both the Man Booker Prize and the National Book Award and earned Lahiri the 2015 DSC Prize for South Asian Literature, a prize established in 2010 by infrastructure developers DSC Limited to honour the achievements of South Asian writers and "to raise awareness of South Asian culture around the world."

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Lahiri was presented a 2014 National Humanities Medal by U. S. Pres. Barack Obama in 2015. That same year she published her first book written in Italian, *In altre parole* (In Other Words), a meditation on her immersion in another culture and language. Lahiri continued writing in Italian, and in 2018 she released the novel *Dove mi trovo* (Whereabouts). She translated the work into English, and during this time she also began translating Italian-language books by other authors. These experiences inspired the essay collection *Translating Myself and Others* (2022). ([Jhumpa Lahiri | Biography, Books, & Facts | Britannica](#)).

### Summary of the Novel

“The Namesake” (2003) by Jhumpa Lahiri is a story that centered on its protagonist Gogol Ganguli who was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1968. Gogol was born in

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America to Bengali parents Achoke who is a candidate in electrical engineering at MAT and a mother Ashima who is educated too. The Gangulis are waiting for a good name to be chosen by Ashima's great grandmother and sent by mail from Calcutta to Cambridge. Unfortunately, the letter that carries Gogol's good name never arrives, it is lost somewhere between two worlds, India and America.

Thus, the Bengali parents are obliged to name their son after his father's favorite Russian writer Nikolai Gogol who is considered as a symbol of life and as his savior from an inevitable death in a train accident. Gogol is registered as his official name in his certificate of birth. As Gogol starts his official studies, his parents decide to change his name into Nikhil but he does not accept. According to Bengali nomenclature, every Indian child is given two names, a pet name and a good name. The pet name to be used at home and to be called by just family members and relatives whereas the good name is used outside home and to be officially registered. Gogol does not accept his new name because he is not able to understand what is the cultural meaning of a good name and pet name. As a young, he is not able to recognize the cultural weight of these names which later on lead him to his inner conflicts with names and a great struggle with his cultural identity.

As Gogol is growing up, he starts to feel frustrated because his peers at school are calling him as "Gargle" and "Giggle" and sometimes they shout "Go Gogol" in order to mock him. In a school trip to a cemetery in America, Gogol recognizes the oddness of his name that no one in the world shares his strange name and so he starts wondering why he is named such an unusual name, a pet name turned into a good name but even more a last name turned into a first name. At high school, Gogol becomes more frustrated because he learns that the writer he is named after is a frustrated man and so he decides to change his name into Nikhil a name which has an Indian resonance and is more acceptable by Americans, the mainstream he longs to assimilate rather than keeping with his Indian heritage.

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Moreover, at Yale Gogol decides to change his name officially and so he starts to accept himself as an American rather than an Indian. Later on, he discovers the real reason of his name that the book of *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol* which saved his father, what makes him feel the guilt of changing his name, he is now aware of his name's giver. After graduating from Yale, he starts his career as a successful engineer. He is introduced to the world of whites by Maxine his girlfriend, a world which he is so obsessed with. Thus, he starts isolating himself from his family and Bengali heritage to join the whites' world.

Furthermore, after his father's death, Gogol decides to break down with Maxine and return to his family where he accepts himself as an Indian, respecting and practicing his Bengali rituals in his father's mourning. Gogol accepts to get married with Moushumi who shares with the same Bengali heritage. But unluckily, his marriage does not succeed and so he decides to get divorced. At the last of his journey, Gogol is at his room on Pemberton Road reading his book "*The Overcoat Short Stories*", his father's gift on his fourteenth birthday. The book that he has ignored for years. Gogol has recognized that the right meaning of belonging is to belong to the family, homeland and one's native culture.

### ملخص

جومبالاهيري هي من بين الكتاب ما بعد الاستعمار الذين عانوا من الصعوبات والتعقيدات المختلفة لكونهم نتاج حالة الشتات. تنعكس تجاربها في عملها "السمي" حيث تصوّر حياة الشتات لجيلين من المهاجرين الذين يكافحون ضد حالة "البيئية". تركز الدراسة على الشتات من الجيل الثاني الذين يجدون أنفسهم عالقين بين ثقافتين متباينتين، ثقافتهم الأصلية وثقافة البلد المُستضيف. وبالتالي، تحقق الأطروحة في الصراعات الثقافية التي يواجهها المهاجرون الذين ينتمون الى الجيل الثاني من الهجرة وكيف يجدون أنفسهم في حالة من الارتباك حول هويتهم الثقافية الحقيقية وفقدان الشعور بالانتماء. تعتمد المذكرة على النظرية الثقافية للبيئية لهومي بابا لتحليل قضايا الهُجّة الثقافية وكيفية تحول الهويات الهجينة في العصر ما بعد الاستعماري. تهدف الدراسة إلى إظهار الصعوبات والتعقيدات التي يواجهها جوجول، بطل رواية "السمي" لجومبالاهيري الذي يجد نفسه ضائعاً بين ثقافة وطنه الأصلي وثقافة البلد المستضيف، مما يجعله مرتبكاً حول هويته الثقافية الحقيقية. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على النظرية ما بعد الاستعمارية الممثلة في النظرية الثقافية للبيئية لهومي بابا لتقديم من اجل لدراسة و تحليل المشاكل التي يعاني منها جوجول في تحديد هويته الثقافية الحقيقية. توضح الدراسة كيف يتأثر أفراد حالة الشتات بحالة البيئة، مما يؤدي إلى الهُجّة الثقافية.

**الكلمات الرئيسية:** الشتات، نظرية هومي بابا موقع الثقافة، البيئية، الهوية الثقافية، رواية جومبالاهيري "السمي"