



## DIASPORIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S THE NAMESAKE

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### **Abstract:**

This research paper attempts to shed light on the Indian Diaspora and analyse diversity in relation to Jhumpa Lahiri's novel's themes of alienation and identity. Such individuals or populations that depart from their own country and relocate to a location that is far from their ancestral homes or indigenous territory are referred to be "Diasporas." Jhumpa Lahiri writes on alienation and diaspora, between the memories of her native country and this strange new place. In the field of diaspora, the psychological theme is also very important in determining the framework. The immigrants are engaged in a never-ending mental and emotional struggle between the freedom of the new world and the myth and customs of the old one, to which they are deeply rooted. She discusses the generational divide among immigrants, the tension between East and West ideologies, nostalgia, cultural displacement, identity loss, alienation, and hopelessness in her 2004 novel *The Namesake*. Lahiri always talks about how different cultures clash and how people try to figure out who they are. Her skill at portraying people also lets her write about some real native characters with a great message. The people that Jhumpa Lahiri creates are true to the message she wants to send to her readers. Sometimes these characters have their own personalities and sometimes they're just supporting roles. But what drives Diaspora writers most is remembering and feeling connected to their own original people, as well as having a nostalgic experience.

**Key Words:** Nostalgia, Immigrant, Identity, Belongingness, Cultural Displacement Etc.

### **Introduction:**

Among the Diaspora writers, Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the most well-known Indian-American writers. In other words, she is part of the second wave of the Diaspora group. The main goal of diaspora writing isn't clear, but it shows what's going on in the minds of writers who have left their home country and are now living in a strange one. It shows the places and people they are surrounded by since they left their home country. Sometimes the tension can be found in nostalgic feelings and happy times spent with close friends and family. Sarita in her scholarly paper observes; "Generally, diasporic literature deals with alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, quest of identity. It also addresses issues related to synthesis or disintegration of cultures, as they are torn between the two places, cultures and often languages" (Samuel f137). So, it becomes important for a diasporic writer to present the real situation of people. Again, Sarita comments on while talking about the Diaspora writers:

Diasporic writers tend to portray the cultural dilemmas, the generational differences, and transformations of their identities during displacement. The spirit of exile and alienation enriches the diasporic writers to seek rehabilitation in their writings and establish a permanent place in English Diasporic literature (Samuel f140).

Jhumpa Lahiri writes about how foreigners are discriminated against and forced to live in a land they don't know. She also writes about how she feels about how Americans can't connect all levels of their lives to their family history. In her role as a writer of the diaspora, Jhumpa Lahiri has also chosen to write about the main issues of the diaspora, purposefully taking into account and portraying the identity crisis of immigrants, cultural and racial divergence, mental alienation, and the loss of a sense of belonging. It appears that the history of immigration is the history of feeling left out and misguided in a foreign land with unintended consequences. We might conclude that there is a trade taking place between the expatriates and their sacrifices by closely examining her texts. Her immigrant protagonists gain financial security at the expense of their sense of self and community. The majority of her literary works revolve on the idea of self-discovery and identity loss. She moves characters in the right direction towards a search that implies both an inner and an exterior self through her writings. Her topic originates not just from the characters' self-realization but also from the social mores that her characters attempt to fit into. Here, it undergoes a fixed kind of metamorphosis in which different languages and cultures mix and change, losing their original characteristics.

People make an effort to cling to the outlines of the past by making those outlines a permanent part of their lives. Additionally, they look for a way to evaluate the use of their time and improve upon the quality of the past relative to the present. It is possible to argue, from a psychological point of view, that the gone era exerts power over their mind and is responsible for the sentiments and emotions that they experience. There are occasions when this circumstance results in a state of dilemma, which in turn produces inner conflicts. The writings of Lahiri are helpful in understanding the multi-cultural reality, and they highlight tearing down barriers

between countries and the globalisation that is currently taking place around the world. By means of her writings, she is able to return to her own place and, in a sense, assume the role of society's standard bearer. Lahiri writes about characters who are immigrants like her own parents, people who were born in England and America as the second generation of immigrants, and the difficulties and conundrums of establishing oneself in a new nation, including the issues and conundrums that Lahiri's own parents faced.

When we investigate the roots of the Indian diaspora, we discover that the majority of people from their home countries emigrate to the United States and other countries in order to pursue economic opportunities that are superior to those available in their homelands. It is obvious that people's economic interests might occasionally set the sensation in them of needing to leave the place where they were born. Some people have devised a plan to flee the country for political reasons, while others are looking to get away from religious persecution. In due time, these emigrant Indians have taken up residence in a position of significant privilege in the land that is not their own territory. This is something that would not have been feasible in their native area.

Through her writings, Jhumpa Lahiri illustrates the struggles that migrants face in a new area, where they must abandon their customs and traditions of the old land in order to fit in with the culture of the new land. Lahiri shows how migrants adjust their behaviour in order to fit in with the new environment. Occasionally, she will also share a message about being unfamiliar with someone and experiencing an odd emotion. It is a well-established reality that being cut off from one's own country throughout the process of establishing oneself in a foreign area may be a trying ordeal that results in a number of physical and psychological traumas. This is a fact that has been demonstrated time and time again. Lahiri makes an effort, throughout her work, to illuminate for us the reality of the situation facing refugees. Her characters are under the power of the situations they find themselves in, and after some time has passed, they come to terms with the issues they are facing, which include being overworked, unhappy, and frustrated. She demonstrates the plight of a character Ashima in the following words:

For being a foreigner, Ashima is beginning to realize, is a sort of lifelong pregnancy- a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that that previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated demanding. Like pregnancy, being a foreigner, Ashima believes, is something that elicits the same curiosity from strangers, the same combination of pity and respect. (The Namesake 49-50).

In *The Namesake* an Indian family relocates to America in search of better chances, primarily for the benefit of their lone son, Gogol Ganguly. In this book, Gogol has the greatest challenges as his family attempts to adapt to American culture. His name change in his teens is the first issue that he faces. The family as a whole try to adapt to American culture. In spite of his parents' best efforts to preserve Indian culture for their children, Jhumpa Lahiri does a fantastic job drawing the reader into this main character's thoughts and making them feel something for him as he grows up in a world and culture that are completely foreign to him. Reshmi Dutt in her chapter comments on Lahiri's portrayal of diasporic Bengali community; "Lahiri's narratives echo a kind of balanced authenticity and complexity of vision in representing the Bengali Diasporic community that until now has been underrepresented" (Gendered Belonging 158). Jhumpa Lahiri's book emphasises the bewilderment, homesickness, and loneliness experienced by first-generation Indians living abroad. Lahiri discusses the importance of showing consideration for American and Indian people by both parent generations and their offspring.

The novel delineates the story of Ganguly and his journey to fit in with people from a different country. In the early 1960s, a lot of skilled Indians left their home country to work in the United States. Ashoke Ganguly was one of them. The main character in the book, Gogol Gangoli, shows us what it's like to be torn between two worlds; he's not proud of where he comes from. So many times, he tries to run away from his Bengali roots. In this novel, Lahiri does a great job of showing how Gogol's mind changes over time, showing how he becomes more sensitive to his family, culture, and especially his name. We also see how Ashima Ganguly changes from a homesick housewife to a confident woman who is happy with her life and finally starts to feel at home in Boston, but when she is about to get discharged from the hospital she comes to know; "For they learn that in America, a baby cannot be released from the hospital without a birth certificate. And that birth needs a name" (The Namesake 27).

A name tells you who you are in life. It's important for people to get to know themselves and for people to meet and talk to each other. The title "The Namesake" is a metaphor for the trouble Gogol Ganguly has with the name he was born with. It's hard to figure out who you are when you've been kicked out of several places and can't connect with any of them. Gogol was given a pet name, but his parents didn't know that in the United States, a child needs a specific name right after birth in order to be registered on the birth record. This is because they didn't know much about the foreign culture. Ashoke and Ashima had to give their new baby a name, which is why Ashoka gave his son the pet name Gogol, to which he felt emotionally connected. Once that happened, Gogol realised it was hard to keep his name, which he thought was embarrassing, and he looked into why his name was so unusual, which was giving him problems. Lahiri writes; "I think that human beings should be

allowed to name themselves when they turn eighteen,” he adds. “Untill then, pronouns.” (The Namesake 245). But Javeed in his scholarly paper comments; “It is not the problem with the name, but it is actually the culture that enforces him to locate his identity (Raina 117).

When it comes to writing about the diaspora, the words "belongingness," "exile," "alienation," and "expatriation" all mean approximately the same thing. They are vague and have to do with being both a lost person and an ambassador in a foreign land. The word "new diaspora" can be used to describe a way of making culture or a social phenomenon in which people from different cultures mix their identities.

Lahiri wants her readers to see the different kinds of lives that people live in the Diaspora. The paper's discussion of the novel *The Namesake* shows this variety. People who read this have to think again about the places that have a lot of immigrants. The people in Lahiri's books show both good and bad sides of the Diaspora's story. She is a good example of the good things that can happen when people are flexible and change their lifestyles. The characters have trouble because they live on the edge of two cultures, which is not how they usually deal with things. Living their lives, carrying their problems, enjoying their good times, and going through changes in their two cultures, traditions, and beliefs causes them to have identity crises and fights. So, they thought about the past and their own society to figure out what they wanted to do in the future.

Again, Lahiri discusses Koushik's mother's breast cancer in her fiction novel "Going Ashore." Nobody assists her in handling the circumstances. Her friends and family in India also encourage her to cope with the circumstances. Following that, the family makes the decision to return to America in order to escape the upsetting actions and demeanor of the indigenous people and regain mental peace. Lahiri uses these issues as evidence that the Diasporic world has moved past the traditional understanding of home as a place of safety and tranquilly. There are many different immigration experiences. Some of the migrated people are able to free themselves from the bonds of traditional beliefs and practices within the Diaspora and come to appreciate the benefits of assimilation and life in general. Positive changes in the lives of immigrants can only be established via effective communication between these two locations. It is important to remember that the past is our master, and it is not hyperbole to say that the past has some influence over the present and the future. Hariom Sharma comments; “Lahiri deterritorializes the national and cultural identities of India suggesting that individual cannot confine themselves within the narrow concept of national and cultural boundaries in this globalised world characterized by hybridity, transculturalism and migration” (Sharma 82).

The paper's conclusion emphasises how diaspora denotes a journey beyond the less obvious limits of time, place, ethnicity, traditional values, language, etc. in addition to leading to the crossing of borders. The Diaspora gives rise to a novel and innovative entity. The migrants find it difficult to give up their previous way of life and customs, and they gradually adapt to their new country while continuing to perform their tasks in both favourable and unfavourable circumstances. Because our innermost thoughts and feelings set the course for our future lives, the psychology here serves as the tool to influence the decision.

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