

Re-emergence of Globalization and Nationalism in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri

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Abstract

This paper explores the complex intersections of nationalism, diaspora, multiculturalism, and transnational identity, with a particular focus on Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. It examines how historical, cultural, and political forces shape individual and collective identities, especially within diasporic communities navigating displacement and cultural negotiation. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, U.S. ethnic studies, and feminist scholarship, the study analyzes how Lahiri's characters, particularly Ashima Ganguli, balance the preservation of Bengali traditions with adaptation to American society, thereby negotiating hybrid identities across borders. The paper also situates these narratives within broader frameworks of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, highlighting the tension between cultural continuity and globalized modernity. Ultimately, the work argues that transnational mobility enables cultural agency, allowing individuals to create fluid, hybrid identities that transcend rigid national and cultural boundaries, and that literature functions as a vital medium to explore, preserve, and reinterpret diasporic experiences.

Keywords - English literature; fiction; novel; diaspora; multiculturalism; transnationalism; globalization; nationalism; politics of identity.

Introduction

Jhumpa Lahiri occupies a remarkable position in contemporary North American literature as a representative voice of the South Asian diaspora. Her writing, widely celebrated for its depth and nuance, explores the complex identities of so-called hyphenated individuals—those who navigate life at the intersection of multiple cultures. Lahiri's narratives often address themes such as marriage, family, identity formation, and the encounter between distinct cultural worlds, reflecting the intricacies of diasporic experience. Her recognition as a Pulitzer Prize-winning author for *Interpreter of Maladies* brought international acclaim, and her subsequent works, particularly *The Namesake*, solidified her reputation as a chronicler of immigrant life. Beyond these, her later works—including *Unaccustomed Earth*, *The Lowland*, and *In Altre Parole*—continue to examine the nuanced experiences of migration, cultural adaptation, and the formation of transnational identities. Lahiri's literary success is closely tied to her treatment of the diaspora, portraying both the challenges and opportunities of living between cultures. While much contemporary literature on migration often emphasizes trauma and alienation, Lahiri's fiction seeks to illuminate the ways in which immigrants negotiate their relationships with their homelands, their adoptive countries, and themselves. Her narratives reveal that the immigrant experience encompasses not only dislocation and struggle but also creativity, resilience, and the reconfiguration of identity. Born to Bengali parents in London and naturalized as an American citizen, Lahiri embodies a hyphenated identity that mirrors her characters' experiences, bridging heritage and environment while exploring the interstitial spaces of cultural belonging.

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As an Indian-American writer, Lahiri has often reflected on the ambiguity of her own identity, describing her upbringing as a fusion of two worlds that was both enriching and challenging. She has likened her cultural position to the myth of Trishanku, a king suspended between heaven and earth, illustrating her own sense of inhabiting an in-between space. This liminal existence informs her literary voice, shaping stories that explore the delicate balance between assimilation and preservation, individuality and community. Her adoption of the nickname “Jhumpa,” like her character Gogol’s struggle with his name, symbolizes the negotiation of identity, the reconciliation of personal and cultural legacies, and the search for a sense of self within the diasporic framework. Lahiri’s connection to her Indian heritage is both personal and literary. She retains knowledge of Bengali customs, language, and cultural memory, which she translates into her fiction, providing readers with insight into the lived experiences of immigrants and their families. While her portrayals are necessarily selective and interpretive rather than comprehensive depictions of India or its diaspora, they offer a lens into the emotional and cultural realities of displacement, memory, and heritage. Her work demonstrates that diaspora is not solely a story of loss but also a space of creative negotiation and cultural synthesis. The author’s intellectual and educational achievements further inform her perspective. Holding multiple master’s degrees and a doctorate in Renaissance studies, Lahiri approaches literature as both a scholarly and deeply personal endeavor. Her work reflects a commitment to “translation” in both the literal and metaphorical sense: she translates experiences, emotions, and cultural practices between worlds, creating narratives that illuminate the complex intersections of identity, memory, and belonging. In her fiction, the act of translation becomes a creative enterprise, allowing her to construct meaningful spaces where cultural values are preserved, reinterpreted, and communicated across contexts. Family, memory, and cultural practices are central to Lahiri’s exploration of diaspora. She emphasizes the role of parents and intergenerational transmission of knowledge, demonstrating how traditions such as cooking, language, and rituals sustain identity and community. The domestic sphere becomes a site of cultural continuity, offering emotional stability amidst dislocation. At the same time, Lahiri’s work underscores the necessity of adaptation, showing how immigrants negotiate the demands of the host society while preserving ties to their heritage. This dual engagement produces a hybridized, transnational identity that exists in multiple dimensions simultaneously: local, national and global.

Cultural Identity in a Globalized World

The contemporary era, marked by the rapid expansion of globalization, has witnessed a remarkable increase in the movement of people across national boundaries. Individuals from less developed regions often migrate in search of better economic, educational, and social opportunities in more prosperous countries. This widespread mobility, however, brings with it a host of complex challenges. Among these are the struggles associated with adapting to new environments, the gradual erosion of personal and cultural identity, the formation of multicultural societies, and the psychological consequences of isolation, loneliness, and cultural dislocation. Globalization has transformed the traditional understanding of “home,” creating a world in which languages, customs, and traditions intermingle, forming intricate networks of cultural connections that transcend geographic boundaries. The process of cultural evolution is influenced by multiple factors, including geography, climate, social and political conditions, and economic systems. Individuals who grow up deeply embedded in a particular culture often develop a strong sense of identity tied to familiar practices, rituals, and values. When displaced from this environment, immigrants frequently experience disorientation, stress, and a sense of alienation, which can lead to a profound struggle to preserve or redefine their sense of self. Literature often reflects this experience, providing insight into the nuanced realities of displacement and identity formation. Jhumpa Lahiri, a writer born to Indian immigrants and raised in the United States, captures these dynamics vividly in her works, particularly through her nuanced portrayal of both first and second-generation immigrants.

Globalization’s impact extends beyond individual psychology; it profoundly shapes cultural, linguistic, and literary landscapes. The blending of diverse traditions fosters rich “cultural links,” reflecting the intricate interplay between heritage and adaptation. Literature, in turn, becomes a medium for exploring these links and for examining the challenges of assimilation, identity negotiation, and cultural hybridization. Lahiri’s writing, informed by her own experience as both a migrant and a member of the Indian diaspora, exemplifies this engagement. Her novel *The Namesake* provides a compelling exploration of diaspora, identity, and belonging. The narrative centers on the lives of a Bengali couple, Ashoke and Ashima, who migrate to the United States in pursuit of better opportunities. Despite

their aspirations, they confront profound challenges, including cultural displacement, loneliness, and the struggle to maintain traditional customs in an unfamiliar environment. Lahiri presents both the first- generation experience, through the parents' attempts to preserve cultural values, and the second- generation perspective, through their children's negotiation of Indian heritage and American identity.

Alienation emerges as a central theme within the immigrant experience. Even as individuals adapt to a new country, they may remain estranged from their cultural roots, grappling with a duality of belonging and separation. The novel highlights the tension between preserving one's native customs and adapting to the practices and expectations of the host society. Lahiri's characters, particularly Gogol, navigate this complex terrain, struggling to reconcile familial and cultural expectations with personal aspirations. Second-generation immigrants often encounter cultural imbalance, experiencing both the benefits and the challenges of integration. Their journey illustrates that diaspora is a dynamic process, one that involves negotiating new identities, resolving cultural conflicts, and creating hybrid cultural expressions that blend elements from both heritage and adopted cultures. Ashima's story in *The Namesake* embodies the emotional toll of migration. Living in a modest apartment in a predominantly American neighborhood, she faces loneliness and the absence of extended family. Her efforts to maintain Bengali customs, celebrate festivals, and uphold cultural practices serve as a testament to the resilience of immigrant identity. Yet her longing for familial connection and her emotional attachment to India underscore the enduring pull of homeland. Similarly, Ashoke negotiates the balance between honoring his Bengali heritage and raising his children within the American cultural context, highlighting the tension inherent in navigating two worlds simultaneously.

The second-generation experience is captured through Gogol and Sonia, who negotiate their Indian heritage alongside the influences of American society. Gogol's identity crisis, symbolized by his complex relationship with his name, reflects the broader challenge of defining oneself amidst competing cultural pressures. His eventual engagement with Indian culture, alongside his embrace of American ways, illustrates the hybrid identities that emerge within diaspora communities. Lahiri's depiction emphasizes that identity in the context of migration is fluid, multifaceted, and often shaped by ongoing negotiation between tradition and adaptation. The narrative also explores themes of loss, homesickness, and cultural dislocation. Ashima's return to India after decades in the United States, prompted by her father's death, serves as a poignant reminder of the deep emotional ties migrants maintain with their homeland. This journey highlights the enduring significance of roots, memory, and cultural continuity, even as life unfolds in a foreign country. The novel further explores generational contrasts, illustrating how second-generation immigrants often experience detachment from their heritage, yet also create spaces for cultural synthesis and personal agency. Ultimately, Lahiri's work illuminates the intricate realities of the immigrant experience, revealing how globalization shapes personal identity, cultural expression, and social belonging. Through *The Namesake*, readers gain a profound understanding of the dualities faced by migrants—the longing for home and the need to adapt, the preservation of heritage and the embrace of new influences, the tension between isolation and community. The novel affirms that the experience of diaspora is neither static nor singular but evolves continuously, producing identities that are hybrid, dynamic, and reflective of the complex interplay between the individual and the global forces that shape contemporary life.

Nationalism in a Globalized World

Nationalism is a multifaceted and evolving phenomenon, shaped by a combination of historical, cultural, and political forces that differ across nations. At its core, nationalism is not merely a political allegiance to a territory but also a shared sense of belonging and collective identity among members of a community. Scholars have highlighted the paradoxical nature of nationalism, describing nations as "imagined communities" in which individuals, though physically separated, feel a deep sense of unity and connection. This cultural imagination enables people to recognize themselves as part of a larger whole, bound together by language, tradition, and shared history. The emergence of national consciousness, therefore, is as much a cultural and emotional phenomenon as it is a political one. Globalization has challenged traditional notions of nationalism rooted solely in territorial boundaries. The growing interconnection of societies, increased mobility, and the widespread movement of people have given rise to what can be described as cultural nationalism. In this form, shared customs, traditions, and cultural practices become the central unifying force among people, particularly migrants who seek to maintain connections with their homeland while

navigating life in foreign environments. Migration highlights the limitations of rigid national borders and encourages the creation of micro-communities in diaspora settings, where people of similar cultural and racial backgrounds recreate a sense of home far from their original countries. Cultural practices not only preserve the emotional and symbolic ties to the homeland but also enable migrants to build new social networks and support systems, effectively replacing the familial and communal bonds they leave behind.

Cultural nationalism emphasizes the preservation and promotion of cultural identity in the face of global homogenization and the influence of foreign cultures. It recognizes that culture carries both intellectual and emotional weight, functioning as a repository of knowledge, values, and shared experiences that provide stability and meaning in the face of rapid social and economic change. For migrants, culture is a lifeline, connecting them to their heritage while helping them negotiate the challenges of life in a new country. The late twentieth century saw significant waves of migration, particularly among skilled professionals such as doctors, engineers, professors, and scientists, who carried with them not only their professional expertise but also the values of hard work, education, and close family ties characteristic of the Indian middle class. These migrants established dispersed diaspora communities, geographically distant from their homelands yet emotionally and culturally connected through shared memories, rituals, and values. The experience of diaspora is marked by both physical displacement and psychic challenges. Migrants often navigate the tension between the culture of their homeland and that of their host country, facing emotional fragmentation, identity crises, and the challenge of adaptation. This journey, sometimes described as a “diasporic odyssey,” reflects the personal and collective struggles of living between worlds. Diaspora literature emerges as a rich source of insight into these experiences, capturing the nuances of identity, belonging, and cultural negotiation. It encompasses works from diverse communities, including African, Arab, Australian, and Indian diasporas, exploring themes of migration, alienation, and the complex dynamics of cultural hybridity.

Postcolonial theory further illuminates the psychological and cultural dimensions of diaspora. Migrants often experience “double consciousness,” an unstable sense of self that arises from being caught between multiple cultural frameworks. They may feel “unhomed,” a condition of emotional and psychological dislocation in which one does not fully belong to either the homeland or the host country. This state goes beyond physical displacement, reflecting the deeper challenges of cultural identity, memory, and the negotiation of belonging. Individuals in diaspora actively construct and maintain cultural and emotional links to their countries of origin, sustaining communities that are both imagined and lived. Globalization has intensified these processes, facilitating the creation of transcultural and transnational communities. Transculturality recognizes that monocultural societies are largely an illusion, as human experience is shaped by continuous cultural exchange and interaction across time and space. Transnationalism, similarly, emphasizes the fluidity of social, cultural, and institutional connections across national borders. It provides a framework for understanding how migrants, diasporic communities, and global institutions maintain interconnected networks that transcend geographic and political boundaries. These concepts underscore that modern identity is rarely fixed; rather, it is continually negotiated, shaped by both the cultural heritage of the homeland and the influences of the host society.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake* is a profound exploration of the immigrant experience, focusing on the contrasting perspectives of first and second-generation immigrants in America. Through the lives of Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli and their children, Gogol and Sonia, the novel illustrates the ways in which nationality, culture, and identity are experienced differently across generations. For first-generation immigrants, survival in a foreign land often necessitates the creation of an imagined homeland, a microcosm of the culture, rituals, and traditions left behind. Ashoke and Ashima exemplify this tendency as they cultivate a sense of community by forming bonds with other Bengalis and South Asians in America, effectively creating a “mini-India” that allows them to feel connected to their roots while navigating life in Cambridge. By sharing meals, cultural knowledge, and festivals, they recreate familiar spaces that provide comfort and continuity in an otherwise alien environment. Ashima’s journey, in particular, highlights the complex emotional and cultural dislocation that accompanies migration. Moving from Calcutta to Cambridge after her marriage, she confronts not only physical displacement but also profound socio-cultural and psychological challenges. For Ashima, the customs, rituals, and values of her Bengali heritage provide an essential framework for understanding her identity and maintaining continuity with her past. Her strong emotional connection to India underscores the psychological strain of being uprooted, as she struggles to reconcile her memories of home

with her present life in America. Loneliness, homesickness, and a sense of disorientation are constant companions, reflecting the universal challenges faced by migrants attempting to adapt to a new culture while preserving their own.

Lahiri skillfully portrays the role of diasporic communities in alleviating these challenges. By connecting with other Indian families and establishing shared social networks, first-generation immigrants create spaces that allow them to preserve cultural practices, share memories, and support one another. These micro-communities serve as essential mediators between the homeland and the host country, enabling immigrants to construct a collective identity while living in a foreign environment. For instance, Ashima maintains detailed address books containing the names of every Bengali family she and Ashoke know, preserving connections that reinforce a sense of belonging and cultural continuity. Festivals, rituals, and shared meals become acts of cultural preservation, providing both emotional sustenance and a means of asserting identity in a society where they are otherwise outsiders. The novel also examines the experiences of the second generation, represented by Gogol and Sonia, who navigate the tension between their parents' heritage and the cultural environment of the United States. Unlike their parents, they grow up immersed in American culture, which shapes their identity differently. Gogol's struggle with his name and his eventual attempts to assert a distinct identity reflect the broader challenges faced by children of immigrants: negotiating the space between two worlds, feeling neither fully at home in the host country nor entirely connected to the ancestral homeland. Lahiri depicts the gradual reconciliation of these identities, particularly through experiences of loss, such as Ashoke's untimely death, which forces Gogol to confront his heritage and participate in Indian rituals, thereby reconnecting with his familial and cultural roots.

Cultural memory and ritual play central roles in maintaining identity across generations. Ashima's careful preservation of Bengali customs, her teaching of language and traditions to her children, and her adherence to rituals such as the annaprasan ceremony for Gogol illustrate the importance of memory in constructing diasporic identity. These acts of remembrance, alongside connections to other Bengali families, create what scholars describe as "mnemonic communities," where shared narratives, customs, and histories reinforce collective memory and cultural continuity. Even when physically distant from their homeland, diaspora communities utilize these practices to recreate a sense of rootedness and belonging. At the same time, the novel highlights the adaptive capacities of immigrants in response to the host country's culture. Over time, Ashima develops greater confidence and independence, taking on roles and responsibilities that reflect her growing integration into American society. Yet, she maintains her cultural identity through clothing, language, and customs, demonstrating the hybrid nature of diasporic life. Gogol, too, initially embraces an American identity, forming social connections and romantic relationships outside his cultural sphere. However, moments of grief and familial obligation ultimately draw him back to the traditions and values of his parents, illustrating the dynamic negotiation between assimilation and cultural preservation. Lahiri's narrative captures the broader phenomenon of diaspora as a socio-cultural and emotional network that extends across geographical boundaries. Diasporic life involves the coexistence of multiple scales of belonging: the local scale of community, the national scale of the host country, and the transnational scale linking immigrants to their homeland. First-generation immigrants often privilege connections to their homeland and immediate ethnic community, while the second generation negotiates a more complex interplay of identities shaped by both heritage and host culture. Diaspora, therefore, functions as a bridge, enabling migrants to maintain continuity with their origins while adapting to new environments. It also reflects the hybridization of identity that occurs in the context of globalization, where cultural boundaries are permeable, and individuals must navigate overlapping social, cultural and political spaces.

Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity

The contemporary age of multiculturalism can be understood as a reflection of a global society shaped by capitalist imperatives, technological connectivity, and unprecedented mobility. In this context, cultural exchange is facilitated by tools that allow people, ideas, and products to move rapidly across borders, producing a phenomenon sometimes described as "cosmopolitanism." This global circulation creates opportunities for what can be called a peaceful cultural intermingling, wherein diverse traditions, practices, and products coexist and influence one another without necessarily generating direct conflict. In many ways, this process allows Western products and ideas to permeate other cultures, often subtly reshaping them, while simultaneously opening spaces for new forms of expression and hybrid cultural practices. At the same time, it has fostered what some scholars refer to as a "cult of ethnicity," a form of cultural

recognition that is simultaneously inclusive and hierarchical. On one hand, minority communities, especially those labeled as “model minorities,” are celebrated as productive, rational, and socially successful, often embodying positive stereotypes of industriousness, academic excellence, and cultural refinement. These portrayals, while seemingly flattering, carry implicit expectations and pressures, reducing complex identities to a set of consumable traits or cultural performances. In North America, for example, South Asian communities are often stereotyped as individuals who seamlessly combine professional competence with spiritual or culinary expertise, illustrating the selective and idealized ways in which multicultural societies frame minority identities. This “benevolent inclusion” recognizes cultural difference while subtly reinforcing the dominant social and economic hierarchies, reflecting the intersection of multicultural ideals with capitalist priorities.

On the other hand, multiculturalism, especially when tied to global capitalism, also cultivates a form of logophobia—a fear of disruptive speech or acts that might challenge existing narratives or expose historical and social injustices. In societies that prioritize stability, prosperity, and global mobility, discourses that confront past violence or structural inequality are often muted or avoided. This tension highlights the paradox of multiculturalism: it promises inclusivity and cultural celebration while simultaneously circumscribing the boundaries of acceptable expression, privileging conformity to economic and social norms. In this sense, the capitalist and political imperatives underlying multicultural policies may contribute to the subtle erosion of local cultural autonomy, as dominant forms of power and influence shape the trajectories of minority cultures. Despite these limitations, multiculturalism offers a framework for co-existence and cultural hybridity. Its primary goal is not to enforce homogenization or uniformity but to allow multiple cultural identities to coexist, interact, and transform one another organically. The process of “chutnification,” a metaphorical concept drawn from cultural studies, illustrates this dynamic: like a Banyan tree extending its roots across multiple soils, cultures under multicultural conditions can take hold, adapt, and flourish in diverse social environments. Multiculturalism thus becomes more than a political agenda; it emerges as a lived experience of belonging, negotiation, and shared identity, in which individuals and communities collectively navigate the interplay between heritage and contemporary social realities. So, multiculturalism can be seen as both a product and a facilitator of globalization. It allows cultures to intermingle, adapt, and innovate, creating hybrid forms that are neither wholly traditional nor entirely modern. At the same time, it raises questions about the balance between cultural preservation and adaptation, autonomy and integration, local identity and global interconnectedness. By acknowledging these tensions, contemporary thought on multiculturalism encourages a more nuanced understanding of cultural belonging, one that recognizes both the opportunities and the constraints of living in a world shaped by mobility, technology and capitalism.

Transnational Motherhood and Cultural Agency

Jhumpa Lahiri’s novel *The Namesake* is often framed as the story of Gogol Ganguli, the American-born son of Bengali immigrants, yet the narrative begins and ends with his mother, Ashima. The novel opens with Ashima navigating the uncertainty of life in the United States and the challenges of motherhood in a foreign land. It closes with her decisive choice to redefine her life after decades of domestic adaptation, illustrating the complex interplay between cultural preservation and assimilation. Ashima’s journey embodies many of the struggles that postcolonial women in diaspora face: she must maintain a connection to her Bengali heritage while ensuring the well-being and success of her children within a culture that is unfamiliar and often alien. Although Ashima retains many elements of Bengali culture in her domestic life, the demands of suburban American society and her children’s American upbringing compel her to adapt in unexpected ways. From her initial struggles—such as attempting to recreate familiar Indian foods in a Massachusetts kitchen—to her eventual establishment of a transnational identity, Ashima exemplifies the negotiation of multiple cultural worlds. Over the course of three decades, she constructs a life that bridges the Bengali homeland and the American landscape, embodying the meaning of her name: “she who is limitless, without borders.” This transformation underscores the potential for immigrants, particularly women, to forge agency by navigating between distinct cultural spheres.

While much scholarship on Lahiri has focused on her short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies*, which illuminates

the difficulties of maintaining personal connections across cultural boundaries, *The Namesake* extends these concerns into the realm of postcolonial discourse. The novel demonstrates how diaspora creates spaces of mobility and negotiation, where cultural identity is not passively absorbed or erased but actively reconstructed. In this context, Ashima's life aligns with broader theoretical frameworks that explore the intersection of diaspora, borders, and transnational identities. Diaspora, understood as the movement and dispersal of culture beyond national boundaries, resists the assimilationist pressures of the American "melting pot" and allows immigrants to maintain their heritage while selectively engaging with the host society. Lahiri's novel exemplifies this dynamic, showing how cultural practices can become a site of agency for the postcolonial immigrant, enabling negotiation between old and new identities. Ashima's experience can also be understood through the lens of postcolonial feminist theory, particularly in relation to gender roles and nationalism. In historical contexts, Indian nationalists articulated the "women's question" by distinguishing between the material and spiritual domains of life. The spiritual domain, associated with the home, was considered the sphere of women and the guardian of Indian cultural identity. Material pursuits, in contrast, belonged to men and the external world. Within this framework, the Indian home became a symbolic site for the preservation of culture and the assertion of national identity. Ashima's role as a mother in the United States mirrors this division: while her husband engages with the public, professional sphere of academia, she manages the household and ensures the continuity of Bengali traditions. Just as nationalist women were tasked with protecting cultural identity under colonial rule, Ashima negotiates the pressures of assimilation while sustaining her family's heritage.

The novel foregrounds motherhood as a critical site for this negotiation. Ashima's first pregnancy illustrates the compounded challenges of cultural displacement and maternal responsibility. The physical discomfort of pregnancy is compounded by the psychological strain of alienation and isolation. Lahiri draws a striking parallel between the burdens of motherhood and the experience of being a foreigner: both involve ongoing responsibilities, constant adaptation, and the perception of scrutiny from the outside world. This feminization of the immigrant experience highlights the centrality of women in sustaining cultural identity in diasporic communities. Ashima's gradual assimilation unfolds through everyday practices that allow her to interact selectively with American culture. From walking through Cambridge with her infant son to shopping in local stores, she negotiates visibility and acceptance in public spaces, balancing engagement with cultural preservation. Motherhood provides her with a socially sanctioned reason to leave the home, interact with neighbors, and create a routine, allowing her to navigate both American and Bengali spheres on her own terms. She simultaneously maintains her domestic traditions, from wearing saris and preparing familiar foods to singing Bengali songs to her children, while accommodating selective American customs, such as celebrating Thanksgiving with a spiced turkey or hosting birthday parties that blend Indian and American practices. These deliberate choices reflect a carefully negotiated hybridity, one that allows Ashima to honor her heritage while adapting to the demands of American life.

Ashima's efforts to preserve Bengali identity extend beyond her immediate family. She creates a community of fellow Bengali immigrants, hosting elaborate gatherings that serve as surrogate families and microcosms of India. These social rituals, including ceremonies for infants and communal meals, provide continuity for both culture and community, alleviating the sense of loss that accompanies displacement. Over time, these gatherings evolve to accommodate American influences, demonstrating the dynamic and adaptive nature of diasporic identity. Ashima's role as a cultural matriarch reflects both her agency and her capacity to mediate between the homeland left behind and the new society in which she lives. Even after decades in the United States, Ashima remains deeply connected to her Bengali roots while simultaneously embracing elements of American life that enhance her independence. She learns to drive, holds a part-time job, and forms friendships outside her immediate family, establishing a sense of self that is both rooted and mobile. Following the death of her husband, she chooses to divide her time between the United States and India, embodying a transnational identity that is "without borders," as Lahiri emphasizes. This deliberate fluidity underscores the potential for immigrants to claim agency over both geography and culture, shaping a hybrid identity that transcends national boundaries. So, it can very well be said that Ashima's journey in *The Namesake* exemplifies the transformative power of motherhood, cultural preservation, and transnational agency. Lahiri presents a nuanced depiction of an immigrant woman who negotiates the demands of assimilation, familial responsibility, and cultural continuity with resilience and deliberation. By balancing the pressures of the host society with loyalty to her heritage, Ashima constructs a space in which she and her family can thrive. In doing so, she demonstrates that home is not merely a physical location but a site of practice, memory and identity, a dynamic space where cultural traditions

are preserved, adapted and reimagined across generations.

Conclusion

The exploration of nationalism, diaspora, and transnationalism reveals the complex ways in which individuals and communities navigate the tensions between heritage and modernity, belonging and displacement. Nationalism, as both a historical and cultural phenomenon, underscores the importance of collective identity while simultaneously confronting the limitations imposed by rigid territorial, political, or ethnic definitions. In the contemporary global context, the processes of migration, mobility, and cultural exchange challenge traditional conceptions of the nation-state and invite a reevaluation of identity as fluid, negotiated, and multifaceted. The experiences of diasporic communities highlight the ways in which cultural memory, language, and tradition become tools for sustaining identity across borders, allowing migrants to maintain continuity with their heritage while engaging with new social, economic, and cultural landscapes. Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* exemplifies these dynamics through the life of Ashima Ganguli, whose journey as an immigrant mother illuminates the personal and familial negotiations that underpin diasporic identity. Lahiri portrays how individuals navigate the dual demands of cultural preservation and adaptation, crafting identities that honor their roots while participating meaningfully in the host society. Through Ashima, the novel emphasizes that transnational identity is not simply the product of dislocation but an active process of agency, creativity, and cultural negotiation. Motherhood, domestic practice, and community-building become avenues through which immigrants assert their cultural presence, mediate intergenerational differences, and forge a sense of belonging in spaces that are simultaneously familiar and foreign.

The broader framework of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism further contextualizes these individual experiences within global socio-economic and political systems. Multicultural societies, shaped by capitalism, technology, and hypermobility, foster environments where cultural hybridity, exchange, and adaptation are not only possible but necessary. Yet these same systems impose subtle pressures to conform and produce idealized models of minority identity, demonstrating that inclusion is often bounded by social expectations and economic imperatives. The challenge, therefore, lies in navigating these forces without losing the distinctive elements of one's heritage or undermining personal and collective agency. Across these interrelated discussions, a central insight emerges: identity is not fixed but continually constructed through the interplay of memory, culture, and social context. Whether in the negotiation of national belonging, the maintenance of diasporic traditions, or the cultivation of a transnational, hybrid self, individuals exercise agency in ways that reflect both continuity with the past and engagement with the present. Lahiri's narrative, alongside theoretical considerations of nationalism, diaspora, and multiculturalism, underscores that cultural and geographic mobility need not entail alienation; instead, they offer opportunities for creativity, self-definition and meaningful connection across borders.

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