From Cultural Nationalism to Transnationalism: A Diasporic Odyssey in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

Shweta Chaudhary and Smarika Pareek

Abstract

Nationalism is a contemporary phenomenon, whose manifestations are seen when people unite and sacrifice their lives for a greater cause, the nation's freedom. India is an example of nationalism which led to the gaining of Independence in 1947. Indian nationalism as a patriotic sentiment soon was diluted for a variety of reasons, in part because of the onslaught of globalization, the momentum of which overpowered India's postcolonial condition. The advent of technological advancement in Western nations instigated youth from around the world, especially colonies, to migrate to these nations for a promising future and better living conditions. Migration exposes the futility of boundaries and the desire to look beyond borders, as presented in Jhumpa Lahiri's, *The Namesake*.[1] This article draws on Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities," to understand immigrants' psychological transition from cultural nationalism to transnationalism. We develop insights into the immigrants' tendency to maintain relationships with their home countries, and simultaneously examine the degree to which transnationalism takes on a local dimension through the forming of interpersonal relationships across distances.

Keywords: diaspora, cultural nationalism, immigration, transnationalism, globalization

Introduction

Nationalism is a complex and evolving phenomenon, shaped by historical, cultural, and political factors unique to each nation-state. Benedict Anderson explores a paradoxical aspect of nationalism; a nation is an imagined political community that is constrained and independent, and whose members share a sense of unity.[2] He examines the cultural foundations that allowed for the emergence of national consciousness in the contemporary age. Meanwhile, increased globalisation has challenged the traditional idea of nationalism based solely on territorial boundaries as with increased interconnectedness and mobility, cultural nationalism has gained prominence. Furthermore, migration exposed the futility of boundaries and posits an alternative in the desire to look beyond borders and create micro-nations in the parts of the world where immigrants live by creating an arbitrary homeland that comprises of people whose cultural and racial roots are the

Shweta Chaudhary is a PhD research scholar at the Department of English, Chandigarh University. Email: shwetdutt@gmail.com.

Smarika Pareek is an Associate Professor at the Department of English, Chandigarh University. Email: smarika.uila@cumail.in.

[1] Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003).

[2] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (New York: Verso, 2016).

same. This article argues that multinational relationships change certain types of identity by analysing Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and the influence of the immigrants' brief stays at home.

The phenomenon of celebrating culture by the people of a nation is known as cultural nationalism. Culture not only connects the people within a nation, but in this age of globalisation, culture becomes the first connecting force amongst the migrants of the same nation. Furthermore, culture not only becomes a medium that keeps the bond of migrants with their homeland intact but also helps them form friendships that act as a replacement for the families and relatives they have left behind in their homeland. Cultural nationalists emphasise preserving and promoting national cultural identities, often in response to perceived threats from global homogenisation, or the influence of foreign cultures. Edward Said also suggests that:

> Culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society is reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Mathew Arnold put it in the 1860s. Arnold believed that culture palliates, if it does not altogether neutralizes, the ravage of a modern, aggressive, mercantile and brutalizing urban experience … in time, culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state.[3]

Most people who were tempted to move to a foreign location in the late twentieth century belonged to the skilled class, who moved because of the promising future they foresaw in Western countries. Additionally, the American Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act), established a new immigration policy that included skilled labour and helped reunite immigrant families in the United States. According to Leena Chandorkar, the second wave of immigration in the late twentieth century included professionals: doctors, engineers, professors, and scientists, stemming from different strata of Indian society; and brought with them the Indian middle-class values of hard work, pursuit of academic excellence, thrift, and close family ties.[4] This created a dispersed diaspora community, which includes people who have relocated from their ancestral homeland to other parts of the world and who have a similar ethnic, cultural, or national identity.

Although the diaspora is geographically distant from the homeland, its memory is always filled with the emotion of crossing borders and leaving behind land, family, and customs. In order to overcome these barriers, set by a nation or a language, migrants negotiate the conflict between the source and the target cultures. Moreover, the emotional fragmentation and psychic alienation experienced by immigrants as they attempt to adapt to a new environment, culture, and milieu is common. This journey or experience of diaspora individuals not only within their community, but also in the newly inhabited community, is referred to as a diasporic odyssey and metaphorically describes the difficulties and opportunities of living beyond the homeland. The diasporic odyssey sheds light on the collective and personal experiences of diaspora members as they build new lives but retain ties to their cultural heritage, and struggle with identity, belonging, and adaptation in a new host country. Furthermore, the writings created by people who reside outside of their original

[3] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. xii.
[4] Leena Chandorkar, "The Indian Diaspora in America as Reflected in Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction," *History and Sociology of South Asia*, vol. 11, no. 2 (2017), pp. 204-211.

country are referred to as diaspora literature. Diaspora literature comes in many forms and varieties, including that from the African, Australian, Arab, and other diasporas. Indian diasporic literature is one of those that have captured the attention of authors, literati, historians, and sociologists. Foreign environments present a variety of challenges for adjusting and assimilating different socio-cultural values. For instance, Lois Tyson views this condition as:

> Double consciousness and homeliness are the two features of postcolonial diasporas. "Double consciousness" or an unstable sense of the self is the result of forced migration colonialism frequently caused. In the diaspora this feeling of being caught between cultures, of belonging to neither, rather than to both, of finding oneself arrested in psychological limbo that results not merely from some individual psychological order, but from the trauma of the cultural displacement within which one lives is referred to by Homi Bhabha, and others as "unhomeliness." To be "unhomed" is not the same as being homeless. To be unhomed is to feel not at home even in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee, so to speak.[5]

Anderson's idea of imagined communities examines the interplay between physical relocation and the creation of cultural, linguistic, and emotional links amongst diaspora individuals that keep their communities together. It draws attention to the ways in which diaspora groups, although geographically separated, actively imagine and uphold their links to a homeland. Furthermore, the idea of transculturality reveals that the concept of a monocultural society is unrealistic within the confines of history and geography.[6] Moreover, according to A. Benessaieh the term can be applied to "those individuals who, by virtue of a mixed background or lived experience, participate in a plurality of actively connected flows and worlds."[7] Globalisation has played a pivotal role in the creation of a transcultural society and thus another important term that emerged out of this interaction of people beyond borders is transnationalism. Thus, transnationalism emerged as a crucial lens for comprehending how individuals, cultures, and institutions interact across national boundaries in increasingly globalised and interconnected societies.

Analysis of the Text

Jhumpa Lahiri in *The Namesake* narrates the story of two generations, and highlights differences in the way they view themes of nationality through the lens of culture. Due to the fact that immigrants are apprehensive about their existence in an alien land, the only way to survive is by creating an imaginary homeland by staying connected with their roots, either by being connected with the people of their nation or by following the customs, rituals and festivals of the home country. Thus, the tendency of Ashoke and Ashima to create a mini-India in America by

[5] Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 360-421.
[6] Hannes Bergthaller and Yen-ling Tsai, "Introduction: Transcultural Thought and the Planetary Emergency," *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2024), pp. 3-11.
[7] Afef Benessaieh, *Amériques transculturelles, Transcultural America* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010), pp. 11–38.

befriending Indians, Bengalis, and people from South Asian countries reflects the ways immigrants belonging to similar geographical locations and cultures strategically unite in order to make their existence secure in a foreign land. Lahiri portrayed this association in *The Namesake*:

> As the baby grows, so, too, does their circle of Bengali acquaintances. Through the Nandis, now expecting a child of their own, Ashoke and Ashima meet the Mitras, and through the Mitras, the Baneerjees... Most of them live within walking distance of one another in Cambridge. The husbands are teachers, researchers, doctors, engineers. The wives, homesick and bewildered, turn to Ashima for recipes and advice, and she tells them about the carp that's sold in Chinatown, that it's possible to make halwa from cream of wheat.[8]

Ashoke Ganguli and Ashima, first-generation immigrants, and their second-generation progeny Gogol and Sonia face some of the most difficult and unsettling incidents in the story's core. Ashima moved to Cambridge after marrying Ashoke and struggles to adapt to American culture and the American way of life. In this case, moving from India to America involves not just a displacement but also a socio-cultural and psychological one. Moreover, first-generation immigrants like Ashima believe that the Indian socio-cultural system, its values, attitudes, rites, rituals, customs, and gendered behaviour patterns, is passed down from generation to generation in the personal space of the house or ethnic environment artificially created. It is understandable that she would feel a strong emotional connection to her home country given that she was born and reared in a traditional Bengali family. Ashima has a strong emotional connection to Calcutta; she feels she belongs there and is unable to break free of her memories of home. Mangesh Gore captures this emotion; "Being in a foreign country means walking a tightrope high above the ground without the net afforded a person by the country where he has his family, colleagues and friends and where he can easily say what he has to say in a language he has known from childhood."[9]

In addition, as the narrative of the story progresses, it becomes clear that Ashima blatantly rejects multiculturalism, due to her deep-seated belief in the traditions and ideals she learned in her homeland. Her process of remembering the past and going through old recollections that are closely tied to her native Calcutta is the only way she can reconcile herself with the diasporic space: "While living in their three-room apartment, Ashima is frequently depressed and homesick due to the extreme temperature swings experienced throughout the year. She misses her father's warm and loving home and longs to return there. In the immigrant's mind, a home is a magical place."[10] Home and families remain a focal point in Lahiri's narrative. Ashima intentionally reverts to memorising everything Bengali when confronted with American culture, and during difficult moments when she misses her home and family, her only solace is " her watch, a bon voyage gift from her parents, slipped over her wrist the last time she saw them, amid airport confusion and

[8] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, p. 38.
[9] Mangesh M. Gore, "Diaspora Literature: Comparative Analysis of Bharti Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri," *The Creative Launcher*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2019), pp. 34-37.
[10] Robin Cohen, *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*. (London: UCL Press, 1997), p. 192.

tears"[11] and "a tattered copy of *Desh* magazine… she's read each of the short stories and poems and articles a dozen times."[12] Addressing the Indian diaspora, which is separated from India both geographically and culturally, Salman Rushdie asserts that physical estrangement from India almost always results in the inability to recover precisely what was lost; diasporic authors produce fiction capturing invisible homelands, the India of the imagination, not of actual cities or villages.[13]

Ashima, a first-generation immigrant who is unable to blend into the larger cultural paradigms of American society, finds herself in a diasporic borderline due to being torn between her loyalty to her native country, to which she no longer physically belongs, and her adopted home, where she is marginalised. Ashima's social dislocation in America perhaps resulted from the clash of two extremely distinct cultures. However, the trauma that Ashima goes through because of isolation in the host society is partially resolved by the Bengali diaspora in Cleveland. When immigrants come in close association to recreate an arbitrary homeland, community diaspora plays a pivotal role. A community emerges and then persists primarily because it becomes a medium for whatever association the people in a certain location need to establish a connection with everyone who desires to unite and retain relationships with others who share their roots, conjuring a common identity while being exiled for the sake of better future. This finds a reference in the novel as:

> Having three address books makes her current task a bit complicated. But Ashima does not believe in crossing out names, or consolidating them in a single book. She prides herself on each entry in each volume, for together they form a record of all the Bengalis she and Ashoke have known over the years, all the people she has had the fortune to share rice within a foreign land.[14]

These relationships may be familial, social, political, religious, or economic, or may be the result of a shared memory of a tragedy or pain experienced by the diaspora's members or their ancestors.

Anderson's definition of a nation as "an imagined political community"[15] is important in the context of the portrayal of home by diasporic writers. Vijay Mishra modifies *Anna Karenina*:

> All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way. Diasporas refer to people who do not feel comfortable with their non-hyphenated identities as indicated on their passport.… They are precariously lodged within an episteme of real or imagined displacements, self-imposed sense of exile; they are haunted by specters, by ghosts arising from within that encourage irredentist or separatist movements.[16]

[11] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, p. 4.
[12] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, p. 6.
[13] Jenni Ramone, "Salman Rushdie and Diasporic Identities," in *Salman Rushdie in Context*, ed. Florian Stadtler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), pp. 193-204.
[14] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, pp. 159-160.
[15] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.
[16] Vijay Mishra, "Diasporas and the Art of Impossible Mourning," in *Diaspora: Theories, Histories, Texts,* ed. M. Paranjape (New Delhi: Indialog Publications, 2003), pp. 24–51.

Furthermore, the interaction of cultures across nations underwent a significant shift as a result of globalisation, giving rise to fresh ideas and perspectives on how cultural identities are formed, preserved, and made distinctive. However, cultural memory theory suggests collective memories are created and passed down through cultural narratives and practices. This theory suggests that our memories are not just individual, but also shaped by the larger cultural contexts in which we live or have lived. Thus, one of the key concepts in cultural memory theory is the idea of "mnemonic communities," which refers to groups of people who share a common cultural memory or history.[17] These communities may be based on factors such as ethnicity, religion, or nationality, and they may use shared cultural practices and narratives to reinforce their collective memory: "A diaspora has a symbolic and 'iconographic' capital that enables it to reproduce and overcome the– often considerable– obstacle of distance separating its communities."[18] Members of a diaspora coalesce in their place of settlement in the whole set of micro-places (cities, neighbourhoods, or villages) occupied or crossed by those whom they recognise as their own. Each of these places acts as a "centre" in a territory where social proximities suppress spatial and temporal distances. All diasporas are socio-spatial networks necessarily undergoing territorial expansion because they aggregate both places of memory and places of presence.

The population, integrated without being assimilated into the host countries, retains a strong identity awareness, which is linked to the memory of its territory and the society of origin– of its history. This implies the existence of a strong sense of community and community life. As in the case of a nation, it is an imagined community, relying on a collective narrative that links it to a territory and to a memory. Ashoke and Ashima's American-born son Gogol's wish to keep his American girlfriend Maxine away from the death rituals of his father demonstrates his desire to share this moment of his grief only with family members, and those close to his family and country. This reflects the sense of separation between his two worlds, and the challenges he faces in navigating between them.

Due to its diverse cultural, political, religious, and professional links, a diaspora tends to take on a social structure independent from both the host and the parent societies. Resistance to the home country's exploitation is unusual among diasporas, as is lobbying on behalf of the country of origin. Therefore, there are differences in the interactions between diasporas and spaces of inhabitance. Belonging to a diaspora means being able to exist simultaneously on the local scale of the community, on the transnational world scale, and on the scale of the host or home country, integrating the three scales while privileging one or two. This combination differs from one individual to another, according to their position in the genealogy of generations. For instance, the first generation, people who were born and have lived in the society of origin, tend to privilege both the local and national levels in the country they reside in. The second generation frequently considers the local and national scales of the host country where they were born and raised, as well

[17] Vijay Agnew (ed.), *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).
[18] Michel Bruneau, "Diasporas, Transnational Spaces, and Communities," in *Indian Diaspora and Transnationalism*, eds Ajaya Kumar Sahoo, Michiel Baas and Thomas Faist (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2012), pp. 123-139.

as occasionally the transnational scale; the third generation frequently moves on two or three of these scales when searching for ancestors. Thus, India represents the fusion of memory and culture.

In fact, diaspora is a unique and essential cluster of families, communities, and religious groups that have been linked together inside the boundaries of a country. It is simpler to trade and communicate inside these borders than beyond because every nation creates a wall dividing its own networks from outside ones. Though, diaspora is unable to take full advantage of this integration but undoubtedly act as bridge for extending ties beyond the borders of their home nations into a larger transnational network. Diasporas can offer the stability that nation-states frequently provide because of their extensive global ties in the political, social, cultural, and economic realms. Michel Bruneau illustrates this tendency of diaspora to create a comfort space in foreign nation.

> A diaspora is a patchwork of families, communities and religious networks integrated in a territory by a nation-state, within its borders. These patchworks of families, clans, villages, cities, etc., are contained inside the borders of this nation-state where circulation, and exchanges are easier inside than with the outside. The nation-state creates an arbitrary limit between the networks inside it and those that are outside. Diasporas, however, cannot benefit from this extraordinary tool of integration. They function as a hinge between different spaces and different geographical scales.[19]

Ashima makes a conscious effort to impart to her children the Bengali language, traditions, customs, and culture. "She teaches him to memorise a four-line children's poem by Tagore, and the names of the deities adorning the ten-handed goddess Durga during pujo: Saraswathy with her swan and Kartik with his peacock to her left, Lakshmi with her owl and Ganesh with his mouse to her right."[20] Another attempt by Ashima to make Gogol familiar with Bengali culture is; "When Gogol is in the third grade, they send him to Bengali language and culture lessons every other Saturday, held in the home of one of their friends."[21] Jaydeep Sarangi addresses the feeling of being uprooted as, "Feeling at home can be an indication of a process, which is known as adaptation. Man cannot be uprooted thoroughly from his socio-cultural fixity. Yet, none can transcend his cultural identity; certainly, no great writer like Jhumpa Lahiri does."[22]

Despite living in an entirely different location Ashima carries in her heart a deeper connection with her roots and nation by living as she used to in Calcutta; "Ashima continues to wear nothing but saris and sandals from Bata."[23] At times, Ashima is frustrated and overwhelmed with emotion, and asks Ashoke to hurry up and finish his degree; "I'm saying I don't want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It's not right. I want to go back."[24] Yet, she finds solace by establishing

[19] Bruneau, "Diasporas, Transnational Spaces, and Communities," p. 48.
[20] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, p. 54.
[21] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, p. 65.
[22] Jaydeep Sarangi, "Bond without Bondage: Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri," in *Studies in Women Writers in English*, eds Mohit K. Ray and Rama Kundu (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2005), p. 143.
[23] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, p. 65.
[24] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, p. 33.

a bond with other Indian-Americans in an effort to avoid feeling alone in the foreign country. She makes friends with the Montgomerys, their landlords, as well as Maya and Dilip Nandi and a few Bengalis, notably Dr Gupta, a post-doctoral scholar from Dehradun. Similarly, Ashima had a traditional cultural memory of the significance of naming a child after an elder in the family and when Gogol changes his name to Nikhil it emotionally disturbs his parents.

> For ancient peoples, all proper nouns were originally meaningful. The name showed a road and could thus have a bearing on the child's fate. Hence, the care dedicated to its choice is understandable. There was nothing childish or absurd about this as long as the name held a meaning inherent to it, since each person's name was associated with his future and could influence his fate…. The name serves not only to identify an individual, it also confers existence.[25]

Although, after migration immigrants' physical connection with their homelands is loose, but the memory of native place, culture and religion acts as a cohesive force that helps them in adapting in the new surroundings. Bruneau encapsulates this concept of value of the concepts of diaspora and transnational community as,

> Territory or, more precisely, territoriality – in the sense of adapting oneself to a place in the host country – continues to play an essential role. Memory preserves part of territoriality, whilst the trauma of uprooting creates conditions of mobilisation that can play a substantial role in integrating and unifying various family, religious or community sub-networks into a real diaspora. The construction of commemorative monuments, sanctuaries, monasteries and other symbolic (and sometimes functional) places is an essential means, for the members of a diaspora, of a re-rooting in the host country.[26]

Gogol is compelled to acknowledge his Indian heritage by a traumatic incident in the shape of Ashoke Ganguly's untimely death, which is ironically a return to the essentialism in his parents' lives that he had previously rebelled against. While visiting MIT, Ashoke suffers a heart attack, and Gogol is left to gather his father's ashes while Sonia travels to be with their mother. Gogol right away develops a bond with his father that he had never had before and is able to empathise with his parents' emotions as he travels back to his mother; "He knows now the guilt that his parents carried inside, at being able to do nothing when their parents had died in India, of arriving weeks, sometimes months later, when there was nothing left to do."[27]

Gogol and Moushumi's lives have been drifting in parallel trajectories when Moushumi enters Gogol's life. The union of Moushumi and Gogol corresponds to the customary planned marriages in India, where the couple is urged to proceed with their relationship with the blessing of the family's senior members. Knowing that ideology is a poor substitute for love and that their defining of binaries is part of a system that has grown unsustainable, the reader feels a sense of

[25] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, p. 22.
[26] Bruneau, "Diasporas, Transnational Spaces, and Communities," p. 48.
[27] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, p. 179.

impending doom when the two get married. “They had both sought comfort in each other, and in their shared world, perhaps for the sake of novelty, or out of the fear that that world was slowly dying.”[28] Furthermore, literary critics believe that many people in international communities identify considerably more strongly with regional cultures, hometown affiliations, neighbourhood links, and familial ties than with the nation-state. In the novel, for Gogol’s *annaprasan* ceremony Lahiri artistically creates an ethnic Bengali environment, through which Ashima and Ashoke are able to partially fill the void of missing their home and relatives:

> The occasion: Gogol’s annaprasan, his rice ceremony. There is no baptism for Bengali babies, no ritualistic naming in the eyes of God. Instead, the first formal ceremony of their lives centers around the consumption of solid food. They ask Dilip Nandi to play the part of Ashima’s brother, to hold the child and feed him rice, the Bengali staff of life, for the very first time.[29]

Bhabha suggests innovative discourses to substitute for the traditional dichotomies, in order to reinforce a new sense of nationality and identity, which are: “dialogue, translation, negotiation, in-between, cross reference, and ambivalence.”[30]

In fact, in order to achieve that, Gogol voluntarily adopts the American way of life. His shrewdness helps him make friends with numerous American girls as he carves out an identity for himself. He was able to develop a sense of belonging in the new country, which his parents were unable to experience. However, all his acceptance of the new culture falls flat after the sudden demise of his father, when he finds a final resort of bidding adieu to his father by following Indian rituals only, and could fully abandon completely to the part of the world he actually belonged to. It is commonly assumed that the host country where members of the diaspora reside exerts foreign effects on them. The diaspora gradually shifts from the culture and practices followed in the home nation to the new identity presented by the host country with the help of time and active interaction with the distinct traits of the host country. Depending on the variables that influence the diaspora's capacity to adjust to changing circumstances, this inclusion process takes time and is gradual.

> Ashima gradually gains the kind of confidence and independence that a typical American woman is supposed to have. She gets a job as a librarian and meets American colleagues, a relationship she had never had before. She eventually takes over her husband's responsibilities, such as paying bills, purchasing tickets, driving the car, and changing the house. She finally realizes she is an American as she is an Indian.[31]

Ambiguity has been triggered over the identity that is projected in such circumstances due to discussions and arguments based on the preferences of the citizens of the home country, whether

[28] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, p. 284.
[29] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, pp. 38-39.
[30] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge,1994), p. 9.
[31] P. V. Vinitha and K. Usha Rani, “Similes of Diasporic Transformations in Lahiri's *The Namesake*,” *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, vol. 6, no. 4 (2022), pp. 4256-4262.

towards their local culture and lifestyle or the foreign. Jhumpa Lahiri portrays this through the character of Ashima; "And though she still does not feel fully at home within these walls on Pemberton Road she knows that this is home – nevertheless – the world for which she is responsible, which she has created, which is everywhere around her."[32] In order to become suited to the dynamic world that goes beyond the boundaries of nations the feeling of nationalism and national identity needs to evolve and improvise, which leads to blending, assimilation and hybridisation. Judith Caesar claims, "For Ashoke, Gogol is a new life, a rebirth, creating another life in another country, both his own life and his children's."[33] Thus, the narrative throws light on immigrants' struggle to maintain their distinctiveness while trying to lose it. The book, thus, revolves around the challenging choices they must make every day to prevent themselves from being seen as strangers in a foreign country. The trip of the immigrant is a departure from everything familiar, despite its advantages, nevertheless, the coming generation will experience a sense of favour and welcome with the shift towards transnational identity.

Conclusion

This study analyses immigrants' tendency to make their existence and their nation's identity felt by Americans with the help of their festivals, costumes, or language. Immigrants like Ashoke and Ashima create an ethnic environment in a foreign land so that their nation's ethnicity is noticed and respected by others from India, thus paving the way for becoming fused with the so-called hegemonic culture of the foreign land they inhabit now. It is interesting to explore the fact that people of diaspora become active cultural creators when familial ties and international routes meet. Communication across physical borders helps new cultural and social meanings to emerge, which are then changed by all family members, whether they are in the nation of origin or overseas. Lahiri proves the dictum, "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet,"[34] as diaspora communities around the world are connected by homeland's rich culture, tradition, relationships, morals, and family ties. Lahiri's characters are compelled to reclaim their homeland's heritage and attendant sense of belonging. However, cultural nationalism undoubtedly emerges as a phenomenon that helps immigrants find roots in an alien land, overcoming alienation, displacement, and liminality in their gradual journey towards accepting transnationalism. For instance, a culture that is introduced in the beginning as "...in spite of their miniskirts and bikinis, in spite of their hand-holding on the street and lying on top of each other on the Cambridge Common, prefer their privacy towards end."[35] Post-ethnicity, which refers to voluntary alliances across ethnic lines, adds to the intricacy of this interaction between geography and identity.

[32] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, p. 280.
[33] Judith Caesar, "Gogol's namesake: Identity and Relationships in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*," *Atenea*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2007), pp. 103-119.
[34] Jhumpa Lahiri, "My Two Lives," *Newsweek*, 5 March (2006). At: https://www.newsweek.com/my-two-lives-106355.
[35] Lahiri, *The Namesake*, p. 3.

In conclusion, although the processes of transnationalism can lead to the loss of cultural authenticity because as cultures blend and adapt to global influences, they may lose some of their unique and original characteristics, in today's modern world culture can no longer be viewed as a homogeneous concept. Despite the imaginative idea of cultural nationalism being a comfort zone for diaspora, it remains a monocultural concept. Thus, transnationalism acts as a bridge that promotes cultural interaction and enriches cultural diversity in an increasingly interconnected world. Nevertheless, Lahiri's *The Namesake* remains a novel that rethinks the immigrant experience and celebrates the cultural hybridity created by globalisation and modernity.