

Chapter I: History and Philosophy of Cultural Trauma

Meaning of Trauma

Etymologically, the term 'trauma' is derived from a Greek medical term denoting a mental condition caused by a severe shock, especially when harmful effects last for a long time. The term trauma refers to the action shown by the abnormal mind to the body which provides a method of interpretation of disorder, distress, and destruction. Freudian concept of psychoanalysis is the major foundation for trauma theory with various accounts of memory and psychological disorder. Trauma theory, on the other hand, is a broad category which includes diverse fields with the specific focus on psychic, historical, cultural, philosophical, ethical and aesthetic aspects about the nature, subject and representation of traumatized events and situations. And, all these concerns of trauma theory "range from the public and historical to the private and memorial" (Luckhurst 497).

The etymological meaning of trauma is related to the physical laceration and wound but the meaning of the same term can be approved differentially. *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary* defines 'trauma' as "emotional shock following a stressful event, something leading to long-term neurosis" (885) which is extremely horrible and cause us to feel upset and anxious, often making him/her unable to act mentally. Gradually, the theorists extend trauma to denote those who are wounded and deeply infected by the problematic of complicated kind. Such a troubled psyche is called traumatic psyche and this psychic trouble of people is related with psychic trauma.

The analysis of psychic trauma cannot be completed without mentioning the ideas of Cathy Caruth, a leading trauma theorist. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, she argues about the idea of 'latency,' i.e. when trauma first takes place is uncertain, but that "the survivors' uncertainty is not a simple amnesia;

for the event returns, as trend points out insistently and against their will” (6). She emphasizes that trauma can hardly be forgotten. She states on the part of latency of the temporary delay, which should not be misunderstood as repression because trauma by its very nature displays with a vengeance over a period of time, especially when triggered by a similar event. The term ‘latency’ means the period during which the effects of the experience are not apparent in trauma event. It has been described by Freud "as the successive moment from an event to its repression to its return" (Breuer and Freud 7). Caruth opines that the victim of a crash is never fully conscious during the accident itself. The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can never be fully known, but “as inherent latency within the experience itself” (Caruth 8).

Trauma, for Caruth, is incomprehensible by nature and by the same token it is referential as well. The subtlest fact concerning it is referential. Caruth claims that victim of trauma, however, is reluctant to express one’s hidden traumatic truth, and unknowingly reveals certain personal truth. Caruth in this concern writes:

Trauma is not experienced as a mere repression of defense, but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment. The trauma is a repeated suffering of the event but it is also a continual leaving of its site. The traumatic re-experiencing of the event thus carries with it what Dori Laub calls the 'collapse of witnessing'; the impossibility of knowing that first constituted it. (10)

Caruth identifies trauma as a momentous shock which is experienced throughout the passage of time. It is not ‘repression’ of the event but rather re-experiencing of the event. Furthermore, Caruth argues that latency is not so much concerned with the return of trauma as a departure from the knowledge and awareness of trauma:

For history to be history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence rather than the historicity . (18)

Caruth, in this way, talks about trauma as referential not a whole. She more actively focuses on the individual psychic disorder out of certain shock in the past.

Ruth Leys, one of the pioneer theorists of psychological trauma, elaborates the idea of Sigmund Freud-anxiety and repression and Cathy Caruth- latency that focus on psychic distress in her book *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2000). Moreover, for the more precise and specific knowledge about the psychic trauma, the idea of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) must be at the core. The concept of PTSD was officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980. PTSD is the human disorder of mind after the post-traumatic period like Vietnam War. Leys describes the concept of PTSD:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is fundamentally a disorder of memory. The idea is that, owing to the motions of terror and surprise caused by certain events, the mind is split or dissociated: it is unable to register the wound to the psyche because the ordinary mechanism of awareness and cognition are destroyed. As a result, the victim is unable to recollect and integrate the hurtful experience in normal consciousness; instead, s/he is haunted or possessed by intrusive traumatic memories. The experience of trauma, fixed or frozen in time, refuses to be represented as past, but is perpetually re-experienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present. (2)

Therefore, PTSD is the historical construct, which is the result of the traumatic event

and experience in the historical period and its surrounding. In the post war scenario, people especially who were the observers suffered from mental breakdown, neurotic distraction, and the catastrophic hangover. Because of such horrific events they are still suffering from the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in psychic level (Ley's 8).

For more genealogical and precise knowledge about trauma, an individual's psychic distress should be analyzed in relation to historical trauma. The word 'historical' usually describes something that is connected with the past or with the study of history or something that really happened in the past and is likely to be remembered. The word historicism means the theory that culture and social events and situations can be explained in history (Ley's 23).

While dealing with the historical trauma, Dominick La Capra, a leading theorist of historical trauma comes to the fore. La Capra, to clarify his intention about writing, in the preface of *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, writes:

In my account, moreover, not only should trans-historical or structural trauma be distinguished from historical trauma and its attendant losses; it should also be correlated with absence in contrast to loss, notably the absence of undivided origins, absolute foundations, or perfect totalizing solutions to problems. Failure to make these distinctions eventuates in a misleadingly hypothesized notion of constitutive loss or lack which may well be a secular variant of original sin. (xiv)

What does the writing of history have to do with the writing of trauma? How can a historical writing of trauma attest to the specificity of a past event while attending to its ongoing reverberation (echo) in the present? These are some questions examined in La Capra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. As the comma between them suggests, writing history (writing about past) and writing trauma (conveying the past's

resistance to writing) respectively symbolize his main concern about trauma, La Capra says: " 'Acting out' and 'working through' a traumatic past, on the inevitability of transference' and of 'second-hand trauma' in this past's reception, and on the impasses of deconstruction with regard to historical trauma (21).

La Capra proposes a historical approach to trauma that would include the particularity of historical wounds, while recognizing the way in which this unguidable past continues to shape our current experiential and conceptual landscape. However, this past and its losses would also be subject to a collective process of mourning, 'working through' and moving on, a course that would finally release us from a cycle of continuous re-traumatization and allow us to turn to future-oriented ethical and political projects. In this regard, La Capra further writes:

In post-traumatic acting out in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes—scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop. In 'acting out' tenses implode, and it is as if one were back there in the past reliving the traumatic scene. Any duality (or double inscription) of time (past and present or future) is experientially collapsed or productive only of aporias and double binds . . . one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to a future. (21-22)

In traumatic memory, the event somehow registers and may actually be realized in the present. In acting out, a tendency to relive the past in the form of dreams or hallucinations creates traumas. And an aspect of working through includes both back

there and here at the same time, and one can easily distinguish them.

La Capra more actively associates 'working through' as the medium of remembering traumatic event. Working through includes the channelization or obliteration of such traumatic 'acting out'. These processes of working through include lamentation or mourning of critical thought or practices that are recognized as traumatic ones. It requires going back to problem, working them over and perhaps transforming the understanding of them. For instance, La Capra adds, "Germans wanted to do what they did to the Jews because their culture had made them almost Hitlersque in their anti-Semitism, but they nonetheless bore full responsibility for what they did because they wanted and not forced to do it" (115). Thus, working through includes perpetrators and victims in the past, working with that at the present. La Capra prefers 'working through' of trauma to 'acting out' because 'working through' helps traumatized community to decrease the intensity of trauma, where as 'acting out' intensifies traumatic burden.

La Capra, while focusing on the historical trauma, explores more specifically in his book *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*. He distinguishes between traumatic event and traumatic experience:

The event in historical trauma is punctual and datable. It is situated in the past. The experience is not punctual and has an elusive aspect insofar as it is related to the past that has not passed away - the past that intrusively invades the present and may block or obviate possibilities in the future. (55)

Thus, trauma is related to anxiety which can be both the event and experience; only the difference is in the punctuation of occurrence. It is all because of the transitory nature of the history because "history in the sense of historiography cannot

escape transit unless it negates itself by denying its own historicity and becomes identified with transcendence of fixation" (Capra 1).

La Capra distinguishes historical trauma from the trans-historical or structural trauma. He shows different kinds of testimonies, events and traces to depict the real picture of traumatized history. While portraying the historiographic traumatic event and experience, he opines:

In historical trauma (or in the historical, as distinguished from trans-historical, dimension of trauma), the traumatizing events may at least in principle be determined with high degree of determinacy and objectivity. This would include the holocaust, slavery, apartheid, child abuse, or rape. In practice the determination of such events in the past poses problems of varying degree of difficulty for the obvious reason that our mediated access to such events is through various traces or residues - memory, testimony, documentation, and representations or artifacts. (116-17)

La Capra opines that in historical trauma, the event should objectify the certain historically traumatized situation with higher stress. Those events can be considered as historical traumas which can leave scars in present because of various reasons; like testimony, documents, memory or other artifacts. The traumatized events like Nazi genocide, Nigerian Civil War, apartheid and slavery can be exemplified under historical traumas.

La Capra in *Representing Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* describes two important implications of his view regarding the historical trauma. Firstly, trauma provides a method of rethinking postmodern and post structural theories with the historical context. La Capra writes: "The Post-Modern and Post-Holocaust become

mutually intertwined issues that are best addressed in relation to each other” (188).

Secondly, he provides the theories in order to elaborate historicity of the traumatized events and experiences. Canonical texts should not help permanently install an ideological but should, rather, “help one to foreground ideological problems and to work through them critically” (25).

History and Philosophy of Cultural Trauma

Cultural trauma is the condition in which whole group of people from a particular community feel unbearable to the environment where they are living. This situation happens when people from other place come to the community or those people living in the community migrate to alien place. For the cultural trauma, Alexander says: "Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectively feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (1). Therefore, according to Alexander, the life of the people living collectively is jeopardized permanently.

James Berger, a critic, in "Trauma and Literary Theory", writes that La Capra is concerned primarily with the return of the repressed as discourse, rather than with physical returns (such as genocidal repetition in Cambodia and Bosnia). According to him, in the structure of traumatic experience the repressed is said to have returned in an uncontrollably wild way. The victim of trauma while undergoing traumatic experience works as if s/he is a puppet of his/her hidden urges and impulses. S/he hardly becomes the agent of his/her own experience instead of pursuing for certain creative and fresh venture, the victim of trauma repeats the similar things as though s/he is too compulsive to do it. Berger comments on trauma theory basing on

Representing Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma of La Capra:

. . . trauma is not simply another disaster. The idea of catastrophe as trauma provides a method of interpretation, for it posits that the effects of an event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the events. Moreover, this dispersal occurs across time, so that an event experienced as shattering may actually produce its full impact only years later. This representational and temporal hermeneutics of the symptoms has powerful implications for contemporary theory. . . . The idea of trauma also allows for an interpretation of cultural symptoms of the growths, wounds, scars on a social body, and its compulsive, repeated actions. For instance, a sense of the dynamics of trauma offers a new understanding of the insistent returns of family disasters on talk shows that goes beyond discussion of market share and public taste. (572-73)

Following the idea of La Capra, Berger treats trauma as an event which can be manifested variously as symptoms of dreams, amnesia, shattering family, fragmenting social structure and forming national disasters. Although trauma is not a distinct disaster, it is the regularity of the past catastrophe. Trauma, thus, is effect of past covering from private to public in the present.

Thus, La Capra's theory of trauma focuses on three topics: the return of the repressed, acting out versus working through and the dynamics of transference in relation to the historicity of the events and experience. For the further analysis, it is necessary to deal with other trauma theorists like Kali Tal, Avishai Marglit, Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Neil J. Smelser, and other related critics and theorists.

Kali Tal in *World of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma* defines trauma as the threat to life or bodily integrity or personal encounter with death and violence.

Trauma is a life threatening event that displaces one's preconceived notion about the world. So, she writes about trauma:

The writings of trauma survivors comprise a distinct literature of trauma. Literature of trauma is defined by the identity of its author. Literature of trauma holds as it centers the reconstruction and recuperation of the traumatic experience, but it is also actively engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the writings and representations of non-traumatized authors. It comprises a marginal literature similar to that produced by feminists, African-Americans, and queer writers – in fact; it often overlaps with these literatures, so that distinct subgenres of literature of trauma may be found in each of these communities. (17)

The literary works on trauma basically revolve around the traumatized or disturbed events and situations. Generally, trauma writings are identified by those traumatized authors. Trauma writings are similar to those marginalized writings of females, African-Americans and third world people.

This brief survey indicates some of concerns that can be conceptualized under the category of trauma. It stretches from psychic life to public history, reading materials that can include romantic poetry, psychiatric histories, accounts of sexual abuses, memories, testimonies, documentaries, the symptoms, silences, omissions and so many other aspects in individual psyches and national histories. Trauma theory can be understood as a 'terrain' where different critical approaches converge. In a way, it is cross-disciplinary in which different disciplines contest with each other.

For the further analysis of trauma theory and its approach, the cultural aspect, and the necessity to study the cultural side of trauma is the most significant factor.

Jeffrey C. Alexander, a professor of sociology at Yale University, foregrounded the

concept of 'cultural trauma' through his essay "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma". The main objective of Alexander's cultural trauma is to show ongoing affair: "Societies expand the circle of the wet" (1). According to Alexander, throughout the twentieth century, people always have focused on the traumatic situation caused by an event, an experience, bloodshed, violence, and war in relation to certain organization or institution. The shift of concern from individual to collective, to a certain cultural location is the foreseen demonstration. Because of this kind of shifting, people think sociologically. In the traumatic level too, the common experience and event is internalized by certain community or group. Thus, trauma is something covering the matter not only minds: "For trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society" (2).

The aim with Alexander's notion of cultural trauma is to criticize both what he calls 'lay trauma theory,' which focuses that "traumas are naturally occurring events that shatter an individual or collective actors' sense of well being" (2) and to offer a perspective for considering social and cultural processes of collective traumas.

Moreover, Alexander gives cultural trauma an ethical dimension although he does not explicitly use the notion of ethics. So far, Alexander gives the social process of cultural trauma as an ethical dimension though he does not address directly about ethics:

For traumas to emerge at the level of the collectivity, social cries must become cultural cries. Events are one thing, representation of these events quite another. Trauma is not the result of group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity. Collective actors "decide" to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they

are, where they came from, and where they want to go. (10)

Thus, Alexander's aim to deny that trauma is grounded in something objective (external or real), becomes a way of stressing the ethical character of the cultural trauma process. However, one of the key questions is how to expand the circle of 'we' and still withhold the ethical imperative.

The collective consciousness is not the final to determine the event and representation in 'trauma process' but it is agents who do. So, the crux of his idea can be as follows:

'Experiencing trauma' can be understood as a sociological process that defines a painful injury to the collectivity, establishes the victim, attributes responsibility, and distributes the ideal and material consequences. Insofar as traumas are so experienced, and thus imagined and represented, the collective identity will become significantly revised. This identity revision means that there will be a searching re-remembering of the collective past, for memory is not only social and fluid but deeply connected to the contemporary sense of the self. (22)

Cultural traumas are experienced, imagined and symbolized as a sociological domain. Collective identity is the main factor of such trauma. Peoples' search for the collective life in the present and future evokes cultural trauma. The identity revision is the symbol of the traumatic events ever seen.

Another prominent theorist Neil J. Smelser in his essay "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma" appreciates cultural trauma comparing it with psychological trauma. He brings the relevance and generates insights about cultural trauma. He stresses both the promise and limitation of theory and research at the

psychological level for understanding it at the cultural level. He prepares the avenues of psychic trauma while defining cultural trauma. Smelser relates his idea with Sigmund Freud's psychic trauma and its relation to hysteria: "Freud conceived of hysteria as having a definite cause, course of development, outcome, and cure" (32). Smelser further supports that the memory related with an event or experience repressed from consciousness involves catharsis and working through which transfers into the memory of trauma as argued by Freud. Moreover, for Smelser some events like natural disasters, massive population depletion, and genocide are themselves traumatic.

Smelser shifts his idea to cultural trauma demanding prerequisites of cultural trauma. As he argues that several accomplishments should be made before an event gets termed as cultural trauma. These situations are as follows: firstly, the event must be remembered or made to be remembered. Secondly, the memory of such event must be culturally relevant, i.e. it must work as integrity in affected society. Finally, the memory of the event must be associated with negative aspects like disgust, shame, filth, horror or guilt. For example, American history is full of such aspects, such as the institution of slavery qualifies for a cultural trauma. Thus, for cultural trauma, there should be traumatized historical events. In this concern Smelser adds:

The theoretical basis for the proposition is that the status of trauma as trauma is dependent on the socio-cultural context of the affected society at the time the historical event or situation arises. . . . Historical events that may not be traumatic for other societies are more likely to be traumas in afflicted societies. . . . Then, that cultural trauma is for the most part historically made, not born. (36-37)

Smelser expands cultural trauma relating it with psychological and social trauma.

Some historical events can be regarded as both cultural and social as well as the psychological ones. For instance, The Great Depression of Thirties qualifies this kind of trauma. This historic event is not limited within the boundary as it traumatized at various levels: at social level, at psychological level, at cultural level and at national level: "Furthermore, once a historical memory is established as a national trauma for which the society has to be held in some way responsible, its status as trauma has to be continuously and actively sustained and reproduced in order to continue in that status" (38).

Smelser, in this process also, shows the difference between cultural trauma and psychological trauma in terms of the mechanism. The mechanisms related with psychological trauma are the intrapsychic dynamics of defense, adaptation, coping and working through but the mechanisms at the cultural level are mainly those of social agents and contending groups. Psychological adaptation, intrapersonal emotions, and working with individual's depression are some major symptoms of psychological trauma. Anxiety, mental disorder, guilt, shame, humiliation, disgust, anger are the category of psychic situation which, according to Freud, work to communicate between 'perceptual apparatus' and 'adaptive apparatus.' While, certain community, group of agencies/institutions, and mass affected out of some historical event is related with cultural trauma. Presenting all these ideas and evidences, Smelser gives the formal definition of cultural trauma:

A memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is a) laden with negative effect, b) represented as indelible, and c) regarded as threatening a society's existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions. (44)

For a cultural trauma, a related group of same race evoking some horrible event or situation should be at the core. Furthermore, Smelser necessitates three kinds of requirements within such event: full of negativity, having irremovable motif, and the disorder of the fundamental cultural presuppositions.

Approving and repeating the above formal definition of cultural trauma of Smelser, the pioneer theorist Ron Eyerman comes with “Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity” where he explores the concept of cultural trauma dealing with the African American identity from the end of the Civil War to the Civil Right Movement. He basically shows the cultural trauma because of “slavery, not as an institution or even experience, but as collective memory, a form of remembrance that grounded the identity-formation of people” (60). He has considered the Civil War and the Civil Right Movement as cultural process, and trauma is related to the same cultural process, when the people fought for identity construction out of collective memory. In his subject he writes:

The notion of unique African American identity emerged in the post-Civil War period, after slavery has been abolished. The trauma of forced servitude and of nearly complete subordination to the will and whims of another was thus not necessarily something directly experienced by many of the subjects of this study, but came to be central to their attempts to forge a collective identity out of its remembrance. . . . Slavery formed the root of an emergent collective identity through an equally emergent collective memory, one that signified and distinguished a “race”, a people or a community, depending on the level of abstraction and point of view being put forward. (60)

From the above abstract, it is clear that in post war period people who were traumatized by slavery fought for identity with the help of their collective memory. In this sense, trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all. In such situation, when the historical events establish significance, its meaning as traumatic must be established and accepted.

Veena Das in her book *Life and Words: Violence and the Decent into the Ordinary* comes with the same issue, in other words, the communal or ethnic violence in India in post independence scenario. In “Revisiting Trauma, Testimony and Political Community” she especially focuses on the communal violence of 1984. She considers 1984 as the major marker of communal violence in India. Basing on the 1984, she writes:

One important point was established about communal riots in India by the labors of various civil right groups, lawyer activists, and university teachers (including myself) in 1984, namely that far from the state’s being a neutral actor whose job was to mediate between already constituted social groups and their factional interests, several functionaries of the state were, in fact, actively involved as perpetrators of violence or at the very least, were complicit with the violence against the Sikhs. . . . Unfortunately, though, there is still a tendency to work with models of clear binary opposites in the understanding of violence—state versus civil society, Hindus versus Muslims, global versus local, etc. (207-8)

The hierarchy among the various ethnic groups is still working. Many activists, including state actively, evoke violence. In the case of 1984, violence against Sikhs constituted the same hierarchy from the side of state mechanism as well. The

superiority complex is the main background for such communal violence all over the world. The survivors of communal violence even face the threats and harassment from the bureaucrats and police officers if they belong to the 'other' than they.

The subjectivity formation is also shaped by the violence through the collective bodies. The historico-cultural sufferings are always characterized by the search for the collective identity or collapse like Holocaust, slavery and apartheid and so on. As the communal or ethnic violence is rooted in history thus, they are unavoidable in the present.

To rid off from the cultural misrepresentation and clashes, there should be the spirit of 'critical humanism.' According to Said, humanism is democratic and open to all classes and cultures and ethnicities. To him, humanism is to know ourselves and accept the coherent co-existence opposing the elite formation of narrow humanism:

. . . to understand humanism is to understand it as democratic, open to all classes and backgrounds, and as a process of unending disclosure, discovery, self-criticism, and liberation . . . humanism is not about withdrawal and exclusion. Quite the reverse: its purpose is to make more things available to critical scrutiny as the product of human labor, human energies for emancipation and enlightenment, and, just as importantly human misreading and misinterpretations of the collective past and present. (21-22)

Thus, humanism gathers its force and relevancy by its democratic, secular and open character. It is to co-existing and interacting peacefully with each other in the normal converse of event. So, humanism is to changing the concept of misrepresentation, treatment of history, injustice, imperial plan and collective identity to form a unity among diversity. Change is the law of nature, so, there is nothing beyond change. He

advocates for change in human perception to accomplish emancipation, enlightenment and coexistence avoiding misrepresentation and collective past and present guided by the thick ethics of binary opposition, to which we call ‘ethics of co-existence.’

In this way, the historically cultural trauma processes the semiotics of trauma. It takes place in ‘in-between event and representation.’ But in order for the event to become a cultural trauma, it has to be established as politically shared values in recollected manner. This is a process that takes time and that requires agents, mediations and a community of carriers and caretakers. The gap between event and representation is not always a free and open space that is accessible for intervention and agency. Cultural trauma is a social form of caring. It synthesizes all aspects like psychological, ethical, memorial, historical and subjective in a form of collectiveness. Cultural trauma, therefore, is a bridge of those traumatic historical experiences and events, where one has to suffer the irreducible traumatic past.

Therefore, cultural trauma is the dominant issue in the text, *The Namesake*. Ashima Ganguli and Ashoke Ganguli, after migration to the new place the United States of America cannot adjust properly because of habitual action of the past of their own culture. Cultural trauma is collectively experienced by the people living in the particular society. Here, whole family members have traumatic experience in the new society.

The tentative division of the forthcoming chapter will more elaborate the cultural trauma. In the second chapter, the researcher will write the introduction of the author Jhumpa Lahiri. Moreover, her impact of cultural trauma in her works will be included in the same chapter. In the third chapter, the researcher will find out the relevant text of cultural trauma especially experienced by the characters Ashima and Gogol Ganguli. In this way, the research work will be developed onward.

Chapter II: Jhumpa Lahiri as a Traumatic Writer

Jhumpa Lahiri and Trauma in Her Works

Lahiri was born in London, the daughter of Bengali Indian immigrants. Her family moved to the United States when she was three; Lahiri considers herself an American, stating, "I wasn't born here, but I might as well have been" (56). Lahiri grew up in Kingston, Rhode Island, where her father Amar Lahiri works as a librarian at the University of Rhode Island; he is the basis for the protagonist in "The Third and Final Continent," the closing story from *Interpreter of Maladies*. Lahiri's mother wanted her children to grow up knowing their Bengali heritage, and her family often visited relatives in Calcutta in India.

When she began kindergarten in Kingston, Rhode Island, Lahiri's teacher decided to call her by her pet name, Jhumpa, because it was easier to pronounce than her "proper names". Lahiri recalled, "I always felt so embarrassed by my name. . . . You feel like you're causing someone pain just by being who you are" (24). Lahiri's ambivalence over her identity was the inspiration for the ambivalence of Gogol, the protagonist of her novel *The Namesake*, over his unusual name. Lahiri graduated from South Kingstown High School and received her B.A. in English literature from Barnard College in 1989.

Lahiri then received multiple degrees from Boston University: an M.A. in English, M.F.A. in Creative Writing, M.A. in Comparative Literature, and a Ph.D. in Renaissance Studies. She took a fellowship at Provincetown's Fine Arts Work Center, which lasted for the next two years (1997–1998). Lahiri has taught creative writing at Boston University and the Rhode Island School of Design.

In 2001, Lahiri married Alberto Vourvoulias-Bush, a journalist who was then Deputy Editor of *TIME* Latin America, and who is now Senior Editor of *Fox News*

Latino. Lahiri lives in Fort Greene, Brooklyn with her husband and their two children, Octavio (b. 2002) and Noor (b. 2005).

Jhumpa Lahiri has traveled broadly in India. She has a lot of experiences of the effects of colonialism and the issues of Diaspora as well. This is the result that she wrote the novel *The Namesake*. She has a feeling of strong tie to her ancestral homeland along with the United States and England. Growing up with ties to all three countries has created in Lahiri a sense of homelessness and an inability to feel accepted anywhere. Lahiri explains this as a legacy of her parents' ties to India. Somdatta Mandal in his writing *Of Defining and Redefining the Asian-American Diaspora* depicts Lahiri's own voice in one of her interviews with Vibhuti Patel in *Newsweek International*:

It's hard to have parents who consider another place "home"- even after living abroad for 30 years, India is home for them. We were always looking back so I never felt fully at home here. There's nobody in this whole country that we're related to. India was different-our extended family offered real connections. (24)

But the familial ties to India were not enough to make India 'home' for Lahiri as she viewed Vibhuti Patel in the same interview, "I didn't grow up there, I wasn't a part of things. We visited often but we didn't have a home. We were clutching at a world that was never fully with us ... as I grow older, going to India was frustrating, because growing in America is different . . . in Calcutta, and we had to respect the family's concern" (Lahiri 20). Her tie to India altered as she grew older. However, she emphasized on how her stay in Calcutta flourished her creativity as such:

I spent much time in Calcutta as a child – idle but rich time- often at home with my grandmother. It enabled me to experience solitude-

ironically, because there were so many people, I could seal myself off psychologically. It was a place where I began to think imaginatively. Calcutta nourished my interest in seeing things from different points of view. There's a tradition there that we just don't have here. The ink hasn't dried yet on our lives here. (22)

Lahiri feels a bit of an outsider as the second generation immigrants in the United States. She feels Calcutta, the heart of Bengal, to be a wonderful part of her life but yet not 'home'. Lahiri has an assumption that she doesn't belong to any particular country. In several interviews she has expressed her experiences that the problem for the children of immigrants, those with strong ties to their country of origin. She has confusion that where her origin begins from. This is the traumatic effect on Lahiri.

From her early ten, Lahiri began writing as an expression of her inner sentiments. Since Lahiri has longing of creative writing, she began her career from her child days as a fiction writer with the writings of extensive 'novels' in notebooks, sometimes in collaboration with her friends an outlet for her emotions. Lahiri's writing journey developed during her school life itself when she began to write ten page 'novels' during recess with her friends. Later she wrote for her school newspaper. Likewise, Lahiri in the *Newsweek* interview remembers her need to write at her early young age to give an outlet for her sentiments. She views:

When I learned to read, I felt the need to copy. I started writing ten page 'novels' during recess with my friends' writing allowed me to observe and make sense of things without having to participate. I didn't belong. I looked different and felt like an outsider. (99)

Lahiri went on publishing stories though she stopped writing frequently at the time she went to college. By the year she finished her dissertation in Cambridge, she

was accepted to the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown and that changed everything. It was something of a miracle. In seven months, she got an agent, sold a book, and had a story published in *The New Year* magazine. She had been extremely lucky. "During her doctoral thesis in 1997, she worked for Boston magazine as an intern and was given a little trust as a real writer" (Flynn 173). Three of Lahiri's short stories appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1998.

The Namesake (2003) is the second book by [Jhumpa Lahiri](#). It was originally a [novella](#) published in [The New Yorker](#) and was later expanded to a full length novel. It explores many of the same emotional and cultural themes as her [Pulitzer Prize](#)-winning short story collection [Interpreter of Maladies](#) (1999). Moving between events in [Calcutta](#), [Boston](#), and [New York City](#), the novel examines the nuances involved with being caught between two conflicting cultures with their highly distinct religious, social, and ideological differences.

Criticism on Jhumpa Lahiri

Interpreter of Maladies, Jhumpa Lahiri's the first book of collection of short stories published in 1999, won a Pulitzer prize for fiction in 2000, a PEN/Hemingway Award, and The American Academy of Arts and letters Award. The stories, set in India and America, represent the predicament of Indian immigrants who are conscious of being in a different culture, and at the same time flashback for their own cultural roots. Since culture is the most important point in self defining process, the immigrant characters are emotionally attached to the lost culture. The present prosperity cannot define them, and it cannot satisfy their thirst. In this situation, mere confusion waters their emotions and later on the same thing becomes the bone of contention in their marital life. The important point is that marriage is the unifying theme for the fictional works of Lahiri, and marriage is indeed a key element of most

of the stories in her book *Interpreter of Maladies* as well as her first novel *The Namesake*. Even "A Real Durwan" has subplot of Mr. and Mrs. Dalal's bickering and reconciliation. Mrs. Sen's marriage to Mr. Sen in the story "Mrs. Sen" may not be the main focus of her story, but it does create important backdrop for cultural befuddlement. The one story that breaks with the theme of marriage or marital problems is "When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine" but it, too depicts a married couple and their relationship with a married man. The married couples in America have problems especially about their own situation caused by the multi-cultural scenario.

For Lahiri, marriage is the richest domain in her fictional works. Most of the stories in her first book: "A Temporary Matter", "When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine", "Interpreter of Maladies", "A Real Durwan", "Sexy", "Mrs. Sen's", "This Blessed House", "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar", and "The Third and Final Continent" portray marital problems in the immigrants' land. The collection spans in three continents, moving from Boston to London to Calcutta and even Dhaka. What to assimilate and what not to assimilate frequently haunts their minds, therefore they are under the shadow of confusion. The result is marital discord. The same house can be blessed one for Twinkle but not for Sanjeev in "This Blessed House". The carefulness of Sanjeev is more related to his own worries about life and Twinkle's Carelessness is connected with the attraction of the Christian rituals. The sizable collection of Christian paraphernalia becomes the source of discord in their married life. The previous tenants left a treasure trough behind apparently wishing the best for their successors. Twinkle receives them with great joy and excitement. It started with an effigy of Christ and continued with a wooden cross with a key chain, a painting of the three wise men, a 3-D post card of St. Francis, a tile trinity of Sermon-delivering Jesus, a miniature nativity scene and a number of others. These Christian symbols are

no more important for Sanjeev and quite contrarily they are exciting for Twinkle. When Sanjeev came home and he saw them "we're not Christian", he said (137, IOM). For the response of Sanjeev's remark: "Twinkle planted a kiss on top of Christ's head, then placed the statue top of the fireplace mantel" (137). This is the powerful element of discord between the husband and the wife. Both are Hindus but Twinkle is infatuated to the surroundings where the Christian symbols are common. Then they are severely confused for instant action. The cultural awareness is crucial here. The problem of acculturation is increasing in the marital life of the newly married couple. Though there was a compromise of setting them in a recess at the side of the house, so that they are obvious to passersby, there is still misunderstanding. Lahiri writes:

My husband did hate it. He hated its immensity, and its flawless, polished surface, and undeniable value. He hated that it was in his house, and that he owned it. Unlike the other thing they'd found, this contained dignity, solemnity, beauty even. But to his surprise these qualities made him hate it all the more. (156-157)

The Namesake is Jhumpa Lahiri's the most anticipated, and sprawling first novel continues the same issue of marital problem. It is a novel about a family's imperfect assimilation into America. It is the story of Ganguli family; Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli and Gogol Ganguli, a son of immigrant Indian family in America. The couple's hardships in the region of other's culture with the problem of the marriage of the children are the main issue in this novel. Ashima and Ashoke, the already married couples are puzzled in the new land. Marriage creates reciprocal bonds of duty and obligation between husband and wife. Ashoke goes far away for his professional responsibility, and continuous staying at home for Ashima cannot

bridge their common understanding and discordance is common. She frequently requests him for returning back to India whereas Ashoke wants to adjust with the immense opportunities in the foreign land. The novel opens in 1968 in the time when the immigrant couple Ashima and Ashoke were expecting their first child in Masschussets. Ashima is nervous about having her baby in a foreign country, away from her family, and while she waited in the hospital before her delivery, she reflected on how different America was from India, with each woman separated from the others in the room by a privacy curtain. At that time she was perplexed. What to do and what not do that is the question for her. Later on, after the birth of the baby-boy, the time of discharge of the mother and son, came to reality and the compiler of birth certificate, unlike in India asked for the name of the baby. It was really a bad news for them. Lahiri portrays it in this way:

The bad news is that they are told by Mr. Wilcox, compiler of birth certificates, that they must choose a name for their son. For they learn that in America, a baby cannot be released from the hospital without a birth certificate. And that birth certificate needs a name. "But, sir" Ashima protests, "we cannot possibly name him ourselves". (27)

These quoted lines above show the confusion of Ashima in a broader term. In Bengali culture Ashima's grandmother is an authentic person for naming of the baby. On the other hand, they are compelled to choose a name, and a pet name Gogol is chosen, and wait for the good name. It is neither an American nor Indian name that is the product of confusion.

And Gogol Ganguli has faced many difficulties and problems during his thirty two years life tenure in the case of his marital process. Wherever he goes and whatever he does, his Indianness is dominant factor. Adult adjustment and problems

during this period are highly depicted in the novel. Slowly and gradually Gogol becomes young and he feels odd on his own name. The good and pet dichotomy of his name confuses him very much. Gogol is ashamed of his name and heritage because of his affiliation with the American girls. Different American girls come in his life, love him but no one marry with him. The profound process of assimilation with them (Americans) is an illusion for him because of his wrong concept that he is living an actual American life and he avoids ABCD (American Born Confused Desi). At last, he is left alone by the American girls.

Jhumpa Lahiri has interpreted and examined her fictional works from different perspectives. The present study will explore the role of cultural trauma in the life of the immigrants; Ganguli family, the lack of comprehending the environment and the crisis in marriage of the immigrant children, so its perspective will be of cultural studies. The primary focus of the research will be on culture, cultural trauma as well as on the immigration to acculturation. The author herself is the second generation of immigrants, and she knows about the hardships of immigrants in the new land, therefore the research will also draw relevant ideas from the author's life. In doing so, the study will give special attention to the first generation of immigrant characters in *The Namesake*. The uneasiness in living life and behaving with other people, the marital discord of the married characters and the process of marriage and its hardships of the second generation in alien land will be studied in a significant way. How they sort out their Indianness in constant interaction with different cultures will also be the focus of the study. Speaking at a press conference in Calcutta Jhumpa Lahiri portrays her nowhere-ness of her own life: "no country is my motherland, I always find myself in exile in whichever country I travel to, that's why I was tempted to write something about those living their lives in exile." (*The Times of India* 14). As

the characters of her fictional works are confused she herself is in dilemma about the belongingness and cultural settlement.

The Namesake is, to some extent, based on her personal experiences, thus, relevant to pay attention towards her life and experiences. It does not mean that there is one to one correspondence between her and her characters. There is less connection with the behaviors of the second generation immigrant characters and the author herself. Like Gogol in *The Namesake*, Lahiri had a pet name, Jhumpa Neelangana Lahiri born in London to Indian immigrant parents who brought her to the United States when she was five, that changed into good name. In the similar way, like Gogol, throughout her childhood Lahiri spent months at a time in Calcutta to visit her large extended family. In India, though she was not a tourist, she did not like her parents not coming to her home. This unusual perspective, she says, gives her a "necessary combination of distance and intimacy with a place" (51) that have informed her writing. She admits that it is hard to consider herself an American, having inherited a sense of exile from parents who identified only with their Indian heritage and clung to that identity throughout their lives, "the challenge of exile, the loneliness, the constant sense of alienation, the knowledge of the longing for the first world", "are more explicit and distressing than for their children". Yet the children of immigrants, too, share the sense of befuddlement in cultural artifacts. Talking this confused state of Lahiri, Linda Simon explains:

When she is asked where she is from Lahiri knows that 'Rhode island' is not the answer her questions are looking for. Nor does it tell the whole truth about her. Yet she doesn't feel the pull of her Indian roots, and as she grew up, often resented her parents' insistence on preserving their ties to Indian rituals and traditions, traditions that

threatened to separate her from the American culture to which she was undeniably attracted. "As a young child", she says "I felt that the Indian part of me was unacknowledged, and therefore somehow negated, by my American environment, and vice versa I felt that I led two very separate lives. (1)

Lahiri herself is also in that confused state as her fictional characters are confused on whereabouts. She cannot openly tell her exact position and therefore, as Ashima in the last part of the novel *The Namesake* is nowhere, and everywhere, she is in that position.

Lahiri has always been inclined to creative writing. She remembers a need to write as early as ten years old and she has always used writing as an outlet of her emotions. She is defined by her writing because she grew up with ties to three continents. In the course of her visits to Calcutta, she has become bilingual and bicultural. Though occupying 'a middle position' between two cultures her fictional characters, as herself are related more towards their native land. Lahiri exposes a realistic touch to both cultures and it leads her readers to experience both sides of the works.

Except for Native Americans, it is true that all Americans are descended from immigrant populations and are different ethnic groups. Asian American immigration history manifests distinctive differences from that of other groups. Family, marriage, home, community, origin, loss, dislocation, relocation, racial differences, cross-cultural resistance, second generation Americanization and assimilation, identity destabilization and reformulation, as in many other American ethnic texts, are common trajectories in Asian American literatures. As people move from natal territories, notions of individual and group identity, grounded in ideas of geographical

location as a national homeland and of segregated racial purity, become contested and weakened. At that time cultural befuddlement haunts in the minds of the immigrants.

Jhumpa Lahiri's writings represent her Indianness and the common problem of Indian immigrants in the U.S.A. She falls on the category of American born Asians. The Asian American writers, together with the recent emphasis on multiculturalism, have been inspiring Americans of Asian descent to explore their composite heritage. Cultural criticism is undergoing with corresponding changes, and the terms of what constitutes "America" are being re-visioned in the light of its multicoloured citizenry. In Elaine Kim's words; "The lines between Asian and Asian American, so important to identity formation in earlier times, are increasingly being blurred (qtd. in Cheung 7). Elaine's words are less applicable in the case of Lahiri.

In the case of Jhumpa Lahiri, it is not applicable though the writers in the position of Lahiri lack honesty and authenticity in representation. A.K. Mukharjee, for instance, emphasizes on her authenticity and honesty in the representation of Indian characters. He says: "Jhumpa Lahiri is honest and authentic to her experiences. She writes about the Indians who have settled either in the U.S.A. or England and does not comment on everything that she is not well-versed in" (108 - 09). Mrs. Lahiri's fictional characters are from Bengal, India where she visited various times in her early childhood with her parents. As for other Asian American writers such as Meena Alexander, Peter Bacho, Marilyn Chin, Younghill Kang, Fae Ng, Amy Tan, Bharati Mukhjee, Michael Ondaatje, V.S. Napiaul, Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri tries to represent the issues of Asian immigrants in the place of historically, culturally and linguistically diverse environment. The above mentioned writers fall on the category which simultaneously claim and disclaim of both Asia and America. Therefore, most of the Asian American writers represent the marginalized voices that

migrate from Asian countries in America, and Jhumpa Lahiri cannot be an exception for this matter. In the same ground, Jhumpa Lahiri has focused cultural trauma is one of the most important tool not to shape the fix model of life of immigrants in new land, America by writing through the novel *The Namesake*.

Lahiri as a Traumatic Writer

Jhumpa Lahiri, as an Asian-American writer, has psychic duality in her identity. She involves her own personal experience of problems of immigrants creating the same character like herself in her writings. Most of her writings, *The Interpreter of Maladies*, the fictional work and the novel *The Namesake*, are within the periphery of her traumatic theme. Lahiri in *The Namesake* puts her own individual experience of migration as Ashima Ganguli an Indian emigrant to America. Many communication and interviews of Lahiri are found nostalgic of her ancestral homeland, India. Though she was born in London, and migrated to America, she has retrospection of her ancestral homeland. Psyche, confusion, sense of alienation, dislocation, loneliness in assuming alien culture, combination of distance and intimacy with a place, theme of complexity, clash of life style, cultural disorientation, conflicts of assimilation, tangled ties between generations, the question of identity, suspicious nature on America and American cultural, immediate appeal, complexity of emotion, limited canvas, tight focus, memoir style and so on are special traumatic features of Lahiri in her writing. She amalgamates these features in her works of writings as many critics also comment which justifies that she is a traumatic writer in general. C. J. Gillen in the context of her book review in a web site says:

Something about Jhumpa Lahiri's new novel, *The Namesake*, reminds me of a Vermeer painting. She writes in quiet language that neither calls attention to itself nor invites the reader to wrestle with it, yet her

eye for details and precise descriptions draw us into an almost tactile experience of her settings. Far from being a literary virtual reality ride, or a voyeuristic zoo-train view of an exotic subculture, however, these sensory experiences, like the surface patterns of a rivulet, suggest the contours of what lies below and behind the flow of her narrative, making our empathy for her characters more palpable. (12)

Lahiri expresses her experiences which are seen silently, like the painting, the more one sees, the more one perceives. Similarly, another reviewer Mahmud Rahman says:

I have read other books where 30 years of life have been attempted to be fit into 300 pages, and I have found some of them sprawling because the author tried to give us too many dimensions of the protagonist's life. Here Jhumpa Lahiri seems to have chosen a tighter focus, and I appreciate that choice. But in this effort, she might have inadvertently sacrificed her protagonist's fullness. For that matter, we are given a short summary of Moushumi's life and she comes off as a much fuller character. (142)

To wrap up, Jhumpa Lahiri, being born in London, UK, was migrated to the U. S. A. Although she progressed and improved her life style satisfactorily, her willing to go to her own culture in India and the love of Bangali language never removed from her mind. She experienced everything herself and she has poured her own experience in the novel *The Namesake*. She has her own cultural trauma herself but she has used Ashima Ganguli in the novel as being the victim of cultural trauma in the novel *The Namesake*.

Chapter III: Cultural Trauma in *The Namesake*

Trauma: An Overview of the Novel

This work shows cultural trauma and its impacts in the characters in life living process in a migrated land (America), in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. Lahiri, in the novel, pours her individual emigrant and diasporic experience, which also assimilates with characters in the novel to justify how cultural trauma brings out hullabaloo, disorder and ups and downs in the subtle mind and the lives of Indian immigrants, the Ganguli family, in America.

Sense of Alienation and Trauma on Ashima

As *The Namesake* opens, Ashima Ganguli is a young bride who is about to deliver her first child in a hospital in Massachusetts. Her husband, Ashoke, is an engineering student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In the first glimpse of the beginning of the novel, when Ashima is in the desire of getting something in her pregnancy, it is estimated that she is lacking which leads her trauma throughout her stay in the foreign land. As the novel opens:

Ashima has been consuming this concoction throughout her pregnancy, a humble approximation of the snack sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and on railway platforms throughout India, spilling from newspaper cones. Even now that there is barely space inside her, it is the one thing she craves. (1)

Here, she has been followed by her Indian mind rooted into the depth. So, it can be said that her traumatic situation begins from Indian experience and still has been working.

Traumatic situation comes from the earlier experience that everyone has in the childhood. This is related to crisis in other words. Lois Tyson says: "Trauma is also

used, of course, to refer to a painful experience that scars us psychologically. Thus, I might experience the childhood trauma of losing a sibling to illness, accidental death, or suicide in later life" (21). Thus, psychological wound or past experience which affects in later age is trauma.

As she prepares to give birth, she realizes herself isolated. If she was still in Calcutta, she would have her baby at home, surrounded by all the women in her family who would administer all the proper Bengali ceremonies and would tell her what to expect. In the United States, Ashima struggles through language and cultural barriers as well as her own fears as she delivers her first child:

But nothing feels normal to Ashima. For the past eighteen months, ever since she's arrived in Cambridge, nothing has felt normal at all. It's not so much the pain, which she knows, somehow, she will survive. It's the consequence: motherhood in a foreign land. For it was one thing to be pregnant, to suffer the queasy mornings in bed, the sleepless nights, the dull throbbing in her back, the countless visits to the bathroom. (6)

Ashima gets scarcity of familiar culture in America. This makes her feel alienated in the foreign land. Not only that but also she feels dislocated and unfamiliarity in new land. It is implied that when she feels uneasy with her pregnant state in the new place, she seems, as if, to go back her original place to feel easy and to be helped by kith and kin.

Jeffrey C. Alexander indicates that "cultural trauma is a result of the group practicing for collective identity" (2). The conversation between Patty and Ashima Ganguli at the time of Ashima's pregnancy at Hospital supports as said:

After a minute they continue on, toward the nurses' station. "Hoping

for a boy or a girl?" Patty asks. "As long as there are ten finger and ten toe," Ashima replies. Patty smiles, a little too widely, and suddenly Ashima realizes her error, knows she should have said "fingers" and "toes." This error pains her almost as much as her last contraction. English had been her subject. . . . But in Bengali, a finger can also mean fingers, a toe toes. (7)

From the lines above, it is seen that cultural trauma comes from psychological effects which is experienced in the feeling of Ashima's herself language error while talking with an English Lady, Patty, at Hospital.

A boy baby is born and is healthy and the new parents are prepared to take their son home. But Ashima and Ashoke are stunned to learn that they cannot leave hospital before they give their son a legal name for birth certificate, to be given by hospital. The traditional naming process in their families is to have an elder give the new baby a name. They have chosen Ashima's grandmother for this honor as Bengalis have tradition to name a new born baby by the elder one in the family. They have written the grandmother to ask her to give the baby a name. But the letter never arrives and soon after, the grandmother dies.

In the meantime, as they must provide the name for their baby to discharge from hospital; Ashoke suggests 'Gogol' a name for his son. He chooses this name for two reasons. First, it is the name of his favorite author (Nikolai Gogol), the famous Russian author. The second reason is that Ashoke, before he was married, had been in a very serious accident. The train he was riding in had derailed. Many people died. Ashoke had broken his back and could not move. He had been reading *The Overcoat* the book of Nikolai Gogol just before the accident. He had a page of that book clutched in his fist. The page of paper caught the attention of the medics who had

come to rescue the wounded people in the accident and he also had been rescued. If it had not been that page caught in his fist, acting as a flag in the darkness, Ashoke could have died. He got his new life then. He wants the name 'Gogol' to remember for long time in his life. Ashima also adds her consent for her husband. So, the name was relevant.

When they arrive at home from Hospital, there is lack of amenities. Ashima accepts this the American way. However, now with a baby in her arms, her breasts are swollen with milk, her body coated with sweat, she groins still so sore she scarcely sits, it is all suddenly unbearable. She says she cannot do this all. . . . What are you saying Ashima? Ashoke asks. "I'm saying hurry up and finish our degree. And then, I'm saying I don't want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It's not right. I want to go back" (33).

As Ashima comes to home after hospital, she feels alone in the pregnant state which is taken a difficult state for women. She also feels lacking which is not possible to manage alone in unfamiliar environment. In this way, the psychological impact on Ashima brings the feeling of uneasiness, alienation and hatred towards America.

Ashoke dies when they are in the United States. The feeling of loneliness on her increases when she is alone after her husband's demise. Her traumatic experience gears up in an alien land, aftermath of Ashoke's death due to stomach bothering.

Ashima feels lonely suddenly, horribly, permanently alone, and briefly, turned away from the mirror, she sobs for her husband. She feels overwhelmed by the thought of the move she is about to make, to the city that was once home and now in its own way foreign. She feels both impatience and indifference for all the days she still must live, for something tells her she will not go quickly as her husband did. (278-

79)

She is panic-stricken and suffering due to Ashoke's death to digest the situation easily and she realizes that she is very alone after the demise of her husband, Ashoke. She mourns for her husband. She thinks to leave the place but later on she takes it that she has to bear more responsibilities toward children, friends and other relatives in the absence of her husband. This has changed her into full-framed maturity in her stay in America. However, the lack of husband is always palpitating to her.

A Distinct Experience on Gogol

Gogol gets different experience as a second generation immigrant during his life in America. He has trauma of Americanness in his adolescence and becomes failure of his successful life due to his mistake of losing time with American girls in the name of love and marriage. Cultural variation between two cultures (Indian culture and American culture) is the obstacle for his successful life in American land. But on the later phase of his life, he comes to accept his own original culture (Indian culture). In this sense, he confesses his mistakes. So does the trauma of culture on him.

As Gogol grows older and becomes more eager to fit with his peers, he finds Alexander Shortened to Alex, Andrew to Andy, likewise, William Billy and Elizabeth Lizzy, and he would have greatly preferred to have something like this of his name as well. Unfortunately, as the narrator remarks, “but Gogol sounds ludicrous to his ears lacking dignity or gravity” (76). Furthermore, “not only does Gogol Ganguli have a pet name turned good name, but a last name turned the first name. And so it occurs to him that no one he knows in Russia or India or America or anywhere shares his name. Not even the source of his namesake” (78). It turns him finally to a sheer skeptic as the narrator depicts his attitude:

But he does not want to tell Kim (his American girlfriend) his name. He doesn't want to endure her reaction to watch her lovely blue eyes grow wide. He wishes there were another name he could use, just this once to get him through the evening. It wouldn't be terrible . . . I'm Nikhil he says for the first time in his life. (95-6)

Gogol, who finds himself basically a loner even when he is in a group making him feel like a lapper in the crowd, starts resenting everything from his over-cautious rather Indian parents to their heritage and culture because, he thinks, of which he has never been actually accepted in the circle he is. Upon discovering that "his namesake was a severe depressive . . . a queer, and sickly creature, (as the writer Ivan Turgenev once made a complement upon the writer of *The Overcoat*) . . . who slowly starved himself to death, Gogol feels freshly betrayed by his parents" (91). Even his father had a point: "the only person who didn't take Gogol seriously, the only person who tormented him, the only person chronically aware of and afflicted by the embarrassment of name, the only person who constantly questioned it and wished it were otherwise, was Gogol" (100). Gogol's hatred towards his name lands him to the disgust which creates a tension in the Ganguli family which is clear from the father-son conversation:

Gogol says: How could you guys name me after someone so strange? No one takes me seriously.

Ashok replies: Then Change it. In America anything is possible. Do as you wish. (100)

So, Gogol had obtained a common wealth of Massachusetts change-of-name form He'd filled out the rest of the form. In spite of his parent's sanction he feels that he is overstepping them, correcting a mistake they've

made. (100-01)

During his college life in Yale, he re-invents himself by a legal name as 'Nikhil', the official name for him given by his elders at home. The new name sounds far more sophisticated and most importantly, could pass as a western name. Gogol finds his new name as if it were an alter ego when he uses the name Nikhil. This name sets him free from all the ethical constraints of his parents. It is as Nikhil that he embarks on his adult life that he begins to have relationships with White American Women who take him by the lapels, shake him awake to life's charms, and injects chronology of his life with some Zest. But all these take place at Gogol's private life as Nikhil, secret especially from his parents. The narrator projects Gogol's secrecy, "Gogol's successful affair with Ruth (the first white girlfriend of Gogol) and his happy relationship with her becomes his such an accomplishment in his life about which his parents are not in the least but proud or pleased" (116). Thus, as Nikhil, he becomes part of the mainstream culture, not just a hyphenated American.

Stepping the threshold of adulthood, Gogol is openly exposed to the dominant high culture. Gogol craves to leave behind the inherited Bengali values of his parents. So, he takes his own path through life as Nikhil Ganguli.

While he insists on being called Gogol in elementary school, by the time he turns 14 he starts to hate the name. His father tries once to explain the significance of it, but he senses that Gogol is not old enough to understand. His parents decide to give him a more public name, which is part of the Bengali tradition—having a private name that only family and friends use and a public name for everything else. They chose Nikhil. Shortly before leaving for college, he travels to the courthouse and has his name legally changed to Nikhil Gogol Ganguli. When Gogol goes off to college, he uses his public name.

This change in name and Gogol's going to Yale, rather than following his father's footsteps to MIT, set up the barriers between Gogol and his family. The distance, both geographically and emotionally, between Gogol and his parents continues to increase. He wants to be an American, not a Bengali. He goes home less frequently, dates American girls, and becomes angry when anyone calls him Gogol. During his college years, he smokes cigarettes and marijuana, goes to many parties, and loses his virginity to a girl he cannot remember.

When he goes home for the summer, Gogol's train is suddenly stopped and temporarily loses electricity. A man had jumped in front of the train and committed suicide, and the wait for the authorities causes a long delay to him for his home. Ashoke, who is waiting at the train station for Gogol, becomes very concerned when he calls the train company and hears of the incident. When they pull into the Ganguli's driveway, Ashoke turns off the car and he finally explains the true significance of Gogol's name. Gogol is deeply troubled by this news, asking his father why he did not tell him this earlier. He starts to regret changing his name and his identity. He lives in a very small apartment in New York City, where he has landed on a job in an established architectural office after graduating from Columbia. He is rather stiff personality-wise, perpetually angry or else always on the lookout for someone to make a stereotypical comment about his background. In this way, the narrator says:

He is shocked and discomfited by the news, feeling bad about his irritation and impatience, wondering if the victim had been a man or a woman, young or old. He imagines the person consulting the same schedule that's in his backpack, determining exactly when the train would be passing through. (121)

That is why, we can find the fear of loss of identity of Gogol on Ashoke by

retrospection his past train accident with the delay of Gogol's train.

At a party, Gogol meets a very attractive and rather socially aggressive Barnard girl named Maxine. Gogol becomes completely wrapped up in her and her family. Maxine's parents are financially well off and live in a four-story house in New York City. Maxine has one floor to her and invites Gogol to move in. Gogol becomes a member of the family, helping with the cooking and shopping. Maxine's parents appear to have accepted him as a son. When Maxine's parents leave the city for the summer, they invite Maxine and Gogol to join them for a couple of weeks. They are staying in the mountains in New Hampshire, where Maxine's grandparents live. For a while, Gogol is fixed in this very American family.

Gogol introduces Maxine to his parents. Ashima dismisses Maxine as something that Gogol will eventually get over. Shortly after this meeting, Gogol's father dies of a stomach bothering while he is working on a temporary project in Ohio. Gogol travels to Ohio to gather his father's belongings and his father's ashes. Something inside of Gogol changes. He slowly withdraws from Maxine as he tries to sort out his emotions. Maxine tries to pressure him to open up to her. Gogol breaks off the relationship and begins to spend more time with his mother and sister, Sonia. Ashima, after some time has gone by, suggests that Gogol contact the daughter of one of her friends. Gogol knows of the woman from his own childhood. Her name is Moushumi, and she has had the unfortunate experience of having planned a wedding only to have her intended groom change his mind at the last minute. Gogol is reluctant to meet with Moushumi for two reasons. She is Bengali, and she is recovering from having been shamed. But he meets her anyway, to please his mother.

Moushumi and Gogol are attracted to one another and eventually are married. However, by the end of their first year of marriage, Moushumi becomes restless. She

feels tied down by marriage and begins to regret what she has done. Gogol suspects something is wrong and often feels like a poor substitute for Moushumi's ex-fiancé, Graham, who abandoned her. One day, Moushumi comes across the name of a man she knew when she was a senior in high school. She contacts him, and they begin an affair. Gogol finds out. Moushumi and Gogol divorce.

Gogol has the sense of failure in his married life since Moushumi and he gets divorced. As the narrator states: "And then he returned to New York, to the apartment they'd inhabited together that was now all his. A year later, the shock . . . but a sense of failure and shame persists, deep and abiding "(283). He realizes his mistake and forgets her action due to trauma of unsuccessful life.

He has also the trauma of leaving Bengali culture. After divorce with Moushumi, he realizes his mistake feeling the failure of successful life and remembering his family of the past. He feels it is due to American hullabaloo and his own insensitiveness to himself. The narrator thus, shows:

In so many ways, his family's life feels like a string of accidents, unforeseen, unintended, one incident begetting another. It had started with his father's train wreck, paralyzing him at first, later inspiring him to move as far as possible . . . that seemed out of place and wrong, these what prevailed, what endured, in the end. (286-7)

Gogol, at last loves his name 'Gogol' because that was put by his parents, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli. He retrospects Nikolai Gogol, from which he is put his name, and his parents in a new land, has trauma of loss of time.

The givers and keepers of Gogol's name are far from him now. One dead. Another widow, on the verge of a different sort of departure, in order to dwell, as his father does, in a separate world . . . it was

destined to disappear from his life together, but he has salvaged it by chance, as his father was pulled from a crushed train forty years ago.

(289-90)

Eventually, Gogol reaches some sort of compromise, but it is never entirely satisfactory as there is always a sense of sadness that he is neither fully of one world nor of the other, but a torn one. In this way, trauma of culture (Americanness) affects Gogol in his fruitful life which he had dreamt to live in America.

The story ends with Ashima selling the family home so she can live in India with her siblings for half of the year. Sonia is preparing to marry to an American man, Ben. Gogol is once again alone. But he feels comforted by one thing, before his father died; he finally told his son why he had chosen that name for him. By the end of the novel, Gogol has come to accept his name and picks up a collection of the Russian author's stories that his father had given him as a birthday present many years ago.

Cultural Trauma: A Voice from Indian Immigrants

Indians constitute one of the largest immigrant groups with a sizeable population in different parts of the world today. Indian emigration to the developed countries is a post independence phenomenon. In an attempt to establish themselves as successful professionals and businessmen, Indians have had to undergo massive pressures from within and without. Through sheer hard work and brilliance they have earned respect and admiration in the field of science and technology, and art and literature.

Cultural trauma is the experience felt by whole social group that they are victims of something of unfavorable environment. Likewise, this novel has traumatic experiences of the characters Ashima Ganguli and Ashoke Ganguli. In this sense, Jeanne Curran and Susan R. Takata opine:

A cultural trauma is one that we as a social group experience together, with our experience being that of perpetrators, victims, or spectators, with all of us sorely affected by the experience as representing some form of violent interruption to our lives. (1)

In this way, as a group experience, whole immigrants including Ganguli family in America have been affected by trauma of culture due to different cultural environment.

Human migration is physical movement by humans from one area to another, sometimes over long distances or in large groups. Historically this movement was nomadic, often causing significant conflict with the indigenous population and their displacement or cultural assimilation. Only a few nomadic people have retained this form of lifestyle in modern times. Migration has continued under the form of both voluntary migration within one's region, country, or beyond and involuntary migration (which includes the slave trade, trafficking in human beings and ethnic cleansing).

People who migrate into a territory are called immigrants, while at the departure point they are called emigrants. Small populations migrating to develop a territory considered void of settlement depending on historical setting, circumstances and perspective are referred to as settlers or colonists, while populations displaced by immigration and colonization are called refugees. The rest of this article will cover sense of a change of residence, rather than the temporary migrations of travel, tourism, pilgrimages, or the commute.

Indian writers have been using English language for literary expression in prose for about 200 years. C.V. Boriah's twenty eight page tract *Account of the Jains* (180) is the earliest prose writing in English by an Indian. The short fiction writing though appeared much later, it became a highly popular form of literature within a

short period of time. Literary periodicals, women's magazines, Journals and numerous dailies thrive in the publication of eagerly sought after stories. Story writing has evolved itself in a fine art in the modern times. Story in the last few decades has moved from the individual to the social, from relatively simple narrative point of view to a more complex, and more significantly from the obvious to the subtle.

Manjeri Isvaran, one of the most prolific Indian English short story writers, immensely enriched the corpus of Indian literature by writing stories on varied subject matters for the two decades- 1940s and 1950s. In the recent decades, a host of writers, as such Mulk Raj Anand, R.K Narayan, Raja Rao, Khushwant Singh, Ruskin Bond, Manoj Das and other a number of writers have used the short story writing as a vehicle of expression. In the context of universe, however, in all most all the languages women novelists have taken a foremost position in the art of narrative. There is, thus, a spurt in the output of stories produced by women writers, who have laid a special stress on feminist literature. Likewise the women writers, though quite a few of Indian origin, have however excelled in the art of story-telling and in creating an aroma of Indian setting and environment. The writers like Bharati Mukherjee, an Indian American writer; Uma Parameshwaran, an Indian Canadian writer; and Mena Abdullah, an Indian-Australian writer are the notable writers of Indian Diaspora who score over their male counterpart regarding the art of story-telling.

As the above, *The Namesake* delineates how subjectivities are ideologically constructed, related to outsidership. Indians living in white societies are still subject to the oppressions of those who are the natives. The migrated Indians are considered as the binary opposites of Native Americans. This subjects them to a great divide between the west and east, the occident and the orient, and dehumanizes them. *The Namesake* depicts how Gogol, trying to break away with the Indian values, happens to

lose his own identity and appears to be a marginalized mimic of centralized Americans. It is because of traumatic impact of white-American culture on Gogol.

Gogol is conscious enough to have been subjected to the insults put into place by native's oppressions. He is aware of the events of the day, Gogol, along with his father, pastes golden letters spelling out *Ganguli* on the side of their mail box:

Gogol discovers, on his ways to the bus that it has been shortened to GANG, with the word GREEN scrawled in pencil following it. His ears burn at the sight . . . something tells Gogol that the desecration is intended for his parents more than Sonia and him. For by now he is aware, in stores, of cashiers smirking at his parents' accents, and of salesmen who prefer to direct conversation to Gogol, as though his parents were either in-competent or deaf. (67-8)

Furthermore, Gogol is conscious of the laughter of the relatives in India upon his American accent and the question of his identity in America along with the arguments made about his Indianness.

Gogol, witnesses his parents' affirmation of their Indian identities in a surreal daze, "Within minutes, before their eyes Ashok and Ashima slip into bolder, less complicated versions of themselves, their smiles wider revealing a confidence that Gogol and Sonia never see on Pemberton Road" (81-2). For back in America they would retreat into the safety of their Indian Community. It is not until Ashima, their mother is over forty and takes a job at a public library, Ashima makes American friends. She decides to continue her work, asserting her independence for the first time when Ashok leaves to work for two semesters at a University near Cleveland.

Nikhil's Bengali parents, while trying to create an imaginary homeland or establishing a little India in the New World (America), spare their social life

completely within a Bengali Circuit in their early days. Their visits to Atlanta, Toronto or Chicago were made solely to visit other Bengalis. There were also made visits to hometown (Calcutta) with the unwilling children in tow. Ashima Ganguli who stands in the kitchen of a Central Square apartment combining Rice Krispies and Planters peanuts and chopped red onion in a bowl, adds salt, lemon juice, thin slices of green chili, pepper, wishing there were mustard oil to pour into the mix. Ashima consumes this concoction throughout her pregnancy, a humble approximation of the snack sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and on railway platforms throughout India, spilling from newspaper cones that she still craves for. The narrator remarks, “Even now that there is barely space inside her; it is the one thing she craves. Tasting from a cupped palm, she frowns, as usual, there is something missing” (01). Whereas the children by the time of their parents home visit find it rather a tour to their heritage and long for pizza, hamburger or Chinese special orders for kids. Even, the Gangulies, apart from the name on their mail box, apart from the issues of *India Abroad* and *SangbadBichitra*- that are delivered there, yet to a casual observer appear no different from their neighbor (Americans). They learn to roast turkey. For the sake of children, parents celebrate with progressively increasing fanfare the birth of Christ an event the children lack forward too far more than the worship of Durga and Saraswati. The children sound just like American, expertly conversing in a language that still at times confounds them in accents they are accustomed not to trust.

On the surface, Gogol lives a life not at all different from those of his fellow American students, yet the name Gogol has a hold over him. Even his younger sister, Sonia, who finds it easier to break out of their parent’s restrictive boundaries, insists on calling him Gogol or Goggles. Sonia who has abbreviated her name from a pet name Sonali that is process to assimilation, the name of wife of an Indian prime

minister and a link to the Russian literary culture her father enjoyed, as a more usual name in America. Sonia who cuts her hair, goes to dances and has a secret boyfriend while still in high school, yet urges her brother not to change his name because “he is Gogol” (98).

Gogol’s own name troubles him much as he feels to be a mimic of the Russian writer Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol, hiding his Indian or American identity. Gogol’s name becomes a perfect symbol of the misunderstanding and confusion that he must sort out in order to forge an identity that combines his family’s values with those of the utterly dissimilar world he experiences. Eventually, Gogol reaches some sort of compromise, but it is never entirely satisfactory as there is always a sense of sadness that he is neither fully of one world nor of the other, but a torn one. As he enters adolescence, Gogol, along with his friends- Colin, Jason and Marc- likes to listen to records of Dylan and Clapton, and reads Nietzsche in his spare time. Later, as Gogol joins architect in New York he falls in with a circle of friends like Donald, Astrid, Guggenhei and so on who being American appear as almost at home: among their things. This is what makes him feel to be a different one without a home of his own in the country. Getting vexed by the remark like, ‘teleologically, speaking ABCDs are unable to answer the question where are you from? He turns his attention towards the quest for cultural identity at the very peak of decentredness.

The protagonist ‘Gogol’ in *The Namesake*, therefore, has been put in an urge to actively learn to find his Indian heredity within and in conjunction with the minority-ethnic continuum in the United States for many of them share the common experience of finding their ethnic Indian identity which they find distant from the Indian identity experienced at ‘home’ rather not in isolation but in a coalition with other minorities.

Emigrations of human groups have taken place since the dawn of time, and they are recorded in ancient texts. Seeking safety, shelter, food, farmable lands, and human freedom, people have sought to escape hunger, incarceration, torture, and oppression of the spirit. However, the two decades immediately preceding this millennium have witnessed the largest migratory patterns ever recorded in history. Civil wars in Africa uprooted centuries-old tribal communities. The fall of the Soviet Union unearthed genocidal aggressions in Western Europe. And struggling economies in the Latin American world failed to enhance the lives of a large underclass. Natural and human made disasters also moved people to seek safety, as droughts in Haiti, floods in Guatemala and Mexico, and nuclear accidents in the former Soviet Union caused the relocation of several million refugees in the last 20 years, either to areas within their own countries or outside of their borders.

Thus, this work considers some of the pertinent knowledge that has been generated to answer the questions below by assessing complex subjective experiences of immigrants in the context of their family group. Does trauma of war and disaster permanently impair the human psyche? Do people ever recover from psychological and physical torture? And how do people adjust to new environment and move on lives?

Immigrant Stress and Trauma

Moved by the needs of increasing numbers of immigrant newcomers for social and mental health services, investigative agendas designed by both public and private institutions in the United States focused initially on describing the important bio-psychosocial features relevant to these varied immigrant groups. Basically, following a needs-assessment approach, this research attempted to delineate the uniqueness of new immigrants' mental health and social-environmental needs, investing in those

groups that have comprised the largest numbers of emigrants to this country since World War II. These have been populations from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and other Latin American countries and, more recently, immigrants from China, Southeast Asia, Africa, the former USSR, and Eastern-Europe. This needs-assessment research comprises what I would call the first generation of immigrant mental health investigation. Boylan says:

This literature reports a myriad of complex emotional and physical tasks that must be accomplished by people who leave their homelands. The immigrants' loss of family, community, and physical environment are themes that reverberate through both clinical and creative literatures, alike. (154)

Thus, the feelings of immigrants are seen in the literature of what they had emotional and physical loss of the present country where they are living.

The loss of familiar social networks is especially hard on families and women, who often find themselves isolated, forced to deal on their own with the multiple demands of life in a foreign environment. A downturn in socio-economic status is the unfortunate norm for most immigrants across the social and educational spectrum. This is often a bitter surprise for those who harbored hopes of fresh horizons in a country of new opportunities. Thus, a former school teacher from Bosnia distributes leaflets for McDonald's; a Chinese mechanic *When Immigration Is Trauma* livers food on a bicycle, while his family of six awaits him in a rented room; and a physician from Guatemala drives a cab in New York. Lack of fluency in the host language is frustrating, shameful, and sometimes terrifying for newcomers, for whom a subway ride or a trip to the emergency room with a sick child can turn into a grueling nightmare. While immigrants who relocate as a family far better than those who

migrate alone, family units are faced with the daunting task of frequent redefinitions of gender roles; host country mores and values that are completely diatonic with ethnic traditions; and children who quickly seek to conform to their new community and new peers.

Elderly people who relocate with their extended families tend to do more poorly than their younger relatives, feeling isolated and overwhelmed by the acculturation tasks that need to be tackled. Immigrant women often encounter a dual-edged phenomenon: more willing than men to accept menial and low-paying jobs, they more quickly become wage earners and are thereby introduced to new configurations of traditional gender roles, especially in North American countries. However, those with male partners are often confronted by unemployed and despondent men who feel threatened by the power shifts in the dyadic relationship and family system. In the process Comas-Diaz and Greene add: "Indeed, for some recent immigrant groups, these conditions have been associated with an increase in domestic violence and substance use"(155). The migration process is unquestionably linked to major adjustment stressors. The impact of these stressors on mental health is variable and complex. As has been described in excellent reviews of the literature in these areas, anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and higher prevalence of serious psychiatric disorders have all been associated with multiple immigrant populations both in and outside of the United States.

Currently, through both our clinical experience with diverse groups and our slowly growing sophistication in assessing multicultural samples via better-validated methodological instruments and designs, a more multifaceted understanding of the recent immigrants often avoid or obfuscate the pressing circumstances that moved them to seek safer haven (154). Thus, stress and trauma is different on immigrants.

Outsideness: A More Traumatic Experience of Ashima, Ashoke and Gogol

Ashima suffers a lot when Ashoke takes a teaching job at a college in Boston Suburb, the Gangulis move from Cambridge, a migration, Ashima feels, that is more drastic, more distressing than the more from Calculate to Cambridge had been. Now in a community without sidewalks, she has no streets to walk around, no buses or subways, no stores. Being a foreigner she thinks:

. . . a sort of lifelong pregnancy a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had been ordinary life, only to discover that previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding. (49-50)

The experience of new environment and the sense of dislocation from an historical "homeland" are highly impacting an Ashima's life. As she was quite alone in the time of her pregnancy in the new land in the absence of her husband, she still feels that sorts of suffocation and loneliness. She is struggling with hardships in new 'place' and sometimes discord develops between the spouse. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffithus and Helen Tiffin talk: "place is thus the concomitant of difference, the continual reminder of separation, and yet of the hybrid interpretation of the colonizer and colonized" (123). We can tell that the place of immigrants, exiles or expatriates in new place, is the hybrid interpretation of the immigrants and the natives.

And yet slowly, cautiously, the Gangulis make their way in America. Ashoke becomes professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Ashima has a second child Sonia, and now live in their own home at Pemberton Road. Gogol's formal school life begins but he doesn't like good name 'Nikhil' in school, and from this point Gogol's discord with his parents starts. His parents try to persuade him. "Don't

worry", his father says. "To me and your mother you will never be anyone but Gogol" (57). The Bengali culture stops them to make the pet name the public. Mrs. Lapidus, the kindergarten teacher gets surprised from this double name tendency. His parents are strong enough to familiarize him from the name. Nikhil, and contrary to this, Gogol rejects and conflict between two generations emerges. By considering the condition of the boy and easiness in name, he is registered as Gogol in the school. Since the novel captures the issues of two generations of immigrant family, Lev Grossman calls the novel "a multigenerational saga of the immigrant experience (Time 52).

It is only after years of Gogol's enduring shame about his name, which he finds ridiculous, that his father one day tells him the truth and shares with him the story about how reading a book by Nikolai Gogol saved his life and changed its course irrevocably. When he knows the historical background of his namesake his heart palpitates more than ever. He thinks about his namesake's name and his pathetic ending. Not only does Gogol have a pet name turned good name but last name turned first name. "And so it occurs to him that no one he knows in the world in Russia, or India or America or anywhere shares his name, not even the source of his namesake" (78).

In this way, he feels a lost one. He is extremely puzzled and tries to escape from the loaded name; therefore it becomes the source of discord in the family. For getting relief from Gogol's persistent urge, Ashoke advises him; "In America anything is possible. Do as you wish" (100). Then he starts legal American way of renaming as most of the Americans do. Nikhil becomes his name which was once discarded by himself. Now Gogol evaporates and Nikhil emerges in the American environment. Gogol is ashamed of his name (before renaming), of his heritage

nothing seems to suit well on his India-American shoulders, he avoids them (Indian American Students), for they remind him too much of the way, his parents choice to live, befriending people not so much not because they like them, but because of the past they happen to share.

Gogol's parents speak nostalgically of Bengal implying a certain affinity and identity. They probably think of themselves as awkward. How do they feel can be observed in these lines:

Though they have home they are disconnected by the space, by the uncompromising silence that surrounds them. They still feel somehow in transit, still disconnected from their lives, bound up in an alternate schedule, an intimacy only the four of them share. (87)

The above quoted lines show that they are really baffled in the alluring scenario of new culture, though they are economically prosperous and sound. The first generation of immigrants is in more crises in the sense that, especially the immigrant women are complicated on the boundaries of four walls, the television becomes undemanding and the "others" are quite indifferent in their cultural points. On the other hand the men go far way for their better career and can enjoy with the new aura. The result is the marital discord among the immigrants' couple in the present world of economic affluence.

In conclusion, outsidersness, the feeling of dislocation which leads to cultural trauma has led all the characters in the novel to limbo. They have felt uneasy to adjust in the new society. Ashima has a lot of difficulty to cope up with her life in new place and environment. Ashoke has also the same problem; he loses his life in the foreign land, whose cause of death is not clearly stated, however his death is due to the stomach pain. He moves to many places. He works and struggles more for the

betterment of family, yet he does not feel his settled life in America. He does not see his son, Gogol, studied well rather he sees his son tangling in the vague environment. He hopes his son to follow him being engineer to lighten his and his family's future after him but he does not find Gogol of such kind as he hopes. It is the indication that he has suffered a lot from cultural trauma.

Similarly, Gogol has a lot of problems to adjust with his life. He has attachment with the new environment (American Environment). He spends time with girls and entertains as Americans do without thinking his right future because of his cultural affection of America. He cannot do what he could do in the original culture. At the last period after Ashoke's demise, Gogol reaches at some compromise with original culture but it is never entirely satisfactory as there is always a sense of sadness that he is neither fully of one world nor of the other, but a torn one. It is due to trauma of culture on him.

In this way, the feeling of outsidership on characters in the novel, *The Namesake*, causes to happen cultural trauma on Ganguli family, Ashima, Ashoke and Gogol Ganguli.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

Cultural Trauma as the Result of Strange Culture

Lahiri has raised the issue of cultural biasness and hierarchy creating situation between Indian and American –culture and gap of misunderstanding on the way of life between two cultures by which there is psychic problem in the characters. This thesis seeks to study the cultural trauma of the characters in the novel as Ashima and Gogol Ganguli, when the Ganguli family goes to America. The novel has shown plenty of traumatic experiences in the life period of the characters and glorious situation of cultural trauma of all immigrants in America in general.

This novel galvanizes the idea that cultural trauma can be a tool for bringing imbalance and hullabaloo in life living process of the immigrants in their life in America. Lahiri has done this by bringing characters like Ashima and Gogol Ganguli as the real characters who are embroiled in the turmoil of vague, uncertain and free life due to bounded mind of culture in new land, America. The textuality of the text is widely covered the geographic, social and economical issues rampantly affecting and influencing life of immigrants in an actual sense.

To show difficulty to adjust in a vast environment, Lahiri brings the cultural divergence and how the cultural divergence affects to the life of people in whole time of life and how the comprised cultural mind should struggle for the danger of finishing its original Indian culture in America.

Here, Lahiri has tried to show two kinds of mind, one comprised mind bounded by cultural tradition and the other is open mind. In other words, it is the mind of American culture and the mind of Indian culture. Lahiri has shown the bounded mind always struggles for smooth and prosperous life and it has danger of losing its tied bond of rituals and system amid of open culture like American culture. In this

sense, until the bounded mind loses its tied bond; progress, development and success is impossible in a real ground.

In the same way, Ashima has the trauma of Indian culture where as Gogol has the trauma of American culture. They have been struggling for their own ways. These two minds at a time either in the life of an individual or in the life of individuals play the vital role to stay the same state of life without any advancement.

Lahiri, herself as a traumatic writer and an experienced immigrant individual in America, exposes her own individual experiences how the immigrants in America feel unadjusted and unfamiliarity and how cultural trauma hampers and stops advancement of new comers in new environment. The same seems in Ganguli family migrated to America from India. Ashima Ganguli stays within Indian culture in new place, America which was impossible in total. The fear of loss of native Bengali culture in the name of adjusting in English culture in America in Ashima Ganguli is vividly explained and Gogol the protagonist in the novel, *The Namesake*, becomes failure in his life and he does not have fix aim for his future due to the cultural duality. He is in between dual culture, his own original culture and the new culture in U. S. A.

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 Ahima 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 its obedience is the root of no further progress of life, an experiment of living life in a distinct world. They are also in the same way shown in the novel.

Lahiri has brought the main issue of new culture as the problem of unfixation of life of new comers in America. Lahiri in the novel, by single Ganguli family, lights on the whole immigrants' problems in America. New cultural environment is the problem of adjustment for new comers in America. Cultural obstinate and trauma of Indian culture of Ashima Ganguli is the main cause of repatriation of her and bulging in the hullabaloo and carelessness of his future life of Gogol are the pivotal issues in the novel, *The Namesake*.

Also, Lahiri shows intentionally the state of biasness and hierarchy- creating situation between Indian and American –culture which is seen on Ashima Ganguli in her pregnancy period in America. Likewise, Gogol feels failure in his life and accepts his mistake and remorse at the end of the novel upon bulging in a dilemma of American culture. Lahiri mixes her strong ties to her ancestral land, India, and pours her own Diasporic experiences to justify how difficult and problematic situation the immigrants have to face in America and how cultural trauma becomes the obstacle to light on their future life.

Thus, a strange culture as the root of cultural trauma has been the main cause of repatriation of Ashima Ganguli and also the dilemma on Gogol's life and for his name sake. So does the title of the novel *The Namesake*.

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