



**A Quest for Identity in the Digital World: A Study of Jhumpa Lahiri's
Novel *The Namesake***

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DECLARATION

I declare that all material in this thesis is my own work, and that any material which is not my own has been duly acknowledged. Furthermore, I affirm that no portion of this work has previously been submitted or approved for the award of a degree by this or any other university.

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Date: _____

Supervisor's Certification

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It is certified that the work presented in this thesis has been carried out and completed under my supervision.

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DECLARATION

I, Wania Idrees, student of BS English (8th Semester) at Bahria University, Islamabad, am hereby declaring that the research work titled “A Quest for Identity in the Digital World: A Study of Jhumpa Lahiri’s Novel *The Namesake*” is my original work. I am doing this thesis under the supervision of Dr. Hashim Khan, and it has not been submitted either as complete work or a partial work to any other degree or diploma at any university or institution.

Any information and data utilized in the research have been recognized appropriately within the text and references. I fully accept the originality and validity of the material included in this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

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This research is about the identity crisis of the second-generation South Asian migrants in digital world through Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake*. The novel describes the life of a boy named Gogol Ganguli whose parents are Indians residing in the United States. As Gogol grows up, he struggles with his culture, name, and sense of belonging. Although a lot of literature has explored the experiences and struggles of first-generation migrants, there has been very little research done on second-generation migrants, who exist in-between two worlds.

This research employs digital identity theory to study how the online world and spaces can influence cultural identity, belonging, and nostalgia among individuals like Gogol. The research is founded on the works of Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Jennifer Brinkerhoff, and Sherry Turkle to comprehend hybrid identity, third space, and digital belonging. The novel will be studied through qualitative textual analysis and Gogol's life journey will be compared to the second-generation migrants that can use digital platforms nowadays.

This research aims to describe the identity that the digital world creates in modern times and how it can help migrants reconnect with their heritage. It will enrich migration studies, literature, and discussions on identity in the globalized world.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Migration has now become one of the most noticeable aspects of the twenty-first century. Travel, education, and technology all over the world enable individuals to move without any restrictions across the boundaries, yet it brings about cultural and emotional strains. Migration is a major theme in literature (Smith 45). The stories detailing the experiences and hardships of migrants as they cross national borders are quite several. Such tensions are reflected in the works by South Asian authors like Jhumpa Lahiri, Mohsin Hamid, and Salman Rushdie who wrote about the sense of being caught in-between two worlds. Their narratives show how migrants need to keep on redefining their belonging as they are challenged by new languages, demands, and practices.

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The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri (2003) can be considered one of the most effective examples of the second-generation migration (Lahiri 12). The novel is based on the life of Gogol Ganguli who is born in the United States to Bengali parents. As his parents look back towards India with nostalgia, Gogol is brought up in American culture and cannot balance between the two. His odd name is a representation of his inner conflict. The way in which Lahiri describes identity formation in a new land makes the novel the perfect text to study the process through which migrants shape and navigate their cultural identity.

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However, in the twenty-first century, identity is not just determined by geography and family but also by digital life. Social media, messaging applications, and digital communities are the online spaces that provide migrants with new means of maintaining contact with their homeland. Jennifer Brinkerhoff (18) refers to it as the *digital diaspora*, where the migrants use technology to maintain their cultural connection. Similarly, Sherry Turkle (29) describes how digital platforms enable people to experiment with various versions of self. For the second-generation migrants such as Gogol, who already exist between cultures, such digital spaces may relieve their struggles with identity as well as intensify their struggles.

This research explores how experiences of second-generation South Asian migrants might change within today's digital environment. By re-analyzing *The Namesake* through the lens of digital

identity theory, it examines how cultural identity, nostalgia, and belonging are negotiated in an increasingly online world.

The second-generation migrants face different challenges compared to their parents. They are born and brought up in a new country, yet their roots are in another culture. In the majority of cases, they are torn between two worlds (Kumar 103). Nowadays, in the digital age, this feeling is far more complicated. Online platforms such as social media networks, video calls, online groups, and communities enable migrants to remain close and connected to their culture. These technological tools influence their perceptions of themselves (Rahman 88).

33 This study will discuss the impact of the digital world on the identity of second-generation migrants. It will concentrate on the life of Gogol in *The Namesake* and demonstrate how web-based technologies might shape his identity if he had to live in contemporary society. The significance of the topic is that a large number of young migrants rely on the internet and social media to remain in touch with their culture.

11 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Most of the research work on diaspora literature is concerned with first-generation migrants, or those who themselves leave a country in pursuit of another. Their problems tend to be tangible, including language barriers and job-related problems, as well as social and cultural adaptation issues. These tensions, however, are psychologically inherited by second-generation migrants. They are born and brought up in a foreign land, but they are still emotionally attached to the homeland of their parents. Their confusion of identity is not physical but more internal and cultural.

Although *The Namesake* has been widely studied, few researchers have applied digital identity theory to it. Lahiri's novel was written in a pre-digital era, but today's world is defined by virtual networks that reshape how people experience home and belonging. The gap this research aims to address is the lack of attention to how digital life might influence characters like Gogol and how virtual connectivity could transform or complicate their search for self.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To analyze the character of Gogol in *The Namesake* through the lens of digital identity theory
- To examine how digital tools and platforms may shape cultural identity and belonging in a diasporic context.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How might Gogol's identity formation differ if he lived in today's time?
2. In what ways do digital connections support or complicate cultural identity and belonging among diasporic individuals?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study connects traditional migration literature with modern digital culture. It provides a new perspective by combining Lahiri's human-centered narrative with theories of digital identity. Academically, it contributes to postcolonial and diaspora studies by extending them into the digital age. Socially, it offers insight into how young migrants today use technology to build or question their sense of belonging. The research therefore aims to bridge literature, technology, and real-life migrant experiences.

1.6 Conceptualization and Operationalization

- **Identity:** How a person sees himself in terms of self and culture?
- **Digital Identity:** How online platforms shape a person's sense of self and culture?
- **Diaspora:** A group of people living outside their homeland but still connected emotionally and culturally
- **Hybrid Identity:** A mix of two or more cultural identities

- **Digital Diaspora:** Online communities that keep migrants connected to their homeland and culture.

1.7 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This research will seek guidance from the following theories to understand Gogol's identity and how it might change in today's world.

- **Turkle's digital self:** How online life affects how we see ourselves (Turkle 12).
- **Brinkerhoff's digital diaspora:** How migrants use digital tools to stay connected to their homeland (Brinkerhoff 18).

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Migration and Identity in Literature

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Migration has become one of the most discussed themes in contemporary literature, especially in the works of postcolonial and diaspora writers. Many novels highlight the challenges faced by migrants as they move to a new country and try to adjust. South Asian writers such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Mohsin Hamid, and Hanif Kureishi focus on themes of identity, belonging and cultural conflict (Adichie 45). Among these works, Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* stands out as it portrays the unique challenges of second-generation migrants who are caught between two cultures.

While first-generation migrants frequently face language barriers, homesickness, and economic adjustment, second-generation migrants struggle with the search for identity. They grow up in one culture while being raised by parents from another. As a result, this creates confusion about who they really are and where they belong. Literature gives voice to these identity struggles, helping us understand the emotional and cultural impact of migration (Naipaul 61).

Migration literature often depicts identity as a constant process of transformation. For most people, migration is not only a geographical shift but also a great cultural and psychological journey. According to scholars, second-generation migrants struggle more with their identity than their parents; this is due to the fact that they do not experience displacement directly but inherit it. A.K.M.A. Ullah describes that this creates “a sense of cultural doubleness” in them because they belong to two worlds yet not fully accepted by either. Such individuals must create a balance between family expectations based on the ancestral culture and the requirements of the society where they are brought up.

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Different studies on second-generation South Asians in Western societies portray that cultural belonging is not a stable concept. Instead, identity is negotiated daily by the use of language, behavior, and social participation. Sharanjit Sohal explains that young migrants develop “hybrid practices” that blend traditional values with the new ways of life, enabling them to navigate multiple cultural identities at the same time. This negotiation aligns with Stuart Hall's concept of identity, which is more of a process “produced in specific historical and cultural contexts” rather

than a fixed essence (Hall 225).

3 Within the literary context, Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* portrays these complexities through the character of Gogol Ganguli, a second-generation Bengali-American, who struggles with heritage and self-identity. His experiences reveal the greater challenges faced by migrants' children: to belong both to their parents' world and their own. These facts provide a foundation for exploring how identity functions as a dynamic experience that is culturally, emotionally, and nowadays, digitally constructed.

2.2 Hybridity, Third Space, and Cultural Negotiation

19 In today's digital age, identity is shaped not only by friends and family but also by digital platforms. Youngsters use social media, video calls, and online communities to connect with others and express themselves. Second generation migrants mostly turn to these platforms to explore their cultural roots. Digital tools allow them to stay connected with traditions, languages, and communities from their parents' homeland (Brinkerhoff 44).

26 If Gogol from *The Namesake* lived in the modern world, he would have used digital platforms to know more about his Bengali roots. Social media Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp might make him feel connected to his culture and less confused over his identity. A comparison of the analog world of the novel to the digital world shows how identity is constructed due to technology (Turkle 38).

53 The theory of cultural identity by Stuart Hall describes that identity is not fixed. It evolves with time and is influenced by culture and history (Hall 225). This theory assists in comprehending the development of Gogol's identity in the novel. Furthermore, Homi Bhabha contributes to this by his idea of the "Third Space" which is the space between cultures where new identities are created (Bhabha 112). This comes in handy especially when studying second-generation migrants who exist between two worlds.

The *Third space* concept by Homi Bhabha is among the most useful approaches to establish the understanding of second-generation identity. He says that cultural interaction does not merely reproduce old traditions but creates a “hybrid space” in which new forms of identity are born (Bhabha 56). The people in this hybrid space are neither entirely of one culture nor the other; they are caught in-between, translating and adapting meaning from both cultures.

Bengt Nordgren states that these hybrid individuals usually “learn to be multiple” and are inclined to have flexible self-concepts that change according to circumstances. This hybridity can be seen in the context of Gogol's journey who switches between rejecting his Bengali name to valuing the emotional connotations of it. His life symbolizes the theory of Bhabha that identity is created in the struggle between cultural differences and negotiation.

This hybrid state is highlighted in scholarly discourses of *The Namesake* as a core of Gogol's development. The story Lahiri tells demonstrates that hybridity is liberating and disturbing at the same time; it allows adaptation but brings inner tension. The concept of *Third space* thus acts as a medium of transition between theoretical discourse and literary representation, as it offers a lens through which Gogol's cultural transformation can be examined.

2.3 Digital Diaspora and New Forms of Belonging

Jennifer Brinkerhoff presents the concept of *digital diaspora*. She describes how migrants communicate with their homeland through digital platforms. This helps in creating a sense of belonging and community (Brinkerhoff 87). Conversely, the theory of the digital self by Sherry Turkle describes how individuals form different versions of themselves on the internet. Such online personalities also affect their perception of themselves in the real world (Turkle 29). These two theories support the analysis of Gogol's identity in the digital world.

Expanding on these concepts, the identity formation in the twenty-first century has assumed broader characteristics like virtual communities that go beyond physical communities. The advent of technology has seen migrants get in touch with their roots via digital platforms. In the article about the digital diasporas, Jennifer Brinkerhoff describes how the online community enables people that have been dispersed to “reestablish a sense of home and continuity” across the boundaries (Brinkerhoff).

32 Similarly, Sunyoung Park and Lasse Gerrits emphasize the importance of social media, the way social media networks become transnational meeting spaces where migrants share cultural knowledge and emotional support. To second-generation people who might feel out of touch with their traditional heritages, these spaces will form a modern *Third Space*, a virtual one, in which hybrid identities are exercised and validated.

34 The application of these concepts on *The Namesake* implies that Gogol’s experience might have been different in a connected world. Isolation and alienation that he experiences may have been alleviated through online Bengali communities or accessing cultural heritage online. Thus, technology is not only a tool of communication but a cultural mediator that modifies how belonging is experienced.

2.4 The Digital Self: Experimentation and Identity Performance

Sherry Turkle's theory of *digital self*, complements the concept of digital diaspora by Brinkerhoff by focusing on individual identity construction in online environments. Turkle is of the opinion that digital platforms allow people to experiment with various selves and re-define their identities. Such freedom of experimentation can be especially significant in the case of second-generation migrants who are always juggling between cultural demands.

Empirical data supports the statement by Turkle. Ullah explains that digital engagement is beneficial for young migrants to “gain confidence in expressing their heritage identities,” whereas Park and Gerrits demonstrate that online socialization reinforces national and transnational identities. Nevertheless, Turkle also warns that online life also complicates self-perception since it is easy to have several virtual identities which complicate the process of identifying what is authentic and what is performance.

If Gogol lived in the digital age, it would have been possible to understand his renouncement of his name and subsequent reclaiming of his name through this perspective. He might present different versions of himself on the internet; one aligned with his American peers and another reconnecting with Bengali culture. The digital self therefore takes the concept of hybridity further to the virtual world where identity is no longer determined by physical spaces.

2.5 Literary Scholarship on *The Namesake*

The critical analysis of *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri mostly focuses on traditional themes of diaspora such as generational conflict, displacement, and assimilation. In academic readings, Ashima's nostalgia for Calcutta, Ashoke's silent suffering, and Gogol's evolving identity are highlighted as symbolic of second-generation struggle. Although these analyses shed light on cultural and emotional aspects, they usually do not go far enough to examine how the digital influences may transform such narratives.

According to the recent discussions on Lahiri's work in literary and cultural journals, her exploration of "emotional distances within the same family as symbolic of cultural disconnection" (Lahiri, "Gogol"), is highlighted. However, according to Nordgren, the newer generations experience their hybridity on digital platforms, where a sense of belonging is enacted instead of inherited. Not many researchers have applied this insight into Lahiri's pre-digital settings.

This study thus aims to bridge a gap by connecting *The Namesake* to contemporary frameworks of digital identity. It replaces the postcolonial theory of hybridity with the new contemporary understanding of the digital self and the diaspora, thus placing Lahiri and her narrative within the current global realities of migration and technology.

2.6 Synthesis: Linking Social Research and Literary Analysis

A synthesis of the theories and studies reviewed above reveals the intersection of cultural and digital frameworks. The *Third Space* by Bhabha defines hybridity as a constant negotiation among traditions; Turkle and Brinkerhoff show that this negotiation is now being carried out in the digital spaces. As Ullah, Nordgren, and Park and Gerrits demonstrate, belonging is actively redefined with the help of

12 online participation. These perspectives strengthen a contemporary understanding of *The Namesake*, which can be used to address the experiences of second-generation migrants in a globalized world.

2.7 Transnational Identity, Memory, and the Role of Digital Archives

30 Recent research has provided insight into the changing role of transnational memory in shaping migration identity. Unlike previous research on diaspora, which was predominantly focused on physical displacement, there is only a limited body of research that specifically focuses on the psychological impact of migration/displacement. Minimizing the effects of psychological displacement is more important in the process of tackling the issue (Khan 25). Even more recent emerging research proves that identity is currently being formed by digital archives, online memory practices, and virtual reconnection to the homeland. The idea of post-memory by Marianne Hirsch is especially relevant, who believes that children of migrants inherit memories they did not directly experience and thus build up their identities around it (Hirsch 106). Identity formation, in case of a second-generation migrant like Gogol, does not solely rely on family stories, but also on digital traces in the form of scanned photographs, online family communication and recorded narratives to uphold cultural history. These online archives make cultural memory more accessible, sustainable and participatory, allowing the younger generation of diaspora to engage with their heritage in a more interactive way.

Likewise, other theorists like Svetlana Boym have developed the theory of reflective nostalgia to explain the ways in which migrants maintain emotional attachment to their homelands by using recreated memories instead of restored memories. Online content, videos of homeland festivals, digital storytelling and cultural archives, circulated via Instagram and YouTube, enhance reflective nostalgia in the contemporary digital era. These digital relations not only preserve but also transform cultural memory. Imagine if Gogol is placed in this digital environment, he would probably be able to get access to Bengali rituals, music, and history through online spaces, making his identity formation more connected than his parents.

28 Other works by Daniel Miller in the digital anthropology also indicate that online communication allows migrants to develop a sense of “ambient intimacy,” where emotional closeness is present even when geographical barriers exist (Miller 54). This model can be applied to interpret the sense of belonging among second-generation migrants in the present time. To an individual, such as Gogol, whose physical distance to Kolkata and limited understanding of the Bengali culture contribute to the feeling of alienation, the access to digital cultural archives might soften his disconnection and aid in

his sense of hybrid identity.

2.8 Identity Fluidity, Algorithmic Visibility, and Platform Culture

Since digital spaces define how people portray themselves, researchers claim that modern-day identity is not only influenced by cultural backgrounds but also by algorithms. The article by Danah Boyd on networked identities highlights the way the youth is navigating “context collapse,” in which various social contexts, such as family, peer groups, diasporas, coexist on the same platform (Boyd 38). Such phenomenon would have a profound impact on a person like Gogol, whose identity struggle is based on his ability to act differently for different audiences. On the Internet, he would have to deal with the problem of negotiating several identities online, where privacy and visibility are more permeable.

According to a study conducted by Zizi Papacharissi on online affective publics, social media encourages the expression of emotions and the performance of identity guided by platform norms (Papacharissi 118). To migrants and their descendants, the issue of identity negotiation is not only cultural, but also, technological. Social media platforms promote specific expressions of authenticity, cultural pride, or nostalgia, thus shaping the presentation of the diaspora members. Gogol, whose name, appearance, and relationships reflect his hybrid identity, would face new pressures in the digital space, either the need to be “authentically Bengali” online or the need to conform to the American culture online.

Moreover, according to Jose Van Dijck, digital platforms change personal identity to that of “datafied selfhood,” in which digital footprint of likes, posts, and interactions create social identity of the person (Van Dijck 42). This datafied self forms a new continuity of identity that is remembered and stored algorithmically. In such a setting, Gogol’s need to belong would be both psychological and technological, influenced by recommendations, platforms, and digital memories that follow him wherever he goes in his interactions with either the Bengali or the American culture. This proves the flexibility and, at the same time, more surveilled nature of identity in the digital age.

2.9 Diaspora, Community Building, and the Politics of Online Belonging

Diaspora scholarship is becoming increasingly interrogative about the ways in which online communities challenge the notions of home and cultural citizenship. According to the seminal work by Robin Cohen, diaspora is a community united by the collective memory, mythology, and solidarity

(Cohen 157). However, the modern theorists argue that the constructions of digital diasporas extend beyond this idea, and provide dynamic, interactive spaces where younger migrants can explore identity. Anjali Gera Roy believes that digital platforms provide diasporic individuals to create “micro-publics of belonging,” in which cultural practices are reinvented and shared in online groups. These micro-publics develop other support systems that compensate for the loss of physical homeland.

For South Asian diasporas particularly, Punathambekar and Mohan note that social media platforms like YouTube and Tik Tok have become a notable place of recreating a sense of cultural belonging, including food channels, language revival content, and other forms of media. These practices enable the second-generation migrants to gain cultural knowledge beyond their homes. The character of Gogol, brought up in estrangement on Bengali language and cultural traditions, would have been comforted by these spaces where young South Asians normalize hybrid identities and share knowledge about their cultures.

Several other researchers emphasize the political aspect of digital diaspora. The theory of mediascapes by Arjun Appadurai states that digital technologies create global flows of cultural imagination, thus affecting the ways migrants construct their identity and home (Appadurai 34). These digital flows imply that second-generation migrants are not limited to the memory of their parents only but rather can compile their identities based on the globalized image of South Asia, such as music, literature, cinema, and diaspora narratives. This increased cultural access would have allowed someone like Gogol to have a less conflicted, broader sense of his heritage.

2.10 Digital Hybridity and the Negotiation of Cultural Authenticity

Digital hybridity refers to the practice through which individuals blend various cultural identities through online practices. According to several studies conducted, online spaces allow young migrants to stylize the hybrid identities with the help of fashion, music, and language. This hybrid expression disrupts traditional conceptions of cultural authenticity and allows adolescents to exist in a number of cultural worlds at once. In the case of Gogol, who is “not Bengali enough” and “not American enough”, these hybrid spaces would have brought him validation and belonging.

At the same time, other scholars warn that digital spaces may enhance cultural policing, where diaspora communities question one another on their authenticity. In forums, comment sections and cultural communities, expectations of what is considered a “proper culture” can create identity pressure. This process is parallel to the notion of the Third Space presented by Bhabha as a place of

liberation and a place of conflict. Thus, if Gogol participated in modern Bengali online communities, he might have felt belonging but also face the expectations to speak Bengali, follow traditions, or to be culturally loyal.

Moreover, Melissa Brown argues that digital culture produces “performative heritage,” cultural practices that are designed to be presented to audiences online. This concept is especially relevant to the fictional world of *The Namesake*: the festivities of the Ganguli family, their culinary traditions, and Bengali customs would most likely be shared online today, which makes them a performative diasporic identity. For Gogol, it means that he would not only inherit culture but also perform it publicly, shaping his identity in front of a transnationally wide audience.

2.11 Literary Criticism and Digital Reinterpretations of Diasporic Texts

The recent literary criticism has started to explore the ways in which the digital culture is altering the reading of diasporic literature. According to Priya Kumar, online spaces encourage readers to re-interpret migrant narratives using modern issues, such as online identity formation, cyber-social belonging, and migration trends across the globe. This analytical framework explains why *The Namesake*, even though written before the rise of social media, still finds a way to echo in the cultural space of the digital realm. The contemporary reader habitually compares the sufferings of Gogol with their own lives of negotiating between various online identities, thus proving the ability of digital spaces to redefine the literary meaning.

Moreover, Jigna Desai argues that the diasporic literature gains new life in the digital book clubs, social reading sites, and virtual academic forums which gather the representatives of the global South Asian diaspora. These virtual spaces, allow readers to reflect together on characters like Gogol and Ashima and create a common emotional and cultural nexus that goes beyond geographic borders. If *The Namesake* were published in the modern world, it would probably enjoy widespread distribution in these online spheres, thus becoming an important part of the conversation about identity, belonging, and hybrid culture.

Online reading groups further expand the access to multicultural stories. The growth of the global digital publishing industries, as Sarah Brouillette notes, enables the diasporic writers to access a wider audience hence shaping the global meaning of migrant identity. This phenomenon supports the increased relevance of the novel’s themes of displacement, identity negotiation, and cultural ambivalence within the digital age.

2.12 Expanded Synthesis: The Digital Evolution of Migration Theory

An integrative synthesis between the traditional migration theories and new research on the emerging digital identities indicate that there is a noticeable trend in the conceptualization of identity. Early theorists like Hall and Bhabha emphasize cultural negotiation, hybridity, and fluidity, yet modern digital theorists build upon their principles and state that identity is not only culturally constructed but also technologically mediated. Theories such as affective publics, algorithmic identity, digital nostalgia, and platformed community reveal that migrant belonging in the current world is shaped by technological infrastructures.

Taken together, these broadened horizons convey the following observations:

- Identity is a multi-layered, hybrid, and technologically mediated process.
- Digital spaces increase emotional attachment to the homeland, and at the same time create new pressures.
- Second-generation migrants feel belonging both in cultural memory and online.
- Diasporic literature gathers new meanings in digital reading cultures.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This research is based on two main theories of the twenty-first century that explain the relationship between identity, migration, and digital belonging. These theories are direct extensions of the discussions made in Chapters I and II making sure that there is conceptual continuity and scholarly coherence.

The concept of the *digital self* by Sherry Turkle describes how individuals experiment with multiple identities in online environments. Turkle believes that digital spaces enable individuals to create, negotiate, and transform their sense of self (Turkle 12). This paradigm is especially applicable to second-generation migrants, who already must deal with two sets of cultural expectations. By applying Turkle's concepts to *The Namesake*, the paper imagines how the identity journey of Gogol would change in a digitally mediated world.

The second significant theory is the theory of *digital diaspora* proposed by Jennifer Brinkerhoff, which places emphasis on the importance of online platforms in shaping transnational belonging. According to Brinkerhoff, digital communities allow migrants to preserve cultural connections, understand heritage, and build shared stories across the borders (Brinkerhoff 18). This theory directly addresses the research gap that was identified in Chapter I by adding the element of digital connectivity to the analysis of identity formation

These frameworks are further strengthened by two supportive theories. The idea proposed by Stuart Hall of cultural identity as fluid, historically constructed and continuously negotiated offers a foundation for the analysis of Gogol's evolving sense of self (Hall 223). The theory of the Third Space that was developed by Homi Bhabha emphasizes the hybrid cultural position occupied by second-generation migrants, which is applicable in studying Gogol's negotiation between the American and Bengali identity (Bhabha 56). The combination of these theories forms a consistent analytical framework.

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3.2 Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design based on close textual analysis. The qualitative design is suitable since the research is based on themes, character development, symbolic representation, and cultural negotiation, all of which can be best interpreted by detailed interpretation rather than numerical value.

The design is aligned with the objectives presented in the previous chapters: to examine the identity formation, cultural hybridity, and the imagined impact of digital connectivity. The study is also academically simple and clear yet possesses methodological depth.

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3.3 Method of Data Collection

The research is based on two data types:

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Primary Data: The main text is the book *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri. Relevant passages, dialogues, and moments in the story that describe Gogol's confusion, rejection, or acceptance of identity will be chosen.

Secondary Data: Articles, scholarly books, and theoretical writings by Turkle, Brinkerhoff, Hall, Bhabha, and other migration, diaspora and digital identity theorists. These sources offer the theoretical foundations that can be used to redefine the novel through digital lens.

Every secondary source is included in MLA format and complements the close reading of the primary text.

3.4 Research Instrument

Close reading is the primary research tool, which is a common tool in literary research. The analysis focuses on language, metaphors, narrative structure, and thematic patterns. Special attention is given to the passages in which Gogol confronts cultural expectations, changes his self-representation, or negotiates belonging.

Theoretical mapping is also used in the study to connect the textual evidence provided in the novel to the works of Turkle, Brinkerhoff, Hall, and Bhabha. This makes literary interpretation well anchored

in scholarly discourse.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

Data is analyzed using a thematic and interpretative approach. The selected events and instances will be studied through the lens of two major theories while also seeking support/guidance from the two support theories. All the selected pieces of text will be analyzed by means of four central themes that capture the conceptual basis laid down in Chapters I and II:

1. **Digital Self (Turkle):** The article reimagines how the identity formation of Gogol could have been different had he been given access to digital spaces such as social media, online communities, and transnational networks.
2. **Digital Diaspora (Brinkerhoff):** The cultural distance of Gogol is examined in terms of digital Diaspora, analyzing how online platforms can offer cultural continuity or complicate belonging.
3. **Fluid Identity (Hall):** The changing nature of Gogol in relation to his name and his heritage is explained by Hall in terms of identity as something evolving and historically constructed.
4. **Hybrid Identity and Third Space (Bhabha):** Gogol's negotiation between the Indian and the American cultural expectations is discussed as an expression of hybridity and Third Space identity.

The discussion combines direct textual evidence, theoretical interpretation, and information of the existing literature on this topic. The integration of these layers makes the chapter clear, academically powerful, and coherent methodological framework to support the research questions of the study and align properly with the themes of Chapter I and II.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the conceptual framework will be combined that has been constructed in Chapter III, which focuses on Digital Identity Theory, and the textual evidence from *The Namesake*, by Jhumpa Lahiri, to make a thorough, theory-driven analysis. The aim is to answer the research questions: (1) How might Gogol's identity formation differ if he lived in today's time? (2) In what ways do digital connections support or complicate cultural identity and belonging among diasporic individuals?

To structure this analysis, five particular tools are used, which are drawn from the theoretical framework: the Origin-Myth Tool, the Name-Performance Tool, the Trauma-to-Continuity Tool, the Third-Space Enactment Tool and the Digital Diaspora / Multiple-Selves Tool. Supporting insight has been brought, where appropriate, of Stuart Hall's conception of cultural identity as production and Homi Bhabha's notion of Third Space.

Each of the sections below focuses on a specific scene, symbol, or dialogue in *The Namesake*, uses a particular analytical tool, and reflects how that experience would be shifted, improved, or made more complicated in a digital present. This is also highlighted how these observations tie to the research objectives and previous chapters.

4.2 The Origin-Myth Tool: Ashoke's Train Accident and the Naming Narrative

One of the most powerful and impactful moments in *The Namesake* is the near-fatal train crash of Ashoke and the ragged page from Nikolai Gogol's *The Overcoat* he clutch-ed afterward.

Lahiri writes:

"The pages of his book, which had been tossed from his hand, fluttered in two sections a few feet away from the train... he was still clutching a single page of 'The Overcoat,' crumpled tightly in his fist..."

This picture is the emotional and symbolic beginning tale of Gogol Ganguli. Later, Ashoke tells his

son:

“It’s about your name... Gogol.”

4.2.1 Analysis with the Origin-Myth Tool

With the help of the Origin-Myth Tool, which is based on the Digital Identity Theory, we see that this accident is not an anecdote but a foundational narrative. Origin myths in identity formation, particularly in the diasporic family, act as anchors in a way that defines the identity of the individual and how others perceive that individual. Survival of Ashoke and salvaged page give meaning in the novel: not only is Gogol named after a writer, but also after the piece of writing that saved his father.

From a digital perspective, when mediated online, such as in a family blog, recorded audio memory, or even a social media post, this story would acquire persistent and public aspect. Instead of being an oral narrative that is told through a private conversation, the narrative of Ashoke could exist in a digital archive: a video record of an interview, a scanned copy of the folded sheet of paper, or even an entry in a blog, where someone writes about “why he named his son Gogol.” This digital transmission would render this myth of origin more established, more shareable, (in a sense) more influential, but also more public.

The observation made by Hall regarding the identity as something that is “produced” (rather than defined) comes in handy here: this is not a myth that is inherited but a narrative that is told, retold, reinterpreted, displayed. In a digital context, narrating is more visible and repetitive. The story of the digital life of Ashoke would allow Gogol to revisit, re-frame and even repurpose his origin myth: as a son publishing his father’s story, as a reader commenting on the *Overcoat* page or even as a person who shapes how he wants the world will remember the accident.

This myth, thereby, continues to be the focus of Gogol’s identity but also on how that identity might be shaped and maintained in digital space. It offers him continuity, legitimacy, and narrative authority but the openness of a digital origin myth may also expose him to the outside readings, verdicts, or even falsification.

4.3 The Name-Performance Tool: Shame, Rejection, and Reclamation

Another theme that keeps reemerging in the life of Gogol during his youth is discomfort with his name.

Lahiri describes it very clearly:

“He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure... like the scratchy tag of a shirt he has been forced permanently to wear.”

54 The metaphor (his name is a scratchy tag) not only describes the annoyance, but also the inescapable nature of his identity marker.

4.3.1 Analysis with the Name-Performance Tool

The Name-Performance Tool of Digital Identity Theory is concerned with the functioning of names as identity tags and how they have been publicly displayed, socially evaluated, and internalized personally. The name Gogol is not just a label but a performance, something that other people read and respond to, and something that he carries physically and emotionally.

His name makes him stand out in the social settings of the novel, in school rollcalls, in official forms, in introductions. He sees it as being “absurd,” an indication of his sense of otherness, and as “obscure,” which emphasizes its perceived meaninglessness or inability to connect in his American surroundings.

If we imagine this in the digital context, then his name becomes even more exposed. It could serve as a username, a handle, a tag in photos, or a searchable identity on social networks. In such spaces, the “scratchy tag” might be changed into a digital handle which others attribute to him. Sometimes he might try to attempt to change it, as one might do online, taking on a fake name or a nickname to fit in or to conceal himself. Turkle states that digital spaces enable us to experiment with various identities, to control how we are perceived, and to dynamically redefine our identities.

However, no matter how he has changed his online name, his real name, which is connected to his birth, his family, and his origin myth, would still exist. This conflict reflects the concept of Hall that identity is both a question of being (rooted on origin) and becoming (built via narrative and performance). And this interpretation is justified by Bhabha’s theory of Third Space: *Gogol* the name is not completely Western or completely Indian—it is a sign of hybridity, a site of negotiation, and a point of cultural ambivalence.

Later when Ashoke tells the story behind the name, Gogol starts to feel a different connection to his name: what Gogol thought was the weight turns into valuable heritage. This re-signification,

in a digital world, could be shared broadly. Gogol might write a personal essay, tape the voice of his father, or post an old photo with a caption on it explaining how his name is not merely strange but deep. This reframing would not only reclaim the name for him but also welcome other people to interpret its meaning and significance.

4.4 The Trauma-to-Continuity Tool: Death, Rituals, and Memory Anchors

The death of Ashoke is a shocking break in the family. However, Lahiri depicts the way in which the Ganguli family turns that rupture into an anchoring continuity, through memory and ritual. Among the saddest incidents is the annual commemoration:

“On the anniversary of his father's death ... they stand together in front of the photograph and drape a garland of rose petals around the frame.”

It is not merely remembrance—it is reenactment of ongoing presence, a ritual which makes them feel connected with Ashoke even after his death.

4.4.1 Analysis with the Trauma-to-Continuity Tool

The Trauma-to-Continuity Tool goes further to show how traumatic events are not left behind but instead are incorporated in identity through memory, ritual, and material culture. The photograph of Ashoke, the garland of roses, and the repetitive act of gathering serve as containers of continuity in the world of Lahiri.

If we imagine a digital version of this ritual, it might take the form of memorial pages on social media, a pinned post on Facebook, or a commemoration story on Instagram. Virtual altars, timeline posts, or even video tributes can be hosted on digital platforms. These digital items would also serve the same anchoring role: they retain memory, offer a platform to share grief, and allow maintaining contact over time and space.

This is where Hall and his concept of identity production come in: the identity is not fixed; how the family recalls Ashoke is in itself a part of the production of their current identity. The concept of the Third Space presented by Bhabha also comes in: their rituals are neither fully Bengali nor fully American; they are hybrid practices: rose petals and garlands collide with cameras and picture frames; Bengali customs of mourning collide with New England domesticity.

A digital memorial makes the matter even more complicated: the ritual of grieving is exposed, publicly distributed, and even mediated. However, even with digital memory, intergenerational dialogue is possible: Gogol, Ashima, and others can look back, comment, and transform the memory of Ashoke. Digital continuity, through this means, does not just preserve but is a part of an on-going identity formation.

4.5 The Third-Space Enactment Tool: Domestic Life, Hybrid Practice, and Cultural Translation

The Namesake features a lot of very intimate and revealing moments in the domestic sphere: in the kitchen, on vacation, holiday rituals, and in daily life. Lahiri writes about the efforts of the Gangulis' to combine American and Bengali practices:

“In spite of the hundred or so relatives they've just seen, they feel as if they are the only Gangulis in the world... They learn to roast turkeys, albeit rubbed with garlic and cumin.”

This is a little moment but plenty: a turkey, an alien icon of Thanksgiving, spiced with cumin—a spice that is related to Bengali cuisine.

4.5.1 Analysis with the Third-Space Enactment Tool

The hybrid identities, according to the Third Space theory presented by Bhabha, are created “in-between” of cultures. The Gangulis do not just leave their Bengali identity behind or adopt the American one completely, they make a *third space* through translating, adapting, and negotiating. The cumin-rubbed turkey is not merely a cooking choice—it is a sign of culture negotiation.

The Third-Space Enactment Tool assists in understanding the way identity is practiced in micro-practices. Such practices are not passive; they are active negotiations. The performances of hybridity in Ashima are her mothering, her cooking, and the mixed celebrations of the family.

Online, these performances could move and change. In a modern context, Ashima might post a photo of that cumin-roasted turkey on Instagram with a caption accompanying it stating that she is a Bengali immigrant celebrating Thanksgiving. Family members or even a larger diaspora community might comment, share or recreate similar dishes. These digital enactments support transnational belonging. They are also democratic in tradition: the third-space practices become visible, shareable, celebrated,

and replicated.

The identity production lens by Hall applies here as well: identity is not inherited in a static way; it is reproduced and created through practice. This production mainly occurs in the domestic life of the Gangulis. The third-space concept by Bhabha highlights that these acts are not just assimilation, but rather self-fashioned, hybrid, and generative.

4.6 The Digital Diaspora / Multiple-Selves Tool: Romantic Relationships, Self-Curated Selves, and Hybrid Longing

Gogol's identity struggles and negotiations, in the novel, are clarified in his romantic relationships. The two relationships, the ones with Maxine and Moushumi, are particularly illustrative.

Lahiri writes: When Gogol is with Maxine,

“Maxine ... felt jealous of his mother ... ‘You guys can't stay with your mother forever,’ Maxine says.”

His mother later advises him to call Moushumi:

“Why doesn't he give her a call?”

These relationships represent various ways of belonging, different cultural scripts, and different identity performances.

4.6.1 Analysis with the Digital Diaspora / Multiple-Selves Tool

With the Digital Diaspora / Multiple-Selves Tool, based on the work of Sherry Turkle on the multiple or fragmented self in digital spaces, and the work of Jennifer Brinkerhoff on the role of diaspora in the digital world, the research will be able to interpret and understand the relational life of Gogol as parallel performances of identity.

Turkle states that, through digital platforms, people are living and trying out different selves—in other spaces, with other audiences. In the case of Gogol, his life with Maxine is that of an assimilated, Western self: common social groups, non-Bengali settings, and a life relatively detached from the parents. Moushumi helps him become a person who perceives and appreciates diasporic ambivalence

and intellectual cosmopolitanism.

If Gogol lived in the modern digital era, he might have several accounts on the Internet. One of these profiles may represent his life with Maxine: gallery photos, brunches, Manhattan walks, parties. The other might be the echo of his Bengali background: images of pujas, family gatherings or photos of his parents. He could curate, alternate, or even converge these selves through digital platforms.

10 The digital diasporas work by Brinkerhoff demonstrates that online spaces can be used to help create a sense of transnational belonging—diasporic groups, chatrooms, forums where second-generation immigrants can exchange memories, negotiate identity and enact hybridity. In the case of Gogol, he could join a Bengali diaspora Facebook page or Sub-continental literature forum, and tell his name story, his family background, or his ambivalent experience of heritage to people who already know and understand.

Nevertheless, Turkle also warns of fragmentation: the existence of several selves can cause the feeling of detachment or authenticity crisis. Gogol could believe that there is no single digital identity that is fully representative of his personality. The relationships that he has in real life (with Maxine, Moushumi, and his parents) may not feel in sync with the ones that he shares on the internet.

Here, the Third Space by Bhabha can also be seen: the digital self is a third space, neither completely American nor completely Bengali, but something in between, a hybrid identity that inhabits both real and virtual spaces.

This discussion shows that digital life would not only enable Gogol to explore his identity (greater space, greater audience, and greater control) but also make it more difficult (fragmentation, exposure, performance pressures).

4.7 The Literary-as-Transnational-Mediator Tool: Books, Reading, and Cross-Cultural Kinship

One underlying yet strong motif in *The Namesake* is the relationship between Ashoke and literature and the role it serves in mediating his transnational life. He admits that there was a special bond with Gogol, the Russian author:

“I feel a special kinship with Gogol... He spent most of his adult life outside his homeland. Like me.”

This is not just an intellectual remark—this is very personal, and it influences the naming of his son.

4.7.1 Analysis with the Literary-as-Transnational-Mediator Tool

In this case, literature itself turns out to be a mediating tool of identity. Reading *The Overcoat* to Ashoke is not entirely aesthetic; it appeals to his personal experience of being an immigrant. The lives of authors, their dislocations, and their existential struggles provide a parallel that he internalizes and transfers to his son.

In a digital world, such mediation would be magnified. The folded sheet of *The Overcoat* could be scanned, uploaded, annotated, and shared. Gogol could join some online book clubs, share the story of his father, or connect that page with his personal thoughts. Digital platforms transform literature into a collective, interactive asset, rather than an object.

This tool also relates to Hall’s concept that identity is narrative produced. The literary allusions belong to the narrative system, with the help of which Ashoke and Gogol learn to make sense of their lives. The third space thought of Bhabha emerges as well: the literary connection is transnational, breaking the boundaries of language, culture, and time. It establishes a sense of belonging that is not limited to blood or location.

Through reading, naming and co-existing with that textual echo, Ashoke creates a personal and culturally hybrid relationship. This relationship may become communal, if mediated digitally: a family archive of literary heritage, communicated across continents.

4.8 Synthesis: How These Tools Answer the Research Questions

Coming together with these five tools, a coherent pattern can be observed: The core identity tensions of *The Namesake*—origin, name, loss, daily practice, relationships, literature—are seen to describe exceptionally well how digital platforms would mediate, amplify, complicate, and confuse them.

1. **Origin narratives**, when digitalized, would become permanent public archives, and they would invite both continuity and possible reinterpretation.

2. **Names**, already central in the novel, would become even more prominent and manipulative in digital contexts; performance and stigma would persist but the agency would grow.
3. **Trauma**, instead of being an individual family burden, might be shared and ritualized online, making intergenerational identity stronger.
4. **Domestic hybrid practices**, the Third Space of the family kitchen, and holiday rituals would be transferred into digital life through shared images, videos, and diaspora networks.
5. **Multiple selves**, made possible in romantic relationships, would find digital analogues in curated profiles, enabling both experimentation and fragmentation.

These observations respond to the research questions by demonstrating not only how Gogol's identity formation might differ in a digital age but also how digital connection would support and complicate belonging.

4.9 Implications for Literary Studies and Diaspora Scholarship

The analysis also holds wider implications for both literary studies and diaspora scholarship:

- **Literary Studies:** The application of Digital Identity Theory to *The Namesake* enhances our understanding of Lahiri's novel. It makes us understand how a pre-social-media text anticipates many present-day themes: the negotiation of self, the continued presence of origin narratives, and the performance of hybridity. This theoretical perspective can be applied to other diasporic texts to explore the process of identity construction and mediation, proposing new directions for digital literary criticism.
- **Diaspora Scholarship:** In diaspora studies, digital diasporas have become a growing concept. The analysis conducted indicates that the traditional diasporic narratives can be re-read in digital forms not merely as an abstraction in scholarly terms, but as lived experiences. Using the Digital Diaspora / Multiple-Selves Tool, it is demonstrated that digital spaces can offer both continuity and rupture. This highlights the necessity for more interdisciplinary research to integrate literary analysis with digital sociology.

4.10 Limitations and Reflexivity

Although this analysis provides deep insights, limitations should also be noted:

1. **Hypothetical digital scenario:** Since *The Namesake* was authored in a pre-social-media era, any digital framing is hypothetical. This analysis is a projection of how digital identity tools *might* be used in Lahiri's world, but the actual results may be different.
2. **Selective focus:** The research has focused on key scenes (accident, name explanation, death, relationships). The other sections of the novel (childhood, sibling dynamics, professional life) can also be analyzed using these tools but are beyond the scope of this chapter.
3. **Theory choice bias:** The analysis is done through Digital Identity Theory, Hall, and Bhabha. Other frameworks (e.g., postcolonial feminism, psychoanalysis) might bring forth different insights.
4. **Cultural specificity:** This analysis presupposes a specific type of digital access, literacy, and diaspora connectivity. Digital platforms would not be utilized in a similar by all second-generation immigrants or diasporic families.

By identifying these limitations, the researcher is considering her positionality: and interpreting Lahiri's novel through the lens of contemporary theory. This interpretation is not an attempt to recreate the social context Lahiri depicts but imagines how her themes would resonate in the mediated, networked world we live in today.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This paper aimed to discuss how identity formation in *The Namesake* could have been different if Gogol Ganguli existed in the contemporary digital world of hyperconnectivity. Expanding on the research problem presented in Chapter I that the digital identity theory is yet to be incorporated into academic literature on *The Namesake*, the study used four primary theoretical frameworks: the theory of the digital-self proposed by Sherry Turkle, the concept of the digital diaspora proposed by Jennifer Brinkerhoff, the theory of identity as cultural production proposed by Stuart Hall, and the theory of the Third Space proposed by Homi Bhabha. Chapter II carried out the synthesis of scholarship on migration, digital identity, South Asian diaspora experiences and hybridity literature, with a gap between the pre-digital diasporic narratives and the digitally mediated identities of second-generation migrants in the present.

The theoretical approach of Chapter III was based on qualitative textual analysis with the novel as the primary source of data and theoretical writing as a secondary one. Five interpretive tools were developed to operationalize the analysis; these included, The Origin-Myth Tool, Name-Performance Tool, Trauma-to-Continuity Tool, Third-Space Enactment Tool and Digital Diaspora / Multiple-Selves Tool. These tools facilitated a structured, theory-driven, discovery of how digital life could re-define some of the major identity events in the novel.

Chapter IV used and applied these tools in key scenes of the narrative, such as the train accident of Ashoke, the story of naming, the discomfort surrounding Gogol's name, the trauma of his father's death, the hybridity in the domestic rituals and his romantic relationships. In every section, the way these experiences could be reimaged in a digital world was presented, demonstrating how virtual platforms can intensify feelings of belonging while also complicating self-understanding. The discussion has shown that digital spaces do not merely alter the ways in which migrants communicate, but rather radically transform the processes of identity production, performance, archiving and negotiation.

Overall, the analysis found that, in the modern world, Gogol would experience more outward identity formation, more edited, more fluid, yet more fragmented. Digital media would provide him with new

45 means to access his cultural heritage, but it would also put him in the path of various pressures of performance, visibility, and comparison. The results, therefore, shed light on the changing aspect of the second-generation migrant identity in the twenty-first century.

5.2 Findings

According to the elaborated discussion of Chapter I-IV, the most significant findings are as follows:

5.2.1. Digital environments reshape origin stories into public, permanent identity anchors.

Using the Origin-Myth Tool it became evident that the life-altering accident Ashoke had had, and the salvaged page of *The Overcoat* would have gained a digital identity if Gogol lived today. Such stories might not be family-only stories, but they may be published in video, blog, or memorial post giving the origin myth a new form of a publicly accessible identity archive.

5.2.2. Digital platforms amplify name-based identity performance.

The results achieved with the Name-Performance Tool indicate that Gogol would feel even more uncomfortable with his name in the digital era. The name would become even more publicly visible with usernames and searchable tags, but digital anonymity could enable him to experiment with alternative names or identities.

5.2.3. Digital memory-making practices reinforce continuity after trauma.

The Trauma-to-Continuity Tool shows that the loss of Ashoke, though devastating, might have been grieved using digital memorials, online remembrance posts and family archives. The continuity across generations would be enhanced by such mediated grieving, and mourning rituals would take on a hybrid, diasporic shape (Lindholm 88).

5.2.4. Domestic cultural hybridity becomes more visible and performative online.

The study, based on the Third-Space Enactment Tool, discovered that daily instances of cultural blending like Bengali spiced Thanksgiving dinners would probably be shared online, changing private hybrid practices into public online identities .

5.2.5. Digital life creates multiple selves with both liberating and destabilizing effects.

The Digital Diaspora / Multiple-Selves Tool revealed that Gogol could have multiple digital selves in relation to the distinct social contexts: a Westernized self in relation to Maxine, a culturally rooted self connected in relation to his family, and a hybrid self in diaspora communities. Digital platforms would enable experimentation but can also lead to fragmentation and stress (Brinkerhoff 74).

5.2.6. Digital diaspora communities provide new forms of belonging absent in Lahiri's pre-digital setting.

The results suggest that applications such as WhatsApp, Reddit diaspora groups, or Instagram heritage communities would provide Gogol with cultural reinforcement, making him less isolated and at the same time exposing him to new demands regarding cultural authenticity (Rahman 84).

5.2.7. Literature becomes a digitally mediated tool of transnational identity.

The connection between Ashoke and Nikolai Gogol would probably be exchanged on the internet, stored or even debated within an online reading circle, enhancing the emotional and symbolic power of literature in identity formation (Smith 62).

5.3 Discussion

The discussion relates these findings to the existing theories and broader scholarly discussion.

5.3.1 Identity as a Continuous, Digitally Mediated Production

The findings are closely aligned with the concept of identity being a production and not a fixed essence, as expressed by Stuart Hall (Hall 225). In the contemporary digital world, Identity production requires not just the development of personal narratives but also mediated posts on social media, digital archives, algorithmic visibility, and shared interpretation. The identity of Gogol would therefore be co-produced by Gogol himself, his family, and online audiences, making his sense of self more fluid, but also more publicly visible.

5.3.2 Digital Diaspora and Belonging in Transnational Spaces

According to the theory of digital diaspora provided by Brinkerhoff, online platforms enable migrants to create cross-border communities. The results show that Gogol would benefit from these digital communities where shared cultural memory and collective nostalgia can mitigate second-generation alienation. This is further supported through the research of Leurs, who argues that online spaces form the so-called “affective publics” where young migrants negotiate identity in both emotional and visual aspects (Leurs 64).

Such communities might assist Gogol to embrace his roots sooner and avoid the overwhelming shame that he feels towards his name. Nevertheless, they might also establish new pressures to perform cultural authenticity.

5.3.3 The Digital Self and Multiplicity

Turkle believes that digital life enables “parallel selves” to exist (Turkle 11). This is supported by the findings presented in Chapter IV that demonstrate how Gogol might live two different lives, managing multiple profiles, one as an American and the other as Bengali. Though these digital selves offer the opportunity to experiment, Turkle alerts that “identity becomes a negotiation across platform,” growing self-surveillance and anxiety (Turkle 205). The tensions between Maxine and Moushumi, identity and expectation that Gogol experiences may therefore increase online.

5.3.4 The Third Space in a Digital Context

The Third Space, as discussed by Bhabha, is even more applicable in the digital era. Hybridity is no longer practiced in physical domestic spaces but is practiced online, through food posts, cultural reels, holiday photos, and hybrid linguistic styles. According to Leung, digital platforms have now become “the daily arenas of enacting diasporic hybridity” (Leung 193). This is exactly what the findings present, indicating that the hybrid cultural life that Gogol is leading would probably be visible, affirmed, and criticized simultaneously.

5.3.5 Digital Memory and Post-Trauma Identity

Modern research demonstrates that online grieving practices form “networked memory archives” to

assist diasporic families to remain connected following a loss (Walter et al. 2022). The results indicate that the digitalization of Ashoke's death would continue to be a living entity in the evolving identity of Gogol. Digital ritual strengthens the sense of belongingness and changes cultural mourning practices into hybrid ones.

Each of the findings aligns to the theoretical frameworks: identity becomes multi-layered (Hall), hybrid (Bhabha), digitally editable (Turkle), and communally constructed (Brinkerhoff). Reading *The Namesake* through the lens of contemporary digital perspectives shows how migrant identity has radically changed in the twenty-first century.

5.4 Conclusion

The findings of this paper show that the identity of the second-generation migrants in the digital era is much more fluid, edited and enacted publicly as opposed to the traditional diasporic storylines, showing the fact that digital platforms are both a source of connection to the culture and a source of conflict around identity. Origin stories, as a family secret, are becoming a visible digital collection that, migrants are free to explore, revisit, and to remake, providing continuity to emotional and symbolic underpinnings of selfhood. Similarly, names acquire greater digital presence, broadening the possibilities of both stigma and agency in identity negotiation. The paper also unveils that digital memorial shapes the trauma experience by carrying familial memory practices in the online environment, hence strengthening intergenerational relationships and maintaining cultural continuity. Furthermore, the hybrid cultural rituals that were predominantly practiced in the domestic setting are now digitally visible and shareable, which enables second-generation migrants to perform, reshape, and legitimize their Third-Space identities within larger virtual communities. It is in these online spaces that there are numerous digital selves that can co-exist and express the multi-layered aspects of belonging that are negotiated within the cultural, social, and technological landscape. Digital diaspora communities also strengthen this process by providing emotional support and cultural reinforcement, despite presenting new demands about authenticity and cultural performance.

Lastly, literature itself emerges as a transnational digital resource and deepens identity formation by offering migrants accessible symbolic anchors beyond physical boundaries.

Taken together, these conclusions confirm that the digital identity theory has a valuable and modern extension of *The Namesake* by Lahiri, indicating that if Gogol lived today, his identity would still be shaped by the cultural tension but would be unfolded by digital tools, platforms, and networks that

radically change the nature of diasporic selfhood.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Based on Findings

46 On the basis of the findings of this research, a number of recommendations can be drawn that can guide scholars and educators who will work on the topic of migration, identity, and digital culture. To start with, the digital literacy models must be incorporated into diaspora studies because the virtual space has become the most significant place where second-generation migrants discuss their sense of belonging, cultural identity, and the pressures of visibility. Digital ethnography is also recommended to be used by literary researchers to gain a better insight into how modern readers reinterpret the process of reading diasporic texts such as *The Namesake* by means of social media interactions, online discourses, and digital communities.

52 Additionally, researchers must examine the impact of digital mourning, as online memorials have come to influence family's memory of loved ones and provide continuity in cultural heritage across generations. The interdisciplinary approaches to literature and media studies, cultural psychology, and sociology are critical in capturing this layered and digitally mediated identity formation that was identified in this study. Due to the increased importance of names in the digital era, the ways in which second-generation migrants navigate through the name-based stigma, misrecognition, and self-presentation on social media deserve additional focus. Hybrid domestic practices, including culturally infused celebrations and food, are getting increasingly common on the internet and can be a really good source of information about how Third-Space identities are being performed and validated within the context of daily digital life.

35 Overall, the paper suggests that educators and researchers should revise the current models or frameworks to capture the reality of digital spaces playing a significant role in the negotiation of diasporic identity.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

50 Besides the recommendations based on the findings, the study outlines some of the possible future research directions. The comparison of various groups of diasporas, including African, Middle

Eastern, or Latin American groups, might indicate the way digital identity formation differs in terms of cultural and regional backgrounds. Empirical research on actual participants (interviews, online ethnography, surveys, or digital diaries) would also be useful in future work to compare actual experiences of second-generation migrants with the hypothetical digital identity journey imagined for Gogol.

Particularly, platform-specific research is crucial because Instagram, WhatsApp, Tik Tok, Reddit, and new social spaces each produce a unique version of identity performance and visibility, as well as cultural exchange. It is also important to conduct gender-oriented research, as women and men can have extremely different experiences of digital diaspora, surveillance, and cultural expectations.

Lastly, with the growing impact of artificial intelligence on online content, in the form of algorithmic suggestions, targeted advertisements, and automated cultural indicators, future research should explore the impact of these technologies on migrant self-perception, culture affiliation, and daily digital life experiences. Collectively, these guidelines can facilitate the broadening of the field and deepen academic insights of digital identity in the twenty-first century diasporic communities.

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