

RESISTING IDENTITY CRISIS IN LAHIRI'S *THE NAMESAKE*: A POST-COLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

Safi Ullah

Department of English and Applied Linguistics, University of Lakki Marwat, KP, Pakistan.

Email: safiullahmarwat40404@gmail.com

Dr. Kiramat Ullah

Chairperson, Department of English and Applied Linguistics, University of Lakki Marwat, KP, Pakistan.

Email: kiramatazad86@gmail.com

Arshad Khan

Department of English and Applied Linguistics, University of Lakki Marwat, KP, Pakistan.

Email: arshadkhan511512@gmail.com

Bibi Asia

Department of English and Applied Linguistics, University of Lakki Marwat, KP, Pakistan.

Email: asiaumar323@gmail.com

Muhammad Yaseen

Department of English and Applied Linguistics, University of Lakki Marwat, KP, Pakistan.

Email: yaseenhusainsmk72@gmail.com

Abstract

This research study is a critical analysis of a complicated interaction between identity crisis and resistance in *The Namesake*, a postcolonial novel by Jhumpa Lahiri. Based on the concept of hybridity introduced by Homi K. Bhabha, the paper initially examines the key reasons behind identity crisis among the Ganguli family such as the concept of diasporic alienation, the symbolic weight of naming, and the dissonant nature of cultural hybridity. Then the study breaks down to explore the strategies of resistance and response of the characters to these difficulties. These tactics entail a subtle kind of assimilation, continuing self-establishment quest, and a strong desire to re-unite with the cultural within. This paper provides a text-based argument on how Lahiri uses characters to negotiate their bicultural existence, and in that process, create some of the most fascinating and hybridized identities in a third space. Finally, this study enlightens the readers on the concept of diasporic identity formation as not a path of fragmentation, but a negotiation process that is ongoing and robust that can reveal much about the current subjectivity of immigrants and postcolonials.

Keywords: Identity Crisis, *The Namesake*, Homi K Bhabha, Post Colonialism, Jhumpa Lahiri

1. Introduction

Postcolonialism looks at the political, cultural, and psychological effect of colonialism and how the previously colonized societies are able to bargain identity following independence. The orientalism (1978) by Edward Said was constructive in the field of postcolonialism as it showed that colonial discourse formed stereotypes to legitimize domination. Ashcroft et al. (1989) and

other scholars stipulate that colonialism influenced the life of a significant part of the world population as well as had long-term impacts on the culture, identity, and power relations. Through this framework, readers have the ability to realize how the remnants of colonial history still affect people and the community in the present day.

The process of identity formation is one of the major topics in postcolonial studies. According to Eagleton (1996), the goals of the postcolonial literature are not only to oppose the power of the colonizers, but also to create new cultural identities. The key theory to this argument is the hybridity theory of Homi Bhabha. He suggests that the colonizer and colonized interact and form a third space, in which hybrid identities are formed and cannot be confined to cultural limits. This hybridity is particularly prominent in the experience of immigrants, where people must always strike a deal between the ancestral cultures and the host cultures. Mercer (1990), Hall (1989) and Goldberg (P-10), all highlight that identity becomes precarious when there is cultural disruption but people also actively negotiate and resist the identities imposed on them by outside sources.

The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri gives a good portrayal of the concept of hybrid identity, displacement and cultural conflict. Lahiri herself was raised between the Indian and American cultures and felt the tension of not belonging to either of them completely, which is transferred to her writing. The novel reveals some of the ways in which the multicultural societies are not always accommodating to diversity, and as a result immigrants tend to have fragile or fragmented identity. By reminding of the Ganguli family, Lahiri underlines the emotional and cultural challenge of existing between cultures, demonstrating that people have to constantly address the gap between their native and foreign worlds.

The diasporic identity is complicated as the experiences of the first and second generation as portrayed in *The Namesake* depict. The emotional cost of displacement is found in Ashoke and Ashima who are grappling with homesickness and the necessity to maintain Bengali traditions and adapt to American living. The concept of hybridity by Bhabha assists in defining the experiences since the novel reveals how people achieve hybrid identities that are influenced by the Indian tradition and the American values. In the case of the second generation, as shown in the case of Gogol and Sonia, the tension is even stronger. They are raised with greater sense of belonging to the American society but with cultural expectations that they are supposed to transmit, they are left confused up to the point of internal conflict. Characters like Gogol and Moushumi show that although migration causes crises of identity, it also gives possibilities of the formation of new and fluid identities that are amalgamations of both the mother country and the new country. By doing so, *The Namesake* highlights that a postcolonial identity is dynamic and in a continuous process of development due to the constant cultural contact.

1.1 Research Objectives

- i. To probe into the main causes of identity crisis in *The Namesake*.
- ii. To investigate the characters resistance to the identity crisis in the novel.

1.2 Research Questions

- i. What are the major causes of identity crisis in *The Namesake*?
- ii. How do characters resist identity crisis in the novel?

2. Literature review

Postcolonialism has become a prominent critical approach to contemporary literary analysis, especially on the culture and politics of the impacts of colonialism on identity. When

the political freedom is attained, Young (2003, 2016) states that cultural influence still exists and is the way these individuals negotiate identity. Hybridity is here the key term used, meaning that Bhabha refers to the process of developing new forms of culture that emerge in the area of contact between the colonizer and the colonized. The theory underpinning the current study gives some background to the analysis of *The Namesake*, a novel by Jhumpa Lahiri closely connected to the issues of identity, belonging, and cultural negotiation.

The Namesake is a quality story of the Bengali immigrants in America, which show how the first and the second generations adapt to the new cultural demands. The experiences of Ashoke, Ashima, Gogol, and Sonia demonstrate how identity keeps on being constructed by displacement, memory, and cultural adaptation. The novel underlines that identity does not exist, it is modified by the process of loss, change and re-identification of heritage. The struggles of the characters reveal how the subjects of postcolonialism find their path in the space between the different cultures.

A number of researchers examine the identity negotiation in the novel. According to Macwan (2014), identity within a diaspora is an ongoing process that is influenced by family demands, cultural compulsion, and personal desires. Macwan brings out the way Ashima transforms into cultural rigidity and then flexibility, whereas Gogol holds on the predicament of second-generation immigrants who have to reconcile between the values passed down to them and the values of the host community. The paper highlights that identity crisis does not occur only between the generations, but is also expressed in the symbolic distinctions between the host country and the homeland.

Next to this cultural prism, Taş and Sonmez (2014) delve into the theme of hybridity being a lifetime negotiation between belonging and estrangement. They point out that the two Ashima and Gogol feel displaced in different ways Ashima as a result of migration and gender-based isolation and Gogol as a result of his divided feelings towards his name and ancestry. Their interpretation underlines the way in which Lahiri shows hybrid identities as unstable, multi-layered, and sometimes disturbing, neither denying the cultural backgrounds nor wholly accepting the new world.

Other researchers are concerned with cultural markers and memory. Farahmandian, Yousefi, and Rizi (2015) focus on the influence of language, food, and clothing on creating diasporic identity. They demonstrate how the efforts by Ashima to recreate the Indian dishes are the indication of cultural erasure and how the refusal and acceptance by Gogol of cultural symbols is the manifestation of the cycle of alienation and re-identification. They focus on the daily culture and ways in which it is practiced, which they say is a means of maintaining or creating a new identity in the diaspora.

The discussion is further enhanced by trauma based readings. Tanritanir (2017) views the novel through the lens of intergenerational trauma and maintains that both train accident that happened to Ashoke and the fact that Gogol was given a name which belonged to his father are emotional burdens that shape identity between generations. Equally, research by Ilyas and Afzal (2021) and Yahya and Mani (2022) points to psychological disintegration and internal exile. They demonstrate the way in which the nonlinear form of the novel reflects the fractured identity of the characters and how emotional alienation, particularly to Ashima and Gogol, was a manifestation of concealed psychological impacts of migration.

Newer methods extend the analysis to social and political settings. Mohamed (2024) applies intersectionality to explore the determination of identity by race, gender and social status especially to Ashima and Gogol. Karagoz and Boynukara (2019) present the concept of re-orientalism and state that Lahiri opposes and occasionally re-represents the cultural stereotypes. Brennan (2011) introduces one more element, the geopolitical one, and it is possible to state that the novel is a mirror of the post-9/11 America, where the racialized identity becomes especially suspicious. Naming, repression, and cultural conflict are also discussed in the studies by Mohammed and Berzenji (2023) and Chaudhary (2016) as the main aspects of identity formation. Drawing on recent stylistic research that highlights the role of linguistic choices in shaping psychological tension and reader engagement (Muneeb et al., 2025), the present study examines how Jhumpa Lahiri employs narrative strategies to resist and negotiate identity crisis in *The Namesake*.

Despite the plethora of literature, most of the works consider identity crisis in general and do not explore how the characters resist identity loss by embracing hybridity. The cultural conflict, trauma, and alienation are scrutinized by most researchers; however, the concept of hybridity as an intentional, rather than an imposed state, is applied by Bhabha. Such is an important gap since the characters in Lahiri, and especially Ashima, Gogol, and Sonia are not the victims of hybridity, but are actively redefining their identities by adapting, retaining certain aspects of their culture, and reconnecting with the heritage. This paper aims to fill that gap by using the theory of hybridity as a resistance strategy developed by Bhabha to demonstrate how postcolonial identities are reconstructed based on the principle of negotiation, instead of assimilation.

3. Research methodology

This paper consists of a qualitative research approach and textual analysis to discuss the presentation of hybridity and identity crisis in *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri. The paradigm, to which the research adheres, is interpretivist, which is oriented toward the comprehension of the meaning of human experiences and the mechanisms of the process of negotiating the cultural identities of characters. The major source to use in the study is the novel itself, although the secondary sources will be scholarly books, journal articles and postcolonial theory research, the concept of hybridity introduced by Bhabha, and literary analysis. This is done by analyzing the issues, character growth and narrative devices through close reading where the characters are observed in their reaction to difficulties between their host and native cultures. The paper uses the theory of hybridity by Homi K. Bhabha as its primary approach to demonstrate how cultural fusion affects identity and how characters actively control and redefine their identities within a postcolonial society.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Core Elements of Identity Predicament

4.1.1 Diaspora and Alienation

A diaspora refers to a large group of people sharing a similar heritage or homeland who have dispersed across the world. Derived from the Greek word *diaspeirein*—meaning "to scatter about" (from *dia* "about, across" and *speirein* "to scatter")—the concept of diaspora underscores a fundamental displacement from an origin. In contemporary discourse, diaspora is often understood as a condition of being located between cultures, between majority and minority, nation and non-nation, citizen and foreigner, original and hybrid. For individuals within a

diaspora, this interstitial positioning frequently becomes a primary cause of identity crisis, characterized by dislocation and profound alienation.

In *The Namesake* (2003), the experiences of Gogol's parents, Ashoke and Ashima, vividly illustrate the identity crisis stemming from the post-1960s wave of Indian immigration to the United States. Ashima, in particular, embodies the inherent features of diaspora such as homelessness, dislocation, and deep alienation. Her journey from Kolkata to America following her marriage to Ashoke is presented not merely as a geographical relocation but as an abrupt and emotionally charged severance from her entire familiar world. The poignant memory of "airport confusion and tears" alongside a "bon voyage gift, slipped over her wrist the last time she saw them" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 9) symbolizes the profound emotional cost of this departure, cementing the notion of a past irrevocably left behind. This initial rupture immediately plunges Ashima into what Homi K. Bhabha (1994) describes as the "third space" of hybridity—a liminal zone where established cultural meanings are dislocated, and the subject is left in an ambivalent, unsettling in-between. This disjunction creates a deep sense of psychological instability, a core aspect of her identity crisis.

The vivid depiction of Ashima's flight—"flying for the first time in her life on a BOAC VC-10 whose deafening ascent twenty-six members of her family had watched from the balcony at Dum Dum Airport, as she was drifting over parts of India, she'd never set foot in, and then even farther, outside India itself" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 9)—underscores a complete geographical and psychological rupture from her heritage. This journey launches her into an alien cultural landscape, initiating the "unhomeliness" that is a defining characteristic of diasporic identity crisis (Bhabha, 1994). This Bhabhaian concept signifies not merely nostalgia for a physical home, but a deeper existential unsettlement arising from the erosion of familiar cultural referents and the inability to feel truly at home in either the past or present location.

4.1.2 Cultural Hybridity and Initial Dislocation

Cultural hybridity denotes the complex association of individuals from differing cultural backgrounds and their ensuing struggle to adjust within a new cultural milieu. In this intricate process, immigrants often face the profound crisis of dual identities, persistent cultural dilemmas, and an inherent fear of identity loss while striving to assimilate into multicultural societies (Bhabha, 1994). Both first and second generations frequently act as cultural mediators, navigating the adopted culture of their new homeland alongside the heritage of their motherland. Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) vividly portrays Bengali culture—encompassing food habits, dress, festivals, rituals, customs, and religious ceremonies—as the first-generation immigrants earnestly endeavor to transmit these elements to their second-generation offspring in America.

Jhumpa Lahiri meticulously portrays Ashima and Ashoke Ganguli as a first-generation couple grappling with the disorienting aspects of hybridity upon their arrival in the United States. Ashima's early experiences in America foreground the immediate cultural dissonance that triggers her identity crisis. Nearing delivery, she finds solace in a Bengali snack, a "concoction of Rice crispies combined with peanuts, chopped red onion, salt, lemon juice, thin slices of green chilli and mustard oil – a Bengali snacks sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and on railway platforms throughout India, spilling from newspaper cones" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 1). This small, intimate connection to her homeland contrasts sharply with her new, isolating reality. During labor, her cultural practices clash with American hospital norms: she calls out to Ashoke with an interrogative in Bengali, "Are you listening to me?" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 2), adhering to the Bengali

custom of not calling one's husband by name. This subtle yet significant act underscores her ingrained cultural identity in a foreign setting.

This initial dislocation culminates in a deep sense of despair when her son is born without the presence of any family beyond Ashoke. Ashima laments that her son "has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 25). Having grown up in a large joint family, she feels profoundly lonely and detached in America, burdened by the thought of raising her child without communal support. Her emphatic plea to her husband, "I want to go back" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 33), underscores the immense psychological toll of this early diasporic experience. This pervasive feeling of displacement and isolation establishes her "unhomeliness," a core tenet of Bhabha's (1994) theory, where the diasporic subject feels perpetually dislocated and unable to fully belong in either their homeland or adopted country.

The subsequent challenge of naming their child further exacerbates Ashima's crisis, illustrating how seemingly minor cultural clashes can trigger significant identity struggles. In India, naming a child is a lengthy process often involving family elders and astrologers, but in America, a name is required for a birth certificate before the baby's release. Mr. Wilcox, the hospital's birth certificate compiler, informs them a name is needed and suggests naming the child after an ancestor—a "sign of respect in America and Europe," but a practice that "would be ridiculed in India" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 28). This forces Ashima and Ashoke to hastily make a decision that directly contradicts their cultural traditions, highlighting the immediate pressures of cultural assimilation and the loss of traditional agency in the hybrid space. This early experience foreshadows the consistent tension between inherited culture and imposed norms that contributes to the ongoing identity crisis for both generations.

4.1.3 The Burden of Naming

For the second-generation immigrant, Gogol Ganguli, the primary genesis of his identity crisis is intrinsically linked to the "burden of naming." This problem stems from the profound cultural differences between Indian and American naming conventions, thrusting Gogol into a perpetual state of chaos and internal conflict from birth (Lahiri, 2003, p. 28). Unlike the Indian tradition of carefully chosen names, often sent by letter from elders, Gogol's is bestowed arbitrarily: a "pet name" given simply because his parents needed a moniker to release him from the hospital, chosen serendipitously after the Russian author Nikolai Gogol, whose book is famously linked to saving his father Ashoke's life (Lahiri, 2003, p. 29). This accidental, culturally mismatched origin makes the name "Gogol" a quintessential example of what Homi K. Bhabha (1994) identifies as an ambivalent hybrid signifier – a symbol detached from stable meaning in either cultural context, thus precipitating a profound identity crisis.

From his earliest years, Gogol struggles immensely with the weight of this name, experiencing profound psychological discomfort. Lahiri describes him as initially asocial, unhappy, shy, and full of hatred, sentiments deeply tied to his name. The "eccentricity of his name becomes obvious" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 68) when he is eleven, triggering his conscious recognition of feelings of estrangement, shame, and self-hatred. This early phase of adolescence marks a critical point where the name actively contributes to his identity crisis. When his father gifts him The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol for his fourteenth birthday, Gogol's internal turmoil becomes palpable: "For at this point, he's come to abhor questions relating to his name, detests having continually to explain. He loathes telling individuals that it doesn't mean anything 'in Indian' ... He loathes that his name is both ludicrous and dark, that it steers clear of what his

identity is, that it is neither Indian nor American yet of everything Russian" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 76). This passage powerfully illustrates how the name, intended as a private tribute, becomes a public source of anxiety, marking him as fundamentally other and pushing him into a conflicted third space where his identity feels neither authentic nor coherent (Bhabha, 1994; Smith, 2018). The burden is exacerbated by the clash with Bengali cultural norms, where "singular names are hallowed, sacred. They are not implied for legacy and shared" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 28). This makes Gogol's name, taken from a dead author and a non-Indian culture, an affront to his heritage, further fueling his sense of being culturally displaced. His desire to shed this burden leads him, upon entering Yale as a freshman in 1986, to legally change his name to "Nikhil" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 118). This official name, which his parents had intended for him, initially seems to offer a path to a "new life" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 120) and a more seamless integration into American society.

However, this attempted solution inadvertently creates a new layer of psychological problem, highlighting the pervasive nature of his identity crisis. The former name, "Gogol," and his past continue to follow him, demonstrating that an imposed hybrid identity cannot be simply shed through legal means; it continues to haunt him, preventing a truly coherent sense of self. Jones (2020) argues that the random and culturally anomalous nature of Gogol's name serves as a perpetual source of identity crisis. It thrusts him into a state of dual identity where he consistently grapples with not knowing who he is, leading to feelings of inferiority and emotional discomfort. The name, being neither traditionally Indian nor American, becomes an empty signifier that fails to provide a stable foundation for his self-perception, marking him as perpetually in-between and estranged from both his heritage and his desired American identity.

4.2 Reshaping identity

4.2.1 Assimilation

Assimilation, conventionally defined as the process by which an individual forsakes their own cultural traditions to adopt those of a different culture (Gordon, 1964), takes on a nuanced meaning in *The Namesake* as a conscious strategy for first-generation immigrants to manage and respond to identity crisis. Ashima and Ashoke being the first-generation migrants endeavor to become part of the American culture, and thus trying to give their children an easier way as well. Their creation of a tight-knit Bengali social network, in which they are Mashis and Maushas (aunts and uncles) to other children, represents a kind of selective assimilation, with the old-world community relations combined with acclimatization to a new setting. The strategy illustrates a finer tactic of cultural navigation, instead of total submission (Bhabha, 1994), which offers a social cushion, familiar to the smaller American context.

The parenting style of the Gangulis also serves as another prime example of their strategic assimilation, which was done to facilitate the transition of their children into the new environment, all the while keeping the linkage to their culture subtle. Even though they are careful to pass on the Bengali cultural baggage, including reciting four-line poems by Tagore or teaching the names of Hindu gods, they also promote American life among their children. An example is Ashima who constantly forces Gogol to watch American television shows such as Sesame Street and The Electric Company in order to learn more English. Their choice to give their children a free hand, especially when it comes to their love life, is in complete contrast to the traditional one. Bangladesh parental control. This parental attitude can be seen as a conscious attempt to enable their children to create hybrid identities, balancing between cultures without having to follow either of them (Gupta, 2017). The process of assimilation for both generations

is fraught with complex psychological challenges, revealing the limits of cultural absorption. For the second-generation, like Gogol and Sonia, assimilation is often less about conscious effort and more about the lived reality of anticipatory socialization—a process where individuals rehearse for future social positions (Merton, 1957). Yet, this socialization does not erase deep-seated cultural differences, which can emerge as moments of profound cognitive dissonance. Lahiri poignantly conveys Ashima's shock when Gogol's school takes him on a painting trip to a graveyard. Ashima's traditional Bengali reverence for death, which designates burning ghats as forbidden spaces for women and children, clashes violently with the casual American approach: "What type of field trip was this? It was enough that they applied lipstick to their corpses and buried them in silk-lined boxes. Only in America (a phrase she has begun to resort to often these days), only in America children are taken to cemeteries in the name of art. What's next, a trip to the morgue?" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 70). This moment highlights how, despite ongoing assimilation, fundamental cultural divergences can trigger moments of crisis and highlight the irreducible "otherness" that assimilation cannot fully erase.

Ultimately, Lahiri's portrayal of assimilation demonstrates its role not as a straightforward process of cultural abandonment, but as a dynamic form of resistance to identity crisis within the "third space." For the first generation, like Ashima, initial "anguish and nostalgia" eventually give way to "creations of identities and transformations" as she familiarizes herself with a new life-stream and embraces new roles. This transition characterizes a diasporic existence that leads to the formation of new hybrid subjectivities and personalities.

4.2.2 Search for Identity

The enduring quest for identity stands as a central theme in *The Namesake* (2003), illustrating how characters actively face and respond to the profound disorientation of their bicultural existence. Jhumpa Lahiri, herself a child of Indian immigrants who navigated cultures from England to the U.S.A., imbues her characters with an authentic portrayal of this bitter-sweet experience. Her narrative reflects the "ongoing quest for identity" common to the second generation of the Indian Diaspora, foregrounding identity as a dynamic process rather than a fixed state (Davis, 2005; Hall, 1996). This search for identity is a primary form of resistance, moving characters beyond a passive reception of their crisis towards active self-definition within the "third space" of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994). For Gogol, the son of first-generation immigrants, his problems and, subsequently, his active search for identity commence with the unique burden of his name. From childhood, he grapples with the discord between his Russian "pet name" and the American cultural context (Lahiri, 2003, p. 76). This internal conflict, marked by feelings of "estrangement, shame, and self-hatred" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 68), propels him into a deliberate search for a more congruent self. His decision, upon entering Yale, to legally change his name to "Nikhil" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 118) represents a conscious act of self-redefinition. This act is an attempt to align his external identity with a desired American normalcy, reflecting a direct response to the identity crisis imposed by his given name. For Gogol, "Nikhil" embodies the possibility of a new life, free from the "ludicrous and obscure" associations of "Gogol" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 76). Lahiri demonstrates that this search for identity is not a simple, linear process of rejection and adoption, but rather an ongoing negotiation within the complex "third space" (Bhabha, 1994). Despite changing his name, Gogol's past and the name "Gogol" continue to pursue him, creating a "dual identity" that leaves him perpetually unsure "who he is." His journey highlights that identity is not something merely changed, but continually constructed and

reconstructed (Hall, 1996). As he ages, he paradoxically begins yearning for the extremely dual personality that he dismissed as a kid, suggesting that the search involves confronting, rather than simply escaping, the complexities of his heritage. This dynamic illustrates that the search for identity is not a battle against hybridity, but a process of engaging with it to forge a coherent, albeit fluid, self.

The novel further reveals that the search for identity extends beyond naming to encompass broader efforts to find belonging and meaning. Characters like Ashima, despite her initial challenges, gradually engage in their own subtle search for identity by adapting and forging a bicultural existence. Lahiri's work, drawing from her own diasporic experience, consistently reveals what she terms "the inconsistency of the concept of identity and cultural difference in the space of Diaspora," a theme powerfully explored within *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003). Through the varied journeys of her characters, the novel emphasizes that the search for identity is indeed an ongoing quest, reflecting the continually evolving consciousness of the diasporic sensibility. This dynamic process, as theorist Stuart Hall (1990) conceptualizes, views identity not as a fixed essence but as a dynamic production, ultimately leading to the formation of new, hybridized subjectivities in a constant state of becoming. While Ihsan et al. (2025) depict gendered suppression in colonial Delhi, diasporic subjects in *The Namesake* experience identity fragmentation under postcolonial cultural pressures.

4.2.3 *Urge for Cultural Roots*

The "urge for cultural roots" manifests as a profound and dynamic form of resistance to identity crisis, particularly for the first generation in *The Namesake*. Jhumpa Lahiri meticulously describes how the initial shock of exile and the question of belongingness in the U.S. deeply disturb individuals like Ashima. Her early experiences are characterized by intense homesickness and a pervasive sense of being "unmonitored and unobserved by those she loved" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 6). She longs for the familiar "clock time" and activities in Calcutta, unable to reconcile with the social and cultural norms of her new country, especially evident during her pregnancy and the bewildering naming process of her child. This persistent yearning for her homeland and its traditions, from her preference for Bengali food and rituals to her disapproval of Gogol's American lifestyle, signifies not a rejection of the West, but a deep-seated impulse to maintain connection with her origins—a critical strategy to alleviate the profound alienation she experiences. This nostalgia acts as a powerful impetus for her desire to anchor herself, demonstrating how even initial longing can fuel a later, more active, engagement with cultural preservation (Smith, 2018). The generational divide regarding these roots becomes a central dynamic. While Ashima and Ashoke initially feel an innate pull towards their homeland, they simultaneously work to instill a sense of their heritage in their children. Ashima's deliberate efforts to teach Gogol Bengali stories and her commitment to Bengali customs, despite her own struggles to assimilate, reflect a conscious attempt to transmit their cultural lineage. This act of transmission becomes a form of resistance against the complete erosion of their identity, demonstrating their role as "cultural mediators" who strive to bridge two worlds (Gupta, 2017). Although they permit their children the freedoms of American life, including independent choices in relationships, their underlying desire to maintain their cultural fabric remains strong.

Over time, this "urge for cultural roots" evolves for Ashima and Ashoke, leading them towards a nuanced form of bicultural identity, or transnationalism. Despite Ashima's early lamentation, "I don't want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It's not right. I want to go back"

(Lahiri, 2003, p. 33), she eventually finds a way to familiarize herself with her new life, gradually imbibing aspects of American culture while not severing ties with her roots. This transition, which Rushdie (1991) argues characterizes diasporic existence where "our identity is at once plural and partial...sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures...it is a fertile territory to occupy for the writers" (p. 15), enables the formation of new identities and subjectivities. Ashima's ultimate decision to spend significant parts of the year in India after Ashoke's death epitomizes this conscious embrace of a bicultural identity, actively reconfiguring her sense of belonging by forging a 'route' back to her 'roots' while remaining connected to her American life. According to (Bhabha, 1994) this active negotiation within the "third space" transforms it from a site of crisis into one of creative self-definition.

Conversely, the second generation, represented by Gogol and Sonia, initially exhibits less overt attachment to their cultural roots. They are largely "at home in the American ways," finding "Indianness" potentially "oppressive" and prioritizing "space and privacy"—characteristics of independent Western life. For them, India is a foreign land, a place for "a visit," lacking the emotional resonance of "home" that it holds for their parents. However, the novel suggests that their own "urge for cultural roots" often manifests later in life, often triggered by significant events such as the death of their father. Gogol's eventual engagement with his father's literary past, for example, represents a personal and internal act of re-connection, a distinct "becoming" that integrates his heritage into his American identity (Hall, 1996, p. 70). The "urge for cultural roots" in *The Namesake* serves as a powerful means by which characters actively resist identity fragmentation. This deep-seated attachment, manifested differently across generations, underscores the dynamic process of identity formation within the diaspora. It leads to the embracing of pluralistic existence and transnational identities, where individuals are constantly "Being to Becoming" (Hall, 1996, p. 70), negotiating and transforming their cultural experiences to create a new, integrated sense of self. This ongoing quest for cultural recognition and belonging in a far-off land ultimately contributes to the rich tapestry of modern-day multiculturalism and multi-identities.

Conclusion

This study has analyzed the issues of identity crisis and resistance in Jhumpa Lahiri *The Namesake* using the theory of hybridity proposed by Homi K. Bhabha, and how the Ganguli family manages to work around the challenges of cultural displacement and identity formation as hybrids. The first-generation characters are confronted by the problem of homesickness, alienation, and the problem of maintaining the cultural background, and the second generation is experiencing the problem of biculturalism, naming responsibility, and social pressure. Lahiri has shown that identity is subject to negotiation that is in a state of selective assimilation, active self-definition, and maintaining connections to the heritage in the third space. The results indicate that diasporic identity is both conflictual and adaptational changing crises into chances of creative self-reconstruction. Despite the fact that this work is conducted as a single and textual analysis, it provides the importance of hybridity in postcolonial literature and proposes the further investigation with the help of comparative researches or the life experience of immigrants. Finally, *The Namesake* describes identity as a dynamic process, which is negotiated culturally and the possibility to combine several worlds into a unified and whole hybrid being.

References

Abdo Mohamed Mohamed, N. (2024). Social, Racial and Gender Identity Dilemma in The Namesake. 270-231), 50(7), 50(7), 270-231). مجلة كلية الآداب و العلوم الإنسانية-جامعة تونس السويس.

Bosma, U. (2012). Post-colonial immigrants and identity formations in the Netherlands (p. 252). Amsterdam University Press.

Brennan, S. (2011). Time, space, and national belonging in The Namesake: Redrawing South Asian American citizenship in the shadow of 9/11. *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 3(1).

Chaudhry, A. (2016). A Critical Analysis on Identity Crisis in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, 4(4), 205-209.

Das, S. G. (2020). Cultural Hybridity and Depiction of Bengali Culture in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake. *South Asian Research Journal of Arts, Language and Literature*, 2(3), 1213-1228.

Dawes, T. A. (2007). The Namesake: A Struggle for Identity. *Mako: NSU Undergraduate Student Journal*, 1(1), 2.

Eagleton, T. (1996). *Literary theory: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Blackwell.

Farahmandian, H., Yousefi, A., & Rizi, F. G. (2015). Diasporic language and identity in "Namesake". *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 5(5), 952.

Gatt, D. Re-defining 'Identity': A Critique of Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake.

Goldberg, J. (2015). Theories of race and ethnicity. In K. Murji & J. Solomos (Eds.), *Theories of race and ethnicity* (p. 10). Cambridge University Press. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781135204778/chapters/10.4324%2F9780203700594-10>

Ihsan, S., Ullah, K., & Muneeb, M. (2025). Objectification and suppression of women in Twilight in Delhi: A Marxist feminist reading. *Contemporary Journal of Social Science Review*, 3(4), 16-25.

Ilyas, M., & Afzal, N. (2021). Analyzing Jhumpa Lahiri's narrative 'The Namesake': A breakthrough beyond text. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(1), 431-444.

Karagöz, C., & Boynukara, H. (2019). The Concept of Re-Orientalism in The Namesake. *International Journal of Current Approaches in Language, Education and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 144-155.

Lahiri, J. (2003). *The namesake*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Macwan, H. (2014). A Study of Diasporic Sensibility and acculturation in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake. *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, 2(7).

Macwan, H. (2014). Struggle for Identity and Diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 3(12), 45-49.

Mercer, K. (1995). Welcome to the jungle: Identity and diversity in postmodern politics. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference*, Lawrence & Wishart.

Mohammed, A., & Berzenji, L. (2023). Names forming and deforming identities: A psychoanalytic approach to Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake. *Al-Adab Journal*, (147), 91-104.

Muneeb, M., Wahab, A., Fatima, A., & Ullah, K. (2025). The role of asyndeton in building suspense, controlling narrative pacing, and enhancing reader engagement: A stylistic analysis of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*. *Qualitative Research Journal for Social Studies*, 2(3), 1298–1311. <https://doi.org/10.63878/qrjs441>

Padmini, S. (2021). From Alienation to Assimilation: Exploring Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. *The Creative launcher*, 6(4), 141-147.

Puri, P. (2015). Redefining Identity: A Study of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. *Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*.

Tanrıtanır, B. C. (2017). Diasporic Trauma or Traumatic Diaspora?: The *Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri Reconsidered. *International Journal of Social Science*, 59(1), 103-112.

Taş, M. R., & Snömez, A. V. (2014). The Feeling of Alienation in *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri. *Global Journal of Human Social Science Research*, 14(6-A), 19-25.

Yahya, S. H., & Mani, M. (2022). Where Do I Belong: Alienation as A Psychological Struggle of the Characters in Lahiri's *the Namesake* (2003). *International journal of health sciences*, 6(S4), 9748-9755.