

## “(Not)Belongingness” and “(Not)Betweenness” as being “Other” in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*

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### Abstract

This paper focuses on diaspora-related issues in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake* (2003). Furthermore, the paper analyses the characters’ understating of identity and how it reflects through the characters’ ‘(not)belonging’ and a conflict of ‘(not)betweenness.’ This research seeks an answer to the questions: 1. What is the role of culture and memory in Indian American life? And 2. How do Indian Americans struggle for cultural, diasporic, and personal names as an identity? In *The Namesake*, the characters’ struggles are examined through the works of Bhabha (1994), Chambers and Herbert (2015), and Gowricharn (2022). A textual analysis of this novel is significant to understand diasporic relations with the ‘culture,’ ‘memory,’ ‘dual identity’ and the idea of ‘home’ from the context of twenty-first-century. To conclude, two generations’ stories from India to America bring a sense of ‘(non)belongings’ and ‘(non)betweenness’ as being “other.”

**Keywords:** Indian American, diaspora, (not)belongingness, (not)betweenness, memory.

“The old Indian diaspora is being transformed into a new diaspora. The latter is still in motion but it is obvious that we are witnessing major economic, political and cultural shifts in the global Indian world..New classification in pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial is inspired by a time sequence, not by the features of the bonding between overseas community and India or another homeland” (Gowricharn 2022, p. 4).

Gowricharn (2022) sees the ‘old’ and ‘new’ diaspora existence. The contemporary Indian diaspora changes the views around the historical colonial Indian diaspora. The old diaspora shifted to a new diaspora—during the old diaspora time, a passive role of overseas communities can be seen but in the new diaspora, there is the presence of diversity, entanglements, and movements and almost a permanent connectivity to the home and host. The other

features have not been inspired by any diaspora era but the time and mobility of the diaspora bring these time sequences (pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial). Jain writes that Indian traders, entrepreneurs, travelers and religious missionaries have been traveling overseas since the third century AD. The 'new' diaspora dates from the 1950s and 1960s to the UK, Canada, Australia and the USA. Working class and high-skilled jobs were included in this time period (Jain 2010).

Millions of people worldwide are immigrating from home to the host country for different purposes. Significantly, this impacts to the country and individual's social and economic conditions. To understand the impact of globalization and huge migration mobility, there is a need for researchers to focus on the recent phenomenon of diaspora issues from transcultural, third space, and another postcolonial diasporic point of view. This is to understand the dimensions and multiple layers of the present diaspora scenario. These multi versions of diaspora experiences have been narrated by many female writers (i.e., Susham Bedi, Bharati Mukherjee, Vinia Nair and so on). Among them, Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the great figures who re/present the Indian American immigrant experiences in her writing. Among the other existing novels, Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) represents the multicultural world and the diasporic characters' search for identity. Also, the returning diaspora is another interesting diasporic aspect to see the characters' journey. To understand contemporary diaspora issues, this paper deals with the relationship between national and cultural identity through the quest for '(not)belongingness' and '(not)betweenness' in the novel.

To defend a thesis statement as cultural identity displacement to (not)belongingness, this article starts by analysing Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) with diaspora-related issues. Then, the paper deals with the characters' search for identity always reflected through the character's '(not)belongingness' and a conflict

of '(not)betweenness.' The conceptual ideas of '(not)belonging' and '(not)belongingness' depend on the individual diasporic consciousness and sense of understanding of no belonging from any place as well as the cultural place needs to be understood through textual analysis. In short, this diaspora study is associated with many interlinked angles and theories that give an interdisciplinary approach to understanding diasporic consciousness for '(not)belongingness' and '(not)betweenness.' Finally, the paper explores cultural diaspora-related postcolonial themes. Second-generation characters like cosmopolitan children, Gogol and Sonia portray the conflict in two worlds as a 'home' and 'host' and their transcultural identity in a cosmopolitan world. Mangayarkarasi writes that in *The Namesake*, Lahiri shows the cultural alienation which is most immigrants face when making a new home in another country (Mangayarkarasi, 2017, p. 57).

## Literature Review

To understand the twenty-first-century diaspora, a conceptualization of culture, memory and identity terms must be explored by literature. A person's cultural identity is important when one is in a host country (See, Morve, and Al Tamimi, 2024; Nahar and Morve, 2021; Akhtar et al., 2021). This cultural identity is associated with nationality, gender, food, and many other forms (See, Khan et al., 2019; Siddique et al., 2020). To understand this cultural identity in diaspora space, this research aims to examine the recent cultural and diasporic pressures. This has been taken into account in the textual analysis of *The Namesake*.

Safran's (1991) work entitled, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" is quite an old idea of diaspora which further has been explored by Gowricharn (2022). Safran's diaspora study presents all the world's diaspora communities whereas Gowricharn focuses only on especially Indian immigrants' studies across the world from the emerging

views in response to the diaspora. From the current scenario, Gowricharn’s model is closer to the understanding of the Indian American diaspora. In their work, 31-years gap divides the difference in old and new diaspora’s shift and approaches. To understand the diaspora Gowricharn’s (2022) model of a “new diaspora” can be studied through his work titled, *New Perspectives on the Indian Diaspora*. In the introduction part, Gowricharn demonstrates how caste, religion, and language have been segmented into different sections of the new diaspora and it can be studied differently than putting all diaspora as a similar or broader approach (Indian diaspora economics, Indian migration in African countries and Singapore, etc.).

However, after the idea of nationalism, cultural values for immigrant are a significant part of their life. O’Haodha’s volume is about the Traveller/Gypsy who created a diverse cultural group in Ireland and America. The cultural identity construction of Traveller in folk narrative, music and in memoir is a representation of minority culture. Traveller diasporic cultural discourses explore a historical representation in Ireland and Irish America. This volume is a medium to connect old and new, local and foreign cultures, indigene, and migrant communities inside and outside the dominant discourse. O’Haodha’s discourse of cultural presentation as an Irish minority and migrant is important for the American diasporic context as it brings cultural diversity. A similar presentation of narrating the stories of minorities and immigrants can be seen through the cultural and memory connection of Ashoke and Ashima in the novel. This research creates a gap to explore O’Haodha’s culture, assimilation, minority presentation, and the idea of outsider help to analyze Indian American cultural confrontations in *The Namesake*.

The above literature review is significant to critically analyze Indian American diaspora challenges. After visiting the existing research, we find a research gap in exploring Indian

American representation and literature contribution in culture studies. Even, the discussion on home and host as two sides only has explored than looking from the identity confrontation challenge to de-constructed identity as a ‘(not)belongingness’ and ‘(not)betweenness.’ Cultural studies-related work is important in aligning with diaspora but it somewhere lacks the space of understanding the formation of no identity. To answer the research questions, this research is significant to understand diaspora ‘culture’ in relation to ‘memory,’ ‘dual identity’, and the idea of ‘home’ from the twenty-first-century context. This assimilation struggle and a less active place need to be explored through *The Namesake*.

## Corpus and Methods

A textual analysis of characters’ journeys need to explore their significant role in finding out the duality of identity, nationality, and culture in contemporary postmodern society. However, the immigrant’s ‘(not)belongingness condition’ and ‘dual identity conflict’ create an ambiguous situation. There are abundant incidences and stories that demonstrate each character’s journey is in ‘search of identity.’ However, there is a great way to see how diaspora reading can be done through the lenses of nationalism, cosmopolitanism, post-colonial and diaspora approaches.

For theoretical support, descriptive research design through diaspora studies needs to analyse the data from a twenty-first-century perspective. The postcolonial and diaspora studies work of scholars like William Safran (1991), Chambers and Herbert (2015), Gowricharn (2022), O’Haodha (2009), and Leidig, Ganesh, and Bright (2022) are giving a theoretical shape to explore diaspora related struggle and challenges. These scholars’ scholarship on cultural identity and memory textually analyses *The Namesake* as a primary text. The main aim of this paper is to understand immigrant’s cultural identity quest and diasporic consciousness and a third space-

related struggle. These issues are deeply analyzed through Ashoke, Ashima, Gogol, and Sonia's diasporic experiences.

The Indian American immigrant experiences always have been under uncovered study. There is less representation of an Indian American minority group (in America) in literature and in social and political spheres as well. It is important to see the diaspora change from the current perspective (i.e., postcolonial, globalization and cosmopolitan) than the old diaspora (i.e., colonial and slavery) pattern. For a sampling process, the data is collected from online and print sources (published mainly from the twenty-first century time). Secondary data (on diaspora related) collected by qualitative and quantitative methods where a published book, journals, and reports understand the diaspora-related work and culture from the twenty-first century's perspective. A target of the population is the twenty-first-century Indian American population in particular and the colonial and postcolonial times' diaspora in general.

#### Diaspora and identity

"DIASPORA" is the term in use at present to define any population as "deterritorialized" or "transnational." However, the diaspora is rooted in a land whose social, economic and political linkage to the globe. But in the past, researchers claimed that nationalism, race or identity politics were not a concern (Kenny, 2013; Tashmin, 2016; Parekh, Singh, and Vertovec, 2003; Lestienne, 2020). There are other things where twenty-first-century scholars are trying to give a new shape to the diaspora. In addition, the scholars mainly focus on globalization's impact, feminist perspectives, self and others, self and cultural conflicts and so on. Ashcroft et al quote "Diaspora" as "the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions" (Ashcroft, et al. 2000, p. 68). In a similar line, the diaspora is a Greek noun that originates from the verb *diaspeirein*; a compound of "*dia*" (over or through) and "*speirein*" (to scatter or sow). This word has emerged from the

proto-Indo-European root, *spr*. This is found in English words such as "spore," "sperm," "spread" and "disperse." Diaspora deals with scattering, dispersal and a process of destruction (Kenny, 2013). Safran (1991) quotes that diaspora is "that segment of people living outside the homeland." Similarly, "a sense of belonging to more than one history, to more than one time and place, to more than one past and future" (Tashmin, 2016, p. 16).

Diaspora itself has no single space to bind with the identity. After reviewing the literature, it can be concluded that diaspora is associated with the following main points1:

- (a) Consciousness of assimilation and alienation in both cultures
- (b) Identity is determined differently with the claims as self and other
- (c) Roots of heritage2
- (d) Boundaries in nationalism and transnationalism and
- (e) Articulated multiple identities by race/caste/class/religion/gender.

To see diaspora from female version, Sudan to Britain and Bangladesh to Britain diaspora from female perspective can be seen in recent research works (See, Morve, and Al Tamimi 2024; Nahar, and Morve, 2021). Like the Indian American diaspora, Indian British diaspora experts also move forward and talk about the minority voices and their issues. Claire Chambers and Caroline Herbert have interviewed South Asian Muslim and non-Muslim writers in Britain. They discuss the identity and the root of heritage and how they take back their history. In the context of source as heritage, Chambers and Herbert illustrate:

"Identity and root presume a settled or pure essence; they thrive in times of trouble often preceding them [...] 'A carrot is a root,' says my friend to her husband, who keeps nagging her about returning to his country, to his root. 'I am

not a carrot!’ She keeps screaming back at him” (Chambers and Herbert, 2015, p. 11).

Chambers and Herbert’s idea of identity to its root as a homeland has always been ambiguous from the immigrant’s perspective (Chambers and Herbert, 2015). Diaspora is always searching for roots; the root is found in the heritage. Migrated and immigrated people have various issues from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. Even after globalization, they are not only struggling for identity but also being considered ‘other.’ The quality of pliability makes them much more flexible in adopting both cultures. They suffer not only for their dual and hybrid identity but also for living in both worlds and creating their third world. Respectively, they carry two cultures together where immigrants’ experiences are different from migrant groups (Radhakrishnan, 2016). While a person is born in a country where he/she is not a part of their ethnic identity. But his/her ethnic identity is from another country. According to their sense, they assume they are citizens of the country (where they were born). But whereas, some people (born in the host country) think that giving birth is not concerned with citizenship. Thus, globally, various debates are going on among researchers, philosophers, and diaspora scholars about this issue. However, the question of citizenship politically and socially is equally essential for supporting nationalism and transnationalism (Rana, 2010).

Consequently, an in-between or dual identity crisis makes a diaspora person’s differences in society. Similarly, many writers are known as Indian American or Canadian American, although the writer was born in America and had citizenship in America. Thus, the root of heritage is again coming in the identity context to define what identity and citizenship mean. Moreover, many identities indicate their belonging to another country and create a space between home and host kind of dual identity. William Safran’s work is interesting in understanding “expatriate minority communities” and how they lead to diaspora aspects.<sup>3</sup>

The above points are equally applicable to Lahiri’s characters: Ashoke, Ashima, Gogol and Sonia. The solidarity of culture experienced by Ashima than lesser in Ashoke. Also, their home and cultural connections depict their relationship with India. Moreover, Gogol and Sonia are conscious of their identity as they feel they cannot accept American culture nor fully Indian.

Immigration and Dynamic Identity in the Reference to Diaspora

It is significant to comprehend, unlike migratory geographical and political experiences of marginalization, cultural deviations, construction of identity consciousness, displacement, and the questions of belonging. All issues are significant to portray in the form of discourse. Diaspora people fail to accept their host and home culture as well. Cohen has grouped the diaspora into four categories—victim or refugee, imperial or colonial, labor or service, and trade or commerce. Bergsten and Choi write, “For decades, diaspora in social science researchers is seeing that diaspora issues with equivalence for “overseas,” “ethnic,” “exile,” “minority,” “refugee,” “expatriate,” “migrant” and so on” (Bergsten and Choi, 2003, p. 10). To some extent, they try to adopt or follow the host culture but somewhere they fail to adapt ultimately. Their origin and consciousness of belonging eventually stop them from adopting a host culture.

Bergsten and Choi have categories of types of the diaspora in Table 1.

Table 1. Different Types of Diasporas (Bergsten and Choi, 2003).

Types	Examples
<b>Victim or refugee</b>	Jews, Africans, Palestinians, Irish
<b>Imperial or colonial</b>	Ancient Greek, British, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and French
<b>Labor or service</b>	Indentured Indians, Chinese, and Japanese
<b>Trade or commerce</b>	Venetians, Lebanese, Chinese

In the context of the Indian diaspora, the US has powerful ideas through their position of wealth and education and to set the political agenda beneficial to their home country. Diaspora questions are raised by force, nationalism, culture, and ethnicity. Also, the question stands on the relationship between place and identity and how culture and literature interact. Furthermore, the High-Level Committee on the Indian diaspora estimated the total Indian diaspora globally at about twenty million, including persons of Indian origin (PIOs) and overseas Indians (Government of India, 2001) (George, 1996, p. 179–80; Sahay, 2009, p. 158; Tejada, Guerrero and Bolay, 2010, p. 141; Shaikh and Umarsharif, 2006, p. 2).

Table 1 indicates four types of diaspora which has become a vast area for study to understand the diaspora issues in many other countries. The reason for being a diasporic there are personal and political issues.

Gabriela and Bolay (2010) studied the diaspora population in different countries and correlated its percentage with the national population as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Estimates of Diaspora Populations (Tejada, Guerrero and Bolay, 2010, p. 144).

Country	The estimated number for the recent year (million)	Percentage of the national population
USA	7.0	2.5
Australia	0.9	4.3
New Zealand	0.5–0.85	21.9
India	20.0	1.9
Armenia	9.0	–
Pakistan	4.0	2.8
Philippines	7.5	9.0
China	30 to 40	2.9
Japan	0.87	0.7
Italy	29.0	49.4
Canada	2.7	9
Mexico	19.0	19
Republic of Korea	6.4	13.2
Vietnam	2.6	3.2

From Table 2, it can be concluded that the percentages of the diaspora have been high in numbers across the world. Today, there is a

challenge for all diaspora researchers to understand diaspora issues due to its blast in diaspora populations. The diaspora population has been highest in recent years and increasing day by day. The above-given percentages define that mobility and globalization have no control over stopping illegal migration.

The local to global migration and its impact on society is paying attention to contribute a form of diaspora study. However, the rates of US immigration are rocketing in the twenty-first century than in other countries from all over the world, as compared in Table 3.

Table 3. Immigration from India in Industrialised Countries (Jain, 2010, p. 89)

Immigrant countries	1951–90	2001
US	467,255	1,678,7765
Canada	180,731	851,000
UK	260,120	2,200,000

From Table 3, we can compare the numbers of Indians who immigrated from India to the US, Canada, and the UK in 1951–90 and 2001, among the highest numbers of the Indian diaspora, immigrated to the US which is approximately 200% more than Canada. As a result, Indian immigrants to the US are elevated in numbers than the UK and Canada. According to recent data, “it has been found that in 2014, India was the top in immigration to the US. The immigrant population was 147,000 in a year. Moreover, this population is higher than China (about 132,000) and Mexico (about 130,000)” (Chakravorty, Kapur, and Singh, 2017, p. x). Approximately 2.6 million are Indian immigrants and their children live in the US. The Indian-born population is the third-largest immigrant population in the US (Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program, RAD, 2014, p. 1).

The July 2014 report, Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program (RAD) Diaspora profile, migration policy institute reports, and data from 2009 to 2013 display an Indian diaspora in the United States (US) of 2.6 million. This is sixty-nine percent of

the member population. A total of thirty-one percent of the diaspora had at least one Indian-born parent. India-born population in the US has proliferated since 1980 when approximately 210,000 Indian immigrants lived in the country and made-up 1.5 percent of its foreign-born population (RAD, 2014, p. 3). From the report, an immigrant population in the U.S. by country and region, January 2021 to September 2022 demonstrates that 2.9 million foreign-born population under Biden’s administration where Indian subcontinent (Indian subcontinent includes India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal) is in the sixth rank (Camarota, and Zeigler, 2022). In short, the given data indicates that the diaspora of Indians in America has been rocketing day by day.

Due to the increase in the ethnic population, the study related to ethnic immigrant voices also became important. Davidson and Vidhya find that “migration results in a fracture of identity in homes and individuals are expected to build new personalities on new foundations in their host culture” (Davidson, and Vidhya, 2022).

*The Namesake* (2003)

One more difficulty is that categorizing the canon of Indian diaspora literature is challenging to identify the names and identities of the writers. Many Indian-origin writers settled abroad and represented their diaspora subjects by canonizing the literary style of Indian diaspora writing. The diaspora writers share their dual identity and assimilation memory. This twofold identity quest to build nationality and transnationality is the experience of writers who write through literary writing. The literature sketches the problems which they are still facing today. Shaikh and Umarsharif write in the context of Indian writing, “Diaspora Indian writing in English covers every continent and part of the world. Reading texts about a diasporic context is useful since it points to the interrelatedness across geographic boundaries while simultaneously foregrounding the discreteness of linguistic, cultural, and geopolitical contexts,

traditions, and experiences” (Shaikh and Umarsharif, 2006, p. 2).

Jhumpa Lahiri’s writing deals with diaspora themes. Her writing influences postcolonial diasporic perspectives and this attracts the readers to know the contemporary world. Her short story collection entitled *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) won the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for this collection. It has been understood that Jhumpa Lahiri won the Pulitzer Prize for her collection of stories *Interpreter of Maladies*, becoming the first Indian to win the award. In the final story, an engineering graduate student arrives in Cambridge from Calcutta, starting life in a new country. This story became the basis for *The Namesake*, Lahiri’s first full-length novel in which he brings together elements from his own life to paint a picture of the experiences of Indian immigrants in America. Jhumpa Lahiri’s identity is associated with three countries, as she was born in the UK, is a citizen of America and her ethnic origin is India. In the diaspora, the stories of migrations are coming out with bringing approaches to various sites of the Indian diaspora.

Ashima experiences alienation and isolation in America. When she follows the Bengali tradition in America, she wears a saree, celebrates all Bengali ceremonies and she only cooks Bengali food. Though, she lives in America, she is following an Indian Bengali tradition to preserve her own culture in a host country and of course she always carries cultural memories with her. From the reference to the novel (Lahiri, 2003, p. 2), in Bengali culture, there is no tradition to call a husband directly by their name. The wife should have given respect and women can call unspoken or in a word like: “Are you listening to me?” Though Ashima is in the US, Ashima follows the original Bengali culture, she is happy with this but somewhere she does not feel comfortable with the Western open culture. She thinks that every Western marriage closes with a divorce. Other incidents also clearly define her belief in her Indian culture and attraction to the homeland.

Ashima accepts the cultural differences, so she feels assimilation with other cultures. Her graduation into this state of mind is slow but steady. She learns to live alone whenever her husband is away on his teaching assignments and her children are away pursuing their studies in different states. As she has become fond of her country, so has she become an American (Agarwal, 2004, p. 94). In literature, many diasporic kinds of literature produce personal experiences as Indian diaspora authors do in writing novels. They bring stories out by narrating their experiences and giving their voice to the characters' minds. This diaspora struggle becomes a voice of collectively similar experiences (Dwivedi and Vivek, 2012). Bhatia writes although Indians are distinct and have low political participation are invisible from the American mainstream. Indian Americans have acquired a social class in their home country through their advanced education and knowledge of the English language. The Indian diaspora participants and their responses are in between—they are not assimilated nor separated from mainstream American society (Bhatia, 2007, p. 212).

Furthermore, Sen writes that the quest for identity shapes national identity construction (Sen, 2004, p. 9). As mentioned in the novel, there are always pet names to tide one over. A practice of Bengali nomenclature grants every person two names (Lahiri, 2003, p. 25). The naming ceremony is a cultural remark of Indian culture in which Ashima and Ashoke strongly believe. Their Bengali identity can be seen when they follow traditional ethics. Jabbar writes that home can be physical or imagined—a point of departure and return but also memory or feeling. When migrants and immigrants move across borders, they bring along the places they leave behind through language, art forms, religion, food, and culture (Jabbar, 2022).

Ashoke and Ashima's ritual practices, name ceremonies, the use of Bengali language, and other cultural things which they carry along with them and those they transfer to their son and

daughter. But for Sonia and Nikhil, their home and culture are where they live and grow. As a result, they always feel '(not)betweenness.' Rahim writes about an implicit conflict division between the postcolonial diasporic communities' existences as an old and present and this creates a dilemma. They discover the juxtaposition of ambivalent notions about the two worlds which leads them to an ever-tormenting state of dual existence. They often discover the fact that they belong to nowhere and are the inhabitants of 'no man's land.' They can neither forget their past nor embrace the new land wholeheartedly so, try to live with a duality of mind. For doing so, they have to go through a great deal of reshuffling of their thoughts and activities which makes them feel alienated in their new life (Rahim, 2019).

What is the namesake?

After six months of birth, there is a tradition in Bengali culture to invite family members and friends to feed the rice to the child for the first time. Ashima and Ashoke were strong followers of Bengali culture so, they decided to organize this naming ceremony for their baby. For a 'naming ceremony' programme, they invite to their friends (Bengali and American). All enjoy this ceremony. Ashoke gives the name 'Gogol' to their son. The Russian writer's 'Gogol' name turned into the name of Ashoke's son Gogol. Ashoke chooses this name for his son. Ashoke believes that this is a very proper and pleasing name for him.

To know why Ashoke chose this name there is an interesting story of an accident. Ashoke is very fond of reading. He enjoys reading Russian novels very much. Ashoke's journey from Calcutta to Jamshedpur, at that time there was an accident. In this accident, many people died and some were severely injured. During the train accident, Ashoke was reading Nikolai Gogol's book which he believed turned out lucky for him. Ashoke is very thankful to the writer (Gogol) as his life was saved in this accident because he was reading a book by a Russian author. But in the life of Gogol, this name creates trouble for him. After the birth of a child, he suggests and gives



the name Gogol to his newborn baby as a nickname. On his birth certificate, his name is Gogol and, in kindergarten, Gogol got a new name as ‘Nikhil,’ a Bengali name. To give the name Nikhil is that this name resembles Nikolai (a Russian author whose book Ashoke was reading at the time of his train accident). Now, Gogol’s identity is split into two names. A five-year Gogol is not ready for this new identity but his parents convinced him to a new name Nikhil. In the school when Mrs. Lapidus principal calls Gogol by Nikhil name then he does not reply to her. So, the confusion and lack of confidence can be seen with the name. His official name is Nikhil and at home he is Gogol, this is what is decided by his parents. They convince Gogol by saying that in the Bengali tradition, everyone has two names. But Mrs. Lapidus rejects this name and gives his name Gogol as this is his will. When he meets Kim, he confidently says first time that “I’m Nikhil.”

Finally, he decides to change his name in his teenage years. From the novel, “The idea to change his name had first occurred to him a few months ago. He was sitting in the waiting room of his dentist, flipping through an issue of ‘Reader’s Digest’” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 98). The reference has been taken from the novel to depict the crisis of identity for Gogol. “He hates his name as Gogol” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 102). Thus, he convinces his parents to change his name and give him a new identity to recognize him. Father (Ashoke) is unwilling to change his name but Gogol requests him repeatedly. Namesake is always a quest for Gogol which makes him uncomfortable in associating with this name. As he believes that this name does not give him an identity in which he feels more connected with the self and cultural identity. Gogol’s name is a Russian name in which he does not feel emotional personal consciousness with the name. So, the namesake journey starts for Gogol to be Nikhil. He goes to the official process to change his name. A soul of Gogol he finds in Nikhil so, he starts to his name transition. Bhabha writes, “Third Space unrepresentable in

itself which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same can be appropriated, translated, historicized and read anew” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37). This Third Space conflict we can see in a second-generation immigrant children’s dilemma.

Gogol is thoroughly American and holds a burden of another culture that his parents have carried (Lynn, 2004, p. 162; Agarwal, 2004, p. 94). Like the Gogol and Nikhil conflict, many Indian migrants change their names for example, Rizwan to Riz, Roshan Morve as RM (use abbreviations), and similar to many more examples you can see around. Changing the name is an assimilation to the host culture and to look “cool.” Although he does not like his name as ‘Gogol,’ he obtained a ‘Commonwealth of Massachusetts change-of-name form.’ At the novel’s end, he changes Gogol’s name and converts it into ‘Nikhil.’ In court, he gives a personal reason for changing his name. He does not like to identify himself as Gogol. As Gogol grows up and starts to hate this name openly (actually since childhood he does not like this name but he never dares to say this to his parents).

The context of the diaspora ‘identity’ crisis and struggle can be seen in every diaspora case, in any country they choose to immigrate. Identity consciousness is present in ethnic, cultural, political, and gender issues. However, the majority and minority, self and others, always quest for identity and try to create a place for their own identity and a place in society (Imran, 2019). In the diasporic sense of identity, involvedness emerges due to them nowhere of belongingness and feeling of alienation in many forms of existence and in measuring their individuality. Gogol has an affair with American girls, their names Kim and Maxine. At first, he breaks his virginity by kissing Kim. After this, he hides his feelings for Kim from his parents. He breaks up with Kim and lives with Maxine in a live-in relationship. After some time, this

relationship breaks because of his ignorance of Maxine and his irresponsible behavior.

Gogol's name must associate and resemble himself with the names but Gogol is not entirely assimilated nor accepted so, always in a dilemma. Also, his dilemma can be seen in American culture. Sahu writes, "The example of the name of Nikhil Ganguli/Nikolai Ganguli/Gogol Ganguli is problematised at length and all attention is fixed on the need to carefully evaluate what risk a casually picked up name from a whole world of available and coinable names could ultimately lead to" (Sahu 2021, p. 142). Sahni writes, "There are three types of alienation, alienation from oneself, alienation from other people, and alienation from the world in which one lives, and these three forms of alienation are interrelated" (Sahni, 2014, p. 13). From these three alienations, alienation from oneself can be seen by Gogol (because of the Russian name), alienation from other people by Ashima and Ashoke (for following Indian culture in the US) then the alienation from the world exists in Gogol (by having three identities from Russian name, an American born and Indian ethnicity) also with this Indian family (because Bengali family is different from other as an American immigrant community).

Gogol's younger sister is Sonia. Her name also transformed from Sonali and she goes through transformed identities. From *The Namesake*:

"Though Sonali is the name on her birth certificate, the name she will carry officially through life, at home, they begin to call her Sonu, then Sona, and finally Sonia. Sonia makes her a citizen of the world. It's a Russian link to her brother, European, South American. Eventually, it will be the name of the Indian prime minister's Italian wife" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 68).

In Bengali, Sonali means a person who is golden. But Sonali does not like this name. So, Sonali (name was on her birth certificate) at

home her parents call Sonu, Sona then Sonia. She also faces the same identity quest and feels more comfortable calling Sonia than Sonali.

Gogol Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) deal with identity as a rhizome. Not only is the person recognized as a rhizome with multiple layers but also interconnected with many cultures. It "can open up in all directions" (Fadla and Awad, 2018, p. 171). Here, the rhizome concept makes sense to associate Gogol with the term 'rhizome.' Gogol is seeking his identity through the namesake and demands changing his name. Here, the question arises that "Gogol or Nikhil does it matter?" Yes, it matters to Nikhil when he grows up. As he does not want to associate himself with Gogol's name. So, his diaspora and the cross-cultural struggle for a name started on this journey. Sonia and Gogol find their roots by changing their names so, here a person's namesake is for her identity and space in the social, cultural and diasporic sphere. For this namesake, these characters are spending their whole life to search their name. Finally, Gogol changes his name and becomes Nikhil. He has a Russian name, follows Indian American culture, and holding American nationality all impacts to Gogol's mind. Because of their cosmopolitan identity, Gogol is hanging in multiple Russian Indian American identities.

Sonali changed her name from Sonali to Sona and again changed it to Sonia. Sonia cuts her hair, goes dancing, and has a secret boyfriend during her high school time. Lahiri's character perfectly fits into the American culture which they accept and want to live in. She chooses a partner who is Chinese American. This happens without opposition from the family. She wants to help her family so, she returns to India with Gogol and her mother, Ashima.

Moushumi and Gogol were unknown to each other because Gogol grew up in American culture. However, after Ashoke's death, a family came to India and decided on Gogol/Nikhil's marriage with Moushumi. After Ashoke's death, Gogol is aware of his responsibilities so, he tries his best to help his family. Gogol gives consent

to get married to Moushumi but this marriage fails as Moushumi starts to love a Russian boy.

Adamson writes that diaspora politics is a definite form of transnationalism and it primarily aims to construct and reflect a transnational “imagined community” (Cited in Chakraborty, 2014, p. 175). Lahiri’s Ashoke and Gogol’s two-generation story defines that first-generation immigrant continuously transmits culture to American-born sons and daughters (Siber and Riche, 2013, p. 276). Therefore, the image of Indo-American second-generation life is portrayed by narrating stories around Gogol and Sonia’s characters. In the beginning, they accept the ‘American’ culture and enjoy it but in the end, they return to the Indian Bengali community. Thus, the question remains like a puzzle. Gogol and Sonia create their third world as they are/were neither in a home nor a host culture but they are in-between, leading them to belonging or (not)belongingness. This in-between situation has to get now attention in the political sphere. Leidig, Ganesh, and Bright (2022) find that diaspora and migrant networks not only promote long-distance nationalism towards the ‘homeland’ through digital communications but can equally serve to reinforce nationalism within their countries of settlement/residence, in effect constructing ‘new patriotism.’ They argue that such displays of nationalism can take an exclusionary, rather than inclusionary, stance.

## Results and Discussion

From *The Namesake*, for the first generation (Ashima and Ashoke), their cultural memory of home is always there in their mind which always asks the question of their belonging place and identity. Due to globalization, a second generation (Gogol and Sonia) is living in a cosmopolitan world where multicultural exposure also questions their minority identity. An immigrant’s search for cultural identity leads the diasporic person to rootlessness, nostalgia and alienation. This remains unsolved until the

dominant discourse and the pressure to follow one culture always create a conflict for the person who lives in one cultural space and follows another culture to assimilate and balance. The studied challenges for Indian Americans in particular are the problems of all other diasporas.

But at present, it has been explored in many research fields (social, economic, political, and all others) and now, it is going to be studied with various inter-disciplinary approaches. Globalization has a huge impact on people’s minds and society so, many people are moving from one place to another. People from third world countries have migrated to first world countries (i.e., India to the USA or India to the UK). For the sake of a job, they try to settle temporarily or permanently in the host countries. Due to employment and educational opportunities and for a standard life. This migration phenomenon creates a space for diaspora writers to gain some experience with the current diaspora.

Lahiri’s *The Namesake* highlights our attention to the struggle of two generations, their ‘(not)betweenness,’ transnationalism, and transcultural life. The first generation (characters represented by Ashoke and Ashima) is always living with the home memory whereas the second generation (Sonia and Nikhil) still remembers the memory of home and trying to adjust to modern, postmodern, and parental cultures. To avoid the dilemma and no space situation, there are certain points that need to be done: 1. a secure and comfortable environment for the immigrant may bring some change. 2. Inclusion of ethnic minorities without any neocolonial pressure and 3. To avoid discrimination.

What is missing in their identity is a struggle for all diasporic characters. This novel represents the returning diaspora where the struggle starts from the host (America) to the home (India) country. Other diaspora novels present the life stories of host countries rather than talking about the home return stories.

## Conclusion

Culture and memory have their own space in the diasporic community. In the novel, the home Indian culture is carried by Ashoke and Ashima whereas cultural hybrid identity can be seen in Gogol and Sonia. In mourning ceremonies, the Bengali diaspora community follows traditional Bengali cultural traditions. After the birth of Gogol when Ashima and Ashoke follows all traditional cultural ways that demonstrates their connectivity with the home. In the food, sari (dress), and daily life those are easily visible their culture and memory of home are present and part of their daily life in America. Even, after Ashoke's death, the family performs mourning ceremonies following the Bengali cultural practice. They feed on a mourner's diet, which is vegetarian. On that day, "eat only rice, dal, and vegetables" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 180).

However, Lahiri demonstrates that Indian families struggle with 'other' cultures to adjust and this assimilation leads to a cultural identity crisis for Indian American minorities. It is still a challenging issue for twenty-first century immigrants. A physical homeland is always in memory which always quests them to seek their identity. Diaspora has linked all cultures as Russian name (to Ashoke's son named Gogol), Sonia's dressing style changes as she imitates other American girls. Sonia was having an affair with a Chinese American boy and Moushumi falls in love with a Russian-American boy—The Namesake is not only taking the story of the dual world but there are many other worlds exist in Indian characters' life. Lahiri shows the cultural

struggle of Indian American immigrant characters with other cultures and her aim is not to show only two diaspora worlds. There is always a scope for another world, then discussing only about a binary as home and host.

### Future Research Areas

A gender role in diaspora is an interesting approach to study but this research has not explored it. Researchers can explore the study of gender role and marginalization in detail. However, the immigrant experience can be explored from Indian British, Indian Australian, and other hyphenated identities and understand cultural confrontations in this postcolonial world.

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### Notes

1. After studying diaspora from social, political, cultural, and psychological perspectives, we understand that the given broader terms and ideas have given a sense of understanding of what diaspora means

2. The idea of diaspora identity is associated with a 'root heritage.' This idea has been borrowed from Claire Chamber and Caroline Herbert's work. The root heritage in the sense of identity is explained by Mai Ghoussoub (in the interview)

3. William Safran mentions that "expatriate minority communities" here consider the minorities to be diaspora community

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