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## Bicultural Ambivalence in JhumpaLahiri's *The Namesake*

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### ABSTRACT

The bicultural ambivalence in JhumpaLahiri's work *The Namesake* is the subject of this paper. Lahiri addresses the difficulties faced by second-generation immigrants. The importance of family bonds and the loss of identity are the significant themes in this work. Lahiri presents immigrants as struggling to live, but she focuses on their relationship with their American-born children and their attachment to a country. The character Gogol Ganguli, a second-generation immigrant, is the centre of this paper, which discusses his problem with accepting his ethnic identity and his double consciousness. Gogol separates himself into two halves. He claims to have two selves, one named Gogol and the other named Nikhil. Gogol's perseverance as a second-generation immigrant in recognizing his bicultural identity as an American and an Indian is remarkable.

**Keywords:** Cultural Identity, Double Consciousness, Diaspora, Biculturalism.

Diaspora is a term used to describe a group of individuals who originated in one country but now resides in another. It is separated into two parts in Indian diasporic works. The first is forced migration, while the second is voluntary migration. Compelled migration occurs when authors are forced to leave their home country and settle in another country for various reasons.

Voluntary migration means that the authors are not forced to leave their own nation in order to reside in another.

In terms of Indian diasporic literature, a large number of Indian writers have contributed to the field. Salman Rushdie and V.S. Naipaul are two famous Indian authors who have contributed to

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Indian Diaspora literature. Jhumpa Lahiri, Amitav Ghosh, and Rohinton Mistry have all achieved excellence.

*The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri is one such novel that embraces the distinctiveness of the Diaspora's need for home. By now, it should be evident that the issue of rootlessness is too widespread and variedly addressed by numerous Diaspora literature experts and virtually every second researcher mentions this experience of homelessness anytime Diaspora is discussed. However, when we read Jhumpa Lahiri's novel, we get the impression that the author has approached the subject from the standpoint of women.

The distinction is in its approach, and we can see that Lahiri is more concerned with mental Diaspora than physical Diaspora. Most of us who are familiar with Diaspora literature are aware that this novel was first published as a novella in the *New Yorker* and then turned into a film by Meera Nair. The plot of the book shifts from Calcutta to New York City to Boston, highlighting the nuances that exist between these two civilizations.

Ashoke, Ashima, and their son Gogol Ganguli are the central characters in this novel. It primarily focuses on their feelings of 'To be or not to be,' in William Shakespeare's words. They are attempting to establish themselves in a civilization that they have adopted as their own, but the question is how much they will eventually embrace the foreign culture and society in which they have chosen to reside.

Misappropriation occurs because she is relocated more mentally than physically through marriage from Calcutta's hot humid but colorful and bright weather to New York City's frigid white landscape. The coldness of the weather overwhelms her entire mentality, and she tries in vain to identify herself with the surrounding, food, and people.

The author paints a magnificent picture of the contrast between the two civilizations and societies. The author accurately expresses the

difficulty of all immigrants who feel homeless even in their so-called home in a foreign place; however, the crisis of homelessness is more severe for the second generation of immigrants, who have grown up with the feeling of being strangers in their own house. The house where they live with their biological parents is a strange world to them, and the people who live there have a completely different way of life than they do. These offspring are unsure of what to label their own culture as they grow up. They are always perplexed.

The mother of these children faces a serious difficulty while grooming the youngsters in a strange place. These mothers, like Ashima in the novel, try valiantly to suppress in their children their ethnicity, which their children silently try to reject and ignore. This indifferent attitude of her own child pains the immigrant mother, for whom the child is the only way she can keep her tradition alive and vibrant in a foreign land.

The novel concludes by implying that the migrants must recognize that their identity issue is not geographical or physical, but rather transcends the corporeal; it is constantly broadening and never changing. It's as widening as the ocean's two coasts, which are never seen but always present; all one needs to know is that they can't meet but are always present and invincible pieces of the planet.

In this novel, Gogol Ganguli has a double personality. Gogol believes he has two selves, one of which is Gogol and the other is Nikhil. According to family history, his parents gave him the nickname Gogol. Gogol was born in the United States, yet he practices Indian culture. He sees Gogol as an Indian and Nikhil as an American after changing his name to Nikhil. Nikhil believes that as Nikhil, he is more confident than as Gogol. He was called Gogol and had to wear a nametag at school because his parents hadn't decided on his actual name yet. This was one of the reasons he despised the term.

Ashoke and Ashima, the novel's first generation immigrants, move from India and settle in the United States. They follow their tradition, Ashoke and Ashima prepare Indian cuisine that reflects Indian culture. Gogol and his sister Sonali, on the other hand, are second-generation immigrants. They have the freedom to determine their cultural identity as second-generation immigrants. They have the option of choosing between American and Indian cultures.

Gogol was born in America, and there are a few instances in which he demonstrates his Americanness. After changing his identity to Nikhil, he has a number of love affairs. He only had his first love, Ruth, an English major, after changing his name. They were together for only two years before breaking up. Maxine Ratliff, a historian, falls in love with Gogol once more. Gogol is enthralled by them and lives with them as a substitute for his own home. He feels as if he is growing up in two cultures while living with the Ratliffs.

After his father's death, he ends his relationship with Maxine Ratliff and returns to his family for solace. He later meets and marries Moushumi Mazoomdar. Though they are happy in their

marriage, Gogol learns that she is having an affair with her old crush, Dimitri Desjardins. To overcome his bicultural identity, Gogol practices selective acculturation, in which he aligns himself with American culture while simultaneously retaining some Indian characteristics. Gogol finds it simpler to overcome his bicultural identity and integrate into the community as a result of this exercise.

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