

Tribhuvan University

Cultural Trauma in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and
Social Sciences, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, Tribhuvan University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English

By

Dhanuram Bhandari

T.U. Regd. No: 6-1-40-237-97

February 2012

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Letter of Approval

This thesis, entitled "Cultural Trauma in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*" submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, by Dhanuram Bhandari, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

.....

Rudra Prasad Paudel

Associate Professor

(Supervisor)

.....

External Examiner

.....

Chiranjibi Kafle

(Head, Department of English)

Date:.....

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been possible with scholarly guidance, more valuable suggestions and constant support of my supervisor, teachers and colleagues. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all my teachers of the Department of English, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus. I have no words that can express my profound appreciation of my respected teacher and supervisor, Rudra Prasad Paudel, Associate Professor, former HOD of English Department and now the Campus Chief of Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, for providing me the opportunity to research on the topic "Cultural Trauma in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*." His constant supervision, scholarly guidance and his all the time presence without boredom enabled me to bring this work into its complete shape. I am deeply indebted to him. I am also grateful to Mr. Chiranjibi Kafle, the HOD at present.

I am much indebted to my parents, Gangadhar Bhandari and Thumakala Bhandari who gave me birth, nurtured and provided all the facilities to reach this level in spite of their hardships. I would like to express my deep respect, offer my millions of words of flowers to pave on the way of heaven and wish to stay in a peace and happiness with gods in the heaven to my grandmother since she died during my research work. I never forget her inspiration to me to be bold for any kind of challenge. I want to heartily thank to my friend Ram Prasad Marasini who helped me with several books and computer work to support my research work. I acknowledge Binodmani Bhattarai for his assistance in this work.

Abstract

The novel, *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri, a prominent Asian-American writer, digs out cultural trauma and its impact on immigrants in general. This novel galvanizes the idea that trauma of culture can be a tool for bringing imbalance and hullabaloo in life living process of the immigrants in their life. This novel has also shown cultural trauma as the main cause of unsuccessful life of immigrants, and as a result, affects upon life of the characters: Ashima, Ashoke and Gogol Ganguli. Gogol embroils in the turmoil of vague, uncertain and bogus life in new land. Lahiri has proved that cultural trauma is a cause of uncertain and undeveloped life of immigrants in America. Therefore, digestion of new environment, feeling of self-controlled freedom, acculturation and devotion for tentative future in immigrants are the rock-bases to lift up academic, economic and social life of new comers in America.

The focus of Lahiri to write this novel *The Namesake* is to show sense of alienation and dislocation problem due to the cultural trauma on Ashima Ganguli in particular and on Indian immigrants in general. However, failure of proper individual identity of Gogol, no sense of victory in Gogol's life, unfamiliar environment: the cause of unsettled life of Ganguli family, bounded and rigid Bengali tradition of Ashima Ganguli and obedience to it are the roots of counter advancement of life, an experiment of living life in a distinct world are equally shown in the novel.

Dhanuram Bhandari

Table of Contents

Letter of Approval	II
Acknowledgements	III
Abstract	IV
Chapter I: History and Philosophy of Cultural Trauma	1-18
Meaning of Trauma	1
History and Philosophy of Cultural Trauma	8
Chapter II: Jhumpa Lahiri as a Traumatic Writer	19-31
Jhumpa Lahiri and Trauma in Her Works	19
Criticism on Jhumpa Lahiri	22
Lahiri as a Traumatic Writer	30
Chapter III: Cultural Trauma in <i>The Namesake</i>	32-54
Trauma: An Overview of the Novel	32
Sense of Alienation and Trauma on Ashima	32
A Distinct Experience on Gogol	36
Cultural Trauma: A Voice from Indian Immigrants	42
Immigrant Stress and Trauma	48
Outsidedness: A More Traumatic Experience of Ashima, Ashoke Gogol	51
Chapter IV: Conclusion	55-57
Cultural Trauma as the Result of Strange Culture	55
Works Cited:	58-60