

Tribhuvan University

Quest for Cultural Identity in Mira Nair's Movie *The Namesake*

A Thesis Proposal Submitted to the Central Department of English for the Approval  
of the Research Committee

By

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr Toi Raj Singh Thekare has completed his thesis entitled “Quest for Cultural Identity in Mira Nair’s Movie *The Namesake*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from April 2015 to March 2016. I, hereby, recommended his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Quest for Cultural Identity in Mira Nair’s Movie *The Namesake*” submitted to the Central Department of English, University Campus, TU by Toi Raj Singh Thekare, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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### Abstract

The present research entitled “Quest for Cultural Identity in Mira Nair’s movie *The Namesake*” explores the cultural identity in diaspora, dislocation and pain of constructing a new life in a different world. In building a new life, something must be destroyed. This paper looks in to the state of name and sense of identity and belongingness of the characters of Indian origins and immigrants in the USA. The question of fix identity through perspective of first and second generation Diasporas seem ambiguous and in dilemma. Naming in *The Namesake* symbolizes the feeling of hybrid subject, or trans-cultural identity. Now days people are intentionally move to different places in the world, but they cannot change their cultural identity easily so it makes hardships to stay new place with their old cultural route. Because of their cultural route there is a clash between generations and such clashes become multiculturalism or hybrid culture.

### Quest for Cultural Identity in Mira Nair's Movie *The Namesake*

Nair's first film is *Salam Bombay* a film that combines cinema verite techniques the actors are real street children, the dialogue is based on their own words. The film is extraordinary success, including an Academy Award nomination for "Best Foreign Film" and "Golden Globe Award" among other international prizes. Nair was able to direct other feature films, including *Mississippi Masala* (1991), *The Perez Family* (1995), *Kama Sutra* (1996) and *The Namesake* (2007) films which continued to treat the theme of displaced individuals through romantic tales in beautiful setting.

She is independent film maker an Indian born living in the US. Sony Taraporevala adapted the novel in to screen play. The film *The Namesake* received positive reviews from American critics and won 'Love is Folly International Film Festival' (Bulgaria). "Golden Aphrodite"- Mira Nair.' It is also nominated for many countries film festivals. This movie is adaptation from Jhumpa Lahari's novel of the same name *The Namesake* (2003), Lahari also American born Indian. This movie represents the cultural identity in diaspora. It deals with lives of the Indian immigrants in the United States, rendering the difficulties of making personal identity across cultural boundaries. It also discusses and questions the sense of displacement in the lives of the characters in the movie and relationship between first and second generation Ganguli family. Ashima (Tabbu) and Ashoke (Irphan Khan) are the first generation Indian migrants their children Gogol (Kal Penn) and Sonia (Sahira Nair) are second generation American born Indian. Ashima represents the Indian culture but her son Gogol represent American culture so there is clashes between generations. The feelings of displacement dislocation and deteriorate are amalgamate nicely in the

movie. Nair is also immigrants from India live in America. She is an independent film maker; this term only really has meaning in relation to American films.

Before the releases of *The Namesake* she had already established herself as a director of the diasporic cinema. Independent films are often completed by low budget movies made out of studio control, often-personal expression akin to Art cinema. As a diasporic movie maker Nair says in interview "My mantra in life in terms of my films is 'if we don't tell own stories no one tells them' so, I make most of my work is about people who look like a put in amount of screen and telling a stories about realities and dreams, but doing in way that is very specific in local and so enable" (2007). The film is about Ashoke and Ashima two Bengali young people in Calcutta who marry as strangers and come to New York City in the 1970s begin to life together and have children the son is name Gogol, the son does not know the significance of his name, live in American life, he born to be American not is Indian-American. The relationship between parents and children, as they negotiate their way; living between America and Calcutta. The film is also about juxtaposition of color, countries and generations. Nair is Indian immigrant so, most of the movies parts are the parts of her life and want to reflect as it is; she does not want to stay with nostalgia but take as a useful tool for living present.

Due to the displacement, diaspora's quest for identity, a sense of inability to belong becomes all the more difficult and disparate. The rootlessness, coupled with the indifference attitude of host culture adds the sense of otherness and alienation. Diaspora sense of loss becomes tragic when they think of returning to their homeland. The homes to which they want to return undergoes complete transformation and turns out to be romantic illusion. If seen metaphysically human beings turn out eternal exiles. Man does not have a permanent home anywhere. Displacement gives diasporic

activity like writing and making cinema its peculiar qualities of loss and nostalgia. As Salman Rusdie has said in *Imaginary Homelands* that they are obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some fragments have been lost. An immigrant though westernized, has a painful experience. He is vexed with identity crisis; his native culture unconsciously interferes with the logical grasp of alien culture. He also argues that: “The broken glass is not merely of mirror of nostalgia. It is also I believe a useful tool with which to work in the present” (12). Most of the diasporic people who make any literary work they reflect not only nostalgia of the past but, they use them as a useful tool to work in the present. Nair also get her nostalgia in Jhumpa Lahari’s novel and reflect as it is through movie. A simple word diaspora means nothing more than the idea of displacement and maintenance of a connection with a real or imagined homeland. People in post-colonial times are not necessarily forced by war or colonization to abandon their homes or live under the hegemonic control of a foreign country. They have more freedom to move and choose where to live. They intentionally begin a new life in a new place that will have its own new necessities and obligation which can be unknown and unpredictable to them. They move as they want but after moving they carry their cultural identity in another land that becomes clash between generations. There are many reasons to move away different places; in this movie the train derailment of Ashoke is flash back many times, it haunts Ashoke at night mare. Such accident take a studio close shot light with lantern at night. It is most important event that made Ashoke diaspora.

The question of cultural identity is the most tangible theme in *The Namesake*. Cultural factors are very important in the quest for the identity and self especially for the immigrants. Cultural identity is the point of identification; it is made within history and culture. The question of identity becomes crucial when a person is

culturally displaced and he cannot co-relate with any of the two worlds in which he is living. While experiencing identity confusion from a change of names, Gogol is unable to define his identity. Since Gogol is born after his father survives in a horrifying train accident, his father sees the name Gogol is a gesture of his rebirth. When he is young, Gogol does not understand meaning of his name. The main problem with Gogol is that he is a victim character living in two very different worlds, the stress of which he cannot cope up, he is lost and drifts away from his parents and culture. He does not like to be known by a name, which is neither Indian, nor American, nor even first name. He feels uncomfortable with the Russian name and his Indian cultural identity in America.

As Stuart Hall notes in his *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*:

Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning, hence there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental 'law of origin.'  
(226)

The cultural identity reflects the identity of self in diaspora. The issue of personal identity in this movie is for cultural identity, the problem of namesake in the movie or conflict between two generations for namesake is not other than their cultural identity because of their present position. Each character is identifying themselves through their personal identity and their attitude of culture. The first generation expatriate have their own Indian history and cultural identity but they are in diaspora or they have American born second generation. Their identity is unstable because of dislocation and multiculturalism. The main points of this movie *The Namesake* has its

own history, Bengali cultural practice of keeping of calling name (pet name), (Bhalo name) good name, and emotional relationship with Russian writer. Different cultural practice of rituals used in different location makes problem of family in diaspora.

Diaspora identity produce themselves a new through transformation and difference.

This film edited nicely, the location of India and America are depicted as they are the actual places. The use of two bridges fulfill the gap between two countries technically it is called 30-degree rule and the jump cut, theoretically it is diasporic motif. One is the Howrah Bridge, the busiest Cantilever bridge in the world, which connects Calcutta, and the other is the 59<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge in Manhattan, which connects the New York City. These two bridges of the countries stand for the immigrant people's mobility and connection with the past and journey in to the future. These bridges take as extremely close shot in the film to shows diasporic theme. It introduces the metaphor of division and reunion calling for reconciliation between the cities, between east and west and between the first and second-generation Ganguli family. This technique use to maintain a continuous space, the camera is limited as to where its next shot can come from and editing creates continuity for locations. The costumes, make up, lighting and such motif makes important meaning in the movie at the context of experimental movies.

According to Andrew M. Butler in his book *Film Studies*, "Sometimes elements of the mise en scene seem to take on greater importance than their role within a particular scene an object shape a color will appear in several scene and have some sense of significance about it" (32). The symbols and motifs of the movies give multiple meanings in perception, most of diasporic films mention of airport, suitcase, crossing bridges. These things in the film occurs leitmotif and their general roles are not important than their theoretical underlying meaning of the movie. As noted in

“Bengali Diasporic Culture: A study of the film adaption of Jhumpa Lahari’s *The Namesake*” (2003) by Subrata Kumar Das, “Nair presents Bengali cultures clearly through audio visual modes and relies on ‘chronotopic’ motifs or, sequences of time and spaces in narrative pattern that unify multiple temporalities and histories” (2).

These Bengali cultural motifs are Bengali songs, Bengali dressing style, in a diasporic world, selection of a Bengali baby’s rice ceremony, practice of Hindu rituals, making samosas and specially caring each other. In the film samosa is an important motif of Bengali culture that practice in New York, when Gogol and Maxine are leaving for Maxine’s parents New Hampshire home, Ashima gives them a lunch parcel of samosas. After Maushumi’s marriage with Gogol, when she visits her in law’s home before the Christmas party, when Ashima gives her last farewell party to her Bengali friends at the Pemberton home before her departure to India, she gives a party with piles of samosas. These Indian cultures adapt in America makes second generation confused which one adapt to be American or Indian.

As Hall writes that:

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think, perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices than represent, we should think instead of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within outside, representation. (222)

The cultural identity is not as transparent because it is always in process, it cannot determine already. The existence of cultural identity always exists on the self. Self also exists in opposing factors known as other it also strengthens the comprehensibility of the self. Self and other make a boundary of difference they produce and reproduce a new through transformation. The first generation expatriate

Ashima follows her Indian cultural route but, her son Gogol want to stay with American culture. He wants to practice American culture and avoid his route culture and want to be American, it is because of society, at his home he adopt Indian culture but where he spent most of time with friends, school and places he is influence by American culture, he always found himself different. Because of double identity he is confused and most of clashes in his family for Gogol's namesake. It is not only for namesake but also for their search of cultural identity. Their behavior with each other shows the process of producing a new culture in new place. Because of cultural clashes there becomes heterogeneity in culture, they are neither Indian nor American. They are living between two countries and have double identity.

Regarding this, the Indian immigrants involved in *The Namesake* has an internal dialogue or opposition between their ethnic culture and the culture of the country in which they abide: America. For the children of the immigrants who were born in America where the Indian culture and costumes still exist even if in a diluted form. Different generations' clashes for their cultural identity become heterogeneity in identity. Gogol is changing his name and his unfix search of identity symbolizes lives between two cultures; it is outcome from clashes between cultures. He lives between dual identity that is hybrid he is neither American nor Indian but, mix of double cultures. The second-generation Bengali children live in their home with Bengali culture and at outside their home with American. They cannot live with their cultural aura, because of dislocation and diversity of culture. Because of multi cultural fraction the characters of second generation produce their own new culture, the fraction of culture comes from difference, called hybrid culture they are Indian in their route culture and host American culture.

The characters in *The Namesake* are search of their identities; that is in-betweenness of cultures, one as the self and the other as other. The first generation Ashima Ganguli represents the Indian cultural expatriate, but Ashoke and Moushumi, have their European side of their identity formation. Ashoke reads European writers; his world is not just India and America but the Europe of the authors he reads. Moushumi, also her life in England with her parents and being a student in France adds to complexities regarding her identity. Gogol trapped in between American and Indian identity, he wants to be American but influence by his cultural route so, he is always flux in these two identities. Ashima feels lonely in America, when she gets her first child Gogol and asks to his husband for leave America “I want to go home. I don’t want to raise Gogol in this lonely country” (Nair 2007). This is the felling of every diasporic people in foreign land, they feel only host in diaspora. The first generation feel they are not as their home they are only host in diaspora, but second generation feel differently, they can only define home as the place where their two cultures merge, the literal and metaphysical location in their parents’ house. Their behavior is akin to that of tourists in their home countries. American culture is blend with Indian culture, and being American adds to the confusion of the characters in the movie. The clash happens inside, having the other interchangeably replaced sometimes by the Indian and sometimes by the American side of the cultural identity of the story. Such kinds of duality shows that identity is not transparent or unproblematic, it is always in process of representation.

Hall argues that diaspora is a necessary heterogeneity and writes that:

The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’, which lives with and through,

not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves a new, through transformation and difference. (235)

The exchange of cultures and adaptation to the new culture urges where experiences of in-betweenness, displacement and diaspora. The clash between generation for the namesake symbolizes the producing and reproducing themselves a new through transformation and difference. Ashima's insist of being pure Indian and Gogol's American identity makes clash between generations insisted of being heterogeneity. Existence is the part of the natural outcome of this intentional obligation. Because of global market, internet, tourism, different international festivals, sport events and university studies that have doubled the pace of trans-nationalism. The term trans-nationalism is a specific category of cine- writing iconography and self narrativization linked through themes of memory, desire, loss, longing and nostalgia. The transnational cinema relates to work on diasporic, exilic and postcolonial cinemas.

According to Song Hwee Lim in his "Concept of Transnational Cinema: towards a critical trans-nationalism in film studies." Lim argues that

The final approach to transnational cinema relates to work on diasporic, exilic and postcolonial cinema, which aims, through its analysis of the cinematic representation of cultural identity, to challenge the western (neocolonial) construct of nation and national culture and by extension, national cinema as stable and Eurocentric in its ideological norms as well as its narrative and aesthetic formation.

(9)

The exilic, diasporic or postcolonial filmmakers working with in west and they are aware of power relations between center\margin, insider\outsider, as well as the

continual negotiation between the global and local that often increases beyond the host/home binary in transnational or diasporic cinema. As a diasporic cinema “The Namesake” fulfills all types of symbols, motifs, the jump cut, and lighting costume and make up. It is cinematic representation of cultural identity in this neocolonial construct of nation and nation culture. It is Nair’s Independent cinema, or extremely experimental cinema. It is also about migrate from one country to another country so it shows planes, suitcases, bushes, trains, and everything that the people used in the world now. Such kinds of motifs arrange the cinematography in the mobile films. People always in the move, so lest on the Calcutta and New York the part of the whole thing and also part of the idea of the transition in this film is obviously key.

The film starts with Ashoke’s train journey from Calcutta to Jamshedpur in the mid 1970s; at that journey he has a train accident. After accident, Ashoke is confined to bed. Immediately follows the montage of Saraswati, the goddess of learning is depicted as a close shot. Ashima is seen attending a classical music class. At the time of returning, there is a scene of bridge. Voyaging in a diasporic world will not be complete without the mention of suitcase airport, and more importantly crossing bridges. The sequence of time is also important thing in the movie because it is bounded in fix time and story. Acting is also important thing in the movie, good movie must have good performance or actors must have give life in the character. The movie is beautifully amalgamated in the acting dialogue, body language and movement, most of the time the characters are silence, in the language of film called hold. The characters are speaking less, story known through their body language and through their movement. The film is powerful example of performance what Butler writes on his *Film Studies*, “Delivery of dialogue body language and movement can

all meaning to a performance” (30). The perfect amalgamation of Bengali and English dialogue shows the diversity in identity.

The costume of characters also shows the cultural identity and personality. Bengali people wear different colors of costumes according to their ritual. Deepika Bahari argues in “Deepika Bahri is Touched by Mira Nair’s Vivid, Sonorous Account of Immigrant Life in an Adopted Home City” that “The film makes especially effective use of colors and color palates to construct a visual architecture not only of the physical spaces of Calcutta and New York, but also of the emotional space in habited by the characters” (10). She mentions many ritual scenes and analyzes them, Ashoke’s wake, for instance, brings home to Gogol the black- and -white difference between his world and Maxine’s. Ashima’s red color dress before Ashoke’s death and white color dress after his death symbolizes the potent sign of the loss of a mate and the color of life in Hindu custom. Earlier even before Ashoke tells Ashima that her father has died, we would know through her mother’s white sari and her brother’s shaved head. Equally subtle but telling, autumn colors immediately signal the shift to America because, as colorful as Indian landscapes can be they cannot produce the colors of an autumn tree in New York. In the movie Ashima wear sari every time in America it represent diasporic identity, as a professor of University Ashoke wear gentle dress then his son Gogol and other characters. The movie is akin to director because she is also diasporic people; she also faces some difficulties in her life in diaspora. She is an independent film maker this term only really has meaning in relation to American films.

Butler argues in his *Film Studies* that:

Usually low-budget movies, made out of studio control, often-personal expression akin to Art Cinema. Given the limited amount of

independent distribution, so-called independent films are often completed by studio money and distributed with their other products. Some studios have divisions dedicated to making quasi-independent product or manufacturing sleeper hits. (147)

Nair makes her film with techniques, used by traditional commercial Bollywood filmmakers. Most of Hollywood films are marked by huge investment, innovative and inventive camera settings, use of light contrasts, enriched and ultra-modern sound tracts, varieties of symbolism and others post-modern techniques. Such productions are not easy for independent directions. Therefore, this film is not comparable to the Hollywood's mainstream films. However, this film won awards in film festivals and nominated in different film award categories. Das argues, "The critical acclaim was won for its handling of debatable issues and diasporic themes which are topical in multicultural globalized world" (3). Art cinema, made outside of Hollywood, attempts to act as personal expressions rather than aiming to make money. They often feature non-linear narratives (if indeed they have narratives at all), open endings and ambiguous morality. These features somehow we can find in the movie, but they are overlap with Art cinema, Avant-garde and Independent cinema. Avant-garde film is experimental movies; these films are often having financial backing from corporate sponsors. Avant-garde films are more likely to be self financed or funded by patrons. As Independent filmmakers Nair express her personal experience in the movie so, it is much more diasporic in the context of cultural identity. The film is in English though we can find some Bengali conversations between Ashima and Ashoke, this is done to show the diasporic peoples ethnic continuity in familial spaces.

Ashima and Ashoke Ganguli try to create a small Bengal clutching to their roots and culture in America far from the land of their birth and struggling for an

identity in the land of opportunities and riches. They find many Bengali friends and try to create their own community there. They try to restore their traditions by preparing Indian food, used to through parties to their friends in order to meet them. In the film the use of Bengali language is, used to show the moment of intimacy, difference, comfort and some serious moments. The conversation between Ashoke and Ashima's family in Calcutta, their Bengali language is not diasporic, but their conversations and their English language show the postcolonial influence in their culture. It shows their intention to be colonized it is postcolonial diaspora. After settlements in US when Ashoke is explaining to Ashima how to reach Fulton fish market, Ashima replies in Bengali that if she gets lost then what will happen? Ashoke also answers in Bengali that he will not let her get lost. When Ashima washes Ashoke's clothes, which shrink, Ashoke gets angry and rebukes her. Ashima enters her room and closes door. Then Ashoke cajole Ashima speaks in Bengali "my Ashima, dear Ashima, open the door, and crazy girl" (Nair-2007). As times goes by, Ashoke and Ashima speak more in English, but their last phone exchange before Ashoke's death is in Bengali. When Gogol returns from Cleveland with shaved head, his mother is astonished and tells him that it was not necessary. He unexpectedly speaks in Bengali to tell his mother he wanted to do this. When Ashoke and Ashima are walking in a beautiful place near a school, Ashoke wants to hear from Ashima's smooth the line 'I love you' in this intimate scene Ashima says 'Yes' in Bengali. The language of Bengal shows their intimacy and familial space represent their cultural identity. Film always tries to remind us that language plays both roles as a bridge and as a barrier for communication.

The story of movie is veer around the namesake of Gogol Galguli, his parents; Ashima and Ashoke are the first generation immigrants of the movie. There are more

characters involved in the movie, Gogol's family members and the girls with whom he has been involved. The movie provides more information about Gogol's parents, his mother Ashima represent the Indian cultural main character in the movie, where Gogol represent confused character between American and Indian culture. Sonia (Sahira Nair), Maxine (Jecinda Barrett) and Moushami (Zuleikha Robinson) are the passive characters in the movie. The main point of the story is Gogol's namesake or Ashima and Gogol are the main characters who suffer a lot because of their attitude. Maxine is an American girl who does not have a dual aspect to her identity or nationality as opposed to Gogol and this characteristic of hers provide a deep and informative contrast to Gogol with his sense of difference multiplicities regarding his identity. Maushami is Gogol's wife, who in many respects resembles Gogol and is a child to Indian immigrants' however; she is different from him in her own way of perceiving her identity. All these characters are inseparable parts of the network around Gogol and provide a sufficient lens through which the theme of displacement.

Homi K. Bhaba describes about displacement in his *Location of Culture* that:

The negating activity is, indeed the intervention of the 'beyond' that establishes a boundary: a bridge, where 'presencing' begins because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world- the un-homeliness that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiation. (9)

Both generations negating activity make boundary between their home and outside world. It makes clashes between them and feels un-homeliness. Ashima is the most spiritual and Indian figure of the family. Where there is a reminder of India and Indian customs, Ashima is at the significant part. She establishes numerous parties with the invited Indian families in America through that she want to maintain the Indian

customs and create a surrogate India in America. It is inside the house that India should preserve, for the outside is inevitably America. This is what Ashima is trying to do all time to preserve her family's Indian identity, but she gives birth to children who are fated to be American mainstream.

As time goes by Ashima indulges herself more in the American way of life which gradually provides her with the sort of confidence and independence that a typical American woman is supposed to have. She finds a job as a Librarian, which results in more contact with the outside world, and become friends with her American colleagues. She eventually does her husband's job like driving the car, buying tickets and changing the house, which she never did before his death. She later realizes that her life in America exceeds her life in India. She is as much American as Indian, and gains cultural and geographical fluidity by the very practice of her life through the decades. After her husband dies, she decides to divide her time between India and America. Thus is Ashima's transformation to a transnational figure. She will be without borders, without home of her own a resident everywhere and nowhere.

Ashoke as an Indian young man moves to America after a suggestion given to him by a Stranger, named Ghos who had the experience of living in England for a while he says to Ashoke that "pack a pillow and a blanket, see the world, you will never regret it" (Nair 2007). Although, this meeting is short, the man died in the train accident but, Ashoke is rescued from the train by holding a page of Nikolai Gogol's book and dropping attract the attention of the rescuers- was a strong and constant memory for him which later caused him to name his son after the Russian writer it was an affectionate relic of his personal life, told to Gogol, by the time that he had already begun to hate his name and had changed it. Ashoke wants to maintain his family harmony in the context of cultural identity. At the movie review of Kapil

Amarnath's "*The Namesake: Lost in Translation*" he argues that "The film attempts to multi-generational themes but is littered with lazy approximations of the immigrant experience and tries to cover too many characters in too much detail for its two hour running time" (13). The story ties too many characters in cultural identity, through tolerance and such harmony maintain by Ashoke.

Being aware that his newborn son is an American, Ashoke decides to wait for the name to come from India. In the way he follows the Indian tradition that the oldest in the family chooses the name of the newly born, the family extends from Boston to Calcutta. According to their inside the home rule which is to create a private India in the United States, Ashoke chooses a pet name "Gogol," a reminder of his savior in his big accident, for their son while waiting for the good name to come in letter from the grandmother in India. The letter does not arrive until Ashoke and Ashima decide to put the pet name in the birth certificate to release him from that hospital, according to the American law that the birth certificate should contain a name. The resemblance of Gogol's life story with his name's fate similarly draws his identity into consideration; Gogol's identity and the sense of self are in permanent transit. It never delivered to him until the end of the story. The juxtaposition of the cultures leads to the acceptance of the pet name as the good name, which remains with Gogol and subsequently for his family. Ashoke's grief with his horrible past and his never-ending nightmare that is, transmitted to his son by the name Gogol. Later he gives the name Nikhil to his son by which he doubles his son's identity in to a trans-cultural identity that he himself has. He is able to fulfill his responsibilities regarding everyone in family. As an Indian, a husband to an Indian, also father to his American children, he lives between two different identities. The quality of his makes him a character that seems to be comfortable with the different aspect of his life.

Ashoke is the first person in the movie who has found the balance in himself and is able to live comfortably in a foreign land. After the train accident, Ashoke actually displaced from India to America. Ashoke's death is also very important since it is a turning point in the lives of the other characters both physically and emotionally. It is through his absence that Ashima and Gogol enter and gain new and different perceptions of life and make crucial changes to their lives. After his death Gogol breaks up with his American girlfriend Maxine and is more concerned about his family and relations some of his buried Indian side of identity, especially by taking is mother's advice to marry Moushumi, a family familiarity of his parent's Indian friends in America. Ashima also changes by losing Ashoke, her husband and only Indian expatriate in her family; not only does she have to live alone but she also has to limit her ways of life to the American side of the family (her children) and do the house hold responsibilities which were previously Ashoke's.

Sonia is Gogol's sister, she is a passive character, and she shares her intention with Gogol. As Americans do, she leads her private life after entering college. She is free at cultural Identity not like her brothers identity, so she has not any problem of being American and lives with her American life. Moushumi, Gogol's wife, is the most complicated character in the movie regarding the concepts of identity. Having Indian parents, being born in England, having lived in England, America and France together with having several relationships with people from diverse backgrounds and nationalities, makes her an intricate personality who is also in search of a fixed identity without noticing it. She seemed to be reluctant in accepting a fixed and defined identity due to her way of living. At the first appointment with Gogol's family Gogol and Soniya feel her behavior is complicated, because she is apart from American culture even her hates American televisions. When she marries Gogol, she

does not accept to change her last name to Ganguli and keeps her own name.

Changing the name would suggest her acceptance of the sense of being somebody else, even if this person is Gogol. Moushumi took her mother's advice to date and finally marry Gogol: this was a period of her life, which ended by taking refuge in having affair with another man.

The different attitudes of first generation and the second-generation diaspora is beautifully depicted on the movie. The cause of displacement they are confused about borders between home and world. As Bhaba writes that "In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and uncannily the private and public become part of each other forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (9). In the movie; after fall in love with Maxine, Gogol avoids his parental home. He does not pick up his mother's phone call, even he celebrate his birthday with his friends not with his parents. When his father is about to leave his Pemberton home for Cleveland, his mother calls him, Gogol says he can't come; he wants to visits his girlfriend's parents' lake-view house in New Hampshire. When Gogol and Maxine come to meet Ashoke for few minutes on their way to that house, Maxine is very American, she addresses Ashima by her name, she address Ashoke by his name and kisses their cheek. Gogol warns Maxine these things in front of his parents; she forgets and holds Gogol's hands at the dining table, these behaviors awkwardness in Gogol's family. Ashima says, "I'll get drink" (Nair 2007) Ashima offers lassie instead of alcohol. When they are about to leave, Ashoke tells Gogol to check up on his mother time to time during his absence. Maxine remarks that "never guess the parents and of their subjects matters" (Nair 2007). Ashima gets a temporary job in the library and develops close friendship with one of her colleagues. She shares her anxieties about her children for their behavior of avoid them. When Ashoke is

dying from massive heart attack Gogol is busy with her girlfriend's writer friend's party in New Hampshire. These behaviors show the cultural difference between the generations and negotiate each other as their way of living.

The cultural elements present in Nair's *The Namesake* are different Bengali songs. There are many Baul and Bhatiali songs in film; the Baul song is popular in the Bengal.

Das argues in his paper that:

The *Baul* song is popular in Bengal. The themes are philosophical and allegorical focusing on the state of disconnect between earthly soul and spiritual world. Often they philosophies on love and the many-splendored bonds of the heart, subtly reveals the mystery of life, the laws of nature, the decree of destiny and the ultimate union with the divine. (2)

The Bhatiali is also a folk song; such song is associated with particular groups such as fishermen, cart-drivers and hermits. When Gogol and Sonali visit India with their parents, Gogol notices a Baul singing outside his maternal grandfather's home and another one while returning after jogging. When Gogol performs mourners' ceremony for his father and Maxine comes to meet him, she is unable to understand this emotion. She is unable to convince Gogol to come out of his family bound and starts weeping after being rejected by Gogol. In this scene, a background Bhatiali song, "Oh Majhi re, Monka Sather Nokar Majhi" is used (Nair 2007). When Gogol and his families are busy with the last part of the mourners' ceremony on the bank of the Ganges, that song is hearing again from a boatman. There are also classical songs sung by Ashima at the beginning and ending of the film as well as other background songs and ethnic music. All types of songs have different meaning in the movie.

The music is clearly of great significance in the film. Different languages, genres and style of music evoke a sort of babel in New York communicating the theme of worlds and cultures and generations in collision and contact. At Gogol's high school graduation day, for instance, Gogol can barely hear what his father is saying over the song that is blaring in his room. The song called "once" with "once upon a time" as its refrain. At that time, Ashoke wants to tell the story of his train wreck and survival once upon a time, but its burden is no match for the sounds that have already filled his son's head: it fulfills many years later. Music also mark movements in relationships at the scene of the honeymoon suite where Moushumi dances seductively for Gogol to a pop version of an old Hindi song, "Ye Mera Divanapanhai" about inevitable desire and obsession, the film requires us to see and hear the shift. The next scene is at the apartment of Moushumi's friends Astrid and Donald's party. The background music features Verdi's aria "La donna e mobile," it means the lady is fickle, which Gogol will have to understand later. Moushumi is fickle, faceless, unreliable, and mobile in the sense of being the wondering migrant who is compel to keep moving. She has already transited through London, New York and Paris she has set in motion by modernity. The two pieces of music in two different languages in the juxtaposed scenes are background scores, which foreground Moushumi's conflicting desire and allegiances. These beautiful sounds set next to each other, but are so differently beautiful, express strong emotions and perceptions. Ashima's returns to training in classical Indian music as she follows her bless is also part of the symphonic structure of a film that tries to represent the experience of a multicultural world punctual notes, different melodies and rhythmic structures.

Ashima at the first phase of her life in the US shows her passivity to the outside world around her Boston home, but gradually she starts adapting the

environment and life style of New York City. She starts going out for laundry and buying fish from Fulton fish market. Ashoke has a nightmare about the accident and starts sweating even in a cold winter night. Immediately Ashima tries to make comfortable Ashoke by keeping his head on her lap and singing a song, it is like a mothers lullaby. When Ashoke goes to Cleveland for nine months, she takes a part time job in library to pass her time. At that time, she drives a car and gives her husband gift of books. It shows Ashima's struggles and transforms from an all-accepting wife to a self-reliant widow and a lonely mother of two, who finally seeks comfort after being back home.

Gogol's search for his identity is the main point of this movie, and through his search the story reveals all of characters' cultural identity. Identity crisis starts from Gogol's birth in hospital, instead of keeping his good name they keep his pet name Gogol because they want to follow their Bengali culture of keeping good name and pet name, or also follow their cultural root which is keeping name of newly born baby through their grandmother who is in India. His name becomes the factor that distorts his personality into confused state and his mind into an ambiguous anonymity. He changes his name from 'Gogol' to Nikhil, but ironically the sense of alienation does not cease to occur even after changing the name. Perhaps he is more confused with his dual identity as 'Gogol' for the family and 'Nikhil' for the outer world. The new name comes with its own dilemma and conflicts with it he feels that he stands nowhere. His relationship with all and various around him muddles because he fails to get grasps of any fraction of his identity. Nikhil suffers from alienation because not only he is living in a country to which he does not belong, but also because of the name which increases of his ambiguity regarding his nationality and his identity. The inner conflict of Gogol is reflected through his intimate relationships with women and his family.

When his wife Moushumi reveals the secret of his former name with her friends in party, it becomes one of the reasons to end their marriage. Gogol suffers from his fragile identity as a Bengali-American boy.

The main and primary reason for Ashima's feeling of displacement in the American society is the distinction between two very different cultures. Ashima ties her home in India and stark differences between that country and the US, because her house in India is full of life people and color, though it lacks clean water washing mashie and such luxuries. She gets luxuries in America but lack of love and care so she feels cold in the city. Culturally America and India have crucial differences. While women and men are equally independent in America but women are very independent in India. There are certain cultural peculiarities in the Indian perspective as to the role of sexes in society. She feels dislocated and homeless in diaspora. When she makes American friend in library she share her feelings with her and says "I lost the company of my parents, when I first came to this country. Now I feel I'm losing my family all over again" (Nair 2007). Her feeling is in-between thing that, her soul being in New York, thinking of Calcutta.

As Homi K. Babha argues:

The move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions-of race, gender generation institutional, location, geopolitical local, sexual orientation-that inhibit any claim to identity in the modern world. What is theoretically innovative and politically crucial is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus those moments or process that are produced of the articulation of cultural differences. (1)

Ashima feels lonely in diasporic land and wants a caring and sharing world like her lost home India but, because of different generational attitude and cultural diversity she cannot get what she desires. Because of location, race and geo-political condition her identity is in a trap, she cannot get her particular identity she wants as it trap that is between the two cultural identities. The feelings of generations are different; situation and location creates such feelings. These feelings also depict the clashes between generations, such is modern world surrounded by postmodern cultural identity. This film also addresses multigenerational themes like Ashima and her son Gogol, who have different experience in immigrant land. The behavior of a second-generation diaspora to the first generation is complex. The feelings of nostalgia towards the imaginary homeland by the first generation expatriate like Ashima Ganguli and assimilated, transnational and trans-cultural tendency among the diasporic people, especially among the second-generation immigrants in the film like Gogol Ganguli and Moushumi Mazoomdar.

Kapil Amarnath explores Ashima's perspective of differences between India and America, her house in India is full of life people and color, though it lacks clean water and washing machines. In the US she finds all of luxuries with snow, captivity and loneliness. The main differences of two countries are, they have gain and loss of love and affection. When Gogol is close to his family and shows love home he grows up in America, attending public schools' and rock concerts. When he leaves home he rebels against his parents and totally in love with American culture. It takes a tragedy to remind him of his love for his family. Kapil beautifully investigates two generations crisis in the movie and explain "Bouncing from crisis to crisis, Ashima and Gogol seem oddly emotional and overtly tragic and despite all the action, the movie plods" (14).

The main theme of the movie is dislocation and the pain of building a new life in a different world. In building that new life, something must also be destroyed. As the story opens, Gogol wants nothing to do with his Bengalese family. Gogol is born in America and feels tremendous pressure to be accepted as “American.” Gogol’s family is seen simply as his stumbling block at this point. It is Gogol’s father’s death that is the catalyst for this quest. After Gogol’s father dies, Gogol suddenly realizes how important his Bengalese cultural identity is. He becomes less interested in the American Maxine and more interested in the Bengalese Moushumi. Gogol seems to find his fulfillment in his Bengalese culture through this marriage and treats his wife well. If the story ended there, it would certainly be a happy ending. Moushumi is the only woman among Gogol’s relationships who recognizes him by both of his names. Moushumi reveals his previous name to his friends in a party. This offends him and it is simultaneous with the decline in their relationship. Even when she has an affair with her ex-boyfriend while she is still marriage to Gogol, she refers to Gogol only as her husband. It is in this relationship that Gogol loses the effect of his name on himself to the verge of being indifferent and nameless. Jhumpa Lahari mansions that in her novel *The Namesake* (2003). “His time with her seems like a permanent part of him that no longer has any relevance, or currency. As if that time were a name he had ceased to use” (284).

Gogol’s changing the name has not relieved him of the Russian writer. He wishes that his name was never revealed to anybody and he could simply be referred to by pronouns. Moushumi deceives her husband, she is unsatisfied with Gogol. Gogol gets pain again and he opens his father’s graduation gift and finds his father’s handwriting “For Gogol Ganguli. The man who gave you his name; from the man who gave you your name” (Nair 2007). After that, he says to his mother he feels free

in first time. His prospective of taking his name and cultural identity is change now. He does not hate his name anymore; instead now that he is losing the emotional network of family one by one he misses the name.

Gogol's emotional identity, especially at the beginning of the story, Gogol is very immature in dealing with his emotions. He is quite stiff and closed off unless he is involved with a woman (such as Maxine) at which point he becomes obsessed and unable to think of anyone else just as in the first quest for identity, it is the death of Gogol's father that provides the impetus for change. After Gogol's father dies, Gogol realizes what is really important. Further, he matures enough to understand that Maxine is not necessarily the best woman for him. He is beginning to embrace his family's routes and beginning to allow his own emotions to be a source of pride. When this comes to fulfillment, he is able to meet and wed Moushumi. He has learned how to be a good husband, even though Moushumi certainly does not want to be a good wife. Moushumi's deception shows her quest for her identity and her changing psychology of second generation diaspora.

Names are the symbol of identity in life. Names help people to communicate with each other, they play an important role in life. In literature dealing with the class cultures, countries and races, names emerge as identity symbols in India perception good names represent dignified and enlighten qualities. Pet names are sometimes meaningless and silly. The movie represents the experience of a very specific community which has no name. Film focuses on the cultural dislocations of a family, immigrants from Calcutta who settle in Boston to study, work and raise family.

The main story of this movie is the namesake of the Gogol which is adapted from Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. He was most brilliant Russian writer, Ashoke is great fan of him because of his book *The Overcoat* he gets his life back in terrible

train wreck. After that he take every day as a gift given by Gogol, his son Gogol does not know about emotional relations of his father with Gogol, he only think his father is a great fan of Russian writer and take his name as burden and want to change it. Gogol wants to redefine himself as a born and brought up of the USA rather than to be identified from his parents' Bengali immigrant culture. The question of identity becomes crucial when a person is culturally displaced and he cannot co-relate with any of the two worlds in which he is living.

Russian writer Gogol was an eccentric genius. At the time of his he was reputed to be hypochondriac, was deeply paranoid, frustrated, friendless. He never married and has no children. Towards the end of his life, he proceeded to commit slow suicide by starvation. After learns about the absurdity of Russian writer at school he is a mentally troubled genius. This is the beginning of his hatred of his name. He rebukes of his parents and make harsh comments on his parents says; "Did you guys know all this stuff about him when you decided to name me? That he was paranoid, suicidal, friendless depressed?" (Nair 2007). Ashoke reminds him that he was also genius but, Gogol furiously says, "I don't understand how you guys could name after someone so strange" (Nair 2007). His mother Ashima is typical Indian housewife and mother she furiously rebukes Gogol for his behavior with his father and tells him that "Don't talk back to your father and don't call us 'guys'. Sometimes when I close my eyes and listen to you both, I fell I have given birth to strangers" (Nair 2007). This is the climax point of their struggle the matter of their discussion of his name in family. At the last when he knows about his father and importance of his family. He feels guilty about his ways of life through the years.

Nair also tries to internationalize the Bengali diasporic culture in film version. This movie is representing the diasporic culture, which is amalgamating with various

cultures. *The Namesake* delimits cultural status of migrants and their existence in the diasporic land. It gives knowledge how to make balance between cultures and relationships. Story is about Indian migrant and their searching of identity, adapting from Lahari's novel, same name *The Namesake* Nair adapts most of sings which often used in most of diasporic movies so we can understand them as diasporic motifs. Every representational film adapts a prior conception.

According to Dudley Andrew in his book *Concepts of Film Theory*:

Every representational film adapts a prior conception. Indeed the very term "representation" suggests the existence of a model. Adaptation delimits representation by insisting on the cultural status of the model, on its existence in the mode of the text or the already textualized. In the case of those texts explicitly termed "adaptation" the cultural mode which the cinema represents is already treasured as a representation in another sign system. (97)

In the case of adaptation such cultural modes which the cinema represents is already valuable as a representation in another sign system. Most of the diasporic motifs like Airport, Bridges, Bengali language, Samosas, and costumes used in this movie to show diasporic culture. These things are already valuable in the sings system of diasporic cultural movies. This movie represent multicultural theme in diasporic land and expose generation's perspective of their cultural identity. Character's changing psychology is the important thing in the movie, at first, audiences think they don't change their perspective but at last they all change their view and life style. Ashima's last emotional speech in her Pemberton home and her decision of divided her time one by two for America and India shows her changing identity, they all have their new cultural identity that is hybrid cultural identity neither Indian nor American they live

between two cultures. Hybrid culture suggests the co-existence of a number of different cultures. It does not prescribe homogenization and conformity directly. It also does not encourage openly different ethnic religious, lingual or racial constituents of a particular society to degrade and alienate each other so that such society is destroyed evanescent. The family members of *The Namesake* have destroyed their perception and live with their new culture at the last that is multi cultural identity.

*The Namesake* is a story of cultural identities. It begins with migration in the first Generation and follows with its specific concerns to the second generation. The family is split; two are Indians and other two are born in American are second generations. The different nationalities create tension for the characters involves. As one sees all through the movie each Ganguli family member is a singular case and unique version who seeks for his own real self and tries to answer the question of identity. Even though they live together and share much, they still have differences in their life orientation and their experiences with their identities which are mostly related to their Indian-American lives. Characters of *The Namesake* undergo regarding their displacement is the result of their psychological struggle with their identity as first or second generation migrants. Displacement is an in-between situation where the displaced belong nowhere. This journey of belonging starts from one place or culture and is substituted with the virtual other while the virtual former still has its impact and shadow. Trapped between the two, the displaced want emancipation, searching everywhere eventually which ends nowhere. The namesake suggests bondage and symbolized in a name.

The second generation expatriate of the movie, Gogol Ganguli, is never really relieved of his name and namesake. Despite all the description of Gogol's troubles with his true identity and displacement during his life, there is a hidden desire of

freedom in him. His self suffers from its cultural captivity which is caused by his parent's routes, and not finding solace in his American side is related to his instinctual desire for freedom and emancipation from the identity related captivity. To be identified as a pure American subject does not save him from his psychological captivity, neither does his symbolic return to his supposed identity associated with his parents' roots in India at the end of the movie. Just like the desire for the fixed identity in human beings, there is a parallel opposition in their nature to escape boundaries caused by fixed identity. All human phenomena have their own opposites just like the "self" and the "other". For Gogol, the family represents India and outside is America but in fact it is the family that is outside for him. These interrelated phenomena are changeable and not fixed. Apart from Gogol all of characters also want to maintain their fixed identity, but they cannot maintain because of multiculturalism. The characters efforts to construct identity get transformed into a multiple cultural identities. It is difficult and impossible to make a fixed identity in this cultural globalization. The expatriates are searching their own cultural identity they have more than one choice. Making one choice among many choices often leaves their ambiguous. The problem does not come from making the wrong choice, which is displacement- but it is the realization of the multi-sidedness and benefiting from all the choices equally.

*The Namesake* convincingly illustrates the lives of both first and second generation Indian migrants in the USA. Alienation is the part of the experience of the Indian diaspora and even if people are at home in any part of the world it does not mean that they will not become victims of the sense of alienation. The movie also shows how the immigrants face cultural dilemmas in the foreign system. Nair has tried to answer all questions in her own balance through the quest of identity of her

characters. Diaspora is all about the creation of new identities, spaces for growth, resolution of conflicts and a new culture. Nair shows that the immigrants in their enthusiasm to stick to their own cultural belief and costumes gradually to take the cultural ways of the host country too. Their own children groomed to be bilingual and bicultural face cultural dilemmas and displacement more. But at last Nair shows that all immigrants care for their own routes in course of time and it is not necessary that they should settle in the country of their own origin.

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