

## Research Proposal: Generational Conflicts in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake

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### Abstract

This paper examines the nuances of generational conflict in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. It explores how the "clash of cultures" is not merely a geographic struggle but a temporal one, manifesting in naming conventions, dietary habits, and marital expectations. By analyzing the protagonist Gogol's rejection and eventual partial acceptance of his heritage, the study highlights the psychological "in-betweenness" experienced by the second generation. The research concludes that generational conflict in the novel serves as a catalyst for identity formation rather than just a source of familial discord.

### Introduction

Generational conflict in immigrant narratives often transcends the typical "rebellious youth" trope. In *The Namesake*, the conflict is rooted in the diasporic consciousness. While Ashoke and Ashima cling to the traditions of Calcutta as a survival mechanism in a foreign land, Gogol views these traditions as a burden that prevents him from fully assimilating into American society. The novel uses the concept of the "pet name" (daknam) and "good name" (bhalonam) as a metaphor for this fractured identity.

### Review of Literature

Existing scholarship on Lahiri often focuses on:

**Cultural Hybridity:** Homi Bhabha's theories of the "Third Space" are frequently applied to Gogol's journey.

**Culinary Nostalgia:** Critics like Madhuparna Mitra have explored how food acts as a bridge and a barrier between generations.

**Onomastics (The Study of Names):** Extensive work exists on how the name "Gogol" symbolizes the protagonist's alienation from both his Indian roots and his American surroundings.

### Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, socio-literary approach. It utilizes:

**Close Reading:** Analyzing key dialogues and symbolic events (e.g., the rice ceremony vs. the burial).

**Comparative Analysis:** Contrasting the parental perspective of "home" with the children's perspective of "home."

**Psychological Framework:** Applying Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development to understand Gogol's identity crisis.

### Research Gap

- To identify the primary triggers of conflict between Ashima/Ashoke and Gogol.
- To analyze the role of "naming" as a focal point of generational resentment.
- To examine how the second generation navigates the pressure of dual-citizenship—emotionally and culturally.

### Importance of the Study

- Understanding these conflicts is crucial in a globalized world where the "immigrant experience" is a common reality. This study provides insight into:
- The psychological pressures on second-generation immigrants.
- The role of literature in articulating the silent struggles of the diaspora.
- The transition of the "Indian-American" identity from an anomaly to a distinct cultural category.

**Conclusion**

The generational conflict in *The Namesake* is not a failure of love, but a failure of translation. Ashoke and Ashima cannot translate the "weight" of their heritage for Gogol, and Gogol cannot translate his need for individuality for them. However, by the novel's end, the conflict matures into a quiet realization: the second generation does not have to choose one world, but rather learns to inhabit the space between them.

**Bibliography**

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