

**IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE AND THE  
EMERGING SELF: A STUDY OF  
UNHOMELINESS IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S  
*THE NAMESAKE AND WHEREABOUTS***

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**Immigrant Experience and the Emerging Self: A  
Study of Unhomeliness in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*  
and *Whereabouts***

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## THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Immigrant Experience and the Emerging Self: A Study of Unhomeliness in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts*** submitted by me in partial fulfilment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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## ABSTRACT

**Thesis Title: Immigrant Experience and the Emerging Self: A Study of Unhomeliness in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts***

This study analyses Jhumpa Lahiri's novels: *The Namesake* (2003) and *Whereabouts* (2021), utilizing the theoretical postulates of Homi K. Bhabha (1992), Bruce Robbins (1992) in combination with Robert Shoemaker (2006) to examine emergence and transformation of the fictional immigrant characters. A triangulation of the concept of unhomeliness from Bhabha, Bruce Robbins's idea of cosmopolitanism, and Robert Shoemaker's notion of identity is utilized to devise the theoretical framework for analysing the fictional immigrant characters. Syllogizing these concepts, the study has delved into the lives of the characters, where the characters are found to be in compliance with the theoretical perspective of unhomeliness. The relocation of home occurs for almost all of the immigrant characters throughout the selected texts. Cosmopolitanism too plays a vital role and the study has explored successfully that in both the novels some characters experience unhomeliness that leads to identity crisis, however few characters seek and attain the privileged status of cosmopolites. Besides, as Bhabha and Robbins claim these notions to be postcolonial and post-cultural spaces, transformation among the immigrant characters is evident although the first generation of the immigrants try to preserve their identities. The immigrant characters are found to be in a state of unhomeliness where their ambivalence is apparent. As a result of unhomey feelings where they are unable to feel at home, the characters go through identity-related issues, and thus to escape them, they turn towards cosmopolitanism as a refuge, resulting into a major transformation in their self-identities. These unhomey fictional characters then evolve into cosmopolitan figures with new identities and thus multiple places to associate with.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to the millions of Palestinian immigrants who have been forced to live in exile for decades, and have been forced to give up on their identity, but they have signed their oaths with their blood that they will never surrender and continue on their path towards freedom.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This study analyses the notions of 'unhomeliness,' 'cosmopolitanism,' 'identity,' and 'hybridity' in Jhumpa Lahiri's novels, *The Namesake* (2003) and *Whereabouts* (2021). The dissertation undertakes an exploration of the intricacies surrounding self-identity in these novels through the utilization of selected conceptual framework. The theoretical framework encompasses Homi K. Bhabha's notion of 'Unhomeness', Bruce Robbins' concept of 'Cosmopolitanism', and Sydney Shoemaker's theory of 'Identity'. Utilizing the theoretical postulates of Bhabha, Robbins and Shoemaker the study endeavours to comprehend the issue of hybrid identity in the selected fictional works of Lahiri.

In our increasingly globalised world, immigration and the subsequent formation of new identities on estranged lands are matters of profound societal attention and relevance. This increase in the relocation of immigrants to foreign countries in pursuit of refuge, economic opportunities, improved quality of life, and, most importantly, the prospect of peaceful living resultantly cause conditions of (un)belonging in cultural, national and ethnic spheres. The experience of these migrants in the host lands cannot be homogenized because their diverse socio-cultural backgrounds contribute to their lived experience as well as in the process of identity formation. Immigrants seek asylum on lands where political stability is found and financial security or career development is guaranteed. The recent wars on Yemen and Gaza, change of government in Afghanistan, and the Ukrainian War have further escalated the numbers of immigrants, fleeing from their own lands. As documented in *World Migration Report* (2022), about 3.6% of entire world's population migrated in 2020. Around 87 and 86 million migrants were hosted by Europe and Asia comprising of 61% international migrant stock. North America followed these regions by hosting 59 million international migrants which comprised 21% of the global migrant stock. (WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2022: SELECTED INFOGRAPHICS). While immigrants may discover these opportunities in their host countries, they often do so at the expense of relinquishing their original cultural identities. In light of these dynamics and the complexities they entail, it is evident that the matter at hand has evolved into a pressing issue of our time. Within the realm of literature, such lived

experiences of the diasporas have been addressed. Eminent immigrant writers including Khaled Hosseini, Bharati Mukherjee, Bapsi Sidhwa, Mohsin Hamid, and many more have been conveying the experiences of their fictional characters to their readers, offering a profound exploration of diasporic narratives. Similarly, Jhumpa Lahiri's novels, *The Namesake* (2003) and *Whereabouts* (2021), offer a rich tapestry to explore these themes.

The concept of 'unhomeliness' experienced by diasporas transcends mere physical displacement profoundly affecting their psychological and emotional states. Immigrants worldwide grapple with the fluidity of their identities, perpetually seeking stability within themselves. Continuous shifts in self-identity contributes to a state of ongoing turmoil in the lives of diasporic individuals. This research study critically examines the manifestations of unhomeliness, cosmopolitanism, identity, and hybridity in the aforementioned novels by Jhumpa Lahiri. In reality, the colonised individuals continually grapple with a sense of inferiority, trying to adopt new identities in order to assimilate into the host cultures, whereas the colonisers or the host culture is seldom subjected to diasporic conditions and the accompanying identity struggle. Studies related to immigrant experiences need to be carried out so that the host cultures treat the immigrants inclusively in the context of multiculturalism. To Find out how Lahiri's novels represent unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism, as well as the changing identities of the immigrant characters, textual analyses of the novels have been done under the theoretical underpinnings mentioned already. Homi K. Bhabha's unhomeliness serves as a precursor to cosmopolitanism, where unhomeliness, as described in *The Location of Culture*, represents the sense of displacement, dislocation, and not belonging to a specific 'home' entirely; thus, this often leads to individuals' adaptation of cosmopolitan perspectives. When individuals feel estranged from a specific 'home,' they are more open towards embracing cosmopolitan worldview. Consequently, in this manner, the identities of the characters transform accordingly.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

In the novels *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts* by Jhumpa Lahiri, the concepts of unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism blur the boundaries of self-identity for immigrant characters as they confront the challenges of adapting to host countries and cultures. The fictional characters grapple with the uncertainties surrounding their own

identities as they strive to reconcile their past experiences with the demands of their current environments.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

The study aims to achieve these objectives:

- i. To investigate the ways Lahiri's novels, reflect unhomeliness.
- ii. To elucidate the notion of cosmopolitanism within novels.
- iii. To inquire the shifting identities in the characters in *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts*.

## 1.3 Research Questions

The study tries to answer the following questions:

- i. How does unhomeliness play out in the selected fictional texts?
- ii. In what ways do the texts engage with the concept of cosmopolitanism?
- iii. What shifts occur in the self-identities of the characters in the two selected novels, *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts*, adhering to unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism?

## 1.4 Significance of the Study

In an era characterized by escalating global migration, this study offers a profound exploration of the intricate experiences of immigrants. It provides valuable insights into the emotional and psychological challenges faced by individuals navigating diverse cultures, shedding light on their struggles, adaptations, and the evolution of their identities. Furthermore, this research bridges the divide between literature and sociocultural studies, offering an interdisciplinary perspective on the immigrant experience. This interdisciplinary approach contributes to the academic conversation and encourages a holistic grasp of the subject matter. The findings from this research can assist educational curricula and discussions on multiculturalism, equipping educators and students with a deeper appreciation of the challenges faced by immigrants and the dynamics of cultural adaptation. Moreover, by illuminating the journeys of immigrant characters, this study encourages empathy and a heightened understanding of the diverse human experiences.

## 1.5 Delimitation of the Study

This research is delimited to two novels by Jhumpa Lahiri, i.e., *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts*.

## 1.6 Organization of the Study

This study has been divided into five chapters. The initial chapter, labelled as the 'Introduction,' serves as the gateway to the research, providing an exposition of the study's background and its underlying rationale. Within this chapter, readers will find sub-sections dedicated to elucidating the research questions, presenting the statement of the problem, and emphasizing the significance of the study.

The second chapter, titled 'Literature Review,' delves into a comprehensive examination of critical scholarship related to the theories underpinning this dissertation. Additionally, it explores the works of other scholars being done on *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts* and tries to elucidate and uncover the research gaps that exist.

The third chapter, titled 'Conceptual Framework,' encompasses the theoretical underpinnings essential to the execution of this research endeavour. Furthermore, it provides an elaborate discussion on the research methodology and approach employed in this study.

Within the fourth chapter, an in-depth textual analysis of the two novels is conducted. The chapter scrutinizes the texts through the sequential lenses of 'unhomeliness' and 'cosmopolitanism,' subsequently delving into the examination of the concept of identity as it operates within the narrative fabric. This comprehensive textual analysis aims to illuminate the nuanced presence of these concepts within Jhumpa Lahiri's literary works.

The conclusion chapter provides an exposition of the study's findings, followed by the references section in the subsequent segment.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the pre-existing research that has been carried out on the selected texts in order to locate the present work within the existing scholarship and to find the research gap that exists within the already-conducted studies. First of all, the critical scholarship on the theories and concepts that have been selected as theoretical framework to carry out this research are presented. Afterwards, the critical scholarship on the texts, i.e., *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts*, are discussed.

The immigrant experience is one of the dominant themes of Lahiri's works. She is not the only one to have chosen this area, but rather there are many other emerging authors who, just like her, are themselves immigrants. They are also looking for a better living, settled in lands other than their native ones, and thus transformed into completely new beings. This area of study is now vastly researched, and therefore the concerning literature will be reviewed in this section of the study.

#### **2.2 Critical Scholarship on Identity**

'Self' is an abstract notion that has always been there in the human mind, if not present in verbal form. With the emergence of language and literary ideas, the concept of the self has been a subject among critics and philosophers. The ancient idea of identity and self was way superior in the minds of human beings as compared to the modern concept of the self, as it was unseen and static. David Hume considers the self nothing more than a bundle of perceptions (Britannica). Perception, according to Dictionary.com, is an act or faculty of perceiving or apprehending, employing the senses or the mind. The idea of the self as a perception suggests the way a person thinks about himself. So, it appears that Hume takes the self as a matter of subjective ideology and not of a superior being, as it has been in ancient times.

Petkova (2015) investigates the cultural and self-collective identity in the coastal area of Ecuador by recording the interviews of 1000 participants. The researcher explores the relationship between the 'Ecuadorianness' and the 'Americanness' of the Ecuadorian people and the relationship between ethnocentric

consumerism and Ecuadorian national identity to differentiate between cultural and national identity. The analysis of the participant interviews resulted in a model of the Ecuadorian cultural identity, which is based on the uniqueness of the Ecuadorian cultural traditions and historical heritage of the country. Utilizing foreign goods, services, and technologies demonstrates Ecuadorians' beneficial contribution to the country's future growth through low ethnocentric consumption. This study discovered that, due to the overwhelming influence of Christianity, Ecuadorians are strongly religious and adhere to their religious beliefs. Despite the increased focus on personal initiative, autonomy, and accountability, Ecuadorians nevertheless feel a strong sense of belonging to the rest of Latin America, despite their national distinctiveness. Ecuadorian and Latin American identities typically coexist, complementing one another rather than stifling or outdoing the other. With these traits, Ecuador's cultural identity may serve as a template for how a country in Latin America might effectively engage in the process of globalization, while on the other hand, the present research study does not study the collective cultural self-image of a whole nation but only the self-image and self-identity of the characters of the two novels. No comparative analysis of the country is followed in the current study, but a comparative textual analysis of the characters' identity is.

Similarly, Erikson (1959) argues that one's identity can never be separated from the original culture and its impact. Identity and the individual's social and cultural context are closely interrelated and help to develop, maintain, and preserve identity throughout life (42-3). Erikson (1968) has provided eight psychological stages of the cultural identity development processes while having an exposure to culture. The current research does not provide or inquire about these eight cultural identities, but it does investigate the development of the characters' identity and its overlap with the host countries. These characters also face identity crises throughout their lives, as Erikson points out in the development stages of life, but the characters of the novels face identity crises because they have been shifted to the new host country, where the cultural and social identity is completely different from theirs (154).

Moreover, according to Walter Truett Anderson, "a human being is and can satisfactorily describe one with the customary names, roles, and badges of identity that are the currency of all our lives" (Anderson xi). Society distributes badges and

names without knowing the person's subjectivity and taking his or her consent. The individual accepts these titles and badges as his 'currency' or asset. These identity badges associate them with a specific group, class, ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality. Barbara Simerka and Christopher Weimer agreed to the fact that in the postmodern age, "the individual is no longer easily conceptualised, and western culture's understanding of identity and subjectivity is at the moment in flux and far from secure" (46). The output they receive is that the idea of self or identity is not similar or identical within the modern and postmodern worldviews. From this, it could also be concluded that the surrounding culture behaves as a force that constructs multiple tools that form the identity (Simerka and Weimer 46-7). These tools that function in forming the identity are often defined as the conscious willingness of the human subject to merge himself into society. As Erikson posits, "identity is not a fixed, pre-given entity but rather an ongoing production within social relations." (67). Therefore, many subjects act according to their situations and thus camouflage their personalities as is required according to the situation. In this postmodern era, a person is performing multiple roles at a time, so the human subject might not be identified with a particular and static identity. Wan Roselezam considers postmodern identity unstable when he states in his research, "This fragmentation of cultural boundaries and hybridization is one characteristic of life in the postmodern world where there is no original, only copies or pastiches are present" (13). This makes sense because the disintegration of ethnic boundaries and the hybridization of ethnic groups account for the fact that there is no original identity. He further states that "the process generated by the media and its signs, involving 'mechanical reproduction' means that the real can be endlessly copied and extended" (Roselazam 15). From this, it could also be understood that the surrounding culture has a huge impact on the formation of one's identity. As Petkova avers, "identity is a complex interplay between individual experiences and collective affiliations." (42). He appears to be of the view that mass media is affecting the specific identity of the people, as all the people are trying to participate in a rat race of modernism and are copying either each other or influencers and celebrities.

The badges of identity given to people by society provide a reason for differences among people in terms of class and ideology. These differences allow people to show narcissism, where they unreasonably feel superior to others. They



become judgmental towards others, and other negative attributes like politics, greed, power, and racism also add to the narcissism and hence lead to identity politics.

'The fluid nature of identity that breaks and renews itself in new contexts in its modern façade, the need for identity has a lot to do with "politics and agency" (Hall 2-5). Here, the word politics suggests the overall environment that can impact and question identity politics, which is often an effort for agency. People desire agency in the name of recognition, an identification by people with whom the subject shares a 'common origin' history or cultural association. Identification then becomes an 'articulation, a structuring, and a determination' (Hall 13). People look at things through their specific lens of identity, which means their association with that specific group and its interests. This means that their approaches to issues revolve around how those things affect the relevant group or groups. This convention of associating one's self with a particular group is ironically escalating in the world as a semantic relationship of a part-whole where people become diehard members of that group to defend their personal and social identity. Fukuyama argues that "identity politics is the politics of recognition, whether rooted in religion, gender, race, or ethnicity" (xvi). This definition can be understood in a dual sense. On the one hand, it appears as the personal identity of the beholder, and on the other, it tells us about the recognition of the group one is associated with.

### **2.3 Critical Scholarship on Cosmopolitanism**

Salman Rushdie (2000) writes that "among the great struggles of man—good or evil, reason or reason, etc.—there is also this mighty conflict between the fantasy of home and the fantasy of away, the dream of roots and the mirage of the journey." The idea suggests that the conflict between the homeland and being away from home is one of the biggest struggles as well as the pleasures of life. According to Craig Calhoun, cosmopolitanism is a central way in which the modern era has organised the fantasy of away. "Whether as the fashionable man of the world or the responsible (and gender-neutral) citizen of the world, the cosmopolitan inhabits the world" (427). Cosmopolitanism, as he relates, is a central form of modernism between the ideas of home and being away. For him, "away is more in fashion among intellectuals and especially political theorists. But home has a strong popular following, and debates over cosmopolitanism are largely about this tension" (Calhoun 428). So, this may explain why the term cosmopolitanism highly impacts identity politics, and that is

why it is more in use by intellectuals and political theorists. Whereas the connection between the cosmopolitan and 'home' is inevitable since 'home is suggestive of the identity of an individual, Irene Smith believes that in a cosmopolitan setting, subjects often downplay their national affiliations and cultural differences; however, they also mark their national identity categories and 'cultural features' to maintain the difference they collectively embrace.

In an otherwise multicultural or cosmopolitan society, identity-based groups are often criticised. No matter whether they are women groups, ethnic groups, gay and lesbian groups, or disability groups, they are often pointed out by both the Left and the Right groups for 'multiculturalism', identity or any other issue. According to Alcoff and Mohanty, "identity-based groups are widely portrayed as having an "agenda," they are called "special interest groups" and their leadership is often portrayed as opportunists uninterested in, even opposed to, the common public good" (1).

Cosmopolitanism encompasses the fundamental rights of a human, from basic positions like his 'right to eat, drink, and be sheltered' to broader positions like 'civil liberties, safety, freedom, justice, equality, and the freedom to practise one's religion or culture are universal and transcend national boundaries'. Thus, it seeks to create a space—a cosmopolitan space, a fully open realm without inequalities of race and religion' (Sunderland 76).

In terms of its scope, cosmopolitanism stresses the universality of dignity and rights of humans as members of a given society without realising its effects on the ideas of nationalism and patriotism because the interests of humanity come first in any conflict between them and national interests (other things being equal). "For extreme cosmopolitanism, patriotism is not a virtue, and that loyalty to one's country is valuable only insofar as it promotes the interests of humanity" (Audi 373). Though it advocates the importance of humans as the basic entity of study and something that matters, this idea does not solve the issue; on the contrary, it poses other questions. "The opposing ideologies of Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism appear in a variety of forms. Does each also apply to areas that are involved in national life? For example, the tussle creating areas of its armed forces or economic framework, as the growing activities that follow globalisation provide a fertile ground for the battle between Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism," (Audi 376) the difference between them is

particularly crucial for globalisation. Do good ethical principles require that one side be preferred over the other in such disputes? (Audi 376). Questions like these put the notion of cosmopolitanism to the test, and the answer to it depends on how individuals or, let us say, philosophies respond to it. Richard Rorty's appeal to his American readers for the invocation of emotion of national pride and a sense of shared national unity, advocates the stress on patriotism and nationalism as a preferred notion against cosmopolitanism (qtd. in Bowden 236).

While the rebuttal of this same idea by a classicist and philosopher, Martha Nussbaum, who advocated the idea of Cosmopolitanism by declaring herself as the 'citizen of the world' (qtd. in Bowden 236), shows how thinking minds put their weight behind the ideal notion of cosmopolitanism. The theoretical division on this preference comes from the statement of Alasdair MacIntyre, a communitarian, who contends that when "large interests... are at issue, patriotism involves a readiness to go to war on one's community's behalf" which may be seen as one side of this debate (236). Lord Acton's claim that "the conception of nationality... is a regressive step in history" (qtd. in Bowden 236) can be placed at the other extreme. Leo Tolstoy also asserted that "the source of conflict... [is] the sole desire for the well-being of one's people; it is patriotism." Thus, patriotism must be destroyed to end the war. (107) The great majority of people who have participated in the conversation, including Rorty and Nussbaum, have, to varying degrees, chosen to identify themselves as proponents of either one side or the other. With barely any exceptions, they either support some kind of cosmopolitanism or just some sort of nationalism; contributors have very infrequently tried to compromise between the two.

However, the theoretical standpoint of preference in a society, or, to say, a nation-state, is one thing, and its practical exercise is another. Since the turn of the 21st century, the magnitude and traffic of immigration have enormously increased, and the need to treat immigrants as dignified individuals in their host countries has become a necessity (Nail 187-99). Commenting on the same issue, Derrida says that "the various responsibilities of states, unions, federations, or state confederations on the one hand and of cities on the other would also need to be re-evaluated in this regard, both in Europe and abroad. If a city's name [cosmopolis] and identity still have importance, then it could be able to elevate itself above nation-states or at the very least free itself from them to become, to use a new and inventive word, a free

city when addressing issues of hospitality and shelter” (09). And according to Derrida, these cosmopolitan places should be placed where individuals who face problems in their homeland “should come and live with dignity and avail justice” (09). Derrida’s remarks not only insinuate [towards] and subscribe to the idea of global citizenship but also demand practical facilitation for immigrants in the light of Cosmopolitanism.

What Derrida refers to as 'hospitality' and 'shelter', is a state where the immigrant must be allocated a space that offers inclusivity and respect. Derrida asserts this because oftentimes the immigrant who enters a host country is identified as other by the local group, and this otherness gives him a status or feeling of estrangement (Islam 749). It usually happens that entities within a particular social or ethnic group conceptualise their own group as useful and productive, whereas others seek to present other groups as adverse and harmful (Islam 751). Further, the immigrant faces marginalisation and alienation because of the foreign identity for which he is called 'other.' This belittling is an absolutely restricted phenomenon that creates obstructions for external groups by refusing them social fairness and blocking their opinions too (Mowat 458). The underlying idea behind this 'othering' is identified as someone who does not belong to the same group, the one who is an outsider. And this phenomenon is an intrinsic part of identity politics, which, according to critics, is “too complex for a simple explanation to suffice. What is clear, however, is that the centripetal or unifying forces of globalisation and the centrifugal or fragmenting forces of identity politics are two sides of the same coin, two complementary tendencies that must be understood well for anyone wishing to make sense of the global scene at the turn of the millennium” (Eriksen 4). Identity-related politics has been enfranchised further as “modernization and globalisation actualize differences and trigger conflict. When formerly discrete groups are integrated into shared economic and political systems, inequalities are made visible since a direct comparison between the groups becomes possible” (Eriksen 5).

## **2.4 Critical Scholarship on Unhomeliness**

For the immigrants living in a host land, issues like marginalisation and alienation push them towards a space where they become uncertain of who they are and oftentimes pose a question about “who they are” or “where they belong to.” The drive inside an individual to seek answers to such questions is aroused by his 'ethnonational' anxiety, “which is a psychological dislocation based on an intense

nostalgia for an imagined past of a stronger community in which the divisions and confusions of a pluralistic community do not exist” (Fukuyama 65). Such dislocation and feelings of being nowhere are called 'unhomeliness' by Bhabha. 'Home' for Bhabha is “a location of solid identification where one has been and is what one thinks of. Home is associated with a good version of the past in oppressed nations and cultures. It denotes a time before tyranny” (132). In other words, freedom and home are related. Bhabha expands on the idea of being unhomey by giving references to several works of postcolonial literature that champion the concept of a true and secure home. Bhabha stresses the ephemerality of 'home' and “Bhabha stresses the ephemerality of 'home' and 'the past'” (Rostami 157-60). According to Bhabha, there is a post-colonial zone between the homely and the unhomey where one may examine in what manner a person's identity is a weaving of what is strange and what is familiar (112). This viewpoint is similar to that of Sigmund Freud. Freud believed that when the subconscious intrudes into awareness, it generates an eerie moment. The same thing happens when the outside world intrudes into the house and upends an identity that was believed to be solid and secure (De Sousa 210). Bhabha's Concept of Unhomeliness can be seen in the character of Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* who confesses that “I [he] lacked a stable core; I did not wither; I belonged to Lahore, New York, or nowhere” (Hamid 201). This ‘lack of stable core’ is the core point around which Bhabha structures his idea, and the presence of this idea is so real that most immigrants, while living in their host country, go through such feelings and a state of ‘unhomeliness’ and develop nostalgia for their homelands, which according to Bhabha is a symbol of actual or true identity (65).

Thus, identity, cosmopolitanism, and unhomeliness are the key factors that underscore the lives and experiences of immigrants while they live in their host countries. The literature reviewed shows how identity and its nature change and are subjected to both personal and outward recognition. It also finds how identification gives rise to identity politics and forces individuals to raise their voices for their authentic recognition. Identity and identification also question the ideals of cosmopolitanism, whose claim of providing ‘global citizenship’ often fails to provide due ‘hospitality’ and 'shelter' to those who seek it, especially immigrants. Immigrants face marginalisation and alienation while living in their host country and thus develop a feeling of unhomeliness, which is the absence of a stable core of identity and a

strong desire for authentic identification, which further manifests itself in the form of nostalgia for home or homecoming.

## 2.5 Critical Scholarship on *The Namesake*

*The Namesake* is an award-winning novel of Lahiri, on which abundant scholarship is found. The critic Krushna Chandra Mishra, in her article, deals with the novel from the perspective of naming and its importance in shaping an individual's identity. She believes that naming is a process of connecting the individual to some unknown past, which might be dangerous for the individual who has no connection with those roots but with the land where his birth has taken place, and thus this naming alienates him in the new society where he has to live. In other words, the naming is an unseen pattern that is trying to connect the individual to his ancestral roots, which might further strengthen the concept of the existing physical borders separating one people from the others. Similarly, the role of society in defining and controlling the identity of the individual is discussed by the critic by stating, "Lahiri raises the question of the identity of the individual as it is constructed in society through the interplay of forces beyond his or her control" (Mishra 165). Whether the individual likes it or dislikes it, these are the factors that are beyond control and thus result in shaping the identity of the individual. This is mentioned by her in these words: "She also underlines that the identity of the individual, consistently affected by society, is something that one has to accept through a process of reflection and negotiation" (Mishra 165). Along with these, she also discusses the ugliness of the clash between cultures as described by Lahiri by stating, "Jhumpa Lahiri thus captures the ugly and bizarre consequences of cultural differences and tends to imply that antagonism between cultures must cease and mutual accommodation and cross-fertilisation of cultures encouraged" (Mishra 169). This study of Krushna helps this research deal with the identity and self of the characters, where a sort of codification of identity takes place. Furthermore, it helps to sort out the problems that such a fixed identity creates for Cosmopolitanism.

Yousif and Al-Jumail (2021) analyse the conceptualization of immigration in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* by identifying the stylistic investigation of the metaphorical representation of the immigrants through the theoretical framework of George Lakoff's Conceptual Metaphor and Mark Johnson's Linguistic expression. This study concluded that all the source domains represent the target domain of

immigration in the metaphorical expressions that are chosen by using the mapping method. Jhumpa Lahiri has significantly conceptualised the immigrants' identity by using multiple conceptual metaphors. Similarly, Joshi (2016) explores short story narratives by using Mikhail Bakhtin's Concept of Polyphony to explore the relation between language, culture, and diasporic identity formulation. Joshi aims to emphasise the linguistic use of discourse in her fictional narrative story, '*The Namesake*'. She utilised the stylistic approach of investigation of the text to determine how the language has been used to construct the diasporic identity. This study finds out that one character has different voices, and even Lahiri complicates the self-identity construction by mixing the narratives of the first and third person throughout the novel. Additionally, the study found that successful switching strategies do not emphasise a clash between voices of the home and diaspora but rather a clash within voices about the home and diaspora, while the present research study focuses on the clashes of identity, the voices of the home and diaspora, with reference to unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism. Not only do male immigrants suffer from identity crises and unhomeliness, but female immigrants also face the same. According to Subba and Joshi (2019), female characters' narratives are connected with those of male characters to fully show immigration and its effects on the formation of self-identity. Men are not the only gender to experience the immigration process. The scholars analyse the novel *The Namesake* from a feminist perspective in order to examine how immigration affects men and women differently. The goal of this study was to examine the various facets of women's plight and empowerment in Jhumpa Lahiri's work. This study discovered that Lahiri's representation of women is 'ethnocentric'. These women fight for gender equality and their own sense of self-identity through developing cross-cultural skills and becoming independent consumers. The ethnocentric representation demonstrates that the female characters are well educated, professionals, and constantly prepared to tackle challenges. However, the present research study does not analyse the data in relation to just how women are portrayed. The current study examines the unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism of immigrants and the self-identity of women and men alike. Further, many other researchers have also worked on Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* such as Karagoz and Boynukara (2019), who investigated the concept of Re-orientalism in this novel; Kharis (2020), who explored cultural hybridity and assimilation in *The Namesake* to explore how the characters of the novels managed to devolve their cultural growth and exchange in the

host country; and Raina (2017), who explored the complex cultural process and identity crisis faced by the characters of the novel.

The research that has been carried out deals further with the diasporic themes, where all the focus is centred on the results of the immigrant experiences. It reports, “Lahiri never fails to remind the readers, especially Indian readers, about the immigrant features that are felt by the Indian immigrants who live in two worlds” (Hemalatha 11). The two worlds of the immigrants are discussed and analysed within Lahiri’s novel, *The Namesake* as the researcher further states in the conclusion that, “As a result, they cut themselves loose from the traditional norms of man-woman relationships to find comfort in a sub-culture of their own” (Hemalatha 20). This study could be enhanced further by relating it to the emergence of the self of these characters and by seeking the relationship between this emergence and unhomeliness.

In the works of Lahiri, the experiences of belongingness, life in exile, difficulty getting accepted, and what the first and second generations of immigrants go through are widely found. These could be joined together under the theme of displacement. The problem arises when children or the second generation of immigrants are not able to decide between what their parents offer them and what the society to which they belong has to offer: “For the children of the immigrants who were born in America, the site of the confusion is their household or parental home in America, where the Indian culture and customs still exist even if in a diluted form” (Assadnassab 7). This thesis discusses in detail the problem of the Gangulis, and especially Gogol Ganguli, whose actual problem lies in the very same fact discussed above, where he is entangled between what his parents come up with and what society demands from him; thus, in spite of the displacement that has taken place, his paternal home, or whatever comes from his parents, creates a tension between the choices the young Gangulis want to make and the pleasure of their parents. “It is inside the house that India should be preserved, for the outside is inevitably America.” (Assadnassab 11). In the same manner, it is not the in-betweenness of mere Americanism and Indianness, but rather, in the case of Ashoke, even the authors that he reads have an impact on his transformation. He is the very first of the characters that has been displaced, but his displacement has taken place through books and to places where he has never been in his life. But very ironically, Ashima, who has always been a preserving figure of Indian identity herself, transforms into a completely new figure,



which could not have been thought of at the start of the novel. “She gains cultural and geographical fluidity through the very practise of her life through the decades... Thus is Ashima’s transformation into a transnational figure” (Assadnassab 12). As far as the name of Gogol is concerned, the researcher states, “By giving this name to his son, he tries to give him a transnational identity, but Gogol rejects it” (Assadnassab 22). This might mean that Ashoke himself was aware of cosmopolitanism and wished it for his son, which his son wasn’t aware of in the beginning, and we could see it in the final scene where Gogol reads the story 'The Overcoat' from the book that was given to him by his father. This study comes up with a conclusion: “To be identified as a pure American subject does not save him from his psychological captivity, nor does his symbolic return to his supposed identity associated with his parents’ life-roots in India at the end of the novel” (Assadnassab 28). The hybrid Gogol is continuously in a state of ambivalence, where he is not able to decide whether he should escape the boundaries of his fixed identity or stick to it throughout the novel. This study helps the research under consideration further dive into the matter and analyse how the characters emerge differently from one another. Along with this, the inter-novel comparison also adds to the existing knowledge, where the latter contemporary novel, i.e., *Whereabouts*, helps to understand the concept even better by going back and forth through the two novels.

The sense of belongingness to one’s roots is not easily given up, especially in the first generation’s case where they move to a new location. The same is the case with Ashima Ganguli in *The Namesake* where “she follows all the Indian rituals and culture even after coming to foreign land” (Varma and Singh 88). Ashima, mother of Gogol, as described in the earlier paragraph, is the binding force between the nativity and the newly emerged identity of her family members. But contrastingly, Gogol is not interested at all in Indianness, at least during his earlier part of the novel. “In spite of going back to Calcutta for eight months every year, Gogol was not at all excited and happy about the Indian culture and customs, as he did not perceive them as antithetical to American.” (Varma and Singh, 89). According to this research carried out by Varma and Singh, they consider the first generation of immigrants, i.e., the parents, as the connecting force with the nativity and name it enculturation. They state, “The main purpose and process of enculturation can be defined like the Indian immigrants deliberately want to bring up and frame their children with Indian effect

as they got from their parents in their childhood” (Varma and Singh 90). Although Ashima herself transforms completely after the death of her husband, she is the main character, binding all the Gangulis with their nativity. This process of enculturation and its relation to fixed roots act as a hindrance to global citizenship, and thus this research looks into the phenomenon from a cosmopolitan point of view, and the effect of such hindrances on the emergence of the self is considered.

Another research paper, 'STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY AND DIASPORA IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *THE NAMESAKE*' also discusses this matter of identity and diaspora in Lahiri's novel. The focus is once again on the name of the main character, i.e., Gogol. It states, “The title, '*The Namesake*' reflects the struggle of Gogol Ganguli, who goes through to identify with an unusual name” (Salunke 40). It is quite evident from the cited line that Salunke points out the struggling Gogol who is intertwined between the inner and the outer world, where there is a huge state of confusion about whether his inner world is his home and the outer America, or vice versa. Therefore, he tries to set his own definition of the self and escapes what is imposed on him for some time. “In order to get self-definition, he abandons the name Gogol and tries to become someone else” (Salunke 40). His change of name shows how alienated he feels from within. Similarly, Salunke points out the plight of Ashima by stating, “She feels emotionally dislocated from the comfortable ‘Home’ of her father, full of so many loving ones and years to go back. Ashima undergoes the same phase, and she feels that living in a foreign land is like a lifelong pregnancy” (Salunke 40). According to Salunke, Ashima is in great trouble with her displacement and is struggling with her broken identity. This again relates to the notion of a fixed identity where an individual cannot move beyond it, and thus the concept of unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism help to further understand the plight of these characters.

Although there are lots of other works carried out under different themes when it comes to Lahiri's *The Namesake* the one discussed here would be the last one regarding the topic of diaspora and the concept of home and identity. This research also discusses the feeling of belongingness in the case of Ashima and states, “As a newlywed bride, she pines for her lost home and desperately wishes to go back. She misses her family in the wake of her loneliness. She is nostalgic and often fancies an imaginary homeland” (Paudel 72). But here, the researcher has mainly focused on the nostalgia for homeliness as something that is imaginary and not real. This might refer

to Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands*, where, according to him, there is no actual home, but the concept of home is imaginary. This might as well result in the conclusion that the Diasporas find relief in their new identities or define home as sometimes the place where they feel content. In this research, Gogol is considered to be in actual trouble, as Paudel states, "His Bengali heritage forbids him from completely assimilating into white American society. On the other hand, the clan of his relatives in Kolkata is not enough for him to consider India his homeland" (Paudel 72). The hybrid Gogol is a stranger in both the US and India. The same is the case with Sonia, the sister of Gogol. But as Paudel states, "This rootless existence demonstrates that neither the US nor India can claim her; however, she claims both as her own" (Paudel 72). It could be seen that, though the Diasporas might not be accepted and embraced by society, they tend to find themselves new identities with which they feel comfortable. This can be related to the privileged status of cosmopolitans and is thus studied under this theme.

## 2.6 Critical Scholarship on *Whereabouts*

Coming to the second work, *Whereabouts*, being a new translated work of Lahiri, it has remained almost untouched except for a few research articles along with the reviews that have been made regarding it. As to the surprise of readers, Lahiri has written it in Italian first and then translated it to English; her choice of Italian language and relocating to Italy might be considered most important. Her interview with *The Guardian* is very important in this regard. She states,

I am the opposite. While the refusal to change was my mother's rebellion, the insistence on transforming myself is mine. "There was a woman, a translator, who wanted to be another person": it's no accident that *The Exchange*, the first story I wrote in Italian, begins with that sentence. (Lahiri)

As is evident from these lines, Lahiri herself is an individual who does not believe in a static identity, but rather, on the contrary, she believes in an evolving self where concept of identity is fluid, and people could transform into any new identity as they wish. But that does not mean that she did not go through the problems that other Diasporas go through. She states,

In a sense, I'm used to a kind of linguistic exile. My mother tongue, Bengali, is foreign in America. When you live in a country where your own language is considered foreign, you can feel a continuous sense of estrangement ... An absence that creates a distance within you.

In my case, there is another distance, another schism. I do not know Bengali perfectly. I do not know how to read it or even write it. As a result, I consider my mother tongue, paradoxically, a foreign language, too. (Lahiri)

Like any other immigrant, Lahiri herself went through this problem of the in-betweenness of two cultures, and this is what is found in almost all of her works. Thus, in this regard, the characters that she has presented are very comparable to her, and eventually, the emergence of self that is sought in her characters is comparable to her.

Sarwar et al. (2022) have analysed alienation and assimilation in Jhumpa Lahiri's novel '*Whereabouts*' by using the theoretical perspectives of Foucault's (2000) theory of 'resistance.' The researcher has used the textual analysis of the qualitative data in the novel's text to highlight the issues faced by eastern immigrants in western countries. The data for the study has been carefully selected by finding out the Foucauldian perspectives on resistance, such as power, dominance, assimilation, and alienation, in the text. The resistance faced by the immigrants in the host country and the person's own resistance towards adopting the social and cultural elements of the host country. This study found that people's traditional cultural forces are much stronger than the elements that tend to attract immigrants. External cultural resistance cannot take place if the one being has powerful resistance. The study found that the eastern immigrants in western countries do not tend to adopt the host culture; usually, they remain intact in their original culture by preserving it against the host culture. The present research study has also noticed the similar cultural and self-identity preservation by the immigrant in the novel *Whereabouts* but with the help of unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism.

Research carried out by Syeda Bushra Rizvi on *Whereabouts* deals with Foucault's theory of resistance. Although it is not very relevant to this study, the point

where she states that every person resists the external factors of the culture from affecting his or her personality could be somewhat related to the concept of identity or that of home. She states, “An immigrant tries to assimilate things with existing culture in mind; if these are not assimilated, then the person is prey to alienation. It is also found in a study that an eastern immigrant can never be adjusted to western culture by adopting western culture yet present resistance to not adopting the culture” (Rizvi, Sarwar, and Sabir). This cultural alienation could be related to unhomeliness in our context, as in the case of unhomeliness likewise there is a sense of alienation, as the diasporic character is not able to relate to any specific culture, or in other words, identity.

Another review coming from *The Guardian* is much more related to this research and discusses the viewpoint of Lahiri regarding her work. Firstly, she talks about the language and states, “To swap one’s native language for a new one seems therefore, if not inconceivable, certainly as difficult and risky an ordeal as a heart transplant” (Rashid). Her comparison of swapping the language with a heart transplant is very extreme, and this could be felt by people facing this challenge in their lives. But this swapping is not because of some difficulty or enforcement; rather, she is the one winning the Pulitzer Prize in English and yet opting for Italian after a struggle of years in order to please her will by doing so and choosing freely. Similarly, this review article suggests that in her *Whereabouts*, Lahiri has moved beyond the local and rather accessed the universal. The review elaborates,

Where her English thrived on the particular, Lahiri’s Italian reaches for the universal. Astonishingly, *Whereabouts* contains not a single proper noun: nothing to identify individuals or places. ... When Lahiri likens a hotel to “a parking garage designed for human beings” – applicable to the business district of any contemporary city worldwide – the image seems emblematic of the universalist vision now shaping her writing. (Rashid)

This point very much supports the problem with which this research deals, i.e., the cosmopolitan nature, where borders and belongingness to one native place lose their meaning and instead new definitions arise according to the free will of the

individuals, going for the common instead of the proper, further assists Lahiri to achieve her purpose, which is to attain universality in her work instead of locality. Thus, the self which attains universality and transforms from local to universal and from ancestral to modern or new identity, could be studied within this research.

Along with these two works of Jhumpa Lahiri, her other works also deal with themes of cultural hybridity, cultural assimilation, identity crisis, dislocation, immigration, diaspora, belongingness, longing for a home or homeliness, etc. But she is not the only one in the queue; rather, there are other prominent immigrant writers whose works have won them fame and deal with similar themes and subjects. Among these, names such as Bapsi Sidhwa, Mohsin Hamid, and Bharati Mukherjee could not be ignored. Their characters as well go through the identity shift and the problems related to the emergence of self, as they do in the case of Lahiri.

Mohsin Hamid, a Pakistani fiction writer, admits the presence of national borders; however, he seems optimistic about the future of Cosmopolitanism. According to him, the national borders are “illusions: arbitrarily drawn constructs with porous, brittle, and overlapping borders” (Hamid). The presence of a single black door signifies that the national borders are porous and penetrable. Similarly, Mukherjee’s short stories and novels come up with such themes, but her characters, like herself, are obsessed with the West and do not feel any estrangement with the new culture. As Jasmine, the main character of the short story, “learned that Ann Arbour [the city west of Detroit] was a magic word. A boy goes to Ann Arbour and gets an education, and all the barriers come cracking down. So Ann Arbour was the place to be” (Mukherjee 171). Similarly, Mr. Venkatesan, the protagonist of *Buried Lives*, also admires the West and wants to be there desperately. He imagines an ideal life, the life proposed by the illusionary American dream, as expressed in the story: “When he was safely in America’s heartland, with his wife and car and all accoutrements of New World hearth and home, he wanted to think of his Trinco family (to whom he meant to remit generous monthly sums) as being happy under one roof, too” (Mukherjee 201).

In spite of this much emphasis on global citizenship or cosmopolitanism, there are still instances where political figures and people of influence oppose such perspectives, such as the former British Prime Minister, who states, “If you believe

you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere” (Adler). Such comments are very odd in a time and place where the world has become a global village and where translocation has become a routine process. However, the concern of this study is beyond such comments, where it looks deeper into Lahiri’s new novel, *Whereabouts*, and its difference and similarity with her first novel, *The Namesake* in terms of the evolution and emergence of self as far as the concept of unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism are concerned. The inter-novel comparison assists in finding the configurations of the shifting identities of the self through the character analyses of both texts. The above-discussed review of the literature makes it easier for this research to be carried out and for the researchers to sort out other areas that have not been touched on so far regarding the new work of Lahiri.

## **2.7 Research Gap**

The comparative study of emerging self or the shifting identities in Lahiri’s foremost and final novel has not gained attention of the researchers yet. This research looks forward to understanding how the fictional characters have evolved over the time period between writing her first novel and her last one. The characters in the novel struggle to develop their own identities. This study analyses the configurations of the shifting identities of the self in the two novels, *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts*, keeping in view the concepts of unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism. The inter-novel comparison provides a rationale for understanding the phenomenon of sociological evolvment. Existing scholarship may have explored each novel separately or analysed Lahiri’s work using various theoretical lenses, however, there is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning a direct comparison between *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts* within the context of the selected theoretical framework. Addressing this gap would enhance our comprehension of Lahiri’s evolving portrayal of identity and displacement over time. Moreover, it would offer insights into whether her thematic and character developments have undergone changes or remained consistent throughout her literary career.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This dissertation studies the selected works of Jhumpa Lahiri i.e., *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts* through Homi K. Bhabha's concept of Unhomeliness in combination with Bruce Robbins's concept of Cosmopolitanism, and Robert Shoemaker's concept of Identity. The method of research used is qualitative textual analysis which involves systematic examination and interpretation of the selected texts as put forward by Catherine Belsey, and Creswell further distributes it into five paradigms where phenomenological design suits the current study.

#### **3.1 Research Method**

The present study has been qualitatively conducted in compliance with the theoretical framework of the study. According to Gabriel Griffin's book *Research Methods for English Studies*, a researcher has the liberty of choosing methods and techniques according to the intended research for carrying out the study (3). Textual analysis of the selected texts has been done in order to study the immigrants' lived experiences. Catherine Belsey discusses textual analysis as a research method where something specific is understood out of a particular text. She further states that in case of textual analysis the interpretations are from the reader's side instead of the writer, but it is essential to avoid adding any assumptions that are not required and to understand the text well in order to add original ideas which might be looked at from a different perspective (Griffin 164). The phenomenological research design as put forth by John W. Creswell in the book *Research Design*, under the umbrella of qualitative study of literature, has been followed in order to further understand the immigrants' experiences in the present research study. Creswell and Creswell (2017) have discussed phenomenology briefly and have taken it from Giorgi and Moustakas. They state: "Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences of several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell 62). The phenomenological research paradigm is best suited to the current immigrants' phenomenon of the characters in



both novels who are living in new conditions, far from their so-called homelands. In case of qualitative study of literature, a phenomenon is traced within the text chosen for study where the characters go through some lived experiences. Furthermore, while dealing with the texts qualitatively, great care has been taken into consideration to only gather the concerning evidences. As Creswell states: “[I]n the analysis of the data, researchers need to “winnow” the data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012), a process of focusing in on some of the data and disregarding other parts of it” (391). Thus, the researcher, who was the participant in the case of the current study, has delved into the fictional characters of both the novels and has closely examined and analysed them and has collected all the instances which were in compliance with the theoretical framework of the study to get in line with the thesis topic.

### **3.2 Theoretical Framework**

This research draws upon the insights of influential scholars in the field. Homi K. Bhabha's 'Concept of Unhomeliness' (1992) forms a fundamental pillar, shedding light on the intricate experiences of displacement and dislocation within the immigrant context. Complementing this, Bruce Robbins' 'Concept of Cosmopolitanism' (1992) provides a lens through which to understand the evolving, universal citizenship perspectives of characters navigating diverse cultural landscapes. Additionally, Sydney Shoemaker's 'Concept of Identity' (2006) lends depth to the exploration of individual and collective identities, enriching the study's analytical framework.

This comprehensive theoretical foundation serves as the guiding compass for our analysis of Jhumpa Lahiri's acclaimed novels, *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts*. These works are not merely narratives but rather vital conduits through which we aim to unravel the complex interplay of unhomeliness, cosmopolitanism, and identity. By employing these theoretical underpinnings, this study endeavours to illuminate the research problem of unhomeliness and identity in a nuanced manner, in alignment with its overarching research objectives. Through meticulous textual analysis and critical inquiry, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights to the discourse surrounding these essential themes within the realm of diasporic literature.

### 3.2.1 Bhabha's Concept of Unhomeliness (1992)

Bhabha's notion of 'unhomeliness' was presented in 1992 in his article "The World and the Home," and later on in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), where he states that the diasporic character does not belong to any specific home. He states that "home is no longer just one place. It is locations" (Bhabha). As he explains, the home is no longer considered a specific place but rather is considered dynamic, where the home could change and evolve as do humans. While using the term 'unhomely,' he states, "it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place" (Bhabha, 141). In this seminal work of Bhabha, he alludes to a psycho-social dimension within the realm of fiction and lives of the marginalized individuals. He provides instances from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, and Nadine Gordimer's *My Son's Story*, thereby underscoring the role of racism and apartheid in moulding this sense of unhomely sentiment. (Bhabha 1-18) Similarly, his concept of unhomeliness constitutes the centre of his notion of Hybridity described as: "that is new, neither the one nor the other" (Bhabha 13-37). Just like a hybrid persona that is ambivalent between two identities, the unhomely too goes through in-betweenness. "In the stirrings of the unhomely, another world becomes visible" (Bhabha 141). Presenting an instance of the unhomely effect from Henry James's Isabel Archer, Bhabha states: "The world first shrinks for Isabel and then expands enormously" (141). He goes on by stating further: "James introduces us to the "unhomeliness" inherent in that rite of "extra-territorial" initiation" (141). As a result of this "the border between home and world becomes confused" (141). From these lines the relation of unhomeliness to the notion of Cosmopolitanism could also be sensed. When a character goes through this unhomely experience, and a confusion initiates between the home and the world, consequently, a sense of belonging to multiple locations initiates, resulting into cosmopolitanism of that persona. Thus, Bhabha's Concept of Unhomeliness serves as the primary source to study the emerging characters in the selected texts.

### 3.2.2 Bruce Robbin's Concept of Cosmopolitanism (1992)

Cosmopolitanism is what has been considered to be assisting the aforementioned Concept of Unhomeliness. From the etymology of the word, it literally means a citizen of the world. Bruce Robbins, a literary critic and cultural theorist, has extensively written on this topic. He propounds it as: "Beyond the

adjectival sense of 'belonging to all parts of the world; not restricted to any one country or its inhabitants,' the word cosmopolitan immediately evokes the image of a privileged person: someone who can claim to be a 'citizen of the world' by virtue of independent means, high-tech tastes, and globe-trotting mobility” (Robbins 171). According to Robbins, people should be open to the perspectives and cultures of others, and there should be an appreciation for difference and diversity. The term has evolved with the passage of time, and this is what Bruce Robbins has stated. The term has been explored from various critical perspectives in his essay ‘Comparative Cosmopolitanism,’ where points of view of critics belonging to different political spheres have been dismantled. However, the word privileged here is very appropriate because a cosmopolitan character has the privilege to consider any place as his own and develop a sense of belongingness towards it. He has given an example of such privilege in the form of V. S. Naipaul, where he states: “The most visibly ineligible example is perhaps V. S. Naipaul, who has recently been singing the praises of what he calls 'our universal civilization” (Robbins 172). Robbins has discussed Naipaul as an instance where he enjoys the privileges of a Cosmopolitanism; however, in the case of Naipaul, this notion of cosmopolitanism is what Robbins discusses as the privileged position of the elites or of the professionals. The more appealing and relevant one to this study would be the one stated as:

Clifford now assumes a 'post-cultural' space where the subjects and objects of description are at least potentially reversible, where the mobility required for observation and comparison is not monopolised by one side, and where the word 'local' has lost much of its contrastive force. His name for this space—a space that is not exclusively professional—is 'Cosmopolitanism.' ... Clifford can approve of Cosmopolitanism because he has been seeing it as neither the consequence nor the prerogative of 'totalizing Western liberalism'; he has been seeing it as something he himself shares with his subjects. (Robbins 182)

In this section, the author discusses the concept of cosmopolitanism as presented by anthropologist James Clifford. Clifford presents a 'post-cultural' space where the traditional boundaries of subject and object are fluid and malleable. This space allows for greater flexibility, facilitating observation and comparison from

different perspectives, rather than being on one side. It is thus from this perspective that the cosmopolitan character transforms from the local towards the global or the universal, and the traditional boundaries start to efface; the evolving characters are studied within the selected texts to determine whether they enjoy such a privilege or not and to what extent. As quoted above, this notion of cosmopolitanism is not related to a few elites in society, but rather the subjects as well share this same experience as the elites would.

From this discussion, it could be sensed easily that the unhomey character is likely to develop a cosmopolitan identity. In this way these two concepts are immensely relatable and serve as a lens to study the characters of the selected novels.

### **3.2.3 Sydney Shoemaker's Concept of Identity (2006)**

The American philosopher Sydney Shoemaker has presented the concept of 'identity and identities' in 2006 which states that identity could be dealt with in the strict and philosophic sense, and similarly a set of traits, capacities, attitudes, etc., that an individual normally retains over a considerable period of time and normally distinguishes individual from other individuals. Identities in this sense can be lost and, to a certain extent, stolen.

Instead of thinking of an identity as an individual essence, we might do better to think of it as something, perhaps a set of traits, capacities, attitudes, etc., that an individual normally retains over a considerable period of time and that normally distinguishes that individual from other individuals. Identities in this sense can be lost and, to a certain extent, stolen. ... There is still a connection with identity in the strict sense. What makes a set of traits an identity is its being such that, normally, numerically different individuals have different sets of traits of this sort, and, normally, an individual retains the set of traits over time - where this means that numerical identity between an individual existing at a certain time and an individual at a later time goes, normally, with the individual having (more or less) the same set of traits at both times. (Shoemaker 40-48)

Identity as a collection of qualities, abilities, habits, etc. that individuals tend to acquire over time and that distinguish them from others. These identities can be lost or usurped. In a strict sense, the link between personality and mathematics remains because personality is defined by traits that are distinctive feature of individuals and persist over time; in other words, individual personality in mathematics depends temporarily on the persistence of certain traits from one to another. Identity in the strict sense relates to the self, having a fixed identity, whereas identity in the other sense is dynamic and keeps on changing with the changing circumstances. As he states:

For one thing, I have not addressed the distinction between a change in a person's identity and a change in how that person conceives his or her identity, the latter occurring when a person realizes (or at least comes to believe) that the identity he has been presenting to the world, and to himself, is something imposed by his parents or peer group, and is not his 'real self.' (Shoemaker 48)

This self-realization concept, where one does not just adopt his identity but choose it, is what make the research significant. Keeping in view these two forms of identity, the effects of unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism are related to the identity of the characters for analyses, where the latter two concepts believe in the dynamic identity that is not particular and keeps on emerging, thus resulting in an emerging self.

The current study uses Bhabha's 'Unhomeliness,' Bruce Robbin's 'Cosmopolitanism,' and Shoemaker's 'Identity' as the theoretical framework of the study. Bhabha's unhomeliness helps the researcher explore the unhomeliness of the novels' characters, who are now residing in the host country and are searching for a traditional homely identity. Robbin's cosmopolitanism supports the idea of unhomeliness, and the novels' characters find cosmopolitan identities in the host country by forming friendly relations with people having common self-identities as them or by assimilating within the new environment. And Shoemaker helps to identify the multiple identities of the characters, and some of the characters are strictly intact to their original identity to protect their traditional culture, whereas some of them face an identity shift as they get involved in the changing circumstances. These

theories have been used to build up a theoretical framework for the study and analyse the data.

These theoretical constructs serve as invaluable tools for dissecting textual excerpts extracted from the two chosen novels. Within the framework of unhomeliness, cosmopolitanism, and identity, we scrutinize these textual extracts to discern how they align with the underlying theoretical tenets. Our investigation begins by pinpointing instances of unhomeliness experienced by various characters in the novels, followed by an exploration of their journeys towards becoming cosmopolitans. It has been elaborated in the theoretical section of unhomeliness that the difference of home and the outer world gets confused for the unhomely. Furthermore, an extra territorial initiation starts, which directly results into a cosmopolitan characterisation. Thus, the emerging identity of a character or characters is a result of the conjoint application of these two concepts. Then, this study looks into the fictional characters of the texts to examine whether they retain their identities by having fixed identities, or they transform to the unhomely cosmopolitan personas. This progression vividly illustrates the intricate struggle for identity among the characters, as they grapple with the complex interplay between tradition and adaptation in their ever-evolving circumstances. These theories collectively underpin our research, providing a robust framework for the meticulous analysis of textual data.

## CHAPTER 4

### TEXTUAL ANALYSES

This chapter analyses the extracts from the two selected novels with the help of the theoretical underpinnings of the study. This section is divided into two portions: the first portion contains the analysis of unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism in the two selected novels, and the second portion contains the analysis of identity in the selected texts.

#### **4.1 Unhomeliness and Cosmopolitanism in the Selected Texts**

In this section, the researcher has examined the notions of unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism in Jhumpa Lahiri's novels *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts*. Homi K. Bhabha's unhomeliness analyses both texts in order to evaluate how this concept runs through the lives of the novels' characters. The concept of unhomeliness, as described earlier in the introduction and the framework section of this study, deals with the concept of behaviour towards a native land and its traits. Bruce Robbins's idea of cosmopolitanism has been the focus of the study, within both of the novels. Because cosmopolite is defined as a global citizen, the characters have been examined through their lived experiences to see whether they have similar claims or act differently.

The main character in the first novel under consideration for this research, *The Namesake*, is Gogol Ganguli. It is his name that has remained the topic of discussion throughout the novel. His name acts as the pivotal point around which the discussion revolves and the story unfolds. The other characters that are associated with this main character are: his mother, Ashima Ganguli; his father, Ashoke Ganguli; his sister, Sonia; his girlfriends, including Ruth and Maxine Ratcliff; and finally, his wife, Moushomi Mazoomdar. Although Gogol is the most prominent character in this novel, the others, in their own ways, are equally significant and relate to him and his narratives in one way or another. His parents are the first members of their family to migrate to the US, and thus they are the first generation of immigrants. Gogol and his sister, along with Moushomi, belong to the second generation of immigrants, and thus there exists a huge difference or gap between them and their parents. On the contrary,

Ruth and Maxine are Americans in their entirety, and for this reason, their behaviours are apparently different than the ABCDs, i.e., "American-born confused Deshi," as named by Lahiri.

The second novel, *Whereabouts*, has various characters that are not named at all. The main character is the narrator herself—single, young, and alone. Other characters are mentioned by mere pronouns such as he, she, and they, or through the professions and positions they hold. Most of the time, the narrator is observing something or trying to create meaning within the otherwise meaningless world. Memory plays a vital role within the novel as the narrator continuously thinks of her past, her parents, and jots the dots, finding a relation between them and what is beforehand. The texts of both novels are dealt with keeping in view the methodology and the theoretical framework presented earlier. The concepts of unhomeliness, identity crisis, hybridity, diaspora, and cosmopolitanism have been derived from the characters and analysed accordingly.

#### **4.1.1 Unhomeliness and Cosmopolitanism in *The Namesake***

As the notion of unhomeliness argues, the home is no longer a single location but rather refers to locations, because an unhomely individual cannot easily associate with a single place as home. Along with this, Bhabha has considered the unhomeliness a postcolonial space. In the data analysis that follows, this concept as reflected in the selected texts is analysed. Besides, cosmopolitanism is also focused on in terms of how it is manifested in the texts by Jhumpa Lahiri.

##### **4.1.1.1 Unhomeliness and Cosmopolitanism in the Character of Ashima**

As the novel *The Namesake* begins, the very first lines present a feeling that has occupied Ashima Ganguli; the feeling is that of belonging and association with the nativity. Ashima, the mother of Gogol in her apartment, misses her possessions in Calcutta, India, for which she has nostalgia. It represents the recalling of one's past due to the association with the local cultural identity. But this is not how she remains throughout the novel. Though in the beginning, Ashima is the one for whom home means one fixed location with which she could associate her memories, with the passing of time, the transient nature of the world advances, and she evolves into a new character. Not only does she evolve a new character, but also her identity transforms



into new. This is how this study examines her character's evolvement from a homely to an unhomely character.

America has been depicted as a foreign land, and in the beginning, it was difficult for Ashima to have any relevance in the new land she had immigrated to, and she was retaining her parents' home back in Calcutta. "For the past eighteen months, ever since she's arrived in Cambridge, nothing has felt normal at all. It's not so much the pain, which she knows, somehow, she will survive. It's the consequence: motherhood in a foreign land" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 6). It states that Ashima had been living for almost one and a half years in America, but it was her relatives, the memories, and the home culture that brought back nostalgia and made her feel longing for a home in the estranged land of 'others.' At the same time, she had unhomely sense in America which was an estranged land with alien people for her.

The character of Ashima is thoroughly influenced by Calcutta, and the Bengali culture always connects the places and norms of the host country to her national cultural identities. She tries her level best not to let her new-borns give in to the new culture, which is alien to her. "To put him to sleep, she sings him the Bengali songs her mother had sung to her" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 35). Ashima is transmitting all the traits that she has inherited from her parents and her parents from theirs, which clearly portrays that she is not only resisting the acculturation of the host country but also imposing her cultural identities on the children too, who are not of the same cultural background, which results in failure later. "Her grandmother had not been fearful of such signs of betrayal; she was the only person to predict, rightly, that Ashima would never change" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 37). And this was so true about Ashima's character who had a static homely concept of home in her mind. Her character is important in the sense that her homely perspective has been discussed within this study in order to examine her character later as she evolves into a new being with new associations leaving her past behind. But at this stage too it could be sensed that she lives an ambivalent life, where though in her mind she longs for ancestral home, but this is causing her unbelonging in the American strata.

These lines depict the extremity of the intactness of the fixed home and culture in a way where thinking beyond it is even considered treachery. The resistance of the immigrants against the host culture and diasporic identity has been highlighted by

calling it a betrayal of their culture. Ashima did not say this to her children, but she acts in that way by forcing them to adopt the Bengali culture because she feels unhomeliness in the U.S. due to the otherness. The notion of home and unhomeliness prevails throughout the novel. For Ashima, who is from the first generation of immigrants in her family, home is a fixed place and needs to be preserved. There is nothing that she finds relatable to her ancestral land and rituals, where she finds the concept of home. “There is no baptism for Bengali babies, no ritualistic naming in the eyes of God. Instead, the first formal ceremony of their lives centre around the consumption of solid food” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 38). The people around Ashima in the United States baptise their children, whereas the Bengali tradition is different. She finds a cultural difference; there is no common ground where Ashima could find herself or her family. It is evident that she is contrasting each and everything in the host culture with the Bengali cultures and traditions, which results in unhomeliness for her in the American society. This is the reason that she, throughout the novel, resists the immigrant identity and sticks to the old traditions of the Bengali culture while living in the host culture.

Ashima tries to create an association between her children and their Indian ancestral roots. For this, she asks Gogol sometimes to get a photo album so that they may see pictures of their relatives in Calcutta. “She teaches him to memorize a four-line children’s poem by Tagore” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 54). The literature, the food, and the language that she uses make sure that her children belong to the Indian culture. Even though the friends that Gogol’s parents have are mostly Indians, and she cooks Indian food whenever they have get-togethers, it clearly depicts that Ashima is highly influenced by her original culture and is struggling against the unhomeliness by opposing the meet and greet function to develop a sense of cosmopolitanism with likely-minded people around her. But this has to not remain the same forever. Ashima has to submit to the transience of time and give up many things. “And yet to a casual observer, the Gangulis, apart from the name on their mailbox, apart from the issues of India abroad and *Sangbad Bichitra* that are delivered there, appear no different from their neighbours” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 64). As stated by unhomeliness, which is a postcolonial space, Ashima also goes through this process and evolves with time. She no longer remains the same Ashima that she was when she first arrived in America. Lahiri states that they even start celebrating Christmas with more enthusiasm than

they would do the worship of Durga and Saraswati for the sake of their children (64). But even then, Ashima takes pride in her Indianness. In other words, she is at odds with her unhomely experience which she wants to confront by consoling herself of a permanent belonging, in which she might not be successful.

“She prides herself on each entry in each volume, for together they form a record of all the Bengalis she and Ashoke have known over the years, all the people she has had the fortune to share rice with in a foreign land” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 159). Lahiri has skilfully preserved this fact even after decades of living in the US, yet there is a cultural sense in Ashima where she considers the US a foreign land and the people that share the same roots as her as her own. Similarly, the letters that she has received from India for years are also what carry her back to her ancestral land. All of this is a sort of refuge which she seeks to escape her unhomeliness.

After the death of Ashima’s husband, she begins to feel some sense of belonging in the host country which in actual is the beginning of unhomeliness towards her nativity, or in other words, she has finally accepted her unhomely identity. This is due to her surrender after the deaths of her parents and then her husband, and she has to give up on what was once unchangeable for her. “Sometimes she eats the way Gogol and Sonia do when they visit, standing in front of the refrigerator” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 162). This presents the ways in which she evolves from her previous self and depicts that apparently, she has not been forced to follow them, as she forced her children to stick with the ancestral culture, but in actual, she accepts the transformation in herself due to her circumstances – she had no other option. Her worldview has also evolved with time. She even admits that her decision for Gogol to marry an Indian girl was a mistake, and she lets Sonia marry an American boy without creating any hurdles for her. It also portrays that she came to know that Gogol and Sonia had both adopted American culture and let them follow it by accepting her mistakes and stopping to do more. But as Bhabha states that unhomeliness is a postcolonial space, it could be assumed here that Ashima had no other option but to surrender to the new identity and give up on unhomeliness after her husband and parents were no more. If she were living in India, she would not have to transform to any new character or evolve herself towards new belongings, but in America, she stood no other chance.

Towards the end of the novel, Lahiri puts it together so conclusively that she states: “True to the meaning of her name, she will be without borders, without a home of her own, a resident everywhere and nowhere” (276). Further on she states: “She feels 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, *The Namesake* 278). These concluding lines about Ashima very clearly present her evolved character, which no longer associates with a single place but rather has transformed herself into Robbins’s concept of cosmopolitanism. It depicts that culture also has an impact on the immigrants. While living in the host country, the resistance of the immigrant culture won against Ashima’s resistance to pertain her ancestral homely identity, and in the same way, she has stopped to associate the American homeliness and similarities and dissimilarities with the Bengali homeliness. It clearly shows that, according to Bhabha, her character has transformed.

“And though she does not feel fully at home within these walls on Pamberton Road she knows that this is home nevertheless.” On the one hand, it is difficult for Ashima to think of her ancestral home as her own, and on the other hand, the home she never considered her own has now strangely become a home for her. This ambivalence in her character depicts her unhomely experience. Her resistance in the novel was found in her associations with her parents’ and husband’s culture and identity. After the death of her husband and parents, she evolved as a cosmopolitan character, where she gave up her unhomely feelings towards America, and gave herself the privilege of a cosmopolitan to consider America as her new home, as this was the best thing she could do that time. Bhabha’s unhomeliness first played out in Ashima’s character not letting her associate with the host culture and Robbins’s cosmopolitanism later helped her develop her sense of location in the once alien community. Unhomeliness along with cosmopolitanism is fully in action in the novel in Ashima’s character.

#### **4.1.1.2 Unhomeliness and Cosmopolitanism in the Character of Gogol**

Gogol Ganguli is the main character of the novel, *The Namesake*. Gogol’s life has been successfully portrayed as a complex phenomenon of the second generation of immigrants. The very first complexity begins with naming him. His father names him Gogol, a name that is alien both in America and India. This might be considered

the very first step to shaping a cosmopolitan figure that is beyond the bounds of any culture and is thus a citizen of the world, as the term meant for Diogenes.

Gogol's mother wanted to assimilate him into Indian culture and belonging, but he and his sister did not give in. The very first instance is Gogol's choice of his name when he is admitted to school. "At the end of his first day he is sent home with a letter to his parents ... explaining that due to their son's preference he will be known as Gogol at school" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 60). This is the very first time that Gogol does not give in to his parents and instead looks for his own definitions of the world. Names give identity to one's self. Choosing his name shows that in the beginning of the novel, he also supports the name and the culture of his parents, but later on, he gets disturbed by this name and struggles against homeliness. This might be caused by the dominant culture that surrounds him and he not being able to associate with his parental culture nor with the culture surrounding him.

Similarly, language is another factor of association that the second generation of immigrants does not follow. "The parents eating and conversing in the Bengali their children don't speak among themselves" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 63). Ganguli and the other children born to 'deshi' parents do not find any reason to connect with the culture and home their parents have a concept of. But the parents try their best to inculcate the concept of belonging within them, and for this, they send Ganguli to Bengali language and culture lessons every other Saturday, but even then, Gogol is not easy with it, nor can he understand its significance. "Gogol hates it because it keeps him from attending every other session of a Saturday-morning drawing class he's enrolled in, at the suggestion of his art teacher" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 66). For him, associating with what is at hand is easier than associating with an imaginary homeland and its characteristics. It clearly depicts that, as Ashima's grandmother was confident about her ancestral cultural influence, both parents want Gogol to use Bengali in their circle, but culture impacts the language too. He resists adopting the ancestral belongings which are not appealing to him. He feels alienated in his parents' home which is a prospect of the postcolonial space as Bhabha opines.

The real conflict of unhomeliness arises when Gogol pays a visit to a graveyard. "Gogol is old enough to know that there is no Ganguli here. He is old enough to know ... that no stone in this country will bear his name beyond life"

(Lahiri, *The Namesake* 69). These are the genuine issues that immigrants and their offsprings have to face. From this, it could be well understood that cultural associations play their part from time to time. The child Gogol is surprised to note this difference: though he was born in America, his and his family's ways are way different. It develops a sense of unhomeliness that he, along with his family, do not have a space for themselves in America. Even within this incident, the cosmopolitan Gogol emerges as he writes the names of the dead and feels an association with them. "But Gogol is attached to them. For reasons he cannot explain or necessarily understand, these ancient Puritan spirits, these very first immigrants to America" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 71). Gogol feels associated with them because these characters buried in the American land have some relation to him. They too have names that are uncommon in America. Noting down the names of the dead gives him a sense of cosmopolitanism that despite of strange name and parental culture, he could still have some sense of belonging as a privileged cosmopolite does—many others were also struggling with the like matters.

The parents' remembrance of the home of their Bengali paternal home and culture is so evident that on every occasion they practised their rituals. Although there are numerous girls around Gogol, the Bengali girl is mentioned as if the rest of them do not matter at all. "The closest person to him in age is a girl named Moushumi" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 73). Although this sort of association is linked to belonging according to an individual's own will and is in disagreement with unhomeliness, but as Gogol is unhomely towards his parental ways, so is Moushumi, and it is due to this reason that Gogol has an association with her, and not because of her Bengali lineage. The mindset of belonging to paternal home and culture, as already stated, is not owned by these children of the immigrants, where the parents continue their struggles: "Lately he's been lazy, addressing his parents in English though they continue to speak to him in Bengali" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 75). In spite of the struggles that parents do for the deep-rootedness of their children, they never happen to be embracing this. "In Gogol's opinion, eight months in Calcutta is practically like moving there" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 79). Home is not the same thing that Ashoke and Ashima consider for their children, but rather it is they who have to decide about it. As mentioned earlier, since home is a fixed location in the homely sense, Gogol wants some newness. "But this time it frustrates him that it is to Calcutta that they

always go. Apart from visiting relatives there was nothing to do in Calcutta” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 79). It demonstrates that parents feel homeliness in their Bengali language and cultural practices and unhomeliness in English language and culture. The same happens with US-born children of Indians who feel homeliness in English language and culture but unhomeliness in Bengali language and culture. This is why he denotes his visit to Calcutta as a mere meeting with relatives where he faces unhomeliness. This states that Gogol does not want to be contained within a space. If given the chance to visit other places, he would not have felt the same narrowness as he does in this case. Yet when they return from India, it is somewhat difficult to get along with the American way of living. This expresses the transient nature of the belonging, which is again a depiction of unhomeliness. Similarly, Gogol is at ease with everything in spite of the discomfort he feels at first. “But for Gogol, relief quickly replaces any lingering sadness” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 87). Similarly, Gogol’s getting along with the girls he encounters every now and then and spending quality time with them presents him with the best that he could associate and yet dissociate from any belonging, making him a true cosmopolitan and an unhomey character.

Gogol continuously evolves throughout the novel. His concept of home keeps evolving as “Gogol makes the mistake of referring to New Haven as home” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 108). He feels comfortable finding a place for himself where he wants to create his own true associations that are not in any way influenced by any static foundations. He calls New Haven his home because it is New Haven where he has the liberty to live as he likes. This reveals to the readers that home is a place where an individual feels comfortable and denounces all the remaining notions. Though this is very normal for Gogol, Ashima, his mother, is not able to bear it. She is outraged by this and resists his calling New Haven his home. Lahiri points out that it is Gogol’s room where he feels most comfortable (*The Namesake* 108). Hence, it is the comfort that would suffice for home, whether it is at any place for any individual. Similarly, when Gogol has an affair with Ruth, Lahiri puts it this way: “He longs for her as his parents have longed, all these years, for the people they love in India” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 117). Along with this, once Gogol attends a panel discussion, he feels discomfort there. “But Gogol never thinks of India as desh. He thinks of it as Americans do, as India” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 118). He even keeps a distance from

all those things that connect him to his parental belongings. Thus, the home is not static anymore; it could be any place, and it could vary from time to time. It clearly states that India is a home for his parents, and America is a home for him. As far as the matter of homeliness is concerned, he feels dissociated due to his parental practises with their belongings, but outside the parental home, he considers India as the Americans do, which links back to Robbins's cosmopolitanism as he feels comfortable with like-minded Americans. Gogol is so into his new world that he resents everything linking him to his parents. "But after four years in New Haven he didn't want to move back to Massachusetts, to the one city in America his parents know. ... He didn't want to go home on the weekends, to go home with them to pujos and Bengali parties, to remain unquestionably in their world" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 126). As Bhabha puts it in "The World and the Home," there is confusion between the home and the world for the Diasporas. If Gogol is looked at from this perspective, then he also has some sort of confusion, but if looked at from the perspective of cosmopolitanism, he exactly depicts what a cosmopolitan must look like. But when Maxine appears in the life of Gogol, he starts comparing himself to her. He can clearly see that Maxine and her parents could relate to everything in America, whereas this is not the case with Gogol and his family as a result of unhomeliness.

As Bhabha puts it, unhomeliness is a postcolonial space. Maxine loves her parents and whatever is in relation to them. Unlike Gogol, she is completely at ease with everything around her. Though Gogol moves in with her to her house and starts living with them as they do, he has some feeling of discontent from within. "He is conscious of the fact that his immersion in Maxine's family is a betrayal of his own" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 141). The confusion in his life is evident from this. On the one hand, he wants to fit into Americanness, whereas on the other hand, he feels this is treachery, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter, where getting rid of one's own cultural identity was considered a betrayal. But as soon as we get through this, in the very next moment, we see that Gogol tries to be a cosmopolitan. "He feels free of expectation, of responsibility, in willing exile from his own life" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 142). It is exactly the same sort of cosmopolitanism that Bruce Robbins talks of in his book. Gogol feels that he is escaping the life, the home that his parents associate him with, and that by doing so, he is becoming a willing citizen of the world, belonging to nowhere yet everywhere. In spite of Gogol's utmost desire to give



up on everything that makes him an Indian in blood, there are instances in his life where he is not able to escape. “But you are Indian,” Pamela says, frowning.” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 157). It is very easy for the colonisers to define the colonised according to their will, whereas the colonised cannot do the same. Again, the concept of unhomeliness has been identified by reminding him of his real self and making it clear that he belongs to others. This is what does not let him escape from the real conflict of unhomeliness.

The death of Gogol’s father brings about a drastic change for Gogol. Though for Ashima it means her transformation into a cosmopolitan figure, for Gogol, things get upside down. When Maxine wants to take him back to her world, Gogol responds, “I don’t want to get away” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 182). Gogol now feels associated with his parents and does not want to escape. His circumstances change him entirely. It is the emergence of his self. He gets to the point where everything started, meeting Moushomi, a Bengali. Gogol throughout the novel keeps evolving and presents a true picture of a cosmopolitan who enjoys a privileged status of deciding for himself as he wishes.

#### **4.1.1.3 Unhomeliness and Cosmopolitanism in the Character of Moushomi**

Moushomi, just like Gogol, belongs to the second generation of immigrants. She as well could be referred to as a cosmopolite, as she also defines herself as she wills and does not conform to her parental belongings. At the same time, this could be her unhomeliness, where she, in her postcolonial space, is in a state of confusion just like Gogol was. “They talk about how they are both routinely assumed to be Greek, Egyptian, Mexican — even in this misrendering they are joined” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 212). Both of them are content with it, as they both have always wished to do the deliberate migration from their homes and from their ancestral belongings, where they do not feel at home. Moushomi is even ahead of Gogol in this regard, where she wants to migrate to France in order to do the intentional migration as her parents did to America. “Immersing herself in a third language, a third culture, had been her refuge” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 214). The word refuge means shelter or protection from danger or distress. What danger was she escaping from? This might refer to the plight of colonised individuals. Moreover, it refers to her cosmopolitan nature as well; it may be that she did not want to end up with a single nationality but rather wanted to carry on as a citizen of the world. Even Gogol accepts this within

her. “He admires her, even resents her a little, for having moved to another country and made a separate life. He realizes that this is what their parents had done in America” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 233). Understanding Moushomi’s decision is easier for Gogol, as he has been through all of this and has himself embraced the life that Moushomi chose. Similarly, although Moushomi and Gogol do not like much about their parents’ lives, their willing exile is what they both admire about their parents. “It’s the one thing about her parents’ lives she truly admires — their ability, for better or for worse, to turn their back on their homes” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 254). Moushomi longs for Paris, and this is her will, through which she feels of Paris as her home, although she was born in England and raised in America. This shows what a dedicated cosmopolitan she is.

Gogol plans a visit to Italy for Moushomi and himself. “A trip together to a place neither of them has been — maybe that’s what he and Moushomi need” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 272). The exiles throughout their lives need various locations to associate with, for a single place could not mean home to them, as they do not have any specific home, and thus they tend to become cosmopolitans on the one hand, and unhomey on the other hand. “He had spent years maintaining distance from his origins” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 281). Throughout the novel, the evolution of Gogol, along with his transforming concepts of home, is what makes him truly a cosmopolitan, along with his mother, Moushomi, and Sonia—all of whom belong to the class of immigrants.

The analysis of the unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism of the three characters of the novel, *The Namesake*—Ashima, Gogol, and Moushomi—depicts that the unhomeliness which they faced or went through in the estranged land was due to multiple reasons, primarily the influence of ancestral land and culture. They were not able to associate with their surroundings, but eventually they were able to associate with their surroundings as cosmopolitans according to their own wills. The parental cultural and language influence causes them hybridity and a loss of self-identity, but when they escape the local cultural impacts, they find home, and become cosmopolitans according to Bruce Robbins’s concept.

#### 4.1.2 Unhomeliness and Cosmopolitanism in *Whereabouts*

The second novel, *Whereabouts*, that I have chosen for this study does not exclusively contain these themes as Lahiri's other works have been doing. But the quotation that she mentions as a preface for this novel says a lot about her and her feelings. She states that whenever her surroundings change, she feels enormous sadness. This might refer to her belonging to a place or places where, because of the associations she maintains with them, she cannot withdraw from them easily. This sense of belonging is there in the novel, and in the proceeding paragraphs, it will be discussed further.

The very important thing about the novel, which might make it an unhomely and a cosmopolitan work, is that Lahiri has not mentioned the names of the individuals in the novel; in the same manner, she has not named the places or even the settings, because at the end of the novel, readers will not know where she is going. As names bring forth associations to static belongings, thus names have been avoided throughout, unlike her first novel. The chapters have been named 'In Bed,' 'At the Station,' 'At the Villa,' 'On the Street,' 'In the Office,' 'At the Museum,' and so on. For a cosmopolite, every place in the world is equally important, and thus, using some specific locations in her novel could have limited her work to a specific area. Moreover, it seems that, as a cosmopolite who is beyond all borders, her novel is also free from any such borders. She clearly places everyone in the frame of the cosmopolitan world by giving general place names in the novel. Also, it demonstrates that every universal character somewhere in the world can relate to the story and the character by taking the position of himself or herself as a cosmopolitan. Because Robbins's concept of cosmopolitanism forms a group of like-minded people, any universal character in the world can be part of a cosmopolitan community and can relate it to himself or herself.

As unhomely characters have no fixed home to associate with, and as discussed earlier in this chapter, they remain in a confused and lingering position, Lahiri also brings forth such instances from her unknown characters. "She tells me that spending seven days in a row together are rough" (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 16). The young girl whose parents have a rift is a sort of character that wants to escape belongingness in her life. Although it is the unparalleled match they have that affects

their daughter, the unhomeliness that is a postcolonial space as well is created due to specific reasons, and it is relatable. The girl is going through unhomeliness in her home due to her parents and is not able to associate herself to that space as her home as Bhabha discusses different fictional characters in his work who go through unhomeliness.

The language difference also raises the unhomeliness, as Lahiri further adds to it when she says that she could speak the language fluently, which her parents struggled with. The struggle of the parents with the language shows that they are not natives. Not being natives adds to the idea of being others in the host country. Here, it clearly depicts that there was a language difference that led them to unhomeliness. Moreover, language, which is again an association with a nation or a homeland, is kept ambiguous, thus giving it a cosmopolitan touch. “She doesn’t look like a tourist or foreigner, she’s the type that fits in anywhere” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 17). This best describes the cosmopolitan nature of the girl she is talking about. Only a cosmopolitan has the ability to fit in anywhere, or else the individuals sticking to their static homes are not able to remain comfortable outside that environment. She is free in her will and denounces the city of her parents as her own, and in this way, she goes through a willing exile. “It’s not my city anymore” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 17). It clearly demonstrates that her cosmopolitan nature makes her fit anywhere in the world, just like the manner in which Lahiri uses the general universal names of the chapters. She possesses general and universal cosmopolitan traits. She resists the homeliness of the parental city and does not associate it with her diasporic identity.

The narrator in the novel, expected to be Lahiri herself, also goes through the same. “Away from this godforsaken city. I’ve been thinking of buying a little house by the sea, or may be in the mountains, far from everything and everyone” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 23). This portrays that even the narrator has some sort of psychological understanding where she does not feel at home at her current place which clearly depicts that unhomeliness in the parental home caused discomfort, and she is not looking for a sense of home, which Bhabha relates to comfort. It is the personal traits, attitudes, and qualities with which one wants to establish his identity and home. Lahiri points out the general plausibility once again by giving it a notion of

cosmopolitanism, where everyone can feel comfort, such as in mountains and by the sea. This becomes further evident when she discusses this with her mother.

If I tell my mother that I'm grateful to be on my own, to be in charge of my space and my time—this in spite of the silence, in spite of the lights I never switch off when I leave the house, along with the radio I always keep playing—she'd look at me unconvinced. (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 28)

Leaving the lights on and the radio playing shows that there is some sense of fear within the narrator. She believes that when she is alone, she is free from every kind of belonging, and yet she has some fear that an unhomely person might have. At the same time, this is not acceptable for her mother, as she cannot identify with what she thinks. When the narrator visits the museum, she observes a woman of her age. She states: “Maybe she’s thinking of her house in some other part of the world” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 30). Which states that Lahiri is continuously struggling for her homeliness and the comfort of home by comparing herself with others or relating their life experiences with hers. In the given instance, she thinks of the unhomely experience of that woman whom she is observing. She tries to form a relation with the girls she saw in the museum in order to remove her anxiety.

Lahiri uses the term 'house' mostly in this novel and does not refer to home, which again supports the notion that she is not able to associate with a fixed place as home which is in accordance with Bhabha’s concept of unhomeliness. The characters that she has been observing might have different worldviews, but for the narrator, home seems to be extinct or not existing. But here, the longing of the character for her house approves of the fact that she does believe in a home. It is only that she cannot find one to form her association with.

The concept of home in the unhomely sense, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, might refer to a place where one feels comfortable. Though again, Lahiri does not use the word home but rather goes on with using house. A friend of the narrator, about whom she mentions that the narrator acts as a therapist for her, says: “In my house I can never just sit and be” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 36). Even though the narrator’s house does not belong to her friend, as she can be what she likes to be in

the narrator's house, this seems to be functioning as a home for her. She states further: "But my house is a mess and I can never find anything there" (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 37). She does not feel homely at home at all; whatever is taking place in the home is taken as a mess, which demonstrates the actual unhomeliness in herself too. Thus, we see that for her friend, the narrator's place acts as a home, and the dynamic concept of home is again put into action here. She views everything outside of the home as a home, but does not feel the same about her actual parental home. This situation is in compliance with Robbins's cosmopolitanism, where one finds himself comfortable with other like-minded groups. The same happens to the narrator. Even the pool, which the narrator and other women visit, is a source of homely shelter. "They come at the same time, on those same days, to escape life's troubles. ... Everything—my body, my heart, the universe seems tolerable when I am protected by water and nothing touches me" (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 39). Comfort from the unrest of life, along with shelter, which are both characteristics of a home, are hereby associated with the pool. In addition to these, as her friend visits her, bringing along 'tasteless' biscuits for her daughter, she says: "We always keep a packet in there, that way she feels at home wherever we go" (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 63). Here the word 'home' is used, and for a child, even the biscuits could associate her with a place. To add further to this, on the occasion of the baptism of the narrator's colleague, even the feeling of home is associated with the restaurant. "They've celebrated other important occasions here and feel at home" (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 90). So, the home is not a place where individuals are born or where their ancestral roots lie; instead, it is any place with which individuals could correlate. The narrator constantly looks for homeliness throughout the novel by relating everything around her surroundings to the home and tries to feel the comfort of home there. In the present case, this sense of belonging to multiple places is considered in association with cosmopolitanism where most of these characters feel unhomely at their homes which they call houses, and on the contrary have homely associations with multiple locations.

There are some instances in the novel in which it might seem that the narrator, or Lahiri, is against cosmopolitanism and shows some intactness towards her belongings. For instance, when the narrator stays in the hotel, she states: "I already know that I'm not going to get any sleep in this room they've stuck me in" (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 52). At first, this seems to be against the cosmopolitan notion, yet to

remind ourselves of the exact definitions of the concept, we know that cosmopolitanism talks of a willing exile, where, as in the case of the hotel room, she has not been given any choice—as she states, they have stuck her in. To support this point even further, another incident could be cited here. When the narrator’s friend visits along with her husband, and the husband mocks the lifestyle of the people living in the narrator’s city, she denounces his mind set. “And I wonder, what exactly did he learn about the world after living in all those different countries?” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 63). According to the narrator, a person should have the ability to embrace diversity, and this protest of hers as a response to her friend’s husband’s remark clarifies her stance on cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism never advocates looking down upon someone’s choices and imposing a specific outlook, and here the narrator does the same in case of her friend’s husband. When she buys things from her neighbour, though she does not need them at all, Lahiri puts it as: “In the stark summer desert, this oasis of objects, this ongoing flow of goods, reminds me that everything vanishes, and also reminds me of the banal, stubborn residue of life” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 71). This could as well be related to the transient nature of the world, where nothing stays forever, whether it be the concept of time or that of place, hence putting down the concept of one static home. At another moment, temporariness of time has also been mentioned. “It was an incendiary time, a momentary surge that has nothing to do with me anymore” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 96). Thus, transience of time and place is evident here.

Whereas the narrator, on the one hand, seems to be a cosmopolitan, her father, on the other hand, is opposite to her. He would not even like to go on vacations. “But he believed that it was better to relax at home, without packing a suitcase, without the effort of getting used to a new place just for a few days” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 84). Here Lahiri has used the word home instead of house, as she has used in the case of the narrator, for the father had a connection with his place in the sense opposite to a cosmopolite. The opposing viewpoint of the narrator is evident from this expression of hers: “I never go back to the same place, it’s better not to feel tied to one versus the other” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 85). Her statement strongly advocates the cosmopolitan notion and is also in accordance with the unhomeliness in her father’s home. The narrator does not see any reason to link herself up to some specific location, but rather she wants to cut all such ties. “I mourn my unhappy origins” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts*

85). This statement could be viewed from the postcolonial perspective as saying that if she were not from the colonised class, she would not have mourned her roots, but on the other hand, as a form of willing exile, this mourning is completely fine for her to get into the larger strata of globalisation. It also shows her resistance to the home being imposed on her rather than being allowed to find her own comfort. She does not even want to go back to that homeliness—belonging to her parental home.

Towards the end of *Whereabouts*, as the narrator receives a fellowship for a year, a sense of belonging arouses within her. There is some sense of dread regarding the new place. “I’ve received a fellowship to go to a place I’ve never been before. ... I tell myself: A new sky awaits me, even though it’s the same as this one” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 128-132). Although she confesses that the new place is just similar to the place she has been living in, the sense of association plays a part. But again, Lahiri does not present the concept of a static home and uses the word 'house' again. “When you change houses you always lose something. Every move betrays you, it always cheats you somehow” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 138). This again negates the concept of a static home, and it is through these translocations that evolution takes place and new forms of the self emerge. She accepts this change and therefore states: “Now that I am about to leave this place, I want to remove every trace of myself” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 142). She does not want to leave anything behind that would remind her of the place she is going to leave. But it is never easy to do so and to go through the transformation. “There’s no point saying goodbye to them, or adding, we’ll meet again, even though right now I’m overflowing with affection for each of them” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 150). The people that she is leaving behind have meaning for her. But again, this does not mean that she is not open to diversity and cosmopolitanism. Her fellowship is something she is going for, according to her free will. However, the strongest notion of unhomeliness could as well be seen towards the end of the novel. “My double seen from behind, explains something to me: that I’m me and also someone else, that I’m leaving and also staying” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 151). This is exactly the case with the diaspora, who immigrates on the one hand, and on the other hand, cannot let go of a place and feel melancholy when they have to say farewell. The second-last portion of the novel has further revelations for the readers. “I’ve never stayed still, I’ve always been moving, that’s all I’ve ever been doing. Always waiting either to get somewhere or to come back. Or to escape” (Lahiri,



Whereabouts 153). Although this is what a cosmopolitan does and enjoys the privileges of it, Lahiri's final conclusions are somewhat more related to her unhomeliness in the sense that Bhabha puts it that such a character has no home at all. "Disoriented, lost, at sea, at odds, astray, adrift, bewildered, confused, uprooted, turned around. I'm related to these related terms" (Lahiri, Whereabouts 153). These final lines of hers reveal that though she is a cosmopolite, she is exactly confused in the sense that Bhabha propounds. She herself has used the word 'confused' in the above-mentioned lines. She is lost because she can relate to no place as her own, yet as a cosmopolitan, she embraces diversity and wants to accept all the places warmly.

It is now clear from the textual evidence and analyses of both novels that they are replete with the concepts of unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, the characters in the novels have evolved with the passing of time, and thus their evolution is also evident. The conclusion will be provided in the final chapter of this study. Now both novels will be discussed from the perspective of identity.

## **4.2 Evolving Identity in *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts***

As the philosopher Sydney Shoemaker puts it, identity is a set of traits and attitudes that an individual retains for a longer period of time, and it is his individual essence. He also brings forth the mention of self, where he states that the individual might try to bring about a change in his identity if he considers that the identity, he has is given to him by his environment and does not present his true self. This is the point where an individual might try to change his identity (Shoemaker). Identity, according to Bhabha as well, is dependent upon concepts such as 'home.' As has been discussed earlier in this chapter, because of the concept of home, Maxine's identity could not be related to that of Gogol. Maxine felt proud of her belongings, whereas Gogol always remained in a state of confusion, for which Bhabha has used terms such as 'ambivalence.' In this chapter, the textual evidence from both novels containing the concept of identity is brought forward and analysed according to the theoretical underpinning at hand.

### **4.2.1 Notion of Identity in *The Namesake***

Gogol's parents, i.e., Ashoke and Ashima, both belong to the first generation of immigrants; their viewpoints are different from those of their children. When Gogol's mother visits America first, she tries to associate everything with her

ancestral land. “She calculates the Indian time on her hands” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 4). The main point is that this strong bond with her birthplace is what has formed her identity, and she is not willing to change that identity at any cost. The same is the case with her husband. He even names his child after Gogol because it is the Russian author with whom he has an association and wants to preserve it in his life. “Ashima approves, aware that the name stands not only for her son’s life, but her husband’s” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 28). These show the intactness of these characters, as they are not open to the newness and are associating with the things that have occurred to them in the past. It has also been mentioned earlier that even the change was thought of as a betrayal and that Ashima’s grandmother was sure “that Ashima would never change” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 37). This strongly shows how the first generation of immigrants is resistant to change and wants to preserve their identities that have been inherited from their ancestors. That’s why it could be seen throughout the novel that Ashima never stops wearing her Indian sari, nor does she stop cooking rice along with ‘Daal.’ Similarly, she is friends only with Bengalis and sticks to studying Indian books along with listening to Indian music. All these are signs of her firmness and sincerity towards her parental culture, and these are the things that form her identity. But even then, as Shoemaker suggests the strict sense of identity, Ashima does go through some transformation, or may be through some confusion, as Bhabha puts it, and does not think of India as she had been doing in the past. “She feels 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, *The Namesake* 278). This represents the change in identity of the firmest character in the novel. This means that even such staunch characters could undergo change and that their old identity could be replaced by a new one. Sometimes the change is brought about by unlearning what an individual already knows and by learning new things. Ashima too is resistant to accepting change in the beginning, but then prior to Ashoke’s death when he moves to Cleveland, she goes through transformation. Lahiri puts it as:

Having been deprived of the company of her own parents upon moving to America, her children’s independence, their need to keep their distance from her, is something she will never understand. Still, she

had not argued with them. This, too, she is beginning to learn.” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 166)

In a way, she is unlearning what she has learned from her parents or what her culture has taught her. This is the point where the identity and, as a result, the self of an individual evolve, and new definitions are set instead of the pre-existing ones.

The title of the novel '*The Namesake*' itself suggests that the name plays a vital role throughout the novel. Names are given to develop a sense of identity. Usually, names are given by parents to children, and this is where the first problem of identity starts in the novel with the name 'Gogol'. Whenever the parents name their children, it is because of some associations that they have with those names, not their children. Thus, this results in forming the identity of the children before they can decide anything for themselves. In the same manner, Gogol is given his name because of his father's association, but this never once occurs to Gogol to have any such connection with his name, and he even despises it for its awkwardness in American society. Gogol, from his very childhood, acts as a rebel, rejecting everything that his parents have to offer him. For instance, when he is admitted to the school, his parents want his good name, Nikhil, to be mentioned, yet he asks his teacher to be called by Gogol. “He is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 57). Though the name Gogol is as unknown to him as Nikhil, because his association has been built with the name Gogol, he does not want to be called Nikhil. Just like Gogol's mother, who tries continuously to inculcate the Indian identity within Gogol, his father does not lag. “Finish it, Gogol. At your age I ate tin” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 55). The way Gogol's or any child's parents want to design the mindset of their children is evident. But Gogol cannot give in to this. Therefore, when he asks his teacher to call him Gogol, Lahiri brings forth the question: “What about the parents' preference? Ashima and Ashoke wonder, shaking their heads” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 60). This is the first incident in the novel where Gogol goes against his parents' will and instead tries to form his own identity. The development of the Gogol's identity through his name creates a sense of self-identity crisis in the host country. He finds no one with the same name, and the second preference of the name also faces an identity crisis because of its association with Indian culture, but what he needs is a name particularly associated with American identity. It clearly overlaps with Shoemaker's identity and one's attitude. Gogol's attitude towards his name brings forth a sense of

unhomeliness. The same is the case with Sonia, his sister. She too belongs to the second generation of immigrants and thus thinks her own way, but she is fortunate in the sense that her parents have already gotten used to the ways of American living after experiencing their first child. "In the supermarket they let Gogol fill the cart with items that he and Sonia, but not they, consume" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 65). Their food choices are also different from those of their parents, and this shows their individual identities.

As Gogol grows up, he keeps looking for associations to define his identity accordingly. He goes through some sort of existential angst and thus looks for external factors to link himself with. For instance, he is not ready to throw away the rubbings containing the names of the ancient American puritans just because they have strange names like him. "But Gogol is attached to them. For reasons he cannot explain or necessarily understand" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 71). In this way, Gogol is trying to establish his own identity. But as he is growing, he is feeling the awkwardness of his name and, consequently, his identity. "For by now, he's come to hate questions pertaining to his name, hates having constantly to explain" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 76). He sort of wants an escape from the things given to him by his parents; his name is the first of those belongings, therefore he is applying for a change of name. As Bhabha terms it, 'ambivalence,' he cannot locate himself neither in America nor in India. "Like his parents when they went to Calcutta, he could have had an alternative identity, a B-side to the self" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 76). He is not able to relate to any place and thus has to go through an existential crisis to find himself some identity. Therefore, even inside the plane, he is not discontent with not having a seat with his parents. "But Gogol is secretly pleased to be on his own" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 80). He even tries wine for the first time on the plane, which again shows his escape from the identity his parents want to give him. This depiction clearly demonstrates that children are struggling to find their own individual identities by keeping a distance from the cultural association of their parents' diasporic cultural identity. As stated by Shoemaker, identity refers to the qualities, abilities, and habits that are developed by the children to find their own identity.

The struggle of Gogol with his name continues, and this might serve as a symbol of Gogol's transformation throughout the novel. Gogol wants to find answers to his questions regarding his existence and identity, but this is not that simple. He

asks his mother for the reason for giving him a pet name, and her response is: “It’s what Bengalis do” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 99). But he still cannot get this because he himself is not a Bengali. “I don’t get it. How could you guys name me after someone so strange? No one takes me seriously” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 100). Gogol faces a plight that not even his parents can understand, and he has to go through it all alone and overcome it. Gogol’s question to his mother depicts that he has been forced by his parents to accept the Bengali identity, which creates a sense of identity crisis due to the sense of otherness in America. According to Shoemaker, these distinctive features of the name Gogol in American culture distinguish him from others, and they can easily relate him to the Indian identity, irrespective of the fact that he belongs to American culture.

Therefore, he goes through the transformation and applies for a change of name, which is again something that he does completely independently and shows the hybridity of identity. “But now that he is Nikhil it’s easier to ignore his parents, to tune out their concerns and pleas” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 105). The change of name is not merely a change of name for Gogol, but rather an escape for him—an escape from every characteristic he inherited from his parents. But the problem is that there are irreplaceable things in an individual’s life—a memory is one such thing. “At times he still feels his old name, painfully and without warning” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 105). Although he has changed his name, yet he is unable to escape his past, which disturbs him time and again. “Somewhere along the two-and-a-half-hour journey, Nikhil evaporates and Gogol claims him again” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 106). This is the problem with which Gogol still has to struggle. The change of the name clearly depicts that Gogol is not fighting against Indian culture but against the identity and unhomeliness being faced at home. Nikhil is also associated with the Indian culture, which is unknown to him, but he wanted to adopt himself, but not as directed by his parents.

After changing the name, Gogol did not find his self-identity or, at least, his homeliness. Gogol has to give up on a lot of things in order to reshape his identity. Therefore, when he makes Ruth his girlfriend, he is afraid of his previous identity. “He cannot imagine being with her in the house where he is still Gogol” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 115). For Ruth it is very romantic that Gogol loves her although his parents would disprove of their relationship. In case of Ruth, Gogol is not able to do

so. But he is continuously struggling to erase all the traces of his belongings to form his new identity. Therefore when Amit, a distant cousin of him asks about the reason he has not joined the Indian association there, he has not a single answer to respond to him with some positivity, for he despises everything that makes him follow the standards of his parents (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 119). He keeps on progressing in his remaking of his identity, and in order to do so, he stops visiting his parents while he studies in New Haven, and the addition of Maxine to his life makes it even easier for him. Maxine is completely different from him regarding her identity. “He realizes that she has never wished she were anyone other than herself, raised in any other place, in any other way. This, in his opinion, is the biggest difference between them (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 138). Here again, the discussion goes towards the concept of identity as presented by Bhabha. On the one hand, it is Gogol’s independent thought to transform into a character he himself wants, yet on the other hand, why doesn’t Maxine want any change in her identity? Why does Maxine not feel uneasy with her parents and their way of life? It seems that this sort of identity crisis occurs only among diasporic immigrants who are not able to relate to or associate with any culture as their own, and thus the concept of unhomeliness has a direct role in it. In other words, it’s the side effect of the colonisation that puts the subjects into such a sort of identity crisis, or, in other words, in search of finding new identities. Therefore, for Gogol, everything that is given to him by his parents is not interesting. “To him the terms of his parents’ marriage are something at once unthinkable and unremarkable; nearly all their friends and relatives had been married in the same way” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 138). Here it is quite evident that Gogol does not want to live the way his parents have lived or accept the identity that they have liked for him. He likes everything about Maxine and her parents, and he can easily be the one he wants to be at her house. There is also a possibility that the escape that Gogol wants from the identity his parents have given him is a sort of rebellion and not his actual identity. He despises everything that belongs to his parents, even the alarm system that they installed in their house. But this goes on until the death of his father. As soon as Ashoke dies, he no longer remains the same as Maxine. All of a sudden, he starts missing his father and finally gives up on Maxine as well. When Maxine wants to take him back with her, he states: “I don’t want to get away” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 182). Maybe he has found that the way he was trying to run away from his parents was not appropriate to form his actual identity. Although he never liked

anything given to him by his parents, after this point, he gave in to his mother's choice of meeting Moushomi and eventually even married her. It clearly portrays that he has faced identity crises in the home and again while living with Maxine. The cultural rituals and practices that Gogol despised and escaped from once, he finally embraces them and he chooses Moushomi for marriage. He has found his identity and home after the death of his father.

Moushomi, in terms of identity, has remained just like Gogol. She is a true cosmopolitan figure who was born in England, brought up in America, and fancies living in France. Just like Gogol went against his parents' will of naming him in his school life, Moushomi was also a rebel and wanted to make her own decisions. "From earliest girlhood, she says, she had been determined not to allow her parents to have a hand in her marriage" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 213). It seems like she met Gogol at a stage when he was retreating from the crises he was going through. Moushomi had transformed herself exactly into the person she wanted to be, and when she knew about Gogol's change of name, she, unlike others, appreciated this, as for her, this was an independence of his choice and identity. "She'd liked that he'd changed his name from Gogol to Nikhil; though she'd known him all those years, it was a thing that made him somehow now, not the person her mother had mentioned" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 248). The matter of free will of identity mattered so to Moushomi that she never thought of changing her name to Ganguli after her marriage. "Sometimes she would sit at a restaurant alone ... simply to remind herself that she was still capable of being on her own" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 247). Gogol nor anyone else was able to bound Moushomi within some specific bounds, and eventually, as she thought of her marriage as a bound, she escaped the marriage with Gogol as well and flew to France, which was the place she could relate her identity to. It depicts that identity is not only related to what one wants to be; it is related to one's individual practices, where he or she feels comfortable to practise whatever gives satisfaction, as stated by Shoemaker. Moushomi's preferences for living in France and the change of Gogol's name to Nikhil support this argument about one's self-identity formulation.

The novel ends with Gogol living under the name Nikhil, with regrets over his past that could not be reversed. "There is a possibility, eventually, of becoming an associate, of the firm incorporating his name. And in that case Nikhil will live on, publicly celebrated, unlike Gogol, purposely hidden, legally diminished, now all but

lost” (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 290). It seems that though Gogol struggled a lot through his life, he finally reached his destination—the formation of a true identity, void of any impositions. He turns to reading the book given to him by his father, not escaping any further.

The identity in the novel *The Namesake* has been presented as the set of traits, capacities, and attitudes of the characters, such as Ashima, Gogol, and Moushomi, where these characters develop their own identity by choosing the paths that satisfy them to develop a sense of satisfaction and belonging. The resistance of the characters against reshaping identities went in vain. Moushomi strictly follows her own dreams to go to France, where she finds her true self. Gogol, after the death of his father, associates himself with his cultural diasporic identity. Ashima, once having fixed-identity, transforms into a cosmopolitan character. Robbins’s sense of identity prevails throughout the novel by guiding them on what to follow and where they can find their true self.

#### **4.2.2 Role of Identity in *Whereabouts***

The second novel, *Whereabouts* also deals with the concept of identity. The very first thing that needs to be mentioned in this analysis is that the novel tells of nothing specific. There is no name of any character—mere pronouns. The actions of characters have been presented along with the professions or the behaviours, which is a good technique to give suggestive identities to characters unlike the pre-determined ones in the case of *The Namesake*. Lahiri has tried to make connections between the characters by relating them to the memories of the narrator and thus telling us more about the narrator and her life. As happenings of the past play a major role in formation of one’s identity, thus different memories related with the incidents beforehand have been mentioned within the novel.

Life of the narrator seems an unhappy one as far as her family life is concerned. “I felt a connection with the little girl, an only child like me, seated between her parents. It’s just that my father never liked eating in restaurants” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 12). In order to think of herself she is trying to find some association with the girl that is there in front of her. She is in the present, and at the same time is thinking of her past trying to think of her life, and identify her place in the world. Similarly, when she looks at the neighbouring women, she feels a sense of loss.



“These things only remind me of loss, of betrayal, of disappointment” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 14). Although she seems to be mourning her past, yet from the narrative of the girl who exemplifies her as a model clarifies it that she is the one who has moved beyond the life that was offered to her by her parents and her environment. “I want to be a strong woman, independent, like you” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 18). This explains about the narrator that she is not a victim of her life, but rather she has formed her identity through her struggle. These lines clearly portray that the narrator feels an identity crisis; this is why she struggles to find her identity by comparing her past with the present of a child at a restaurant. Due to unhomeliness, her self-identity is blurred in her eyes, she mourns her past and wants to be as strong as to develop her sense of self identity.

There are various examples in the novel where the narrator’s self-built identity is revealed to the readers. For instance, she states: “Water can cover me without drowning me. My mother and I are different that way” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 40). She can proudly talk of her difference from her mother. The identity that is in the strict sense asks one to think and behave exactly as their parents would do, but here the identity is a concept of transformation and evolution as Shoemaker suggests. She never wanted to adopt the parental identity but to transform herself in the way that gives her a comfort, and homely identity too. However, an evolved identity does not mean to resent and oppose anything given by others, as was found in the case of Gogol. For instance: “It was my father, who worked behind the window of a post office, who introduced me to the theatre. He loved this world. My mother never went” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 57). She is happily accepting the positive aspects from her past that have helped her through her life. But again, there are negative aspects to this also. As the narrator’s mother remained very curious about spending money, she, the narrator, still has got some fears while spending. This is the impact of the association that identity has with the past. “If I walk into a store, if I admire something but don’t buy it, if I walk out and manage to avoid the cash register, I feel like a virtuous daughter. And if I cave, well, I cave” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 76). This relates exactly to the impacts that Gogol had of his parents. The narrator sometimes spends lavishly just in order to get rid of the fear that she had had in her childhood, but this might not represent who she actually is; it might be just a recoiling effect.

Just like Gogol's identity was influenced by his parents, it almost happens with everyone. Lahiri talks of her friends' child and her birthday party. She states: "I think about the little girl and this afternoon in her honor. She's ignorant of the cheerful party organized to celebrate her life, she knows nothing yet about the world" (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 93). The birthday celebration is just like naming of Gogol—the child knows nothing about it as Gogol knew nothing about his name. Although this is a celebration meant for the little child, yet the child's mind has not developed to understand what it means. In a way, such parties are as well meant for the elders to interact with each other. As far as the places are concerned, unlike humans, sometimes their identities remain intact and unaltered. "An area that's resisted change, that remains unspoiled" (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 102). The country-side that the narrator visits remain unspoiled because such places are not mostly dominated and populated by people. Such places are unlike the people who are continually under the influence of others—especially parents and families. "Nor can we escape the shadows our families cast" (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 112). The strongest influence in a person's life is that of the parents and the family, as these are the first ones to tutor and pamper a child while the child has got an empty mind. As according to psychology, the first five years of a child are irreversible and unchangeable, therefore the influence that is casted upon the children plays a vital role in their identity formation.

Along with the family and parents, as discussed previously, memory, or as Freud would state it, the unconscious has always got a strong effect on an individual's identity. "The stationary store has been one of my haunts for years" (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 119). Even though the stationary store is just a place, yet associations develop as a person contacts a place or a person every day, and thus these associations affect the formation of the identity. Therefore, when she finds that the store is no more dealing with the stationary, she is unable to accept this fact, and at once starts thinking about what might have happened with the family running the stationary store. And then, as she notices a young couple entering that store which now deals in suitcases, she opines about that phase as: "that sublime phase when every stupid thing feels enchanting" (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 121). She talks of the youth as a phase of life, but from this very remark it is understandable that the identity evolves, as the store has evolved from a stationary store to that dealing in suitcases. Just like the store has transformed, when she has to move for the

fellowship, she too has to evolve, or else she will not be able to move on. “Now that I’m about to leave this place I want to remove every trace of myself” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 142). An individual has to transform their identity whenever they undergo changing circumstances in their life, or else it gets difficult to survive. And as she is leaving her place, she sees a woman resembling her. There might be a possibility that she saw no one and it was her imagination where she felt herself moving ahead of her. “My double, seen from behind, explains something to me: that I am me and also someone else, that I’m leaving and also staying” (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 151). If this is considered for instance that it is the narrator herself, then it might be said that as the identity is linked to different people, places, and the environment as stated before, the narrator too before leaving her place is feeling that a part of her still lingers on those streets, she has associations with, that though she has become anew with the passage of time, yet there is some part of her that has always stayed there. This is how this novel of Lahiri, *Whereabouts*, deals with the concept of identity. These instances very clearly relate with both the static sense of identity and with the dynamic one likewise, where Lahiri does not want change at times, but then, change is obligatory at times.

The above discussion is self-explanatory where the concept of identity in both the novels has been discussed. Both the novels consist of the identity in its strict sense and as well in its loose sense, where sometimes the identity remains intact just like the places that accept no transformation, whereas sometimes the identity of the characters has to go through transformations in order to evolve new form of characters. Moreover, the evolvment in the characters of both the novels is visible and apparent, yet the characters in the first novel evolve identically due to the diasporic background, whereas the second novel does not give such traces of diaspora exclusively. Conclusion of this study would be provided in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the findings, discussion and the conclusion of the study.

#### 5.1 Findings of the Study

After analysing the characters of the two novels of Jhumpa Lahiri, i.e., *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts*, by using the theoretical underpinnings of the postcolonial concept of unhomeliness and identity, along with the theoretical grounding of cosmopolitanism, the current study presents the findings of the study, such as:

This study found that in *The Namesake* novel, 'home' was a major concept for the individuals, where the characters like Gogol and Moushomi had their own point of view regarding home, whereas the characters like Ashoke, Ashima, and Maxine thought home as a static and fixed point though Ashima went through transformation in the end. Due to their opposing views regarding the home, their identities differed accordingly. Thus, Moushomi and Gogol appeared as characters facing unhomeliness, while their parents, along with Maxine, who had specific places to associate with permanently, behaved differently.

This study also found that language plays a vital role in forming identity. In the novel *The Namesake*, Ashima sang Bengali songs as lullabies in order to lull her children to sleep. Besides, she had Hindi recipes and other books, which she even studied multiple times as a relief.

The comparative analysis of the two novels states that *The Namesake* deals with the immigrants and their identity-related issues; on the contrary, *Whereabouts* mostly deals with indefinite characters, and most of them are cosmopolitans, and they have no other identities apart from what they do and how they feel or behave.

It was also observed that Bhabha's unhomeliness was found everywhere in the novel, *The Namesake*, because all of the immigrant characters in the novel were in

some sort of confusion about whether they wanted to escape from where they lived or where they were born. Even a woman like Ashima, who had a strong attachment to her motherland, was no longer able to associate with India as her home towards the end of the novel. Similarly, all other diasporic characters like Ashima's husband, Ashoke; her daughter, Sonia; and her son, Gogol, could either relate to no place as home or that home was multiple locations for them. As far as the second novel is concerned, the narrator uses the word "house" for her parents' home as well as for where she lives. However, she has used the word "home" for places like a restaurant or even a pool. This makes both novels resemble unhomeliness, where the diasporic characters or the immigrants cannot associate with a single place as their home and instead look for places with which they could find some associations.

Lahiri, towards the end of *The Namesake*, mentions the meaning of the name Ashima as someone who is without borders (276). This is exactly the same as being cosmopolitan. In the same manner, Lahiri's *Whereabouts* also discusses the overall characters without referring to their names, their identities, their belongings, and so on. What she actually does is that she introduces all the characters as the ones they actually are through their actions and behaviours. She does not care about the details that are given by society to individuals.

The comparative analysis of both the novels' characters and their emerging self-identities concluded that they have undergone enormous transformations in their lives. Gogol in *The Namesake* tried to escape everything he inherited from his parents and yet found solace towards the end of the novel and turned into a composed person, claiming his identity independently. Maxine also went to France, as she dreamt of that place as her dream place, and got what she longed for. Similarly, Ashima, after long years of resistance towards the foreign ways of the foreign land, finally accepted America and the Pamberton Road as her home. Furthermore, in *Whereabouts*, the narrator did not want to leave the place where she lived, overcame her belongings, and believed that wherever she went meant the same for her. All these transformations in the 'self' of the characters are evident through both texts.

This study also found that Lahiri, in her novel *Whereabouts*, overcame all notions of naming characters, language, and nationality. She, as the narrator, has become a cosmopolitan person, where all such notions seem nothing to her anymore.

This study concludes that Lahiri's characters have undergone transformations that go beyond cultures and boundaries. She also enjoys the privilege of being a cosmopolitan who belongs nowhere and yet everywhere.

## 5.2 Discussion

The present research study analysed unhomeliness, cosmopolitanism, and identity in the two novels *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts* written by Jhumpa Lahiri to highlight the characters' struggle with self-identity formulation. The present study takes the novels as sample and investigates the self-identity development in the characters of the novel where unhomeliness and cosmopolitanism give it an additional value. The characters in the first novel are first and second generations of immigrants who struggle with formation of their identities. In the present case, their identities are either fixed or changeable depending on their concept of home. Those having fixed homes tend to have fixed identities too, and those having fluid concept of home behave accordingly. Now, we will refer to the research questions as presented in the introduction chapter and the answers that were found during the analysis.

The first question was regarding application of unhomeliness in the selected texts. Unhomeliness has been discussed in the third chapter of this study as explained by Homi K. Bhabha. According to Bhabha, as a result of unhomeliness, "the border between home and world gets confused" (Bhabha 141). Almost all of the characters of the selected novels have been examined in order to find out whether they go through this experience or not. To start with Ashima as in the analysis chapter, Ashima continuously faces this sort of confusion where she in spite of living in America is confused to conform to the new land and culture as home, and thus in order to survive in that alien host culture and estranged land, looks for associations that could attach her to her parental homeland. Though she lives in America for years, yet she is unhomely in America and her concept of home revolves around India and specifically Calcutta. This does not remain the same till the end when her parents die in India and her husband in America. She is then no more the same person who could not think of other place as home. As Bhabha states "The world first shrinks for Isabel and then expands" (141), so is the case with Ashima. After her husband's death, world expands for her. India, which was once her only home, she cannot associate with her anymore, and America where she felt unhomely becomes her new home. This unhomely feeling

is further strong within the second generation of the immigrants. Whether it is Gogol, Moushomi or Sonia, all of them go through unhomeliness. Border between the home and the world is really confused in their case. They are not able to associate with their parental homes as their homes, whether that home be in America or in India. It is due to this strong unhomely feeling among these characters that they hate everything associated with their parents. In case of Gogol, we see the extremes of this notion. Gogol even hates his name because it sounds strange to Americans i.e., his surrounding culture where he lives. He is time and again instructed to follow Indianness as he does not have Western identity. He is not satisfied with any of these and tries to escape this. Thus, he feels at ease in Maxine Ratliff's house, but in actuality he is even uneasy at her place. That is why after his father's death, he does not prefer her over his mother and family. Same is the case with Moushomi Mazoomdar. She too like Gogol goes through unhomeliness and that is the reason she likes Gogol's decision to change his name because that is how he can escape what his parents have to offer him, in other words, his belongingness. As far as *Whereabouts* is concerned, the unidentical characters of this novel already show no sense of belonging. They do not even have names, nor they have any sense of belonging for places. Throughout the novel translocations have been mentioned, whether it be of the narrator, or the old shop in her neighbourhood. This clearly depicts the unhomely nature of the characters and banality of static homes or belongingness.

The second question of the study dealt with the concept of cosmopolitanism. As Robbins states it: "the word cosmopolitan immediately evokes the image of a privileged person: someone who can claim to be a 'citizen of the world'" (171). As soon as another world becomes visible to Ashima Ganguli, she can then enjoy the privileged status of citizenship of America. As Lahiri states about her name, "True to the meaning of her name, she will be without borders" (276). New horizons open for Ashima after she gets able to free herself from the shackles of unhomeliness. Towards the end of the novel, she is able to transform herself as a cosmopolitan figure and live in America as other Americans do. Similarly, Gogol too is able to finally gain his sense of belonging and willingly adopts the name he once rejected. "And in that case Nikhil will live on, publicly celebrated, unlike Gogol, purposely hidden" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 290). Similarly, he rejects going with Maxine by saying: "I don't want to get away" (Lahiri, *The Namesake* 182). Gogol's character is exceptionally

cosmopolitan throughout the novel, for he is the character who on the one hand faced unhomeliness in his parents' home and at Calcutta, but on the other hand, it was Gogol, who always like a privileged person associated with multiple locations as home, finally choosing his family. Then follows Moushomi. In order to present Moushomi's cosmopolitanism, her decision of moving to France forever after her marriage with Gogol is sufficient. She always dreamt of France, and though she was born to Indian parents and was born and brought up in America, she felt unhomey there. Like a privileged cosmopolitan, she preferred France to be her home, and there she went. Finally, to talk of the second text, *Whereabouts*, apart from the narrator's parents, rest of the characters jointly go through unhomeliness on the one hand, considering their homes as houses, whereas on the other hand, even a swimming pool could act as a home for them. Lahiri states, "I never go back to the same place, it's better not to feel tied to one versus the other" (Lahiri, *Whereabouts* 85). Thus, both the novels contain ample evidence for the notion of cosmopolitanism too along with unhomeliness.

The last research question was regarding the shift in identities of the characters in the selected novels. As Shoemaker presents two kinds of identities where one is fixed and the other is dynamic and changes with circumstances, in the present case, the characters who had sense of nativity and homeliness towards fixed homes either did not transform at all or the evolvment of the self was very minor; whereas, the characters that belonged to the immigrant class of people or those with cosmopolitan point of view went through significant evolvment. Ashima among these characters is exceptional because in spite of her strong homely connection with India, she transformed finally. This might be because of the reason that after all, she also was an immigrant and as a postcolonial character she had no other chance but to mould herself according to the strata of the host land and culture, whereas in case of the Maxine Ratliff and her family, there is not even slight transformation or evolvment of self, because they do not feel the need to.

This present study also analysed the characterological and narratorial voices of the characters, specifically in the novel *Whereabouts*, where the writer herself presents herself as narratorial and characterological voice to portray the elements of unhomeliness, cosmopolitanism, and identity. To relate *Whereabouts* with Jhumpa



Lahiri's own character will not be insignificant. If *The Namesake* is studied and then *Whereabouts*, it could be evidently seen that characters long for 'home' in Lahiri's first novel, but in her last novel, we see that the sense of the 'home' has transformed. The same could be applied over personal life of Lahiri, where she found herself a home in Italy and even wrote her last novel in a new language that she learned and adopted i.e., Italian. Just like the cosmopolitan narrator of her *Whereabouts*, and the cosmopolitan characters, Lahiri too is now a cosmopolitan literary figure who has moved beyond borders and like Moushomi of *The Namesake*, has escaped the bounds of borders and of language.

All of this in the discussion section link back to already-conducted research to ensure the literary significance of the study and how the present study stands out and covers the research gap.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The concepts of unhomeliness, cosmopolitanism, and identity have been identified in the two novels *The Namesake* and *Whereabouts* written by Jhumpa Lahiri on the subject of immigrants. This study analyses the selected fictional texts with the help of Bhabha's concept of unhomeliness, Robbins's concept of cosmopolitanism, and Shoemaker's concept of identity. This research falls under the discipline of postcolonial studies to inquire into the unhomeliness and self-identities of the said novels' characters, who are immigrants and are struggling in the host countries. The qualitative method of textual analysis has been used on the texts of the novels under the phenomenological research design of the study. The phenomenological analysis of the notions of unhomeliness, cosmopolitanism, and identity in the two novels has concluded that characters in the novel face unhomeliness in both the novels, which exacerbates the self-identity crisis in the host countries. It has also been found that the characters of the novels formulate cosmopolitan identities by forming relationships with their surroundings with the intention of taking shelter under Bhabha's home and getting away from their unhomeliness.

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