

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Cultural Hybridity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

A Thesis

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

This is to certify that Ms. Sangita Gurung with class Roll No. 43/065, Exam Roll No. 480387, and TU Reg. No. 6-2-314-10-2004 has prepared this thesis entitled “Cultural Hybridity in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*” under my guidance and supervision, following the format as specified by the Research Committee, Department of English, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara. I therefore, forward it to the Research Committee for final evaluation.

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Approval Letter

This thesis entitled “Cultural Hybridity in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*” submitted to the Department of English, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara by Ms. Sangita Gurung has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri's narrator in *The Namesake* explicates an immigrant's position of cultural hybridity in the United States. In Lahiri's narrative, Gogol Nikhil Ganguli vacillates between the traditional Bengali and modern American cultures in terms of his fascination of the West and resentment of the East. Gogol and Sonia represent young immigrants in America, whereas their parents stand for original Bengali culture. Ashoke chooses a Russian name while Gogol's family back home in Calcutta suggest Nikhil as an official name for the boy in school. Ashoke gives the boy Gogol as his pet name in the honor of a famous Russian writer; however, the son legally changes his name into Gogol Nikhil Ganguli shortly before he leaves for college. Both Gogol and Ashoke embody cultural ambivalence resulted from their experiences of two different worldviews, the Indian and the American. The protagonist, while migrating from the East to the West, shares both the cultures: the original indigenous Bengali and the modern American one. Gogol represents the many of the second generation immigrants while his father embodies the first generation, and both are split between the two worlds. The protagonist's relationship with parents and family reflect the hero's quest for his identity while living in the Indian diaspora in the West. Not only Gogol's engagement with Maxine but also separation from her embodies immigrants' split identities. After reluctance for some time, Gogol marries, Moushumi, the Bengali girl, but their relationship ends with their divorce. Gogol, who resents his name over the years, accepts it after his father explains its significance. His hatred of name replicates his resentment of tradition and Indian identity because of upbringing in different world. Precisely, Lahiri's novel explicates generational and cultural gaps in the diaspora.

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