



**JHUMPA LAHİRİ’NİN *ADAŞ* VE *SAÇINDA GÜN IŞIĞI*
ROMANLARINDA KİMLİK KORUMASI VE YANSIMASI**

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DENİZLİ

**PROTECTING AND PROJECTING IDENTITY IN JHUMPA
LAHIRI'S NOVELS: *THE NAMESAKE* AND *THE LOWLAND***

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İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bilim Dalı öğrencisi Derya ARSLAN YAVUZ tarafından Doç. Dr. Meryem AYAN yönetiminde hazırlanan JHUMPA LAHIRI'NİN ADAŞ VE SAÇINDA GÜN IŞIĞI ROMANLARINDA KİMLİK KORUMASI VE YANSIMASI" başlıklı tez aşağıdaki jüri üyeleri tarafından 27/06/2019 tarihinde yapılan tez savunma sınavında başarılı bulunmuş ve Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.




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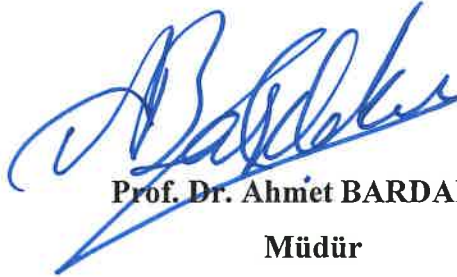
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ABSTRACT

PROTECTING AND PROJECTING IDENTITY IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S NOVELS: *THE NAMESAKE AND THE LOWLAND*

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This study presents a detailed analysis of the Indian American writer Jhumpa Lahiri's novels *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* within the light of postcolonial theory. As an Indian immigrant in the United States, and a Pulitzer Prize award-winning author, Lahiri best depicts the struggles of Indian rooted people in forming an identity in a foreign land. In this process of constructing an identity, the characters' in-betweenness will be depicted through the concepts of cultural clash, hybridity, displacement and dual identities.

Lahiri's first novel *The Namesake* is a portrayal of an Indian immigrant family who moves to the United States in pursuit of a new life and their becoming an in-between society in a foreign land and culture. While the first generation try to preserve their roots and national Indian identity; their children, the second generation is torn between the Indian culture they are imposed in family and the American culture they wish to embrace.

***The Lowland* is Lahiri's combination of the Indian culture and the American life within the embodiment of two brothers. The struggle to survive in a foreign society with an Indian background and the fight for national values in homeland are the main concerns of this novel. Since both of Lahiri's works reflect the identity chaos and duality, this study will be an analysis of these two novels within the frame of postcolonial concepts such as hybridity, ambivalence, in-betweenness and otherness.**

Keywords : Postcolonialism, Identity, Hybridity, Ambivalence, Cultural Clash, Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake*, *The Lowland*

ÖZET

JHUMPA LAHİRİ’NİN *ADAŞ* VE *SAÇINDA GÜN IŞIĞI* ROMANLARINDA KİMLİK KORUMASI VE YANSIMASI

ARSLAN YAVUZ, Derya
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Bu çalışma Hintli Amerikalı yazar Jhumpa Lahiri’nin *Adaş* ve *Saçında Gün Işığı* romanlarının postkolonyal teori ışığında detaylı bir analizini sunmaktadır. Amerika’da Hintli bir göçmen ve Pulitzer ödüllü bir yazar olarak Lahiri, Hint asıllı insanların yeni bir yerde kimlik oluşturma çabalarını en iyi şekilde tasvir etmektedir. Bu kimlik oluşturma sürecinde karakterlerin arada kalmışlıkları kültürel çatışma, melezlik, yer değiştirme ve ikili kimlik terimleri aracılığıyla incelenecektir.

Lahiri’nin ilk romanı olan *Adaş*, yeni bir hayat arayışında Amerika’ya göç eden Hintli bir ailenin ve onların yabancı bir ülkede ve kültürde arada kalmış hale gelmelerinin bir portresidir. Birinci kuşak kökenlerini ve ulusal Hintli kimliklerini korumaya çalışırken, onların çocukları olan ikinci kuşak ise ailede maruz kaldıkları Hint kültürü ile kucaklamak ve benimsemek istedikleri Amerikan kültürü arasında kalmıştır.

Saçında Gün Işığı, Lahiri’nin Hint kültürü ile Amerikan yaşantısını iki kardeşte vücut bulmasıyla birleştirmesidir. Hintli bir geçmişle yabancı bir kültürde hayatta kalma çabası ve anavatanda ulusal değerler uğruna savaşıma bu romanın temel konularıdır. Lahiri’nin her iki eseri de kimlik karmaşasını ve ikiliğini yansıttığı için, bu çalışma bu iki romanın melezlik, ikilem, arada kalmışlık ve ötekilik gibi postkolonyal terimler çerçevesinde bir analizi olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postkolonyalizm, Kimlik, Melezleşme, İkilem, Kültürel Çatışma, Jhumpa Lahiri, *Adaş*, *Saçında Gün Işığı*

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INTRODUCTION

The World has witnessed many different struggles of humanity throughout history. From the very beginning of human existence, there has been a search for every vital necessity such as water, food, shelter, land and even identity. In this sense, the aim of this dissertation is to study the struggles of Indian immigrants related to their search for identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's two prospering novels, *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* within the light of postcolonialism.

In time, the needs of human beings have changed and reshaped according to the conditions, environments, and requirements of the century and humanity. As a nation supplies all its basic necessities and develops domestically, it becomes the first aim to search for new resources or to dominate different and significant lands. However, there has always been a more valid reason such as spreading religion or civilizing the backward regions rather than directly expressing the will for hegemony over the weaker nations. This idea of dominating the weaker one or civilizing the uncivilized nations is the core of the term that we literally encounter from the beginnings of the 16th century, *colonialism*. With the effects of geographical discoveries and gaining new raw materials as its result, powerful nations stimulated their desire to conquer the weaker ones. These weaker ones are always labeled as uncivilized, inferior, irrational, the other and identified with East; while the dominant one is called as West. From this point on, the disparity between the East and West has begun and the terms colonizer and colonized have been generated consequently. In this sense, the colonized's search for identity has started with the alienation or othering processes of the dominant cultures.

With the end of the colonization period in the early 20th century, the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized is clearly seen by all the nations both weaker and stronger. With the independence of many nations and new humanist discourses, decolonization period took its place in the world scene and a new term emerged right after: *postcolonialism*. The massive effects of the colonial period on nations, oppression and authority of the colonizer over the colonized are questioned and criticized via postcolonialism. Although it has many different definitions and ambiguities whether it is really based upon the changes after colonialism or just an extension of colonialism, the term *postcolonialism* is not the continuity of the colonial period but a new period

opening gates to identity formation. The term contributes to analyze the outcomes and features of the previous period and “it addresses the problem of cultural identity and theoretical concepts like orientalism, subalternity, and hybridity which are important in identity formation”, as well (Ayan, 2013: 198). In postcolonial studies, immigration and immigrant concepts are the most prominent determinants as these are the starting point of the lasting culture and identity problems. These migrations also bring along the problems of otherness, cultural hybridity, ambivalence and mimicry which are considered as the basic key elements of postcolonial theory and literature. In terms of contextuality, postcolonial texts mainly study the changes in the lives of the colonized through a wide range of issues such as ethnicity, language, multiculturalism, quest for identity, assimilation, sense of belonging, immigrant experience, clash of cultures, place and displacement. All these topics have continuity today as they are changing and challenging issues in identity crisis of the present, therefore it is said that “postcolonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction” (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 2). Especially the search for identity is a continuing process which seems to last for a long time as the world scene is continually changing and being reconstructed.

Within the frame of postcolonial writing, ethnic writing also emerged as a result of these changes in societies throughout the world, including the United States of America. Similar post-colonial topics have been the main themes of ethnic writing. However, ethnic writers were seen as the “other” by some American groups in contrast with the multicultural structure of their nation. They also had the same in-betweenness problem whether to write with their ethnic identities or isolate themselves from their roots. On the other hand, this duality helps some of them to write more effectively and authentically as they can stand both in and out of their culture as well as reflecting the entire struggle throughout their lives as the “other”.

Jhumpa Lahiri, as an Indian American writer, is one of the most leading figures in contemporary American literature as she won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2000 with her short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies*. Lahiri, who herself is technically an immigrant with Indian parents settled in the United States, chooses her topics carefully from every sphere of life such as family and kinship, belonging and assimilation, culture and identity, immigration and adaptation, place and displacement. Thus, her works are engrossing for most of the readers as well as being notable in

American Literature. *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* are two significant outcomes of Lahiri's talent to create a dramatic, realistic piece from life. Both of the novels handle the issues of identity, double identity, and the search for identity. In addition, they discuss the subjects of cultural conflicts, belonging, the clash between generations, displacement and the longing for home within a family drama.

As these two novels are the works of a postcolonial ethnic writer and tell the story of Indian immigrants who are torn in between of two cultures and two territories, the theoretical background of this dissertation will be held within the frame of postcolonial theory. Significant theorists contributing to the theory both in formation and implementation such as Homi K. Bhabha, Bill Ashcroft and Ania Loomba as well as Edward Said and Frantz Fanon and their views will be the basis of this dissertation. The first chapter attempts to analyze the theory with a brief historical background and the emergence of postcolonial literatures. The second chapter functions as a linking part as it is attempted to depict Jhumpa Lahiri's life and works as a postcolonial writer.

In the third chapter of this dissertation, Lahiri's first and enchanting novel, *The Namesake* will be dealt within the light of postcolonial theory and its concept. The novel describes the immigrant experience of a Bengali couple moving from Calcutta to the United States and their struggle to respect old traditions in a new world through the story of their son Gogol. The novel analyzes the frame of minds of the first generation and second generation immigrants and the conflicts as a result of their immigrant experiences. The themes of homeland nostalgia, cultural shock and displacement are addressed through the first generation characters Ashima and Ashoke. On the other hand, Gogol and Moushumi, the second generation Indian immigrants, exemplify the themes of identity chaos and identity dualities.

The Lowland, the second novel of Lahiri, describes the story of two brothers – Subhash and Udayan – who were born in Calcutta and inseparable in childhood but having different futures ahead of them through their experiences of searching for identity, sense of belonging and displacement. Different from Lahiri's previous works, *The Lowland* is a portrait of India in the 1960s not only with its immigration themes but also with the political concepts of a militant experience, a movement called Naxalbari. These historical and political conditions also contribute to Udayan's identity

construction process as he is represented as a rebel against Indian government. Contrary to Udayan, his brother Subhash is the representative of the American side of immigration as a first generation immigrant. As a consequence, the characters experience displacement and cultural conflicts because of their diasporas. The characters also face with the costs of their individual preferences, their freewill as well as the consequences of their immigration and cultural changes.

CHAPTER ONE

POSTCOLONIALISM AND POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

1. 1. Postcolonialism and Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonialism has always been a debatable and indefinite term which is one of the most significant phenomena not only in literary world but also in other fields such as philosophy, psychology, politics and history since the beginning of the 20th century. As it mainly deals with the pros and cons of the period called as ‘colonialism’, it is only possible to understand and evaluate the postcolonial period within the historical frame of colonialism and its outcomes. To that end, this chapter is organized to draw a general frame of the periods of colonialism and postcolonialism with the light of postcolonial theory. It aims to provide a background of the theory, to analyze the colonial discourse and to figure out the processes of postcolonialism with the guidance of some outstanding theorists and their definitions of key terms. It could not have been possible to understand the term postcolonialism without going back to the period of colonialism and its dynamics since they are representing two different perspectives regarding the colonizer and the colonized.

Throughout history, there have always been extremes as strong or weak and politically some countries have had the greatest role to inscribe their names as those strong ones who had the authority and hegemony over the weak ones. Looking back to the 18th and 19th centuries, these powerful countries were labeled as the West including England, France and later on America as the leading figures of the power. Their common concern was to dominate the weak ones which are also labeled as the East, and to practice their strength more widely known as ‘civilizing’ them. This aim to civilize the uncivilized nations or in other words, the will to dominate and the instinct to control the weaker nations went down in history as the period of ‘colonialism’. Thus, “colonization as a consequence of the desire of authority and dominance of one nation over another one” reinforced “the idea that it is right and proper to rule over other peoples” and in this way it had been not so difficult to get “the colonized people to accept their lower ranking in the colonial order of things” (McLeod, 2010: 20). This ‘colonial order’ was first projected as a discovery of new lands and then comes the steps

to make these new lands reachable and gain wealth above them by exploiting the resources.

Although it is not possible to make a certain definition of the term colonialism, the most basic one used by Ania Loomba goes back to the origin of the Latin word 'colonia' that meant 'farm' or 'settlement' according to the definition of *Oxford English Dictionary*:

A settlement in a new country... a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors, as long as the connection with the parent state is kept up (qtd. in Loomba, 2000: 2).

According to Loomba, however, this definition is not sufficient enough as it never mentions the people who had already been living in those places before the colonizers settled or the 'new' settlement is not that so 'new' when thought within the historical context. Instead of looking out only from the colonizers' point, Loomba prefers to make a wider statement including both the colonizer and the colonized:

Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world but everywhere it locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history... So colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods (2000: 2).

In this process of conquest and control over one nation, colonialism had a history not only limited with the British Empire but also going back to the Roman, Aztec, and Chinese Empires, with the same aim to dominate and have the authority. Within this sense, it is suggested by some critics and theorists that colonialism is sometimes confused with the term imperialism. The point of their being close to one another in theory is explained by McLeod in his theory book *Beginning Postcolonialism* as "colonialism was first and foremost a lucrative commercial operation, bringing wealth and riches to Western nations through the economic exploitation of others" (2010: 9). So the ideology seems common from the view that they share a mutual exploitative perspective. However, this affection between these terms is later distinguished. Colonialism is regarded as a whole process from discovering the new land to the settlement but on the other hand with imperialism, there is no settlement to a new place.

It is rather the ideology to control the economic and military powers over a nation. Thus, Peter Childs and Patrick Williams define imperialism as “the extension and expansion of trade and commerce under the protection of political, legal, and military controls” (1996: 227). Although the economic factors behind each constituted a system of dominance, hegemony and power, “unlike colonialism, imperialism is driven by ideology and a theory of sorts” (Young, 2016: 27). Thus, it can be assumed that colonialism is one of the approaches or paradigms of imperialism.

Imperialism is characterized by the exercise of power either through direct conquest or (latterly) through political and economic influence that effectively amounts to a similar form of domination: both involve the practice of power through facilitating institutions and ideologies. Typically, it is the deliberate product of a political machine that rules from the centre, and extends its control to the furthest reaches of the peripheries (Young, 2016: 27).

The political machine that Young states in this quotation is mostly considered as the colonial mind behind imperialism since he points out that colonialism is the actualized and practiced form of the ideology of imperialism.

Colonialism, except from its abovementioned ties with the term imperialism, also stands for the power above other nations, the leading commercial desire and the control mechanism of Western countries to gain more by using the raw materials and human power of the economically indigents. According to McLeod:

The seizing of ‘foreign’ lands for government and settlement was in part motivated by the desire to create and control opportunities to generate wealth and control international markets, frequently by securing the natural resources and labour power of different lands and peoples at the lowest possible cost to Europeans (2010: 8).

In this context, it was really a big business to make profits by producing at low cost and selling for extremely high prices. Such examples are seen in the sugar plantations using the physical strength of African slaves or in “Indian indentured labourers” (McLeod, 2010: 8).

To sum up the idea of colonialism, it is “the settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous

inhabitants of occupied lands, often by force” (Boehmer, 2005: 2). During these settlements to the new lands or attempts to govern the weaker ones, there inevitably occurred interactions, and “as a result of the connections between the two countries, there have been alterations in the cultures of nations, but chiefly the weaker country is infected by the customs, traditions and cultures of the powerful country” (Ayan, 2013: 197).

There has never been a sharp transition from colonialism to postcolonialism. The process which is called as ‘decolonization’ functioned as a bridge between the colonial and postcolonial periods. It is defined by Ashcroft et al. as “the process of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms” (2013: 73). Just as the formation process of colonialism, decolonization also had some background reasons or aims. This time it was the turn of the colonized people to search for their national identity and to lay claim to their rights such as freedom or hegemony. Surely, it is not possible to diminish the colonial traits from the world stage just in a few movements but it had greater effect on disintegration. It is not a simple end of one era and the start of another; however, it is “a complex and contentious process that appeared to offer a range of outcomes” (Kennedy, 2016: 70).

To date it back, the early beginnings of the 20th century may be regarded as the beginning of postcolonialism process. The roots of postcolonialism were being generated behind the scenes of decolonization as a transition period. This meant great changes in world history concerning both the colonial powers and the colonized nations.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the British Empire covered a vast area of the earth that included parts of Africa, Asia, Australasia, Canada, the Caribbean and Ireland. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, although there remains a small handful of British Overseas Territories, the vast bulk of the empire has not survived. All over the world, the twentieth century witnessed the decolonization of millions of people who were once subject to the authority of the British crown. For many, the phrase ‘the British Empire’ is most commonly used these days in the past tense, signifying a historical period and a set of relationship which appear no longer current (McLeod, 2010, 7).

When the reasons are considered, it is possible to point out that the nationalist movements opposing colonial authority were fundamental. Besides, the decline of Britain's great power around the world and the obstacles to control the distant colonies both economically and geographically affected this process. On the other hand, "the ascendancy of the United States and the Soviet Union" as well as the "changes to technologies of production and international finance which enabled imperialist and capitalist ambitions to be pursued without the need for colonial settlement" were also among the main causes of decolonization (McLeod, 2010: 12).

Due to the long existence of colonialism with a notable past, decolonization process cannot be limited with or identified as a sudden event. Thus, it is better understood with the detailed explanations of John McLeod since he examines decolonization as a process which is spread over time in three different periods:

The first was the loss of the American colonies and declaration of American independence in the late eighteenth century. The second period spans the end of the nineteenth century to the first decade of the twentieth century, and concerns the creation of 'dominions'. This was the term used to describe the nations of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. [...] The third period of decolonization occurred in the decades immediately following the end of the Second World War (2010: 10-11).

With the third and last phase of decolonization, colonized lands in South Asia, Africa and Caribbean, India and Pakistan, Ghana, Nigeria and Hong Kong gained their independence respectively from the once dominant British rule. However, the idea of independence from the ruler is debatable at this point as it is obviously seen that the hidden or indirect control over the once-colonized nations was still perceivable. It was not possible to erase the traits of colonialism on those nations especially when the factors such as language or cultural interactions were considered. They were officially independent but the hidden tie between their supreme powers was not broken off. According to Dane Kennedy, "what we normally characterize as decolonization was the collapse of colonial empires and the creation of new nation-states across what came to be known in the decades following World War II as the Third World" (2016: 5). On the contrary, some critics regard the process not as the ending of the colonialism but just a slight transition as Elleke Boehmer states that "in much of the once-colonized world, decolonization in fact produced a few changes: power hierarchies were maintained, the values of the former colonizer remained influential" (2005: 231). This influence of the

ruler country has never completely lost its oppression throughout history as we still call those countries as ‘once-colonized’. In order to make this process a more concrete phenomenon or in other words, to put through the main aim of colonized people to get their independence, another perspective of the critic John McLeod may be regarded as he points out that ‘decolonizing the mind’ is the most meaningful step for the true decolonization:

Freedom from colonialism comes not just from signing of declarations of independence and the lowering and raising of flags. There must also be a change in minds, a disputing with the dominant ways of thinking. This is a challenge to those from both the *colonized* and the *colonizing* nations. People on all sides need to refuse the dominant languages of power that have divided them into master and slave, the ruler and the ruled, if progressive and lasting change is to be achieved (2010: 25).

So, decolonization process is something not completed, not in theory but in practice because of the dominant ideology of control. This ambiguity is recorded as ‘neo-colonialism’ to the history by some thinkers since they claimed that the hegemony of the powerful countries was carried on economically or culturally. This term was ‘a fitting term to describe the immediate setup of the postcolonial epoch’ and it is somehow useful in that of constituting the sense of postcolonialism from a broadly Marxist perspective (Young, 2016: 48). A clear explanation of the term is given with the below quotation:

In the period of decolonization, it rapidly became apparent that although colonial armies and bureaucracies might have withdrawn, western powers were still intent on maintaining maximum indirect control over the colonies, via political, cultural and above all economic channels, a phenomenon which became known as neo-colonialism (Ayan, 2013: 199).

Although countries gained independence and achieved political dispersement, “the ex-colonial powers and the newly emerging superpowers such as the United States continued to play a decisive role in their cultures and economies through new instruments of indirect control” (Ashcroft et al., 2013: 178). Thus, it can be said that there is no certain beginning or ending regarding historical issues, instead there is always a background process for the next stage.

For the next stage; postcolonialism, “Commonwealth literature” functions as an ‘antecedent’ which has great significance in the development process of

postcolonialism. It is regarded as a movement from colonialism and decolonization to the intellectual contexts and development of postcolonialism. To objectify, as McLeod defined, “Commonwealth Literature was a term literary critics began to use from the 1950s to describe literatures in English emerging from a selection of countries with a history of colonialism” (2010: 12). The studies of writers belonging to the countries that were once colonized constituted the basis of Commonwealth literature. The main aim was to identify and improve and also bring together the writings from different parts of the world such as India, Africa, New Zealand or Nigeria. The themes were generally national and cultural issues which later caused these works to be considered as lack of universality or less substantial in literary canon. In 1965, the first edition of the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* was published as a unification under the category of Commonwealth countries. However, the problem was that these writing were all evaluated within the body of English literature and also expected to be as excellent as the literary works in English. Thus, “Commonwealth literature was never fully free from the older” and could not gain the expected significance or authenticity (McLeod, 2010: 15). Its main aim to write about national and cultural identity or to emphasize the once-colonized nations’ writings lost its function since the anxiety of appreciation by English literary critics restrained them to write and express themselves freely. Thus, they were not considered as authentic despite the writers’ struggle to be so. The transitional stage to postcolonialism through Commonwealth literature was hereby completed slightly and the term ‘postcolonialism’ was started to be pronounced as a new literary movement as John McLeod states:

The nomenclature of ‘Commonwealth’ was dropped in preference for ‘postcolonial’ in describing these writers and their work, as if to signal a new generation of critics’ repudiation of older attitudes in preference of the newer, more interdisciplinary approaches (2010: 28).

The term postcolonialism still stands for a controversial concept since there is no certain definition as well as the spelling differences. Postcolonialism is spelled in two different ways as hyphenated; ‘post-colonialism’ and as hyphenless; ‘postcolonialism’. According to John McLeod:

There is a particular reason for this choice of spelling and it concerns the different meaning of ‘post-colonial’ and ‘postcolonial’. The hyphenated term ‘post-colonial’ seems better suited to denote a particular *historical period or epoch*, like those

suggested by phrases such as ‘after colonialism’, ‘after independence’ or ‘after the end of Empire’ (2010: 5).

These different usages refer to different meanings as well. While the hyphenated form indicates the period after colonialism, the unhyphenated form denotes the continuation of colonialism. Because the term is not easy to define with a single meaning, “for some it means the period after colonialism, and for the others it is the continuation of colonialism” (Ashcroft et.al., 2002: 17). While defining or explaining the term, the hyphen has a significant factor for some of the critics or theorists. The prefix ‘post’ is regarded as an aftermath or a succession over colonialism although for some critics it has a deeper function:

In recent times the hyphen in ‘post-colonial’ has come to represent an increasingly diverging set of assumptions, emphases, strategies and practices in reading and writing. The use of the hyphen seemed to us, then and now, to put an emphasis on the discursive and material effects of the historical ‘fact’ of colonialism, resisting an increasingly indiscriminate attention to cultural difference and marginality of all kinds (Ashcroft et.al., 2002: 197-198).

Whether used with or without a hyphen, the term postcolonialism stands for “a heterogeneous field of study in which different cultures have been subverted, conquered, often removed from history respond to conquering in multiple ways” (Bressler, 2007: 238). Within this sense, it can be said that postcolonialism functions as an umbrella which covers all cultural interactions of colonialism and after colonialism not only in literature but also in various fields from sociology to psychology, from anthropology to politics.

Although the roots are not certain or the spelling is not clear enough yet, postcolonial literary and cultural studies emerged approximately in the 1980s and 1990s. The aim of postcolonial studies was to rewrite or interpret history since the colonial past experiences were all dominant in the minds of both the colonizers and the colonized people. Thus, it can be possible to construe the formation process of postcolonialism as a challenge against colonial perspectives rather than a complete rejection. “It has been suggested that it is more helpful to think of postcolonialism not just as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexibly as

the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism” (Loomba, 2005: 16).

The semantic basis of the term ‘postcolonial’ might seem to suggest a concern only with the national culture after the departure of the imperial power. It has occasionally been employed in some earlier work in the area to distinguish between the periods before and after independence (‘colonial period’ and ‘post-colonial period’), for example, in constructing national literary histories, or in suggesting comparative studies between stages in those histories. [...] We use the term ‘post-colonial’, however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 1-2).

During the period of colonialism, people were labeled with derogatory words such as inferior, other, incapable, or Orient so as to discriminate and manage the process of gaining wealth over their position. Without postcolonialism, these struggles of East against West could not be possible to come to an end as the mind of a paternal rule of the West always sought the lack for the sake of their own interests. One of the most significant critics and practitioners of postcolonialism, Frantz Fanon, points out the psychological effects of colonialism on colonized people. These effects comprised their vexation with their own world which was always belittled by the superior powers, their dual identities rather than being a unique individual, and becoming other that is far from the original self. “The psychological and cultural impact of colonial rule on the non-European” was also concerned by Fanon as a piece of postcolonialism since he aimed to “examine the nature of the colonized subject’s agency in the face of oppression and dominance” (Nayar, 2015: 122). In this process of colonialism and later on postcolonialism, according to Fanon, people, who were once-colonized, felt the duality and the displacement that are basically introduced terms by postcolonialism. The effect of language and culture in shaping people’s lives is also emphasized by Fanon as he states;

Every colonized people - in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality - finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards (2017: 9).

To reach those cultural standards, it is obviously seen that once-colonized nations struggled and as a result they gained their independence, whether partly or not. Within this scope, Robert Young expressed;

The origins of Postcolonialism lie in the historical resistance to colonial occupation and imperial control, the success of which then enabled a radical challenge to the political and conceptual structures of the systems on which such domination had been based (2016: 60).

As an academic component of historical and cultural background, postcolonialism represents “a theoretical approach on the part of the formerly colonized, the subaltern and the historically oppressed” (Nayar, 2015: 122). In this regard, postcolonial theory was formed by some critics in order to define or defend the reasons and results of colonialism, decolonization and postcolonialism as a whole. It is a really wide field to deal with under the name of ‘postcolonialism’ from anthropology to psychology; however, postcolonial theory can be regarded as a critical approach or a literary theory which touches on literature that is produced in countries of once-colonized nations or written by people of colonizing countries and whose main subject is mostly colonized people and their struggle. “Postcolonial theory involves discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics” (Ashcroft et. al., 2006: 2). It is also thought by some of the critics that “the idea of ‘postcolonial literary theory’ emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing” (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 11). Since postcolonial theory intermingled the past experiences with the present facts, it can be said that it combined and reoriented the perspectives of the suffered people with the harsh historical truths. In sum, “postcolonial theory emerged from the colonized people’s frustrations, their direct and personal cultural clashes with the conquering culture; and their fears, hopes, and dreams about the future and their own identity formation” (Bressler, 2007: 238).

One of the leading critics of postcolonial theory, Edward Said, is regarded as the founder of this literary theory with his book *Orientalism*. Said promotes the idea that Western world constructed an image of East which is portrayed as inferior, other and

Orient. He has a significant influence on literary theories as he also decoded some of the complex oppositions created by the Empire, or in other words, West. He enounces in the introduction to *Orientalism*:

My idea in *Orientalism* is to use humanistic critique to open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis to replace the short bursts of polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison us in labels and antagonistic debate whose goal is a belligerent collective identity rather than understanding and intellectual exchange (2003: XVII).

Furthermore, Said emphasized that these labels created by the West were all unrealistic and they were only created in order to affect and direct the perception of the East to justify the hegemony and superiority of the West under the name of civilization. He also highlighted the binary oppositions of colonial discourse such as self/other, powerful/weak, us/them, centre/periphery, active/passive, rational/emotional, modern/timeless, civilized/savage, sensible/erotic, masculine/feminine and Occidental/Oriental from a different point of view (Said, 2003: 40). The term ‘other’ or in other words, ‘Orient’ is mostly emphasized by Said and according to him; the images of the other were related with someone or something irrational, immoral or inferior:

The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, “different”; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, “normal”. But the way of enlivening the relationship was everywhere to stress the fact that the Oriental lived in a different but thoroughly organized world of his own, a world with its own national, cultural, and epistemological boundaries and principles of internal coherence. Yet what gave the Oriental’s world its intelligibility and identity was not the result of his own efforts but rather the whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West (2003: 40).

Being or feeling other always had drastic effects on people since they were alienated from themselves and this also caused great identity crisis throughout this process. Within this sense, like Said, many of the postcolonial theorists struggled to reshape that idea of being other since “one of the main aims of postcolonial critics is to transform ‘otherness’ from the state of inferiority to superior energy with a new identity formation” (Ayan, 2013: 203).

Said defines his theory of ‘Orientalism’ as “the system of ideological fictions” and thinks that it has many significant implications (2003: 321). His theory suggests that West has the role of a cultural leader above the colonized people and thus, all the values, beliefs and ideologies are determined by the hegemony of the West. He explains more clearly:

Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West. Thus the history of Orientalism has both an internal consistency and a highly articulated set of relationships to the dominant culture surrounding it. My analyses consequently try to show the field’s shape and internal organization, its pioneers, patriarchal authorities, canonical texts, doxological ideas, exemplary figures, its followers, elaborators, and new authorities (2003: 22).

Postcolonial theory was reinforced with remarkable contributions of the theorist, Homi K. Bhabha, who is regarded as the leading figure in constructing the key terms of postcolonialism. He has the role of introducing some significant concepts of postcolonial theory such as hybridity, mimicry, difference, and ambivalence with his significant work, *The Location of Culture* (Huddart, 2006: 1). According to Bhabha, colonialism is not something locked in the past, instead he “shows how its histories and cultures constantly intrude on the present, demanding that we transform our understanding of cross-cultural relations” (Huddart, 2006: 1). Bhabha develops a new conceptual reading of colonial and postcolonial texts, which aims to rethink the present moment besides the colonial past and also emphasizes that it is not definitely possible to maintain “rigid distinctions between the colonizer and colonized” (Huddart, 2006: 2). He defends that the colonizer and the colonized interacted through the process of colonialism both in constructing identity and depending on each other; thus, he thinks colonialism is something still very much with us.

Bhabha’s major work, a collection of his most significant essays, *The Location of Culture*, emphasizes the importance of identities and how they are structured within the interaction of the colonizer and the colonized, and he creates a series of new concepts which are regarded as critical in theory of postcolonialism. Within this sense, he regards Edward Said’s ideas and arguments on Orientalism very helpful; additionally he also deals with the psychoanalytic approach to that power which Said charges as the superior and brutal image of the West, or the colonizer.

Like Said, Bhabha suggests that traditional ways of thinking about the world have often been complicit with long-standing inequalities between nations and peoples. His work operates on the assumption that a traditional philosophical sense of the relationship between one's self and others, between subject and object, can be very damaging in its consequences – something we see too often in the encounter between different cultures. If you know only too well where your identity ends and the rest of the world begins, it can be easy to define that world as other, different, inferior, and threatening to your identity and interests. If cultures are taken to have stable, discrete identities, then the divisions between cultures can always become *antagonistic* (Huddart, 2006: 6).

As for Bhabha, one of the most important entities in postcolonial theory is identity. As a result of colonial discourse and later on postcolonial theory, the concept of identity has always been reflected as a chaotic term that the people of once colonized or immigrant societies have suffered. He regards identity as “never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality” (Bhabha, 2004: 73). Constructing a pure identity or conserving the roots of one's identity seems impossible in a world of mixed-ness today. However, this struggle to create an identity seems to be a problem of the ‘other’ rather than the ‘self’, especially for the ones who have been exposed to that questioning of the self and sense of belonging. According to Bhabha, “in the postcolonial text the problem of identity returns as a persistent questioning of the frame, the space of representation, where the image – missing person, invisible eye, Oriental stereotype – is confronted with its difference, its Other” (2004: 66).

In parallel with the concept of identity, the most prominent one is the concept of hybridity which Bhabha focuses on within postcolonial theory. Especially “in the case of cultural identities, hybridity refers to the fact that cultures are not discrete phenomena; instead, they are always in contact with one another, and this contact leads to cultural mixed-ness” (Huddart, 2006: 7). When considered as an extension of the search of identity, hybridity functions as a gateway since it stands for the uncertainty and in-betweenness of the ‘others’. For Bhabha, “hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal” (2004: 159). It can be interpreted that hybridity is regarded as a threat or a kind of challenge against colonial rule and authority.

Hybridity occurs in post-colonial societies as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, as when the colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control, or when settler-invaders dispossess indigenous peoples and force them to ‘assimilate’ to new social patterns (Ashcroft et. al., 2006: 137).

This assimilation, in other words, hybridity, is portrayed not as a compliance but a resistance to colonial power. It is thought that “colonial hybridity is a strategy on cultural purity, and aimed at stabilizing the *status quo*”, thus every ethnic group or different society is viewed as pure and authentic (Loomba, 2005: 174). Any kind of separation or secession from this purity can be regarded as impure which can also be related to hybridity. Homi Bhabha also points out that “hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition” (2004: 162). Thus, it is critical to integrate into cultures and in the long run, this integration works out as the shaking of the authority of the colonizer or in other words the preponderant power.

Another major concern that Bhabha deals with in postcolonial theory is the stereotype. In colonial discourse, like Said, Bhabha also argues that main aim was to legitimate the settlement to other lands. According to Bhabha, “the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and establish systems of administration and instruction” (2004: 70). However, this aim is not fully met because the plan to conquer was always split into two contrary parts – one tries to figure out the colonized as “‘other’ of the Westerner”, trying to exclude from Western culture and view; the other tries to domesticate the differences and reduce the ‘radical otherness’ within the Western thought via Orientalist set-up to construct knowledge about them (McLeod, 2010: 63). Thus, for Bhabha, this construction process of otherness is split into contrary directions since it is both inside and outside of Western thought as he explains “colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible” (2004: 101). Within this sense, the stereotype functions as a fixed, stable character that fixes individuals in one place and disclaim their own identities. He defines “the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated” (2004: 95). By stereotyping,

Bhabha also emphasizes stabilizing the other as something once steady but then chaotic and extraordinary.

As a result of this process of stereotyping, ambivalence, which is one of the most significant themes that postcolonial theory highlights, is also emphasized by Homi Bhabha as he considers central in the colonial discourse. “For Bhabha, colonial discourses are characterized by both ambivalence and anxious repetition. In trying to do two things at once – construing the colonized as both *similar* to and the *other* of the colonizers – it ends up doing neither properly” (McLeod, 2010: 65). Contrary to the aim of security and stability, ambivalence functions more in the process of depicting colonial discourse and postcolonial theory.

In addition to these defined terms of postcolonial theory, mimicry is also a crucial term that is also brought by Bhabha “as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge” (2004: 122). As for Bhabha, “mimicry is a new term for the construction of the colonial other in certain forms of stereotyping – a colonial subject who will be recognizably the same as the colonizer but still different: not quite / not white’ ” (Young, 1990: 147). The main point of mimicry is the resemblance as a result of miming and representing the colonizer. Colonizer’s image of a powerful authority is reflected like a mirror image. Within this sense, mimicry seems to be threat or a distracting matter of fact against the colonizer and their power since the exact resemblance eliminates the differences which are core to the powerful image of constructing the ‘self’. However, Bhabha points out that these similarities should not result in sameness:

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (2004: 122).

Within the frame of postcolonial theory, one has to note that the concept of place and displacement is another major concern that also has an important place in this dissertation. In this sense, the name of Bhabha’s work also signifies the importance of *Location of Culture* since it “addresses those who live border lives on the margins of

different nations, in-between contrary homelands, such as migrants and diasporic peoples” (McLeod, 2010: 251). It is unequivocally obvious that people, who experience migration or exile, indispensably suffer to find a place in a new society. When they arrive at a different land, they become strangers, and in its strictest form, ‘others’. They have belonging problems as neither the new land nor the previous one is their real home. The sense of belonging somewhere is a really effective fact that many migrants lose under the control of dominant cultures. Thus, most of them are depicted as in-between, that is to say a double identity. As also stated in *The Empire Writes Back*, “a major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place” (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 8). As well as this identity crisis in a new land, they also suffer from discriminations that vary from biological to regional differences such as ethnic roots, language, appearance or religion since they do not belong to that place. In the course of clashing between the constructed identity and the real identity, they are shaped and categorized according to some norms.

The process of categorization which is at the heart of the identity construction involves the organization of similarities and differences. In categorizing other people – identifying them as an ethnic or racial group – we emphasize what we see as the similarities among them and their differences from us (Cornell et. al., 1998: 203).

As a consequence, the migrants are labeled and their identity formation is based upon the ideologies and norms of the dominant culture. One of these labels is the term ‘subaltern’ which mostly refers to the peasants, workers or other groups whose access to power is denied. “Subaltern, meaning ‘of inferior rank’, is a term adopted by Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes” (Ashcroft et. al., 2013: 244). In postcolonial theory, however, the leading name of the term subaltern is Gayatri Spivak as she critiqued in a detailed way in her essay ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’. “Subalternity is less an identity than what we might call a predicament. For, in Spivak’s definition, it is the structured place from which the capacity to access power is radically obstructed” (2010: 8). This obstruction restrains the subaltern to speak and make himself / herself heard by others. She explains that “for the ‘true’ subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable

subaltern subject that can know and speak itself; the intellectual's solution is not to abstain from representation" (Spivak, 2010: 254). Spivak especially deals with the Indian women in particular as she points out that if subaltern cannot speak and has no history, then women are the ones who are deeply oppressed. However, it can be understood from her essay that her main aim is not to give voice to the subaltern or marginalized people. Instead, she focuses on the unproblematic construction of the subaltern identity. It is the postcolonial discourse that gives voice to those subaltern groups as Loomba also states that "Gayatri Spivak suggests that precisely because the subaltern cannot speak, it is the duty of postcolonial intellectuals to represent her/him" (Loomba, 2005: 203). In order to represent and reflect the subaltern, literature has always been one of the most effective ways to express new perceptions and to talk on behalf of the subaltern.

1. 2. The Rise and Development of the Postcolonial Literature

Postcolonial literatures deal with the periods during and after colonialism and the effects and results constitute the basis of them. It is obvious that all the literatures emerged in the countries such as Africa, Australia, Bangladesh, India, New Zealand, Pakistan and also the USA are all regarded as postcolonial.

What each of these literatures has in common beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics is that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 2).

The development of the postcolonial literatures occurred through several steps. As a result of colonial period, the writings were all created in English, which is the language of the imperial centre. Thus, the first texts were generally produced by ‘representatives’ of the imperial power in the colonies. Their claim was to hide the imperial discourse within which they are created although the detailed depictions of landscape, customs, culture and language all emphasized the colonial power. The texts were written from the colonizer’s point of view rather than that of the colonized; thus, even though they tried to emphasize the struggle of the native, colonized people, the dominance of the colonizer was inevitably seen as a mirror image of the colonial discourse (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 5).

The second stage in the development of postcolonial literatures is comprised by the native, indigenous people who were educated by the dominant power, in other words, the colonizer. “The second stage of production within the evolving discourse of the post-colonial is the literature produced ‘under imperial licence’ by ‘natives’ or ‘outcasts’” (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 5). For example, Indian upper class, who was educated in English, produced the large part of the nineteenth century poetry and prose. The main point was again to write in English even though the writers were indigenous people. This process is explained in a detailed definition by Ashcroft et. al. as follows:

The institution of 'Literature' in the colony is under the direct control of the imperial ruling class who alone license the acceptable form and permit the publication and distribution of the resulting work. So, texts of this kind come into being within the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage system which limits and undercuts their assertion of a different perspective. The development of independent literatures depended upon the abrogation of this constraining power and the appropriation of language and writing for new and distinctive usages. Such an appropriation is clearly the most significant feature in the emergence of modern post-colonial literatures (2002: 6).

Since writing has the power to enter a world of knowledge and intellectuality, it has been reflected as one of the most significant elements in colonial and then postcolonial literature. However, for indigenous writers, this situation had both advantages and disadvantages. When they write in the dominant power's language, it was more likely to be appreciated by the Center, the mother country and to be known and read by people from the Center. On the other hand, they never felt free to express their feelings in their own language as they were always compulsory to obey what the Center said and demanded.

The effects of nationalism resulted in constructing the last step of postcolonial literatures. Decolonization also played a great role in liberating the writings of indigenous people. At this stage, when they gained authenticity with their own values, it is possible to say that the third and the last step was completed. During these stages, it was not so easy to call this new kind of literature that mainly involves the experiences, cultural heritages and the interactions of the colonized people. Ashcroft and others depict this process of formation:

One of the first difficulties in developing a wider comparative approach to the literatures has been that of finding an appropriate name to describe them. Post-colonial seems to be the choice which both embraces the historical reality and focuses on that relationship which has provided the most important creative and psychological impetus in the writing (2002: 22-3).

One of the other terms used to define literature before deciding on 'postcolonial' was Commonwealth Literature, which is previously mentioned in this study. Also the term 'Third World literatures' was among the attempts to find a more appropriate name

both politically and theoretically. This term, which was later followed by ‘new literatures in English’, was used in some university lectures (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 22). Consequently, the name that best fits to the process both historically and theoretically is determined as ‘postcolonial’ since it embodies the experiences of indigenous people through their writings about migration, diaspora, sense of belonging, identity or hybridity.

However, the term ‘post-colonial literatures’ is finally to be preferred over the others because it points the way towards a possible study of the effects of colonialism in and between writing in English and writing in indigenous languages in such contexts as Africa and India, as well as writing in other language diasporas (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 23).

In this process to completely reach the aim of asserting identity and to form a new type of literature, language also had a remarkable function. There occurred two distinct categories that postcolonial writers maintained in this process. The first was called as ‘abrogation’ which is the refusal of the colonizer’s dominance over their language. It was defined as a “denial of the privilege of English”, having the stance of rejecting colonizer’s dominance on language, culture, aesthetics and “normative correct usage” of English (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 37). It was also reflected as a significant part of decolonization of the language as the writers tried to reject the colonial dominance on their works. The second process, which played a binding role in extending beyond the term ‘abrogation’ to “a reversal of assumptions of privileges”, was defined as ‘appropriation’ (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 38). In this second process, the original language was adjusted to meet the requirements of the indigenous identity and culture that had differing experiences and features. As a result, postcolonial literature is something alive among different cultures which seem to be quite different as well as quite similar.

For in one sense all postcolonial literatures are cross-cultural because they negotiate a gap between ‘worlds’, a gap in which the simultaneous process of abrogation and appropriation continually strive to define and determine their practice. This literature is therefore always written out of the tension between the abrogation of the received English which speaks from the centre, and the act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of a vernacular tongue, the complex of speaking habits which characterize the local language... (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 38).

To conclude, it is clearly seen that postcolonialism and priorly colonialism have affected the language and literature majorly in terms of themes, the way language is used, styles, writing techniques and the psychological reflections on texts as well. It can be inferred that postcolonialism is a part of people's lives affecting nearly in all fields of study with regard to the discourse and ideology. "Postcolonial literary theory, then, has begun to deal with the problems of transmuting time into space, with the present struggling out of the past, and, like much recent postcolonial literature, it attempts to construct a future" (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 35). In this constructed future, postcolonial writers also try to intermingle the past with the present by rehandling the historical elements from a different perspective and highlighting the contemporary cultural and social structures in their postcolonial fictions. To that end, one of the famous American writers with Indian roots, Jhumpa Lahiri and her two novels *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* will be analyzed within the light of postcolonial literary theory with its components of identity, hybridity, ambivalence and in-betweenness that the characters experience as a consequence of their immigration to the United States.

CHAPTER TWO

JHUMPA LAHIRI AS AN ETHNIC WRITER

2. 1. Ethnic Writing in the United States

The United States is reflected as a welcoming land of opportunities with numerous immigrants from all around the world. Her appearance on world history is later when compared to European powers such as Britain or France. Sharing the same aim with many European countries for new lands, trade, welfare and economic strength, The United States also took action for expansion. The difference, however, was that of America's attitude, which was mild and complaisant, towards the natives. That is why the United States "stepped in and supplanted the Europeans" (Yun-yo, 1930: 279). Also, rather than taking the mission of civilizing others as Europeans supposedly did, her crucial reason to expand was economic. After the World War II, the United States of America gained her power and became the superpower instead of England and France. It was America's policy to represent "justice and fair play" by presenting a land of opportunities with better standards and with "the open door" and "equal opportunity" policies, it was not difficult to enter Asian markets to widen her economic movements in the East (Yun-yo, 1930: 283). To that end, it is possible to regard American approach not as colonialism but as "cultural imperialism" as they try to convince them for democracy in order to reach their goals to attract especially the third world nations. According to Theresa Weynond's definition in *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

Cultural imperialism is the imposition by one usually politically or economically dominant community of various aspects of its own culture onto another, nondominant community. It is *cultural* in that the customs, traditions, religion, language, social and moral norms, and other aspects of the imposing community are distinct from, though often closely related to, the economic and political systems that shape the other community. It is a form of *imperialism* in that the imposing community extends the authority of its way of life over the other population by either transforming or replacing aspects of the nondominant community's culture (2016: 1).

In this sense, after the end of the colonial period, United States has been one of the most inviting countries for many third world countries such as India, Africa or so on. With the effects of decolonization and the vanishing authority of Britain over India,

many people immigrated to new lands and the United States was one of the most welcoming countries. However, the reality behind this attraction was not as welcoming as it was thought to be. Despite the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, which were enacted to inhibit every kind of discrimination and to open the doors of the United States to new categories of immigrants such as skilled laborers and professionals, the prejudice against the newcomers was incontestable (Khara, 1997: 25). They were again the ‘other’ in this new land and in the dominant culture of the Americans. Thus, the United States replaced Britain as the colonizer and the Indian people were the colonized ones as they were under the dominance of American culture. However, instead of being assimilated by American traditions, Indians tried to save their ethnic roots by hybridization. When the literary aspects of this process is evaluated, it can be deduced that these immigrations of different ethnic groups affected the cultural structure of the United States and as a part of one country’s culture, literature was also affected. The ethnic writing and the ethnic writers were also regarded as ‘other’ because of their themes and origins. They were neglected and their works were also ignored as representatives of ethnicity and otherness.

The need for ethnic writers in the early twentieth century to free themselves from mainstream impositions, stereotypical self-images, and other such limitations placed upon their field of creativity continues to be reflected in the ways new immigrants are learning to handle their cultural baggage. While all writers are subject to commercial agendas of agents, editors, and publishers, ethnic writers have often also felt obliged to engage or battle stereotypical and exoticized versions of personality and ethnic life (Singh and Hogan, 1994: 8).

Besides being regarded as the ‘other’, ethnic writers also did not have a certain identity as they were described by using a hyphen that signifies the frontier between the Americans and them. They were depicted with their motherlands on the front, and then their American side separated with a hyphen such as Indian-American, Asian-American, or African-American. This also caused an identity and belonging crisis in the literary world exactly like the one they had been experiencing for many years individually. They were both inside and outside the border but did not know where to “fit in the developmental line of progress: in the world from which they may come, in America, or in a specific line of ethnic descent” (Sollors, 1986: 249). On the other hand, having this

duality of being both Indian and American, most ethnic writers had different perspectives since they were both from another culture and from American life. They were neither from their own culture, the Indian nor American because they were not acting like the Indians anymore and were not like the Americans, as well. They were Indian in appearance and American in attitude. This enabled them to gain fame and new readers regarded them as more authentic due to their standpoint which was both inside and outside the American culture. “Because of their close connections to other cultures or to international reading matter, American ethnic writers sometimes participated in literary innovations of other national literatures before such innovations become more widespread in America” (Sollors, 1986: 247). In this regard, “migrant and/or diasporic writers also demand attention, as their situation is increasingly regarded as representative of postcolonial writing in general” (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 215). As a result of these developments, ethnic writing functions as “mediation between cultures but also as handbooks of socialization into the codes of Americanness” (Sollors, 1986: 7). It is not possible to ignore their roots, backgrounds and cultures while evaluating their literatures. Thus, “their literatures could be considered in relation to the social and political history of each country, and could be read as a source of important images of national identity” (Ashcroft et. al., 2002: 16).

In conclusion, ethnic writing is like a patchwork quilt stitching different perspectives and different cultures together under the American multicultural structured quilt. As a member of the ethnic writing, Jhumpa Lahiri can be regarded as a part of this patchwork for being both Indian and American.

2. 2. Life and Works of Jhumpa Lahiri

Born in 1967, in London, to Bengali parents, Nilanjana Sudeshna Lahiri is a second-generation Indian American award winning writer with her short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*. Her parents, Amar and Tapati Lahiri had their Bengali roots for being born in India. When Lahiri was two years old, they immigrated to the United States because her father Amar Lahiri changed his position as a librarian from London to Rhode Island, where Jhumpa Lahiri grew up. Her mother, Tapati Lahiri also worked as a teacher of Bengali language. Although the Lahiri family moved to the United States voluntarily and even received citizenship, they never felt fully cohered in the culture and never thought themselves as American. The life in their home was originally Indian with her parents' speaking Bengali, her mother's traditional clothing, cooking traditional dishes with a smell of Indian culture, and always trying to observe their Indian customs. "Maintaining their ties to India and preserving Indian traditions in America meant a lot to them" (Apte, 2013: 2). On the other hand, there was an American life out of their threshold with completely different traditions which Lahiri says in one of her interviews that her "parents were fearful and suspicious of America and American culture" (Apte, 2013: 2).

As Lahiri herself experienced the dilemma of having another roots but living in a different environment, she also struggled heavily upon balancing these two lives. At such an early age, she suffered of being dislocated and in-between of two cultures as well as two identities and she explains:

When I was growing up in Rhode Island in the 1970s I felt neither Indian nor American. Like many immigrant offspring I felt intense pressure to be two things, loyal to the old world and fluent in the new, approved of on either side of the hyphen. Looking back, I see that this was generally the case. But my perception as a young girl was that I fell short at both ends, shuttling between two dimensions that had nothing to do with one another (Lahiri, 2006: 43).

She was an Indian immigrant with a full allegiance trying to please her parents at home but an outsider trying to "meet the expectations of her American peers and the expectations she put on herself to fit into American society" (Apte, 2013: 2). She was

in-between of two cultures, and like many other second generation immigrants, this made her feel drawn between being neither Indian nor American.

At home I followed the customs of my parents, speaking Bengali and eating rice and dal with my fingers. These ordinary facts seemed part of a secret, utterly alien way of life, and I took pains to hide them from my American friends (Lahiri, 2006: 43).

The sense of “home” was also on different edges for Lahiri and her parents. Kolkata was the place where their real home is located for her parents, where they were raised and achieved their Indian identity. Home is something related to their families they left behind, the songs they listened to, the traditional clothes they wore or the scents they were accustomed to in India. However, this sense of belonging was not so certain for Lahiri because she never felt belonging to somewhere as a second generation immigrant. They were the ones who felt the lack of belonging and in-betweenness most. Thus, Lahiri told in an interview about the place where she belonged or felt belonging that she was never able to answer the question of where she is from:

For example, I never know how to answer the question “Where are you from?”. If I say I’m from Rhode Island, people are seldom satisfied. They want to know more, based on things such as my name, my appearance, etc. Alternatively, if I say I’m from India, a place where I was not born and have never lived, this is also inaccurate. It bothers me less now. But it bothered me growing up, the feeling that there was no single place to which I fully belonged (Apte, 2013: 1).

Like most of the characters in her novels and short stories, Lahiri herself also suffered from in-betweenness as an Indian-American writer. It is obviously seen that her experiences contributed greatly to her writings and thus her themes, characters and settings, which are familiar to whom experience these matters as an immigrant in a new land, are slices of her life. The reason why she sets her stories in Kolkata and America is that she tries to combine both distance and intimacy. As a postcolonial ethnic writer, Lahiri chooses her characters carefully to reflect the indigenous culture as well as identity but while doing this she writes not intentionally to create an Indian immigrant character. She says she reflects herself while writing, so it is inevitable for her to hide her background as a second generation immigrant.

I just approach them (the stories) on the basis of character. It's impossible for me to be in my body, in my head, with my history and my past, and say I'm going to write about an Indian immigrant character. That's part of me, so I can't take myself outside and think that way and be so conscious of it (Leyda, 2011: 75).

Lahiri deals with the concepts of identity, otherness, sense of belonging and self-development of the characters rather than the issues of discrimination, political and economic difficulties or racism as most of the immigrant narratives do. Thus, her characters are more concrete and real-like. Natalie Friedman, in her article "From Hybrids to Tourists: Children of Immigrants in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*", points out that:

I claim that Lahiri, as part of this growing Asian American author group, is less interested in the pursuit of the American Dream as it was traditionally rendered in older immigrant narratives than she is in focusing on what happens once that dream (in its variety of incarnations) is achieved, not only by the generation of immigrants but also by its children (2008: 112).

Another concept, which Lahiri emphasizes both in her interviews and her works, is language by which people express their own culture and identity. As a second generation immigrant in the United States, her perception about English language was different from her parents'. It was a language of communication or survival among her American friends in the United States but for her parents, especially for her mother, it was a language of the foreigners, "the language of the others, the one spoken outside their home, the language her mother was a bit scared of" (Pellas, 2017). Lahiri comprehended English and spoke without an accent although she was not entirely American. On the other hand, because of the barriers that she could not overcome, her mother always feared of English but embraced Bengali as a language to express herself. For Lahiri as a young girl, Bengali was the language she only spoke with her parents, it was imposed on her. Also the language issue was a problem for her during their family visits to Kolkata as she explained in an interview that "there everyone thinks I'm a foreigner, a hybrid, a creature with no real mother tongue" (Pellas, 2017). It is possible to say that Jhumpa Lahiri herself is also an embodiment of the characters she created in her novels because of the striking resemblance. For example, like her protagonist, Gogol, in *The Namesake*, she also experienced the matter of a pet name that is only used

by the family members. Her pet name 'Jhumpa' inadvertently became her good name which is used in public, by others since it was too difficult to pronounce Nilanjana Sudeshna especially for the Americans. This naming tradition, which will be also analyzed in detail in the next chapters, also plays a great role in constructing one's identity.

In this sense, Lahiri is a representative of both Indian and American sides of the people who experience immigration and its consequences as well. The relation between her works and her own life experiences scattering from Kolkata to the United States is also clear in her novels *The Namesake* and *The Lowland*. Before publishing these two novels, the name Jhumpa Lahiri was heard by many people all around the world with her stunning, work of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*. With this work, she won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, "gaining the distinction of being the youngest author ever to receive the prestigious literary award and for being the first South Asian writer to be awarded this coveted American Prize" (Valentine, 2015: 3).

Her first novel, *The Namesake* was published in 2003 and in 2007; the work was adapted into a movie by Mira Nair. The novel mainly deals with the theme of identity with the story of a Bengali family, who moved from Kolkata, India to the United States, trying to raise their children in a foreign land. The characters all struggle to protect or project their identities which they sometimes try to find or save.

Her second novel, *The Lowland*, which was a National Book award finalist, was published in 2013. It was a story of two brothers born in India but had separate lives during the 1960s of a political movement in India. The setting was tied to both India and the United States and the characters were also well-developed for being in-between and in the search of their identity. Subhash, one of the brothers, stands for the first generation immigrants trying to raise his own family in the United States with a background of Indian roots.

In conclusion, as a postcolonial writer, Lahiri's works have been regarded significant for its well-structured and plain language, strong prose, real-like characters from daily life and themes of immigrant displacement, identity and belonging. Her fiction centers on the maturation process of her second generation characters as well as

the struggle to survive in a land of foreigners for the first generation parents. Therefore, one can conclude that Lahiri's works can be best interpreted in the light of postcolonial theory both because she is regarded as a postcolonial writer and also her themes utterly fit with the concepts of postcolonialism.

CHAPTER THREE

IDENTITY CHAOS IN *THE NAMESAKE*

One of Jhumpa Lahiri's most popular and affecting fictions, *The Namesake* (2003), is a representation of immigrant life and a common complexity shared by all dislocated people which is the search for identity. It is an exact illustration of the struggle of an Indian immigrant family in the United States. The novel is fictionalized on the lives of the two generations of the Ganguli family trying to find and relocate their new identities in a new land by both adopting and adapting the culture. The young Bengali couple, Ashima and Ashoke, and their children, Gogol and Sonia, represent the "authentic picture of diasporic culture" sometimes with their longings for the homeland, customs and origins, sometimes with their protestation, loneliness and in-betweenness (Chaudhry, 2016: 206). The novel revolves around the protagonist, Gogol and his maturation process from birth by shedding light on the themes of dual identity, in-betweenness, ambivalence, cultural displacement and hybridity which are also highlighted within the frame of postcolonial theory. The characters' struggle to have a place with their Indian roots in the American society is depicted so inspiredly by Jhumpa Lahiri that the novel is like a real picture from the lives of the immigrants. In this sense, "the novel addresses the issues of culture shock, displacement, rootlessness, sense of unsettling and in-betweenness, conflict in the notion of 'home', nostalgia and identity crisis of the immigrants" (Chaudhry, 2016: 207). Besides these themes, the plot is presented chronologically from the beginning of their immigration to a foreign land, The United States, through their developments under the roof of this foreign culture. Thus, the events, the characters and the examples chosen from the novel will be analyzed respectively in this study.

The novel starts with Ashima Ganguli's delivery to her first child, Gogol, whose story will dominate and lead the events throughout *The Namesake*. Ashima and Ashoke Ganguli immigrate to the United States after their traditional marriage in Calcutta, India, because of the academic position of Ashoke at MIT, in Cambridge. With the birth of their son, their struggle in a land of uncertainty also begins. The identity crisis, which is also highlighted in the title of the novel, starts for Gogol firstly by coming into the world in a foreign land with an ethnic background. Amin Maalouf also describes this

process of an immigrant child born in a foreign land or taken to that foreign land shortly after his/her birth as follows:

Imagine an infant removed immediately from its place of birth and set down in a different environment. Then compare the various “identities” the child might acquire in its new context, the battles it would now have to fight and those it would be spared. Needless to say, the child would have no recollection of his original religion, or of his country or language (2003: 24).

It will be clearly seen in Gogol’s case too that he will be someone different from his parents, his ethnic, cultural, and expected image of an Indian boy. In this different environment, Ashima and Ashoke suppose to maintain some of their Indian traditions such as naming a baby after birth. According to Indian traditions, a baby is named by an elderly person in the family; and for the new born Ganguli boy, Ashima’s grandmother is the one who would give his name. Although she sends it a month ago, the letter has yet to arrive. On the other hand, Ashima and Ashoke are not worried about the name since they think that “names can wait” and “in India parents take their time” to find the right name for the baby that sometimes years can pass (Lahiri, 2004: 25). Meanwhile the baby is called by a “pet name” (*daknam*) which is used among family members and friends as reminders of childhood. Pet names have no meanings and they cannot be recorded officially, instead they function as a funny, ironic utterance for children. Every individual has both a “pet name” and a “good name” in Indian customs. However, unfortunately, the rules are not the same in The United States as they are in India. The chaos and despair are the feelings when they learn that “a baby cannot be released from the hospital without a birth certificate” with a name on it (Lahiri, 2004: 27). At this very point, the identity crisis for their son starts without having a good name but just a pet name, Gogol since his “true identity is hung up somewhere between India and the United States” (Heinze, 2007: 192). The Russian name Gogol stands for his father’s life, an important memory for Ashoke that by means of which his life is given back to him in a train accident. When Ashoke was twenty-two, a student at the college, he was travelling to visit his grandparents to Jamshedpur and had a terrible accident which caused him to break his pelvis, his right femur and three of his ribs. During this journey, he was reading “The Overcoat” one of *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol*, the Russian writer and with the paper in his hand he was lying down after the crash. He was

recognized by the rescuers with the movement of the paper and thus he thinks he owes his life to the Russian writer, Nikolai Gogol. However, for both Ashima and Ashoke, the name Gogol is something transitory just to put on the birth certificate which is supposed to be changed later.

At this point, while naming a baby in a different country, Lahiri also sets the difference in customs of two countries, India and America. In opposition to these traditions of Indian people, Americans, their doctor and nurse at the hospital, suggest them naming the baby after themselves or one of their ancestors, which is a way of naming preferred by the kings of France and England, too. Although it is a tradition for both Americans and Europeans to honor someone they admire or respect, it does not sense the same for Indians that “this symbol of heritage and lineage would be ridiculed in India” because of the reason that “within Bengali families, individual names are sacred, inviolable; they are not meant to be inherited or shared” (Lahiri, 2004: 28). This is one of the striking truths about this new country that the Ganguli family faces in the beginning of their endless journey. The importance of naming also reflects the importance of gaining identity through that name. Thus, the very first pages symbolize Gogol’s identity chaos and the endless search for a ‘real’ identity as he cannot decide to choose the proper name for himself and changes his mind for several times throughout the novel.

As Gogol grows up with the Bengali songs her mother sings to him, his name crisis grows, too. When he is about to start the kindergarten, his family decides to give him a ‘good name’ because of their traditions for not using the pet name as a legal name. Since the good name is the “identification in the outside world” and should “represent dignified and enlightened qualities”, Ashoke choose Nikhil, which means “he who is entire, encompassing all” as a good name for Gogol (Lahiri, 2004: 26, 56). One can also recognize the paradoxical circumstance with Gogol’s good name that it means someone who is entire, which Gogol never feels entire with the lack of a complete identity. He always feels the in-betweenness, which is a term attributed to the immigrants, as a result of being from an Indian family in the United States. As Bhabha states, the term in-between is referred to something or someone not complete or not belonging completely to a culture, “constructed around an ambivalence”, Gogol’s identity is also torn between the Indian side of his family and the American side of his

environment (Bhabha, 2004: 122). On the other hand, though his parents decide the name, Nikhil, which is also connected to the old one with its “resemblance to Nikolai, the first name of the Russian Gogol”, they also feel anxious about “the danger that Americans, obsessed with abbreviation, would truncate it to Nick” (Lahiri, 2004: 56). He first decides to use the name Gogol instead of Nikhil when he starts the kindergarten because he is accustomed to hear Gogol since his birth; he feels familiar and safe with it.

He is afraid of to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know. Who doesn't know him. His parents tell him that they each have two names, too, as do all their Bengali friends in America, and all their relatives in Calcutta. It's a part of growing up, they tell him, part of being a Bengali (Lahiri, 2004: 57).

Instead of being Bengali as his parents tell, he chooses his Russian name and this can be regarded as the sign of the first rejection of his Indian identity. He feels the dilemma of which nearly the entire immigrant children, whose parents have ties to their home country, suffer. “They feel neither one thing nor the other” as Lahiri states in her interview (Apte, 2013: 1). One can relate this with the theme of hybridity within the postcolonial context and as a result of it, in-betweenness. With regard to the postcolonial background, Chifane explains the function and significance of naming in immigrant cultures that:

Hybridity not only emphasizes the rupture, the dislocation, but also creates the image of a third space that bears new transcultural forms. From this point of view, naming becomes a central point in the novel and is seen as a metaphor of the effects that the process of dislocation and relocation have upon the subject (2015: 9).

Within this sense of hybridity, naming is regarded as a tool to dislocate or relocate one's identity. For Gogol, the relocation or dislocation of identity is a repetitious matter of fact that he changes his name to fulfill his expectations to have a place in the American society. Although the family tries to teach him their Indian style of living such as “eating on his own with his fingers”, the truth of Gogol's identity crisis is also foreshadowed when he is just six months old, in his *annaprasan* (the rice ceremony for Bengali babies to celebrate their consumption of solid food) (Lahiri, 2004:

55, 38). He is dressed as an infant groom and his body is decorated with gold chain and some symbols according to Bengali traditions; his parents Ashima and Ashoke are also dressed in traditional clothes such as Ashima's sari and Ashoke's "transparent white Punjabi top" (Lahiri, 2004: 39). All the guests consist of their Bengali acquaintances in America except their upstairs neighbors, Alan and Judy. Gogol is expected to choose an item at the end of the ceremony and this item he chooses, would signify his future. Among these items there is a dollar bill, a ballpoint pen, and some Cambridge soil dug up from their backyard. Each of them symbolizes something different respectively as being a businessman, a scholar or a landowner. At this point, one of the Bengali guests calls out: "Put the money in his hand! An American boy must be rich!" (Lahiri, 2004: 40). This event is the sign that Gogol is already accepted as an American boy by his parents' Bengali circle and even in an Indian ceremony of rice, it is so easy for them to call Gogol as an American. It can be inferred from Lahiri's dramatic depiction that Gogol's quest for his identity will make him a boy of dualities when he grows up: "Only then, forced at six months to confront his destiny, does he begin to cry" (Lahiri, 2004: 40).

Another term, attributed to postcolonial cultural concepts, is the "third space" where the immigrant people go beyond and create their transnational, transcultural identity. According to Bhabha's definition:

It is that third space which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew (2004: 55).

It is understood from the definition that "third space" is a private place for immigrants that they create a space to gather with other immigrants, to share and recreate their cultures under the wide umbrella of American culture. Herein, the gatherings of Ganguli family with their friends on special days like childbirth, marriages, death or festivals can be regarded as going beyond and creating their third space. Within this space, they establish a new sense of belonging and identity by relocating their culture into the American way of life. These families coming together have the same profile: they are the immigrants from India, "like many professional

Indians who in the waves of the early sixties”, “went to the United States, as part of the brain drain” (Spivak, 1990: 61). The husbands are mostly researchers, teachers, doctors or engineers while the wives are mostly the ones who are “homesick and bewildered” (Lahiri, 2004: 38). As days pass by, their acquaintances in the United States also grow in number enough to create them a circle of Bengali friends. Every weekend they gather in one’s home, “they sit in circles on the floor, singing songs by Nazrul and Tagore, they argue riotously over the films of Ritwik Ghatak versus those of Satyajit Ray” or “they argue about the politics of America, a country in which none of them is eligible to vote” (Lahiri, 38). In these gatherings, Ashima gives recipes and advice where to buy carp or how “to make halwa from Cream of Wheat” (Lahiri, 2004: 38). These gatherings construct the image of a typical Saturday with “thirty-odd people in a three-bedroom suburban house” in Gogol’s childhood memories (Lahiri, 2004: 63). His family’s struggle to come together with a group of people sharing the same history, customs, perspectives and on the other hand; the same feelings of dislocation, cultural ambiguity and in-betweenness in a foreign land is an example of going beyond and creating their third space for themselves. However, according to Bhabha’s assertions, “the intimations of exceeding the barrier or boundary – the very act of going beyond – are unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the present which, in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced (2004: 6). At this point, it is possible to emphasize the change in Ganguli family, which Bhabha asserts. Their chats change dimension from Indian customs to new American ways of living. Lahiri portrays these changes by depicting the changes in their interests or decisions such as naming their daughter simply without the confusion of a pet name or a good name “as many of their Bengali friends have already done” (Lahiri, 2004: 62). This critical decision signifies their blending in the American culture as well as their reaching ‘beyond’.

In this sense, similar to Gogol’s, Sonia’s name also has a few changes but this time these changes do not worry the Gangulis. The name on her birth certificate and the name they call her is different, too but, unlike Gogol’s, they regard this as the name Sonia will make her “a citizen of the world, it’s a Russian link to her brother; it’s European, South American” as well (Lahiri, 2004: 62). The radical change in family’s attitude towards American life and its customs symbolize their adaptation process which begins with a rejection of an important Indian tradition; naming. Another family gathering, Sonia’s rice ceremony also signifies their non-resistance to Americanizing

process. Unlike Gogol, Sonia directly chooses a dollar bill and tries to put it in her mouth. “This one is the true American” remarks one of the guests among their Bengali friends (Lahiri, 2004: 63). They are the embodiment of in-betweenness of being in two minds of neither entirely Indian nor American.

Another example of the Ganguli family’s change can be seen in Lahiri’s depiction of their house or living styles or the agenda of their talks with Bengali friends:

And yet to a casual observer, the Gangulis, apart from the name on their mailbox, apart from the issues of *India Abroad* and *Sanguli Bichitra* that are delivered there, appear no different from their neighbors. Their garage, like every other, contains shovels and pruning shears and a sled. They purchase a barbeque for tandoori on the porch in summer. Each step, each acquisition, no matter how small, involves deliberation, consultation with Bengali friends. Was there a difference between a plastic rake and a metal one? Which was preferable, a live Christmas tree or an artificial one? They learn to roast turkeys, albeit rubbed with garlic and cumin and cayenne, at Thanksgiving, to nail a wreath to their door in December, to wrap woolen scarves around snowmen, to color boiled eggs violet and pink at Easter and hide them around the house. For the sake of Gogol and Sonia they celebrate, with progressively increasing fanfare, birth of Christ, an event the children look forward to far more than the worship of Druga and Saraswati (Lahiri 2004: 64).

As clearly seen in the quotation that their life is on a critical point of diversion of mimicking the American culture in which they are reshaped and relocated. Their way of mimicking the American society is to repeat what they see in their outer world. Within the postcolonial frame, the text can be evaluated according to Bhabha’s discourse on mimicry that he points “mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (2004: 122). At this point, it can be inferred that the image of other stands for America and the Bengali family tries to mime that superior other. As a result, they show similarity in some of their daily life elements such as their clothes, foods or the places they live in. Their preferences of more practical daily materials such as a pen or a razor blade also represent the cultural domination of America on Ganguli family as John Tomlinson also highlights “the idea that alien culture products are imposed on a culture [...] but they don’t perceive them as ‘imposition’” (2001: 94). Thus, they not only take advantage of the practical Western products but also adopt the Western culture gradually.

Though Ashima continues to wear nothing but saris and sandals from Bata, Ashoke, accustomed to wearing tailor-made pants and shirts all his life, learns to buy ready-made. He trades in fountain pens for ballpoints, Wilkinson blades and his boar-bristled shaving brush for Bic razors bought six to a pack (Lahiri, 2004: 65).

When compared to Ashoke, Ashima is the representation of their Indian side as she sticks for home more than anyone in the house. That can be also related to Ashima's being admonished by her parents and many other relatives before leaving for the United States "not to eat beef or wear skirts or cut off her hair or forget family the moment she landed in" (Lahiri, 2004: 37). However, she also tries to adapt to the culture she lives in firstly for the sake of her children and then for herself to belong to this foreign land in some way. It can also be seen in their shopping scene:

In the supermarket they let Gogol fill the cart with items that he and Sonia, but not they, consume: individually wrapped slices of cheese, mayonnaise, tuna fish, hot dogs. For Gogol's lunches they stand at the deli to buy cold cuts, and in the mornings Ashima makes sandwiches with bologna or roast beef. At his insistence, she concedes and makes him an American dinner once a week as a treat, Shake 'n Bake chicken or Hamburger Helper prepared with ground lamb (Lahiri, 2004: 65).

Though Ashima tries to protect her Indian side by cooking Indian dishes at home, she also does what her children want in order not to lose their grasp on in this American life of which they are eager to be a part. These changes mean much to Ashima that she also starts to construct a new sense of belonging and identity. Besides these adaptations, the Ganguli family also struggle not to give in completely to the American culture. In order to protect their Indian roots, they send Gogol to Bengali lessons every Saturday to one of their friends' home. It is not the only reason to protect their Indian identity to decide on such lessons for their children. They also feel anxious and uneasy when they hear "their children sound just like Americans, expertly conversing in a language that still at times confounds them" (Lahiri, 2004: 65). The Bengali children learn how to read and write his ancestral alphabet, read about the Bengali Renaissance or the revolutionary exploits in India "without any interest, wishing they could be at ballet or softball practice instead" (Lahiri, 2004: 66). These Bengali lessons are the evidence that an immigrant family cannot preserve their language or culture since it is not possible for them to have an isolated life from

American traditions or culture. Even in the most private part of their life, in their own houses, the American effects are seen to such a great extent that they are afraid to lose their origins thoroughly and need to have extra Bengali language and culture lessons for their children. Opposite their anxiety, Gogol, who hates these lessons because of which he cannot attend the drawing class in the public library, “can’t help noticing, on the paper (the hand-sewn one that his teacher brought from Calcutta) that resembles the folded toilet paper he uses at school” (Lahiri, 2004: 66). Instead of learning their culture by living it with all its norms at home, children are sent to a course as if they are learning something new like the things they learn at school. The families’ struggle to raise their children according to the norms of their own cultures and their fear to lose them as alienated individuals, who would regard their own parents as strangers, is the symbol of ambivalence they suffer from. Neither the families nor the children know where to stand or where to find their own identity. Thus, they become all in-between characters whose search for identity never comes to an end.

Similar to the unsettlement and anxiety they feel against the formation of identity, one day Ashima is shocked with the place that Gogol visits during a school trip. It is a graveyard, a place where whenever they drive by, his mother tells them to divert their eyes. Ashima is horrified and makes a strict comparison between Calcutta and America:

Only in America (a phrase she has begun to resort to often these days), only in America are children taken to cemeteries in the name of art. What’s next, she demands to know, a trip to the morgue? In Calcutta the burning ghats are the most forbidden of places, she tells Gogol, [...] Death is not a pastime, she says [...] not a place to make paintings (Lahiri, 2004: 70).

However, contrary to his mother, Gogol questions his experience from a different perspective. While his friends search for their surnames on the graves and feel like a triumph when they find one related to their family name, Gogol realizes there that there is no Ganguli there. He is also “old enough to know that he himself will be burned, not buried, that his body will occupy no plot of earth, that no stone in this country will bear his name beyond life” (Lahiri, 2004: 69). From his point of view, it can be deduced that his name, which is never completed for him, will not survive in this

land of America, and this signifies his default as a child of immigrant parents belonging to nowhere on earth.

Like his American friends in the graveyard, he feels astonished when he sees six pages full of Ganguli surname in the Calcutta telephone directory in one of their family visits. Contrary to his being the one in America with the Ganguli surname, he realizes that he has a really big family in India.

On taxi rides through the city, going to visit the various homes of his relatives, his father had pointed out the name elsewhere, on the awnings of confectioners, and stationers, and opticians. He had told Gogol that Ganguli is a legacy of the British, an anglicized way of pronouncing his real surname, Gangopadhyay (Lahiri, 2004: 67).

At this very point, the novel serves for both the Westernization effects of British Empire in its colony, India, and its results seen many years later. Thus, one can relate the origins of immigrants' identity crisis with its roots and also the familiarity of Ganguli family with the concept of Westernization even in their own homeland. Thus, Gogol is the embodiment of this identity chaos since he is double in-between or ambivalent not just because of his name but also his surname. Another chaotic situation about their surname is the one they face when they return to India. Their surname, Ganguli, on one side of the mailbox "has been shortened to 'gang', with the word 'green' scrawled in pencil following it" (Lahiri, 2004: 67). He feels queer and regards this as a desecration against his parents rather than he and Sonia. Although America is portrayed as a welcoming country, these details make one think about how tolerant and welcoming it is. The uneasiness Gogol feels reminds him the moments when their parents' accents are smirked at in stores or the moments when salesmen "direct their conversation to Gogol, as though his parents were either incompetent or deaf" (Lahiri, 2004: 68). It can be said that, even if it is regarded as one of the most welcoming countries, it is inevitable to feel the otherness and exclusion not in all but some ways.

As the novel goes on with Gogol's growth as well as family's different experiences in America, Lahiri focuses on Gogol's character as her protagonist. His fourteenth birthday is celebrated by two separate parties, an American one with his friends eating pizza and watching a baseball game on TV; the other with the Bengali

style with his parents' dozen of friends, his mashis (aunts) and meshos (uncles) sitting on the floor. This stresses the "continuous cultural ambivalence" the family suffers from even in a birthday party (Chifane, 2015: 11). His birthday party signifies his growth but more than this, it functions as the reminder of their being in-between and ambivalent. As McLeod also states, the Ganguli family, "in trying to do two things at once", they end up "doing neither properly" (2010: 65). Another fact that cannot be negligible is Gogol's indifference to his parents as a teenager. As he grows up, he becomes more estranged from his family that lately he addresses them in English though they continue speaking in Bengali with him. He is more interested in American style music, books, magazines and he also prefers wearing "a Harvard sweatshirt and gray Levi's corduroys" (Lahiri, 2004: 75). When his father gives him the present he orders from the bookstore just for him, Gogol reluctantly turns down the stereo to hear his father and indifferently opens his gift despite the excitement his father shows while telling him about how long it takes the book to arrive. The present is another symbol of Gogol's life on which his story revolves: *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol*. However, Gogol does not know the reason why the Russian writer Gogol is so important for his father and his father does not tell his terrible experience to his son for now. Thus, the book does not mean a lot for Gogol; instead he thinks he would prefer *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* or *The Hobbit*. All these elements refer to Gogol's preference of an American lifestyle as a teenage boy whose family tries not to lose their ties with their Indian roots as well as adapting some of the American customs for the sake of their children. Besides the issues of cultural ambivalence and Gogol's standpoint, this birthday party is also significant as Moushumi, Gogol's wife-to-be through the end of the novel, is mentioned for the first time. It is a kind of foreshadowing that Lahiri emphasizes their interaction that "the closest person to him in age is a girl named Moushumi, whose family recently moved to Massachusetts from England, and whose thirteenth birthday was celebrated in a similar fashion a few months ago" (Lahiri, 2004: 73). She is depicted as a young girl wearing glasses and reading *Pride and Prejudice* different from other children in the room watching TV. She says that she hates American television when she is asked some questions about her English accent and goes on reading.

From this point on, Gogol's name crisis as a representative of his identity crisis is presented to the reader again by Lahiri since she goes on to emphasize how important naming is in constructing one's identity. Repentantly, he wishes he would have chosen

the Indian name instead of the Russian one when he was in kindergarten. It becomes a snowball in his mind whenever he cannot answer the question of what his name means. Lahiri depicts his situation “like the scratchy tag of a shirt he has been forced permanently to wear” (Lahiri, 2004: 76). He is so restless with his name that even he knows the truth of its being just a pet name which has no meaning; he feels the burden of this weightless and shapeless entity.

He hates having constantly to explain. He hates having to tell people that it doesn't mean anything “in Indian”. He hates having to wear a nametag on his sweater at Model United Nations Day at school. He even hates signing his name at the bottom of his drawings in art class. He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian. He hates having to live with it, with a pet name turned good name, day after day, second after second. (Lahiri, 2004: 76)

As naming has a functional role in shaping one's identity, Gogol's name does not stand for his identity because he does not regard his name as a part of his identity. Although he is already in-between of Indian and American cultures, with his Russian name, his identity is split once again. His name also affects his social status as he feels embarrassed to pronounce it especially among others because it sounds ludicrous, lacking dignity or gravity. He always compares his name with others' and imagines having another name which he can carry as a part of himself, his own identity:

At times he wishes he could disguise it, shorten it somehow, the way the other Indian boy in his school, Jayadev, had gotten people to call him Jay. But Gogol, already short and catchy, resists mutation. Other boys his age have begun to court girls already, asking them to go to the movies or the pizza parlor, but he cannot imagine saying, “Hi, it's Gogol” under potentially romantic circumstances. He cannot imagine this at all (Lahiri, 2004: 76).

As a teenage boy, it is also difficult for Gogol to have a weird name among his peers. Besides being mocked by them, he also feels anxious when he has to explain its meaning to someone he meets. Thus he even does not want to meet anyone new or he escapes from going out with girls as his peers do. He thinks it is his father's attribution to his own experiences but his own fault to choose the name Gogol, instead of Nikhil. “He could have been Gogol only fifty percent of the time. Like his parents when they went to Calcutta, he could have had an alternative identity, a B-side to the self” (Lahiri,

2004: 76). He consents to be someone in America and someone different in India, just like his parents. However, he lacks a certain identity that he regards himself as no one especially in America where he wants to gain an identity most. He wants to relocate himself among American friends and instead of having an odd name, which makes him unique as there is no other “Gogol” around him, he wants to be one of those American named boys and merge among them. Chifane also points out that naming is a critical point in Lahiri’s fiction and it is a metaphor of the effects that the themes of dislocation and relocation are also related and supports this with Marques’ quotation below:

[...] naming occupies a central point in the narrative as the name “Gogol” will bring distress both to him and his family. For his parents it feels as if they had failed to follow an important cultural tradition from their homeland. However, for Gogol, it carries a feeling of dislocation and of no belonging, as it is a meaningless name for him since it is neither American nor Indian. Therefore, [...] naming in *The Namesake* symbolizes the feeling of the hybrid subject who lives between two worlds, an imagined one, and the “concrete” one which forces the characters to deal with their migrant heritage (qtd.in Chifane, 2015: 10).

As a result of his efforts to relocate himself within the American society, Gogol introduces himself to an American girl, whom he meets at a party, as Nikhil. This is an instantaneous decision of him since it is also the first intimacy with a girl in such an atmosphere. He says “I’m Nikhil” for the first time in his life with a hidden anxiety to be laughed at his face by Kim. “He could introduce himself as Colin or Jason or Marc, as anybody at all, [...] but then he realizes there’s no need to lie. Not technically. He remembers the other name that had once been chosen for him” (Lahiri, 2004: 96). This is the first time he uses his once given Indian name and it works as a savior for him to relocate himself in society. Thus, Gogol, who is regarded as indifferent to girls, feels relieved for finding an identity, and kisses Kim. This can be regarded as a breaking point for Gogol to express himself as Nikhil and also gaining self-confidence with this new name. His new name, Nikhil, is like his port against his friends’ reactions when they learn that Gogol kissed a girl for the first time. He says “it wasn’t me”, “that Gogol had had nothing to do with it” (Lahiri, 2004: 96).

In his history class, Gogol has learned that some of the European immigrants had their names changed, and renamed themselves. Besides, he is also affected from the

article he has read in his dentist's that many of the famous people he knows such as Bob Dylan, whose real name was Robert Zimmerman changed their names as it is "a right belonging to every American citizen" (Lahiri, 2004: 99). With this idea in his mind, before his freshman year at Yale University, he decides to change his name to Nikhil. The first reaction to his decision is surely a rejection by his family but he explains his reasons logically to his family that he does not want to carry on with "Gogol" as a name on top of a resume or centered on a business card as people do not take him seriously. He also adds that "it is not even a Bengali name" that does not fit him (Lahiri, 2004: 100). His family respects his decision because they have nothing to do but accept the truth that their children are not the same with themselves; they are the second generation Indians in America and they are shaped by American culture instead of Indian. His father allows him to do as he wishes and adds that "in America anything is possible" (Lahiri, 2004: 100). During the trial, when the judge asks him the reason why he wishes to change his name, he admits for the first time what he has never admitted to his parents that "I hate the name Gogol; I've always hated it" (Lahiri, 2004: 102). Although he has a new name, on which he trusts while doing what Gogol cannot do or ignoring his parents, he knows that his parents and their friends, and also his own childhood friends will all go on calling him as Gogol. Also "he doesn't feel like Nikhil, not yet" and explains that "after eighteen years of Gogol, two months of Nikhil feel scant, inconsequential. At times he feels as if he's cast himself in a play, acting the part of twins, indistinguishable to the naked eye yet fundamentally different" (Lahiri, 2004: 105). When he is called by his parents with his new name, he feels it sounds "correct but off-key" just as "when his parents speak English to him instead of Bengali" (Lahiri, 2004: 106). In this sense, Heinze points out:

Here, issues of personal and cultural identity are linked: Gogol becomes a double, he has a doppelganger, and with it two different histories, identities, affiliations, affections. That this is not just a binary opposition but a complex interplay becomes clear when one considers that "off-key" means a note that is inaccurate in pitch, which still carries traces of the pitch that it diverges from, oscillating between the two (2007: 196).

Here Gogol's taking an Indian name signifies his family and their cultural identity and ethnic roots; but not his own past since "he does not have absolute control over it" (Heinze, 2007: 197). At this point, it can be related to the postcolonial aspect of

the novel that the quest for identity, which is dispersed from the past of the characters through their present experiences, especially for Gogol, never comes to an end because he lacks a stable identity, he is torn between the ambivalence of his Indian and American worlds and the hybridity which retains him to be someone complete.

As in most immigrant cases, their visits to home country also reveal their incompleteness. They are also treated as foreigners in their own home lands just as their experiences in America. In one of these visits, they have to stay in Calcutta for eight months and since they have no relatives in America, the children also have to join them on this long vacation. Staying in their homeland with so many relatives sounds the best thing especially for Ashima but, on the other hand, it is something like a joke or an unbearable situation for Gogol and Sonia. Where they belong and what they like is completely different and this is clearly seen as the children grow up. While their parents feel safe and relieved when they meet with relatives and go back to their origins with their pet names, Sonia and Gogol feel meaningless, anxious and scared because their parents' being addressed with pet names makes them become foreigners for them:

Ashima, now Monu, weeps with relief, and Ashoke, now Mithu, kisses his brothers on both cheeks, holds their heads in his hands. Gogol and Sonia know these people, but they do not feel close to them as their parents do. Within minutes, before their eyes Ashoke and Ashima slip into bolder, less complicated versions of themselves, their voices louder, their smiles wider, revealing a confidence Gogol and Sonia never see on Pemberton Road. "I'm scared, Goggles," Sonia whispers to her brother in English, seeking his hand and refusing to let go (Lahiri, 2004: 81-82).

They feel as strangers coming from another universe both because they do not belong to this country and because their relatives treat them as aliens. "Their cousins and aunts and uncles ask them about life in America, about what they eat for breakfast, [...]. They look at the pictures of their house on Pemberton Road. 'Carpets in the bathroom', they say, 'imagine that'" (Lahiri, 2004: 83). Their American life, which they represent by mimicking, interests their relatives in Calcutta. They represent the American side in India and on the contrary, the Indian side in America. Thus, what their relatives see is the mimicked image of Americanness, the repetition of "the original"; not the identical (Bhabha, 2004: 153). It is clearly seen when they get terribly ill in their longest visit that neither their identities nor their bodies fit with the Indian lifestyle.

Their relatives say, “It is the air, the rice, the wind, their relatives casually remark; they were not made to survive in a poor country” (Lahiri, 2004:86).

Besides their discrepancy in India, one of the basic themes of postcolonial literatures can also be seen via these visits in the novel. It is the displacement of Ganguli family as a whole. There is not a certain home image in their minds as they are immigrants. For Ashima and Ashoke, the first generation immigrants, Calcutta is the home, but they cannot feel a sense of belonging there because they know these visits are just transitory belongings. Each of their departure from Calcutta means grief and worry for Ashima “but for Gogol, relief quickly replaces any lingering sadness” (Lahiri, 2004: 87). Like many other different feelings, their sense of belonging also stands for some different things for the parents and the children. At the end of these journeys, although the place they go back is called as ‘home’, parents “feel disconnected from their lives” (Lahiri, 2004: 87). John McLeod states this home image from a postcolonial frame as follows:

For migrant and diasporic peoples in particular, ‘home’ is a particularly complex idea which impacts in central ways on their existence [...]. It can act as a valuable means of orientation by giving us a fixed, reliable sense of our place in the world. It is meant to tell us where we originated from and apparently where we legitimately belong (2010: 242).

Thus, for many immigrant people, sense of belonging is one of those phenomena which cannot be completed or explained exactly due to their in-betweenness. When they first move to their house on Pemberton Road, they think they have a place in this new world to which they came with a single suitcase, and “this is the small patch of America to which they lay claim” (Lahiri, 2004: 51). Though they have a claim of property in this new land, padding it as a real home is not so easy for them. Once when Gogol makes a “mistake of referring to New Haven as home” while telling about the Yale decal, which his parents ask for to paste on the back of their car window, he says “Sorry, I left it home” and Ashima objects him distractedly to how he can call it as a home only in three months while “after twenty years in America, she still cannot bring herself to refer to Pemberton Road as home” (Lahiri, 108). This is one of the most critical points of the novel as well as its naming issue. As a major theme in postcolonial

literatures, place and displacement is directly related with the self in constructing one's identity and without belonging anywhere it is impossible to solve the identity crisis of immigrant people.

In this formulation, home becomes an especially unstable and unpredictable mental construct built from the incomplete odds and ends of memory that survive from the past. It exists in a fractured, discontinuous relationship with the present, forever just out of reach and impossible to restore (McLeod, 2010: 243).

At this point, it can be commented on Lahiri's depiction of Gogol and Ashima within the sense of place and displacement that Ashima cannot construct a home image as she already has an old one in Calcutta in her memory. Yet, for Gogol, there is no certain image of a home, no past, no bond to attach; thus it is easier for him to create an image of home not only to have a place in American society but also to construct his own identity by belonging somewhere. However, as they have no other choice but to adapt to the place they live in, it does not take the Ganguli family too long to go on their lives in America, even if they feel disconnected, after they return. Their Bengali friends visit them, they fill the refrigerator with familiar labels such as Skippy, Hood or Bumble Bee, and they go on their lives as if they have not been to India a few days ago:

By the end of the week, after his mother's friends come to admire her new gold saris, after the eight suitcases have been aired out on the sun deck and put away, after the chanachur is poured into Tupperware and the smuggled mangoes eaten for breakfast with cereal and tea, it's as if they've never been gone" (Lahiri, 2004: 87).

As their life goes on in America, their in-betweenness in many areas also goes on. When it is time to decide on Gogol's major at university, his family expects him to be, "if not an engineer, then a doctor, a lawyer, an economist at the very least" (Lahiri, 2004: 105). Since the social status has a great role in one's living, this status is more important to people like Gangulis or other immigrants, who try to have a place and be respected by the society. Gogol's father, Ashoke, also represents the knowledgeable, intellectual man who leaves his country and comes to America in search of an academic identity and studies "in the field of fiber optics" by way of which he gains "security and respect" in American society (Lahiri, 2004: 9, 105). It is a kind of acceptance by the dominant culture and it is only possible with hard work, a good profession and serving

for the society in return of being welcomed. It is also stated by Bharati Mukherjee that “hard work and education will erase the deficit within a generation of immigrants” (Mukherjee, 2011: 687). Contrary to his parents’ thoughts, Gogol, now Nikhil, thinks it is not the profession but the belonging that makes one revered and a part of that society. Also, as he is Nikhil now, not Gogol, it will be “easier to ignore his parents, to tune out their concerns and pleas” (Lahiri, 2004: 105).

When Gogol starts university, his life changes in a faster way when compared to his early ages. As he is Nikhil now, he feels more self-confident in expressing himself in society, attends different courses and learns about the world. His relationships also make his life reshaped and raise awareness in his identity development process as Nikhil. Since he does not have a past with Nikhil, these experiences help him create someone familiar with him. Yet he cannot deny the Indian side of his roots as he cannot deny his family. When he has a relationship with a girl named Ruth, he tells her about his experiences in India, the food they eat, the tea they drink in a completely different style and her appreciation makes him feel flattered. However, when he thinks of his family in his weekend visits, he cannot portray Ruth in their kitchen, chatting with his family and eating Indian food. This is both because his family does not approve a relationship with an American girl and that “he cannot imagine being with her in the house where he is still Gogol” (Lahiri, 2004: 115). Though they adapt to the American style of living in many conditions, his parents are not so welcoming about an American girl that they still try to emphasize their Indian side especially on family matters. When they give Gogol the examples of Bengali men, who have married Americans and ended up with divorcing, he feels more alienated from his family rather than his American girlfriend. Gogol also becomes more aware of the fact that when compared with American families, his family is more traditional but this tradition is nothing common in this country. American families are more welcoming and tolerant just like America, he thinks.

During his journey to find or re-create his identity, Gogol hears a term called ABCDs for the first time in his life when he has to attend “a panel discussion about Indian novels written in English” to meet his distant cousin coming to the panel as a presenter from Bombay. The subjects are boring for him as he does not understand and attend reluctantly until he hears one of the sociologists saying “ABCDs are unable to

answer the question ‘Where are you from?’ (Lahiri, 2004: 118). He then realizes that the term stands for “American-born confused *deshi*”; in other words, him” (Lahiri, 2004: 118). He knows the meaning of the word ‘*deshi*’ that it stands for ‘Indian’; also ‘*desh*’ is used simply to refer to India for many of the Indians and his parents, as well. However, just like the Americans, for Gogol India is India, not *desh*. When his cousin asks him whether he is a member of the Indian association or not, Gogol puts him off saying he has no time but, indeed, he thinks there can be “no greater hypocrisy than joining an organization that willingly celebrates occasions his parents forced him, throughout his childhood, to attend” (Lahiri, 2004: 119). At this point, Gogol ponders certain awkward truths that:

Although he can understand his mother tongue, and speak it fluently, he cannot read or write it with even modest proficiency. On trips to India, his American-accented English is a source of endless amusement to his relatives [...]. Living with a pet name and a good name, in a place where such distinctions do not exist – surely that was emblematic of the greatest confusion of all. [...] He has no ABCD friends at college. He avoids them, for they remind him too much of the ways his parents choose to live, befriending people not so much because they like them, but because of a past they happen to share (Lahiri, 2004: 118-119).

This is the certain evidence of his becoming an alien to his family and Indian side due to his rejection of all bonds he has with his ethnic identity. He again says “I’m Nikhil now”, trying to convince himself that there is a boundary between Gogol and Nikhil, between India and America, between self and other. He is so determined to go far beyond his Indian roots that he even does not want to move back to Massachusetts, the only city his parents know in America, “attend his father’s alma mater, live in an apartment in Central Square as his parents once had, and revisit the streets about which his parents speak nostalgically” (Lahiri, 2004: 126).

These are the signs for Gogol’s radical change from an Indian rooted boy to an American born and bred young man and another significant radical decision is his moving to New York as a newly graduated architect. This can be considered as a rebellion against his family, who does not want him to move to New York – a place which they fear -, and also as a proof of his re-created identity, by which he can make his own decisions. In New York, a new page opens in his journey as Nikhil. He meets Maxine Ratliff, an American girl with a wealthy and tolerant family, and she stands for

his American side to shape his identity in his new life, in New York. She lives with her parents, which later shocks Ashima as she thinks prejudicedly no one lives with parents in America. Maxine's parents, Lydia and Gerald, also have a significant role in Gogol's life because they are the embodiment of an ideal family that he yearns for. They open their house to him as if he is one of the members of the family and this gives Gogol the opportunity to experience American way of living closely. During his close relationship both with Maxine and her parents, Gogol always compares and contrasts them with his family. He first realizes that his parents and Maxine's parents are so different from the very beginning of their marriages that his parents have an arranged marriage and he has never seen them kissing or hugging each other in or out of their home; they were raised in a culture according to which "a husband's name is something intimate and therefore unspoken" (Lahiri, 2004: 2). "Whatever love exists between them is an utterly private, uncelebrated thing" (Lahiri, 2004: 138).

However, the Rattliffs bear no resemblance to his own parents as there are completely different elements in their marriages such as "expensive pieces of jewelry presented on Lydia's birthday, flowers brought home for no reason at all, the two of them kissing openly, going for walks through the city, or to dinner, just as Gogol and Maxine do" (Lahiri, 2004: 138). At this point, it is possible to emphasize Gogol's mimicry of the Ratliff family since they stand for the "other", the American for him. As Bhabha states, "mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (2004: 122). Here, for Gogol, Rattliffs are the powerful, elite, American stereotypes; thus, he tries to be like them by meeting the deficit with his mimicry. Different from his own family, Ratliffs talk about "movies, exhibits at museums, good restaurants, the design of everyday things" while chatting at the dinner table (Lahiri, 2004: 133). Lydia is so relaxed at the table as a mother that she pays no attention to Gogol's plate as a guest. On the other hand, the mother image of Gogol that he has been accustomed to is someone always keeping her eyes trained on the guests' plates, insisting on them to have more to eat. Gogol remembers his family gatherings with other Bengali families on special occasions every time he joins Gerald and Lydia's dinner parties.

How different they are from his parents' parties, cheerfully unruly evenings to which there were never fewer than thirty people invited, small children in tow. Fish and meat

served side by side, so many courses that people had to eat in shifts, the food still in the pans they were cooked in crowding table. They sat where they could, in the different rooms of the house, half the people having finished before the other half began. Unlike Gerald and Lydia, who preside at the center of their dinners, his parents behaved more like caterers in their own home (Lahiri, 2004: 141).

As well as these comparisons in his mind, Gogol also learns many new things from Maxine and her family by living with them in their house. “He learns that one does not grate Parmesan cheese over pasta dishes containing seafood. He learns not to put wooden spoons in the dishwasher” (Lahiri, 2004: 137). However, while doing all these things, “he is conscious of the fact that his immersion in Maxine’s family is a betrayal of his own” (Lahiri, 2004: 141). But he cannot help imagining himself as a part of an American family, having respect and a place in American society. He also thinks that Maxine and her family are generous enough to accept him as a member of their lives. So, Maxine means a lot to Gogol and he is thankful to her for being his American idol.

Gogol desires Maxine’s mode of living, her utensils, and her food, and his curiosity verges on the voyeuristic, while the narrator’s descriptions verge on the orgiastic. Besides sexual pleasure with Maxine, he is seeking a fantasy of upper-middle-class American life. In his fantastic realm, Gogol “learns” to embrace Maxine’s customs; the repetition of the word learns points to his desire to adopt Maxine’s rituals, to make them his own (Friedman, 2008: 121).

In short, Gogol finds his new identity with Maxine and her family by sharing their home and their life. On the other hand, he ignores his family, does not call them, and has obligatory visits without enthusiasm. Instead of struggling like an alien in an Indian rooted atmosphere, he prefers to be a part of the definite American family. He feels more and more American when he is with them because they also accept him as a real American. In his twenty-seventh birthday, instead of celebrating with his own family, he prefers to be with Maxine, her parents and also their American friends. When Gerald introduces him to the guests, he is asked by a neighbor “at what age he moved to America from India” and he abruptly answers that he is from Boston (Lahiri, 2004: 157). She goes on asking about India persistently, trying to despise him and his country as a primitive and pestiferous place. Gogol feels embarrassed trying to defend himself not as an Indian but just as a visitor who gets vaccinated too before going there. At this very point, Lydia rescues Gogol from this unpleasant conversation by admitting that

“Nick is American” (Lahiri, 2004: 158). Thus, Gogol is regarded as a complete American by the Rattliffs and this is something like an immigrant’s acquiring citizenship in a foreign country.

Consequently, it can be said that “Gogol’s immersion into his girlfriend’s life is an indication of a second generation immigrant’s realization that an identity far from their own cultural roots is a necessity to live happily in the multicultural United States” (Dhivyapriya and Jagadeswari, 2015: 35). Although their relationship contributes a lot to Gogol in the process of constructing his American identity, it comes to an end when Gogol is shocked with his father’s sudden death. He has another breaking point in his journey that the Rattliffs were like a port where he took shelter in while constructing his identity, helped him to put the pieces into correct places. But now, he realizes that he cannot go on with Maxine anymore. He has to be with his mother and do his duty as a son for his father after his death. It can be also concluded that Gogol cannot find a stable place, even if he supposes to own a social status in American society, the truth is that his split identity never allows him to be a part of one side, which means he is always in-between of some things.

Another character that Lahiri creates to help Gogol during his identity journey is Moushumi, who is first mentioned in Gogol’s fourteenth birthday as the daughter of one of their Bengali friends. His mother insists on calling her and in the end he is persuaded to meet her. She studies French Literature, which she once hid from her family as a protest, and has an experience of living in Paris which affects Gogol to make him think that she is also someone with many different identities. Thus, she is someone different from what Gogol imagines. “He remembers her mainly at the pujos he had attended every year, twice a year, with his family, where she would be dressed in a sari carefully pinned to the top of her shoulder” (Lahiri, 2004: 200). Contrary to Maxine, Moushumi is a reminder of his Indian roots for Gogol; but, she also rejects being Indian just like Gogol. In this sense, Moushumi is more free than Gogol as she also escapes from being a complete American. This also arouses a feeling of trust in Gogol for Moushumi that she is not a typical Indian girl but a second generation Indian whose roots are about to diminish. Thus, they have so many things in common such as attending family gatherings reluctantly or being obliged to accept all the Bengalis are like their families in this foreign land, whenever they reject to come together. They also both have

unsuccessful relations with Americans and disappointments, as well. Bhalla states their function for each other as follows:

Gogol and Moushumi function as cultural correctives for one another, remedying not only their heart- break, but also feelings of ethnic alienation that their forays into inter-racial romance produced. In fact, the initial basis for their attraction is described through their shared background and heritage (2012: 116).

Besides these similarities, Gogol also feels familiar with some of the items at her home that “he recognizes versions of things he knows from home: a Kashmiri crewelwork carpet on the floor, Rajasthani silk pillows on the sofa, a cast-iron Natraj on one of the bookcases” (Lahiri, 2004: 208). Also sometimes at restaurants or bars, they can find themselves slipping “Bengali phrases into their conversation in order to comment with impunity on another diner’s unfortunate hair or shoes” (Lahiri, 2004: 211).

Unlike Gogol, Moushumi tries to find her stable identity neither in America nor in India. She feels herself more self-confident and relaxed in France as she has no roots there. She also rejects to follow her father’s steps not intending to be a chemist and “deaf to their protests” moves to Paris, where she constructs a part of her identity.

Immersing herself in a third language, a third culture, had been her refuge – she approached French, unlike American or Indian, without guilt, or misgiving, or expectation of any kind. It was easier to turn her back on the two countries that could claim her in favor of one that had no claim whatsoever (Lahiri, 2004: 214).

As expected, Gogol and Moushumi marry with a traditional Indian wedding which is not “the type of wedding either of them really wants” (Lahiri, 2004: 219). In this sense, it is a kind of an arranged marriage with the insistence of Gogol’s mother, Ashima to call her just for one time. Thus, instead of struggling to convince their parents, this time they give in to their expectations to organize an Indian wedding. Also they both feel as much as themselves since they are both Bengali, “everyone can let his hair down a bit” (Lahiri, 2004: 224). After a tiring ceremony full of saris, Indian music, food and drinks, they set a normal way of life, similar to that of Lydia and Gerald or any other American couple. As a counterpart to Ratliffs, who once played a great role in Gogol’s life, Astrid and Donald stand for the same importance for Moushumi because

of their leading function in her life in many ways. However, Gogol feels restless whenever they are with them and one of the most critical of these meetings is when naming a baby is being debated since Astrid is expecting a baby. Moushumi admits that she hates being the only one with such a name just like Gogol did many years ago: “a name like hers is a curse” and she complains “that no one can say it properly, that the kids at school pronounced it Moosoomi and shortened it to Moose” (Lahiri, 2004: 239). Following this explanation, while talking on how important naming a baby is, Moushumi, the only woman “who’d once known him by that other name”, blurts out that “Nikhil changed his” name (Lahiri, 2004: 193, 243). Gogol feels dislocated one more time with this confession that his name never fits him and thus makes him split whenever he tries to reunite. He also cannot be reunited with Moushumi because of her affairs with a man called Dimitri. At this point, one can conclude that Moushumi is the embodiment of resistance against the customs, especially the Indian ones. For her, France is the dominant culture by which she is affected and reshaped, located. On the other hand, for Gogol, America is the dominant culture through which he matures and tries to locate himself anywhere within this culture. Although they share the same Indian background and customs, they cannot share a life together because of their split identities. They cannot “go beyond” themselves; they cannot relocate themselves somewhere between these cultures. Lahiri also points out the different senses of belonging with Gogol and Moushumi. As they represent the second generation immigrants in America, they also reveal the change between perspectives of the first and second generations:

But fortunately they have not considered it their duty to stay married, as the Bengalis of Ashoke and Ashima’s generation do. They are not willing to accept, to adjust, to settle for something less than their ideal of happiness. That pressure has given way, in the case of the subsequent generation, to American common sense (Lahiri, 2004: 276).

To conclude with Gogol and Moushumi, it is possible to say that they are the reflections of the second generation Indian immigrants who grow up in different places simultaneously, and thus cannot be a stable part of one society or one united identity.

The last focus of this chapter will be on Gogol's mother, Ashima, the one who suffered most for being an immigrant. Her journey starts with her marriage to Ashoke and immigrating to The United States with a man, whom she does not know enough yet just like the foreign land she settles. Lahiri starts and ends her novel by depicting Ashima's struggles in America, but unlike Gogol or other second generation characters, she is not in search of identity. What she tries to do is to preserve her Indian side although she seems adapted to the American way of living. At first, everything seems bizarre in this new land. When she is in hospital to give birth for Gogol, she "thinks that her child will be born in a place most people enter either to suffer or to die" but she imagines India where "women go home to their parents to give birth, away from husbands and in-laws and household cares, retreating briefly to childhood when the baby arrives" (Lahiri, 2004: 4). She does not feel normal when she thinks of the future awaiting them in this new country and "she is terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare" (Lahiri, 2004: 6). Because of her anxiety about raising her children in a foreign land, she tries to adapt the American culture so as not to lose the bond between them. She thinks Gogol as her companion and discovers the environment that she will have to live for the rest of her life. She organizes meetings with their Bengali friends, with whom they feel like relatives, has Christmas or Thanksgiving celebrations, which are not a part of her own culture, prepares and sends Christmas cards, which she becomes familiar with during the years she has experienced American culture. In her first days, she associates pregnancy which she suffers from with being a foreigner, which she will suffer from in the rest of her life:

For being a foreigner, Ashima is beginning to realize, is a sort of lifelong pregnancy – a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that that previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding. Like pregnancy, being a foreigner, Ashima believes, is something that elicits the same curiosity from strangers, the same combination of pity and respect (Lahiri, 2004: 49-50).

Bhalla explains Ashima's position in its simplest way that "as mother and wife, Ashima represents familiar, stereotypical modes of traditional South Asian femininity. The metaphor of pregnancy to characterize her adaptation to living in the US reinforces

the limited trope of the long-suffering Asian mother” (2012: 120). This long-suffering Bengali mother is the stereotypical Indian woman wearing nothing but saris, cooking Indian dishes in her kitchen and becoming afraid of her children to be complete Americans. Through the end of the novel, it is easy to see Ashima as a half Indian and half American woman as she adapts to the culture she lives in. After Ashoke’s death, which deeply shocks her with the thought of autophobia, she does all the mourning procedures from clothing to eating and also takes back his ashes to Ganges. All these show her loyalty to her Indian roots. At the end of the novel she decides to “spend six months of her life in India, six months in the States” (Lahiri, 2004: 275). She is also aware of the fact that “she is not the same Ashima who had once lived in Calcutta. She will return to India with an American passport” (Lahiri, 2004: 276). Although she has longed for her home in Calcutta for many years, now she feels permanently alone and “overwhelmed by the thought of the move she is about to make, to the city that was once home and is now in its own way foreign” (Lahiri, 2004: 278). She realizes that even though she never replaced it with the one in Calcutta, the house on Pemberton Road was a home, indeed. Within this sense, Ashima draws a very sharp picture of an immigrant who is unable to find a place to dedicate a life.

As for Gogol, he also comes to a point of resolution at the end of the novel that he realizes his family’s struggle as the first generation immigrants who are torn between their children and their ethnic background. Through the years, he only focused on his own identity construction by changing his name and location but he blocked out his parents, never minded about their endeavor about upbringing a child in a foreign land. He concludes in his mind that:

All those trips to Calcutta he’d once resented – how could they have been enough? They were not enough. Gogol knows now that his parents had lived their lives in America in spite of what was missing, with a stamina he fears he does not possess himself. He had spent years maintaining distance from his origins; his parents, in bridging that distance as best as they could (Lahiri, 2004: 281).

Gogol is in his thirties and now he is aware of many things that he could not realize in earlier years. He thinks of his life and his family’s; it “feels like a string of accidents, unforeseen, unintended, one incident begetting another” and within this process, Gogol is in his long journey to find firstly himself, and then a place for this self

(Lahiri, 2004: 286). He also thinks of his mistakes, the wrong paths he has chosen, the wrong people he has taken into his life and concludes that “these events have formed Gogol, shaped him, determined who he is. They were things for which it was impossible to prepare but which one spent a lifetime looking back at, trying to accept, interpret, comprehend” (Lahiri, 2004: 287).

Thus, it can be concluded that Gogol comprehends and accepts the cores of his life up to now. However, this does not mean he is completed and became stable with a certain identity. As Kemper states, “Lahiri’s characters who rely too heavily on homeland nostalgia (this is for Ashima) and the characters who look only toward progressing in diasporic space (this is for Gogol) are unsuccessful in finding a space for their own identity” (2011: 13). Maybe, Gogol takes his father’s fourteenth birthday gift, *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol*, from which his story also arose, to enlighten his way in this long journey to reach a certain identity and find a certain place within the society as a lifelong immigrant.

CHAPTER FOUR

IDENTITY DUALITIES IN *THE LOWLAND*

Similar to her first novel, *The Namesake* (2003), another impressive work of Jhumpa Lahiri is *The Lowland* (2013), which is also woven through a compelling plot, real-like characters and an integrated setting of places. The novel is grounded on family relationships of two brothers who are born in India, then separated both physically and mentally; and parallel to their experiences, the themes of identity, hybridity, in-betweenness, dislocation and cultural displacement are also implicated. Subhash and Udayan are the two brothers on whose story the novel is based and additionally, other characters are all interconnected through them. As presented in *The Namesake*, the characters' maturation processes are built around their struggles to be in one place with one identity and their experiences to create this identity. Although the main characters seem to be Subhash and Udayan, their wife, Gauri and their daughter Bela are also significant characters who go through different identity changes throughout the novel. The story is set between India and America as a result of the immigration process. Thus, the characters are in-between these two cultures, experiencing the dilemma of having ethnic roots with their Indian life and adapting the new American culture. *The Lowland*, different from many other works of Lahiri, also has political and social concepts since the novel is set during the Naxalbari movement in India. It shows that the historical and political backgrounds also have a great role in shaping one's identity, which is seen through Udayan in the novel. Rather than focusing on the political aspects, the themes of postcolonial theory and its reflections on the characters will be explicated in this chapter. Lahiri uses some flashback techniques in her writing of *The Lowland*, thus the plot sometimes switches among characters and their experiences by referring to some postcolonial concepts such as hybridity, in-betweenness, mimicry, cultural duality and belonging.

Subhash and Udayan Mitra are the two brothers who constitute the basis of the novel with their completely different characteristics. Though they were born one after another and they were the best childhood friends of each other, their opposite characters and independent choices shaped their lifestyles throughout the novel. While Subhash - the fifteen months older one - , is the obedient, thoughtful and calm one after whom his

mother never had to run; Udayan is the radical, rascal and disobedient one who forced his mother with his impetuous actions during his childhood. The movement called Naxalbari, which separates both the brothers and the people in the country, is the first sign for their parting since Udayan becomes a part of it, devotes himself; while Subhash is not sure whether it is worth or not. At this point, their lives become separated with the great gap between their choices that Udayan chooses to stay and fight for a cause, on the other hand, Subhash chooses the way to study abroad and get his PhD in the United States. From the very beginning, it can be stated that Udayan stands for India by reflecting his loyalty to the country where he belongs and for the sake of which he dies; whereas Subhash stands for America by choosing a new path opening to a new world where he demands to belong. India is the land where he “no longer felt a part of” and Calcutta is the “city on the brink of something; a city he was preparing to leave behind” (Lahiri, 2014: 40). However, Subhash does not think it is a kind of abandoning; rather “it’s only a matter of a few years” he says while telling of Udayan about the PhD program and the convenience of going to the United States with the new regulations on immigrant laws for Indian students (Lahiri, 2014: 36). Udayan’s response foreshadows his brother’s choice of a new life in a new land that he says if Subhash goes, he will not come back. When he arrives to the new land, Rhode Island, he is astonished by the differences between this dream land and the ruin where he left behind.

The difference was so extreme that he could not accommodate the two places together in his mind. In this enormous new country, there seemed to be nowhere for the old to reside. There was nothing to link them; he was the sole link. Here life ceased to obstruct or assault him. Here was a place where humanity was not always pushing, rushing, running as if with a fire at its back (Lahiri, 2014: 41).

However, with the idea of going back when his doctoral program is done, he does not feel completely belonging to this new land at first. This may be also because of his realistic point of view that he has just a good position in America; not a permanent, stable place in American society. He has the opportunity to study in this welcoming land and he has to be careful to protect his chance to complete his education and his journey through new identities, as well. He remembers his childhood memories of Tolly Club (a place which is built just for the British people in Tollygunge and is a remnant of the colonial period in Calcutta), in which they were restricted to enter since they were

not British. Here, in America, he is allowed to enter officially; however he still feels at the threshold, which symbolizes Subhash's belonging to neither India nor America. He is also aware of the fact that "the door could close just as arbitrarily as it had opened" and "he could be sent back to where he'd come from, and that there would be plenty to take his place" (Lahiri, 2014: 44). In such a condition, he is both grateful for the scholarship that America presents him and also uneasy of losing it and the chance of having a new life in this new land, as well.

Although he is eager to discover his new world and the small environment enclosing him, he is also staid not to let himself go in the flow of American life because of the imposed idea of going back to his homeland. In this sense, he makes his own meals with curry and boiled rice at the same time sharing an apartment with a Wisconsin boy, Richard. This also shows the beginning of his blending in cultures. When Richard asks about India, although he does not "know how to describe India's fractious politics, its complicated society, to an American" Subhash depicts it as "an ancient place that was also young, still struggling to know itself" (Lahiri, 2014: 50). Indeed, Subhash depicts himself as he is also new here, but old enough for his homeland, and also when his next struggles are considered, he is also trying to know himself. Despite his inner conflicts as a foreigner in a new land, he is proud to be alone in America and he thinks it is something like learning to stand, walk and speak for the first time just like a baby. Thus, it can be stated that Subhash is trying to set a new life for himself unwittingly, by leaving the idea of a transitory stay for a few years and "here, in this place surrounded by sea, he was drifting far from his point of origin" (Lahiri, 2014: 48).

Subhash meets a professor of economics named Narasimhan, from India at the university and he can be regarded as a figure of Indian rooted academics in America, just like Ashoke Ganguli in Lahiri's previous novel, *The Namesake*. They stand for the brain drain, which is among one of the reasons of immigration to more promising countries, and also the representatives of the first generation Indians in America. Unlike Ashoke, Narasimhan seems more adapted to American way of living, with his American wife and using English as a way to express himself even speaking to a Bengali boy. He only remembers a few Bengali words, he says and this means Narasimhan projects the American identity of a Bengali man who has a respected place in American society.

Although Narasimhan is shortly mentioned in the novel, it is possible to say that he has a great role in shaping Subhash's mind about the life in America. He has an American wife and two sons; thus he draws a picture of a family image in Subhash's mind that it is not impossible for a Bengali man to get married with an American and start a family by blending two cultures. At this point, Subhash thinks of the arranged marriages of Indian culture and Narasimhan's rejection of his family's wishes or choices as a spouse for him. Feeling that "some part of him" is missing in Rhode Island, Subhash imagines his own wedding: "He wondered what woman his parents would choose for him. He wondered when it would be. Getting married would mean returning to Calcutta. In that sense he was in no hurry" (Lahiri, 2014: 48). By taking Narasimhan's comfort into consideration, the idea of returning to Calcutta does not seem appealing to him. Within this sense, it can be said that Subhash takes a step from the threshold he stands at the beginning towards his new land since he realizes some unchanging traditions of Indian culture can be replaced with more reasonable American ones, such as marriage customs.

During his struggle to get accustomed to this new land, Udayan's letters function as an intervene which are to remind him a life he left behind in India and his kindredship both to the country and his brother. In his first letter, written in Bengali, he tells about the course of events, of which he is a partisan, in Calcutta, and reproaches his brother due to his indifference of not writing to him since he left. Indeed, he knows the reason behind it, but he is still expectant of his return to Calcutta, just like his family. "No doubt the flora and fauna of the world's greatest capitalist power captivate you" Udayan writes as if he is observing Subhash and his new life in America (Lahiri, 2014: 51). As seen in many different examples of immigrants, who take their way with the idea of returning back home after completing their tasks in the welcoming land, Subhash is also attracted by the new lifestyle presented to him in this new land. However, he is not completely a part of this culture yet; he responds his brother that he also misses his homeland and says "something about the coastal landscape here, the water and the grass, the smell of bacteria when I visit the mudflats, takes me home. I think of the lowland, of paddy fields" (Lahiri, 2014: 52). The lowland is their childhood and memories, so Subhash thinks about his background belonging to India, the reason bringing him to America and his ambiguous future. He sometimes feels alone, "isolated on the ship with scientists and other students and the crew, unable to fathom his future, severed from his past" (Lahiri, 2014: 75). At this point, it is possible to say that Subhash

is somewhere in-between his homeland and new land. He thinks of his family and questions their expectations, traditions and living styles. On the other hand, he thinks of the American society, in which he is trying to learn and observe the ways they treat or the cultural differences, and feels closer to this new culture. He is dislocated and searches for his place in the society to settle down.

In his second letter, Udayan's news is about his marriage, which is against the grain, with a girl named Gauri. He rejects following the traditions that his family would choose the girl for him and this is an undesirable marriage from his parents' eyes. Udayan's rebellious character dares to do such a thing without his parents' consent. He also admits one more thing about his marriage that this is one thing that he admires about the West (Lahiri, 2014: 56). In this sense, although Udayan is the representative of India and the roots, he is a rebellion against some traditions, too. For Subhash, this means Udayan could make his own choice for marriage even though he is in India, and he took a step further than Subhash by getting married. Since Udayan is the radical one, the Mitra family pins their hopes on Subhash, the obedient one, to settle his future and trust them for his future. They write in one their letters that "we hope you will not disregard our wishes, as your brother did" and this also emphasizes the unbroken ties of Subhash with his homeland as he replies to reassure his parents to arrange his wedding (Lahiri, 2014: 75).

With these doubts in his mind, Subhash goes on his new life as an observer in America. In this part of the novel, Lahiri gives Subhash an opportunity to make closer observations as she did to Gogol, in *The Namesake*. Just like Maxine and her family in *The Namesake*, Holly, an American woman with a son, can be regarded as a gateway for Subhash into the American life. Their relationship starts with a coincidence on the beach, and then Subhash finds himself in an affair with her. Both of them are their "others" in the sense of difference. Holly is the reflection of the dominant culture for Subhash, with whom he also tries to correlate; on the other hand, Subhash is the "mysterious oriental" for Holly as he represents India in this powerful land. Some of their conversations shape Subhash's thoughts about America and enable him to recognize the facts that he has no other bonds than a biological one to his roots and family that he dreams of making a good life for himself in this land. He explains what he feels about being in America to Holly that: "There are times I think I have discovered

the most beautiful place on earth” (Lahiri, 2014: 77). On the other hand, he is so aware of his displacement in America that he tries to convince first himself, then Holly to the idea of the best place he can fit is this land. “He didn’t belong, but perhaps it didn’t matter. He wanted to tell her that he had been waiting all his life to find Rhode Island. That it was here, in this minute but majestic corner of the world, that he could breathe” (Lahiri, 2014: 77-78). Holly means much for Subhash that he not only observes an American lifestyle, but also questions his being in America, his sense of belonging, his identity and his place where to stand. With her, he has the opportunity to do many ordinary things such as going to the supermarket or taking long walks that are impossible in Calcutta, before getting married (Lahiri, 2014: 90). Such kind of simple things for an American man attracts Subhash since he feels as a part of both Holly and the American society.

Another significant factor in shaping Subhash’s identity and cultural placement in America is Holly’s husband, to whom she is still married but living in separate houses. He stands as a “stereotype” of the American culture for Subhash in terms of Bhabha’s definitions: “the stereotype is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated” (2004: 95). From Bhabha’s viewpoint, it can be deduced that Subhash needs a stereotype to idealize within the construction process of his new identity and Holly’s husband is the one who is already known with a stable place in society. At this point, Subhash’s desire for originality does not come from his ethnic, Indian roots even though he is attracted by Holly with his past which makes him “distinctive” to her (Lahiri, 2014: 90). On the contrary, he wants to erase those roots and set a new life without any reference to the old; thus he tries to create an image of a husband for Holly and a father for her son. After observing the stereotypical American man, this time he mimics what he has seen. This process is also pointed out by Bhabha that one can appropriate the “other” by visualizing the strong one or in other words it is a kind of reform of repeating rather than representing (2004: 123, 125). What Subhash tries to do is replacing his Indian background with his new style of Americanness through imitating his observations. In this process of embracing American way of life, he loses his virginity with Holly just like many other things - related to his roots- he is about to lose willingly. He regards this as a “profound step he’d taken” into his new

world and now he is somewhere closer to the American culture rather than his Indian side.

In her cramped bedroom, setting aside his guilt, he cultivated an ongoing defiance of his parents' expectations. He was aware that he could get away with it, that it was merely the shoals of physical distance that allowed his defiance to persist. He thought of Narasimhan as an ally now; Narasimhan and his American wife. Sometimes he imagined what it would be like to lead a similar life with Holly. To live the rest of his life in America, to disregard his parents, to make his own family with her (Lahiri, 2014: 91).

When he thinks of a life with Holly, he knows it seems impossible for him as his family would not accept an American woman as a bride as well as her situation of being a mother and a legal wife of another man. These are all against Indian customs, he knows; yet he feels ease due to the thousands of miles between him and his family. In this sense, Subhash moves off his family and his homeland customs for the sake of freedom that his new life presents. However, with Holly's sudden decision to unite with her husband, Subhash recognizes that constructing a new identity or leaving one's roots is not something so easy to accomplish in a foreign land. As Amin Maalouf also states, "identity isn't given once and for all: it is built up and changes throughout a person's life" (2003: 25). Thus, this can be regarded as the starting point, or a breaking point for Subhash to build up his new identity or reshape the previous one with new customs and experiences.

In Subhash's third autumn in Rhode Island, in 1971, trying to survive between being Indian and American at the same time, a telegram consisting of just two sentences shocks him. Udayan was killed by the police because of his illegal involvements in politics. This event is the reason for Subhash's return to Calcutta for the first time since he left. When he is back in Calcutta, he realizes that he does not belong to this land anymore. After the tranquility he found in America, the crowd annoys him that "he had forgotten the possibility of so many human beings in one space" (Lahiri, 2014: 104). On the other hand, he is not welcomed as he was in America. Though he returns to his homeland where he is supposed to belong, he is more welcomed in America where he even does not know at first. His mother promised to meet him just like "a hero's welcome" when he comes back to India, however, he can find what he expects neither from his family nor from the society (Lahiri, 2014: 105). This is partly because of the

funeral of his brother as the family is still mourning, and partly because of Subhash's becoming someone different after his experience of America. At this point, there can be an intertextual similarity between *The Namesake*, in which the Ganguli family also experiences a similar way of not belonging to their homeland when they go for a visit. For most of the immigrant families, the same situation provides them to realize that they no longer belong to their homeland countries or cultures. While they are the ones who observe in a foreign land, they become the observed in their homeland. This is because of the change they experience throughout their life in the foreign land. According to Bhabha, by this way, the identity of a person is also restated and it is estranged from its core; the self in other words (2004: 127). For Subhash, his core is alienated with his American experiences, thus he is also alienated from his own culture, too.

He recognizes some interesting facts about his family and their lifestyles in India. For example, his mother eats after serving them just like Ashima, another mother character in the previous novel of Lahiri. It is one of those meaningless customs for Subhash. Also he is served when he is in Calcutta, he never does any of the housework; but in America he has to do these things on his own. This may be regarded as the needs of becoming an individual. Besides these facts, he also realizes that he is familiar with the foreigners he saw on Calcutta streets; he thinks he has some things in common with them. They are there just to explore, they are passing through. "Though he looked like any other Bengali he felt an allegiance with the foreigners now. He shared with them a knowledge of elsewhere. Another life to go back to. The ability to leave" (Lahiri, 2014: 132). This clearly shows to the reader that Subhash does not belong to his homeland anymore. He knows that there is another world, which is more appealing and promising, outside India. He feels more familiar with that world than his homeland. At this point, Udayan's prediction comes true that Subhash goes back to India only physically, but his mind stays in America with many other things contributing to form his identity.

Another breakpoint in Subhash's life is his decision to take Gauri to America with him. As a widow after his brother, Gauri is depicted as an undesirable being at Mitra home since Subhash's parents do not want her from the very beginning. She is the representation of rebel as they were married without family's consent and after Udayan's death she is treated loathingly by the parents that she isn't given any fish or meat, she is isolated from the members of the house and her colorful saris are taken

away (Lahiri, 2014: 134). These are the customs for Subhash's mother, Bijoli; but discrimination for Subhash. Although Gauri was once a disobedient girl choosing her own way without her own family, now she turned into a widow, depending on her in-laws, observance of the mourning rituals according to Indian customs for ten days after her husband's death.

She did not wash her clothes or wear slippers or comb her hair. [...] The vermilion was washed clean from her hair, the iron bangle removed from her wrist. The absence of these ornaments marked her as a widow. [...] She was given white saris to wear in place of colored ones, so that she resembled the other widows in the family (Lahiri, 2014: 128-129).

Gauri is also the one who carries Udayan's only memory in her body that she is pregnant. This also causes her being rejected by the Mitra family and after Subhash learns about the ideas of his family of taking the baby and throwing her out of the house, he decides to take Gauri to America with him. At this point, this can be regarded as Subhash's rebellion against his family for the first time as they consider his leaving for America not an immigration but a transitory time just for his PhD. Now Subhash is aware of the differences between him and his family and this gap would never be filled after experiencing a different life in a different land.

He was already eager to leave Calcutta. There was nothing he could do for his parents. He was unable to console them. Though he'd returned to stand before them, in the end it had not mattered that he had come. [...] The only way to prevent it (baby's being raised in a joyless house) was to take Gauri away. It was all he could do to help her, the only alternative he could provide. And the only way to take her away was to marry her (Lahiri, 2014: 136).

This is a breakpoint for Subhash to stand up to his parents and take Gauri as a wife and a companion to his new land. After this step, it is no more Subhash's identity formation on his own but also Gauri's search for a new identity and a stable place in America where "no one would bother her" and the child "could be raised without the burden of what had happened" (Lahiri, 2014: 141).

When Gauri arrives at Rhode Island with Subhash, a new life begins for her in a new land. With the idea that this is the place "where she could put things behind her,

where her child would be born, ignorant and safe”, Gauri starts to discover this new land day by day (Lahiri, 2014: 148). At first Gauri is cautious and anxious about this new place as she neither knows nor belongs. She tries to learn to live without her background that she is volunteer to wipe out. In time, she goes out on her own with the trust on her independence that Subhash provides her and even attends the philosophy classes on the campus. She comes to America as an Indian woman with her sari and goes on wearing it in her first days. However, one day she goes out with her sari in and the coat Subhash bought for her over her sari. This exemplifies Gauri’s hybridity and being in-between the two cultures. While she cannot leave her Indian side abruptly, she cannot wear like an American woman with a great change, though. At this point, Gauri first combines these two cultures to which she does not belong and there emerges a third image by “homogenizing the cultural symbols and icons” (Bhabha, 2004: 52). Thus, Gauri is in-between a culture shock and does not know which way to choose for her appearance. Later, when she meets a student in the lounge at the college, she becomes aware of the difference that makes her appearance ‘other’ than the rest of the girls. “Her body was unencumbered by the yards of silk material that Gauri wrapped and pleated and tucked every morning into a petticoat. These were the saris she’d worn since she stopped wearing frocks, at fifteen” and she recognizes that it is time to change this custom of wearing saris (Lahiri, 2014: 158). As a part of adaptation, she should go through some changes such as her clothes, eating habits or living styles.

On the other hand, saris remind her of the life and customs in India which she tries to elude. Thus, as a first step to get rid of her past and to gain her new identity, she decides to start with her appearance: “watching the girl walk away, Gauri felt ungainly. She began to want to look like the other women she noticed on the campus, like a woman Udayan had never seen (Lahiri, 2014: 159). Following this decision, one day she cuts her old clothes and rips them into pieces as if she is also dispelling her past and the part that belongs to India. “In one corner of the floor, all of her saris, and her petticoats and blouses, were lying in ribbons and scraps of various shapes and sizes, as if an animal had shredded the fabric with its teeth and claws. She had destroyed everything” (Lahiri, 2014: 166). This is the clear evidence of her resentment and anger to her past and the cultural norms which have been shaped her life and identity in India. As Andrews and Aasha pointed in their article, “instead of donning traditional roles, she tries to discover her own identity and choices, without waiting for any patriarchal

authority to validate them” (2017: 317). She also cuts her hair, which is a symbol of Indian customs that is obligatory for women to keep their hair long. So, she rejects her roots and societal assertiveness by cutting both her clothes and her hair. This can be regarded as her attempt to bury her past experiences in order not to carry them as a burden in this new promising land of tranquility and freedom. In this sense, it can be said that she follows the steps of an immigrant which are also stated by Bhabha that she first observed the original stereotypical American women, then she internalized these characteristics and the next step is mimicking them as the original source of being American. In one of the courses in which she attended unnoticed, she cannot keep quiet and immerses in the lecture by asking a question about Aristotle. She is answered by the professor “as if Gauri were any legitimate member of the class” and this makes her feel as a part of that community consisting of students and the professor, she feels like she is someone recognized by the Americans neglecting her Indian appearance (Lahiri, 2014: 157). In this process of mimicking the American life and American women, Gauri goes on following what they do and proves herself that she can stand on her own on a campus which she has never been before.

She made a little routine of it, following the wave of students after the class let out to eat her lunch at the cafeteria of the student union, ordering French fries at the grill, bread and butter and tea, sometimes treating herself to a dish of ice cream. [...] She liked spending time in the company of people who ignored but surrounded her (Lahiri, 2014: 157).

She tries to become one of those students, thus she mimics what they do or where they go, and she becomes “almost the same but not quite” (Bhabha, 2004: 122). She no longer wears saris, cooks or eats Indian food, has braided long hair; instead she wears jeans and trousers, eats fast food and uses her hair short. She spends her days in the library by “reading Hobbes, Hannah Arendt and taking notes” so she can create a space for herself in this new land and at the same time, prepares a substructure for her future (Lahiri, 2014: 168).

When she is about to find her place as an intellectual individual in the American culture, she gains another identity as a mother with the birth of her daughter. Subhash also becomes a father, as well as an uncle and names the baby girl of his brother as

Bela. Subhash hopes Bela would make them a real family, however, for Gauri she is the only remnant of her past life, a memory from Udayan. So being a new family seems impossible for Gauri as she does not want to live with those memories of her past which would prevent her being someone new with a reshaped, constructed identity. Thus, Gauri draws an image of an indifferent mother not explicitly but inwardly rejecting her daughter.

Though she cared for Bela capably, though she kept her clean and combed and fed, she seemed distracted. Rarely did Subhash see her smiling when she looked into Bela's face. Rarely did he see Gauri kissing Bela spontaneously. Instead, from the beginning, it was as if she'd reversed their roles, as if Bela were a relative's child and not her own (Lahiri, 2014: 188-189).

She regards both Bela and Subhash as a threat to her new identity, to the woman she imagines to be. When Subhash notices Gauri's failure and reluctance to be a good mother, he remembers his mother's prediction about Gauri and her motherhood as she said once "she is Udayan's wife, she'll never love you" and he is afraid that his mother was right. Since he always feels as if his parents are watching him in this land, he feels himself unsuccessful this time with the fear of justification of her mother. From this point, it can be deferred that Subhash cannot leave his past or roots as easily as Gauri although he lives in America for a longer time than Gauri. He feels guilty against his family for disobeying them and ignoring their thoughts about this marriage and Gauri. This is because his feeling or being regarded as a failure, who cannot manage to set up a new life with a wife and a daughter of his own roots. At this point, he regards Gauri as the cause of his failure, or thinks that she is more adaptable to this new society with a new cultural structure even though she is a mother.

Within this process, Bela feels closer to Subhash and their relationship becomes stronger than the one with her mother, Gauri. The only thing she deals with is her studies at the college and she proves her success in her new life with an acceptance to the doctoral program which is also a sign of being accepted as an individual with an academic identity by the American society. Thus, she consolidates her place in society and takes a new step through her new identity from an Indian widow to an Indian-American academician. However, while reinforcing her location outside, she loses her belonging inside her own home, moves away from her so-called family. She spends

days and weeks “in the spare bedroom that served as her study” and Bela is told it is her office and “when she is in it Bela was to behave as if her mother were not home” (Lahiri, 2014: 238). Thus, she creates her ‘third space’, indeed. She reshapes and re-creates her identity in this third space which is both in and out of the cultures she is a part of. Another location to create a space for her own is the times when she leaves Bela home for short periods such as checking the mailbox or going to the supermarket in order to feel free from the circle enclosing her with the reminders of the past. This is also a kind of foreshadowing that she will leave her forever when she departs for California. In one of those breaks, Subhash comes home earlier and learns from Bela that she is out for the mailbox. When he spots her lie he says that “my mother was right. You don’t deserve to be a parent. The privilege was wasted on you” (Lahiri, 2014: 209). This is the breaking point of their unreal relationship based upon a great lie and an undesired past.

Bela also does not regard Gauri as a compassionate mother and she has a stronger relationship with his father-uncle. She once cried out saying that she does not like Gauri as she does not allocate any of her time for Bela. There is not a bond between Gauri and Bela like any other mother and daughter on earth. That is what Gauri tries to do, indeed: not to create any bound with her daughter, who is nothing more than a reminder of the past, India, Udayan and her life she’s struggling to leave behind. Thus, it would be easier to create a life of her own without them as well as the identity she has started to construct.

Lahiri goes on her plot with a journey to the homeland to make Subhash realize that he does not belong there anymore one more time and also to make Bela experience the sense of being a second generation Indian in the place where she has never seen. Subhash’s father was no longer alive and his mother was no longer mentally balanced after losing both a son and a husband. Bela, unaware and puzzled, tries to make sense of the scenes around her as she has never been to Calcutta before. This time she is the observer because she is in an environment that is not familiar with the one she experienced. Her grandmother, Bijoli or her maid, Deepa are the authentic stereotypes that she would observe and try to act similar to them. She tries to eat with her fingers as all the Bengali people around her do but she is not capable of doing it even though she has the Bengali roots. Just like the second generation immigrant children of the Ganguli

family in *The Namesake*, Bela is also the representative of the Americanness they experience and adopt from the first moment of her birth. The relatives in India are also aware of the fact that these children do not belong to this land:

Watching Bela try to pick up rice and lentils with her fingers, her grandmother told Deepa to fetch a spoon. When Deepa poured Bela some water from the urn that stood on a little stool, in the corner of the room, her grandmother reproached her. Not that water. Give her the boiled water. She's not made to survive here (Lahiri, 2014: 232).

As an observer in India, Bela draws the environment she is in as unsecure since "she was not able to leave the house in Tollygunge on her own. She was not permitted even to move through it freely [...] she was not able to join the children she sometimes saw playing in the street; but in Rhode Island, since her third grade, her mother had let Bela wander through the campus" (Lahiri, 2014: 242). Thus, the first and the last impression of India is somewhere unsafe for Bela and she is regarded as an outsider since many people stare at her directly and watch her in every move. This is the first and the last visit of Bela to India, where she does not belong just like her parents.

Their return opens a new page in their lives without Gauri since she left them with only a letter behind her pointing that "around Bela I am only reminded of all the ways I've failed her. [...] In exchange for all you have done for me, I leave Bela to you" (Lahiri, 2014: 252-253). She sets up a new life by getting the financial support from the university she is accepted in California and thus, she is able to leave both Subhash and Bela, the reminders of her past. However, she does this with an emotional letter as if she struggled hard to be a 'real' mother to Bela and covers up her attempt to freedom with the lie of leaving Bela as an exchange of thanking. What she does indeed is what she dreamed of for years since she came to America. Now she is a self-sustained, strong woman who could manage to reject her ethnic roots and traditions and construct a new identity and sense of belonging, instead. Thus, it can be stated that Gauri, "the most complex, unpredictable character whose thoughts and feelings are opaque from all" takes a significant step towards her reconstructed American identity (Pius, 2014: 110). She left not only her Indian side but also a daughter who will hate her mother throughout her life, will shape her life with the image of a selfish mother. The counsellor tells about this event and its effects on Bela that "it was as if a bone had broken in her body, it was not simply a matter of time before it mended, nor was it

possible for him to set it right” (Lahiri, 2014: 259). After Gauri’s leaving, Subhash also feels dislocated and deficient as if he lost a piece of his identity puzzle which he struggles to complete for years.

After Gauri, Subhash eternally loses another woman figure in his life; his mother Bijoli. She stands for the inner conflicts that Subhash cannot face for years as he once opposed her by choosing Gauri as a wife after his brother. He always felt her eyes on him even though he was thousands of miles away. She represents the Indian side of Subhash that he cannot abandon easily and carries as a burden throughout his journeys from Calcutta to Rhode Island as well as his inner journey from having Indian roots to gaining American norms to construct an identity. His last visit to Calcutta is like a last mission to be completed to face with the truth of his being dislocated from this land and his family:

He understood that perhaps he no longer existed in his mother’s mind, that she’d already let go of him. He’d defied her by marrying Gauri; for years he’d avoided her, leading his life in a place she’d never seen. [...] But now the distance between them was not merely physical, or even emotional. It was intractable. It triggered a delayed burst of responsibility in Subhash (Lahiri, 2014: 264).

Similar to Subhash’s indifference to his family, now Bela is at the threshold to shape her future. She gives her own decisions, like once his mother Gauri, his father Udayan and also Subhash did. She has chosen a life with a “series of jobs on farms across the country, some close by others far”, “she’d lived with groups who pooled their income” and “she lived without insurance” (Lahiri, 2014: 266). Subhash feels worried about her being closed off from him and he does not approve of the paths she has chosen. However, Subhash’s raising of Bela can be regarded as another example of his rejection of Indian customs that “Bela is allowed to live separately from her parents, and travels around the country, living the life of a homeless person. Although both her parents are successful scholars, she is given the liberty to leave her studies at B.A. level and make a living by farming instead” (Ghoreishi, 2016: 46). Bela’s rejecting a university degree can also be emphasized as a reaction against her mother since she was so devoted to her academic studies that she even neglects Bela and instead values her pages as an infant. In this sense, Bela can be regarded as the only person who is not in-

between her roots and the adopted culture. Unlike the second generation characters in *The Namesake*, Bela tries to solve her inner conflicts with her mother, rather than her ethnic background. Her identity formation is not split up because of her being Indian since she has been in India only for one time and this helped her to see the great difference between two cultures. However, “it is her mother who leads to her displacement” and her mother who causes a gap that cannot be fully recovered throughout years (Andrews, 2017: 319). She describes the lack of a mother figure as follows: “Her mother’s absence was like another language she’d had to learn, its full complexity and nuance emerging only after years of study, and even then, because it was foreign, a language never fully absorbed” (Lahiri, 2014: 306). It is regarded as a second birth of Bela after Gauri’s leaving her and she manages to embrace her life as it is, without any effort to change or reshape it. That is the reason of her being a different second generation Indian immigrant with a complete but motherless identity.

When Lahiri shifts back to Gauri, who set up a new life only for herself in California, it is near the end of the novel that each character is about to complete their identities. Her first days in California were full of anxiety to be discovered by Subhash and Bela, in other words to be seized by her past. She was haunted with the image of her daughter whom she left behind and still regards her as a threat to her new life in this part of the country. “But in twenty years no one had come. She had not been summoned back. She had been given what she’d demanded, granted exactly the freedom she had sought” (Lahiri, 2014: 276). Gauri is the one who used all the opportunities presented to her by the new land where she came under favor of Subhash. In this regard, she has a new sense of belonging now. She becomes someone new firstly by rejecting her saris and then diverging through the outer world via her academic studies and now she thinks California as the only home of hers. Also she is regarded as someone respected and as in the case of gaining an identity or a place in a foreign land which was previously mentioned by Ashoke Ganguli in *The Namesake*, she is now a part of the culture she adopts. Despite these changes she could make gradually, there are some certain facts that would never leave her whatever she does:

And yet she remained, in spite of her Western clothes, her Western academic interests, a woman who spoke English with a foreign accent, whose physical appearance and complexion were unchangeable and against the backdrop of most of America, still

unconventional. She continued to introduce herself by an unusual name, the first given by her parents, the last by the two brothers she had wed (Lahiri, 2014: 281-282).

Gauri's identity formation is set up in different layers since she is the most resilient character in the novel. She can adapt to new situations and make her own decisions. Thus, she projects her Americanness rather than protecting her Indian roots. With the liberty of living in the American society, despite her physical appearance or complexion or her foreign accent, she even experiences a homosexual relationship, "something that she could not have dreamed of in India", with a student who just seeks an outside reader for her PhD dissertation, (Ghoreishi, 2016: 46). With this extreme experience, her she added one more layer in shaping her identity that:

[...] her role had changed at so many other points in the past. From wife to widow, from sister-in-law to wife, from mother to childless woman. With the exception of losing Udayan, she had actively chosen to take these steps. She had married Subhash, she had abandoned Bela. She had generated alternative versions of herself, she had insisted at brutal cost on these conversions. Layering her life only to strip it bare, only to be alone in the end (Lahiri, 2014: 287).

This is a resolution point for Gauri in her journey of constructing an identity and finding a place in society. She has the awareness to evaluate her steps she had taken from the very beginning of her life in America. The only thing she feels incomplete at the end of this journey is the bond between Bela and her which could not be established. Thus, she decides to visit Bela after she gets Subhas's letter of a divorce both to give him the documents she signed and to face with the truth of being a mother to a daughter she left years ago.

Meanwhile, Subhash is also at the stage of a resolution to tell the truth they had been keeping as a secret since Bela's birth. But before him, Bela tells about her pregnancy by rejecting to confess who the father is. At this point, Subhash accuses himself again of setting a bad example for her daughter that she thinks she can also bring up a child on her own just like Subhash. On the other hand, this is also a turning point for Bela as she decides to live with her father by giving up that undesired lifestyle by Subhash. This reminds Subhash of a very familiar scene: "The coincidence coursed through him, numbing, bewildering. A pregnant woman, a fatherless child. Arriving in Rhode Island, needing him. It was a reenactment of Bela's origins. A version of what

had brought Gauri to him, years ago” (Lahiri, 2014: 317). Towards Bela’s honesty, Subhash can no more go on with the hidden truth that has been a burden for him and with a fear of loss; he confesses that Udayan was her father, indeed. With the relief of being freed from the heavy burden of his past just like Gauri thought once, Subhash feels renewed. Unlike Gauri adding layers to her identity, Subhash reduces one layer of being both a father and an uncle from his identity. In this sense, Subhash also feels himself disburdened as he revealed the truth, as he left Udayan’s existence in his life which always reminded him India and his past. Now that Subhash is renewed, this can also be regarded as his last step to wipe out the last piece of his past. He thinks all his experiences in India and America and recognizes the point where he stands now:

Until he left Calcutta, Subhash’s life was hardly capable of leaving a trace. He could have put everything belonging to him into a single grocery bag. [...] Until he went to America, he had not had his own room. He had belonged to his parents and to Udayan, and they to him. That was all. Here he had been quietly successful, educating himself, finding engaging work. It had been enough, materially speaking (Lahiri, 2014: 301).

He is aware that he would never go back to Tollygunge, his homeland and his life in Rhode Island would go on with an American woman called Elise for whom he sent the letter to Gauri with a demand to divorce. Thus, it can be said for Subhash that he is able to complete the pieces of his identity puzzle, find himself a place as no more an immigrant but a resident in America. Though he was in-between the two cultures he experienced, now his American identity overcomes his Indian side.

Lastly, Lahiri focuses on Gauri, who struggles most because of the identity dualities she has been exposed to. Like Subhash’s resolution, she also visits her daughter Bela in order to relieve herself from the sense of abandoning. She also wants to thank Subhash for being a good father to Bela, for bringing her to America and for letting her go. “With the shame that had flooded her veins”, She finds Bela with a four-year-old daughter, Meghna right in the place where she once left her (Lahiri, 2014: 368). She feels disappointed when she sees the harmony they live in and she also adds one more layer to her identity as a friend of Meghna’s grandmother, namely as a great aunt. Instead of becoming a real mother, she ends up with becoming a fake great-aunt. Thus, it is impossible for Gauri to fill the gap, which she intentionally formed years ago by abandoning her daughter, in her identity. In other words, it is not possible for Gauri

to have a united identity, a completed one wherever she goes. On the other hand, shocked with her mother's presence, Bela had "never felt such violent emotion before" and "it twisted through the love she felt for her father, her daughter, her guarded fondness for Drew" (Lahiri, 2014: 376). In this way, Bela becomes the most completed identity in the novel because she has never felt in-between the traditions of India and America.

As a last mission to take leave of her already rejected roots, Gauri goes back to Calcutta, which is now called as "Kolkata, the way Bengalis pronounced it" (Lahiri, 2014: 377). Nothing was changed except the name. She wandered in the streets with past memories in her mind as if she embraced her ethnic identity back. However, she knew that it was infeasible for her to be the Gauri again who once lived in this land. With the heavy burden of her incompleteness, she thinks of suicide: "This was the place. This was the reason she'd come. The purpose of her return was to take her leave" (Lahiri, 2014: 386). However, she could not fulfill it just like not fulfilling to construct an identity throughout her journey. In the end, she goes back to California, the place where she feels more familiar and settled than 'Kolkata', and gets a letter from Bela, with no salutation telling that Meghna is asking about her.

In the last chapter, Lahiri shifts back to Udayan and the day he was dead. Lahiri's aim to finish with Udayan is pointed out by Pius that "it was the painful and unreconciled presence of long gone Udayan's life which dictated reactions in both those closely associated with him in his life and those connected to him through lineaments of heredity" (2014: 110).

In conclusion, the identity dualities that the characters struggle with throughout the novel come to an end by creating a completely new or fake identity or reshaping the old one. However, the only exception can be regarded as Gauri. She is portrayed as a woman of permanent solitude found a complete identity neither in her homeland nor in her adopted land. She is depicted as the unhappy one with fake identities since her American dream became a nightmare for her.

CONCLUSION

Jhumpa Lahiri's two prospering novels *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* are evaluated within the frame of postcolonial theory in this dissertation. As a second generation Indian immigrant, Lahiri is one of the most leading figures in depicting a concrete image of Indian Americans trying to set up new lives as well as new identities in consequence of immigration. In her works, nearly all of her characters struggle with identity formation within displaced communities through unique individual experiences. The novels are attempted to be analyzed through postcolonial theory and its outcomes such as identity, hybridity, displacement, mimicry or in-betweenness constitute the basic themes of these two novels.

In both novels, characters go through a maturation process, in which they also gain new identities or reshape their given identities. Lahiri's major characters in both novels are first generation Indian immigrants moving from Calcutta to America and their American born second generation children. By setting a real like plot and making her characters bridge over the past memories and the present environment, Jhumpa Lahiri combines her talent and the dilemma of the characters within these two worlds.

In her first novel, *The Namesake*, the struggle of an Indian couple trying to be an Indian family in a new land is portrayed through their experiences. The parents, Ashima and Ashoke Ganguli represent the first generation Indian immigrants while their son, the protagonist, Gogol Ganguli stands for the second generation. Their adaptation processes differ from one another since it is almost impossible to terminate the gap between generations especially when one is born and grown up in a foreign country. Although Ashima and Ashoke carry their cultural luggage to wherever they go, they also adapt and eventually embrace the American customs gradually. They slowly exchange their habits, cultural norms and identity components with the new Americanized ones. Their eating habits, special days, clothing, language and even the most important one, their identity which they brought within their cultural luggage are all replaced with new customs they experience after they immigrate. Although Ashima Ganguli, the mother image of an Indian family in America, trying to keep their Indian background, was a stereotypical Indian woman resisting the new changes in their lives in the beginning, she has also taken some steps in order to reshape her identity and fit

into the new society. She represents the figure of an immigrant suffering from homeland nostalgia and torn between two cultures and as Rushdie states she is trying to create an 'imaginary homeland' with the India in her mind (Rushdie, 1991: 10). On the other hand, their son Gogol as a second generation Indian in America, struggles to form a completely new identity free from his Indian background for himself. His struggle is mainly about his name and parallel to it, his identity. He always tries to diminish the effects of his Indian roots in his American life and wants to project what he observes and mimicks within the American culture. Yet, since identity formation is a long process, Gogol cannot be said to have completed it at the end of the novel as he is portrayed in his thirties yet. As for Ashima, it can be possible to state that she has completed her identity formation at the end of the novel. Though she is still in-between two cultures, it can be clearly seen that she established a life with an Americanized identity that will stay half of the year in America and her other side with Indian roots will spend the rest six months in India. Thus, Ashima Ganguli is the one who both protects her Indian identity and also projects her achievement of American identity as a first generation immigrant.

In *The Lowland*, Lahiri's second novel, the characters are similar to the ones in *The Namesake* as they are also portrayed as immigrants to America. However, the plot is more complicated and there are many shifts throughout the novel from one place to another. Also, when compared to the first generations in the previous novel, Subhash and Gauri are not as stereotypical as Ashima and Ashoke. They adapt to the American culture more easily than a typical first generation immigrant. At this point, Subhash is similar to Gogol, rather than Ashima or Ashoke. However, Subhash differs from Gogol that he gains a complete identity at the end of the novel by setting a new family and a new life in America as an academic. This means he both has a new identity different from the one he brought to America in his cultural luggage many years ago as a PhD student; in other words, his cultural, pre-given identity and has a new life based upon a marriage with an American woman. In this sense, Subhash may be regarded as one of the most fulfilled characters in the novel. Gauri, on the other hand, is not depicted as a typical Indian woman especially when she comes to America. When compared to Ashima, she is someone totally different, rejecting her Indian customs as well as her Indian identity. Additionally, she is not the stereotypical mother figure neither Indian nor American since she even rejects her daughter for the sake of gaining an American

identity and a stable place in society. However, she cannot have a certain place or an identity at the end of the novel as she is torn between her past and present. She projects the American woman efficiently; however, she is not able to be a complete American woman. Although she measures up to have an academic position at a university or to survive on her own in a foreign land, she is not capable of completing her identity formation process.

When both of the novels are analyzed, it can be stated that relationships and marriages have a great role on immigrants. For the first generation, it is usually an arranged marriage according to Indian traditions and it is regarded as a step to a new land. Both in the cases of Ganguli and Mitra families, marriage can be regarded as the starting point of events through new experiences, new identities as well. Ashima discovers the fact that there is another world outside India with her arranged marriage to Ashoke, and her story changes its direction from a pre-given traditional lifestyle to a modern adopted way of living. Marriage also means dislocation for her; she is dislocated from her homeland and cannot be located in the foreign land she lives. On the other hand, marriage means more than dislocation for Gauri. She regards her second marriage as a salvation from her past, a gateway to a new life in a new land. Since both novels are also depictions of family lives, marriage and relationships can be regarded as the components to affect while constructing or reshaping one's identity. From the protagonists' perspective of both novels, having an affair with an American woman is an opportunity to closely observe that foreign culture and following this, to mimic their attitudes, habits, perspectives through life. At this point, Gogol experiences this with Maxine and becomes more and more American with her by mimicking what he observes from her and her parents. Similar to Gogol's affair, Subhash also has the opportunity to feel like a real American when he is with Holly.

It can be concluded that all the characters go through an identity search and a change gradually. In this process, sometimes they thought of themselves as 'others' when it became difficult to adapt to the culture they met in a foreign land. However, when the postcolonial elements are correlated with the novels, it is possible to say that Lahiri is one of the most outstanding ethnic writers of postcolonial literature as she thoroughly portrays the predicaments of Indian immigrants. During the analyses of the texts, Lahiri's vivid depictions of Indian life, Indian landscape, Indian culture and

Indian point of view have supported to outline a contextual diagram between the American way of living, American culture and American perception of immigrants. Within this theoretical frame, the postcolonial concepts defined in the first chapter of this dissertation have enabled to study the novels and the attempts of the characters to locate and construct their identities in foreign territories. It has been possible to claim that postcolonial themes such as displacement, identity, cultural displacement, hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry are all observed and exemplified concretely with examples from the characters' experiences. Most of Homi Bhabha's thematic concerns are explicitly seen in Lahiri's works during the identity quest of her characters.

Both novels manage to present the difficulties that Indian immigrants face in a new territory. They all struggle with the loss of identity and then the quest to find or fix a new identity as well as the feelings of being dislocated, out of place, in-between and hybrid of the two cultures. In this sense, considering the title of this dissertation, it has been possible to conclude that first generation Indian immigrants such as Ashima, Ashoke and Subhash mostly struggled to protect their Indian identities when they first felt the dislocation or the idea of being other. However, throughout the novels, as they came to an end in their maturation processes or in other words identity formations, their American identities showed up since the characters experienced the dilemmas of being both Indian and American or being neither a complete Indian nor American. The second generation, on the contrary, always tried to project their American identities as a result of their observations and experiences in both countries. Their sense of belonging has been built up within American norms as they were born and raised in America despite their parents' efforts to remind the Indian roots. However, identity formation is a lifelong process, so in postcolonial literatures, characters are not able to gain a new identity without being exposed to the facts of immigration such as dislocation, hybridity, ambivalence and in-betweenness. As a conclusion, identity is not a pre-given feature especially to the ones who are in-between; on the contrary it is an outcome of a long process, it is something gained after many struggles, changes and quests in postcolonial literatures.

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