

**TRANSFIGURATION AND COLLISION OF IDENTITIES: A SCRUPULOUS  
EXAMINATION IN *THE NAMESAKE* OF JHUMPA LAHIRI AND *THE  
IMPRESSIONIST* OF HARI MOHAN NATH KUNZRU**

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**Abstract:**

The present research paper put an effort to highlight the prominent characters of both the novels, Hari Kunzru's *The Impressionist* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. The characters are visualized as how they keep on transforming their identities to accommodate in the extremely intricate conditions. It also tries to discover those conditions and conflicts which have been responsible to minimize them up to that extent which generates clashes in their life and their reaction to those clashes and provocations. This paper also investigates those prime matters and causes which rests in the minds of the characters and at the end it shows erection, reformulation and transmutation nature of the character's identities is the result of the overall trans-cultural situations as well as the experiences on the foreign land.

**Keywords:** Transmutation Identity, Transforming, Trans-cultural, foreign land, Provocation.

The concern of the identity arguably, is the most acute and central area of Diasporic study. It can also be added that an identity is portentous topic of cultural and social deracination. The immigrants assist their survival in the unsheltered surrounding.

The literature of Diaspora depicts the inner scuffle of the Indian immigrants which exist in their head and heart just because of deracination and detachment from their origin. It is common among the Indian Immigrants that they always stuck between life of past and present and they never come out of this. They also cling to crux and refurbishment in the western country. These all the issues uncover the prevailing aspects and a sort of healing treatment in the novels like *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri and *The Impressionist* by Hari Kunzru.

**Identity collision in Kunzru's novel *The Impressionist*:**

The novel of Hari Kunzru *The Impressionist* discloses varied phases of life of the central character Pran Nath. 'The Impressionist' depicts crucial matters, rising from identity collision.

The prominent story of the novel rotates around the mixed blood or hybrid boy Pran Nath, who is a fraudulent son of an English discoverer, and an Indian girl. He was the result of their short time interracial union, a white colonial forester, and a youthful, affluent Indian girl, named as Amrita, this incident takes place during a flood confrontation in a cave. This incident takes place in a very mysterious manner. Unfortunately, The English Forester dies during the floodwater while the girl Amrita gets wedded to Pandit Razdan, he is a highly prosperous man.

Actually, Pandit Razdan thinks that his wife is having his own baby in her womb. After some time, his wife dies while giving birth to the child and leave him in Razdan's care, who is having strong feeling and proud to his royal blood. The prime character of the novel Pran Nath Razdan rejoices grandeur of life up to fifteen years. However, a servant discloses the secret of his real father to Pandit Razdan. As the actuality comes into the consideration of Razdan, the boy is declared a scumbag. Suddenly, happy, and luxurious life of Pran alters into sheer dejection. Razdan throws him out from his house, he encounters to the hard actuality of society. The hybrid young boy has got stricken so hard mentally that he becomes habitual of gliding with utmost harsh circumstances. In the procedure of self-pursuit, he has made to presume different semblance to make his existence. There are varied evocative questions which always hinge in his mental status like what he is in true sense? Where he belongs? He encounters harsh experiences continuously in the sequence of pursuing his actual self.

It can be stated that it is a sheer irony of destiny that in the very beginning Pran Nath has led a rich life, a son of a rich Brahmin, who has rejoiced a comfortable life; all the things are at his service disposal. It reveals that Pran leads a carefree life, a champ, who does not have control on his desires and even he can dare to destroy the chastity of any girl without any sort of fear. However, the revelation of his actuality, transform his identity completely, he comes down from very height of social status. It exposes that how a hybrid boy's origination determines the enhancement of his identity which goes on a sequential transformation as per the requirement of the conditions.

#### **Transfiguration and transition of Identities:**

The very beginning of transfiguration of the identity of Pran happens when he is not aware about the same. His position changes in a short period of time from a rich and prosperous son to unhomed young boy, who devoid of all like home, family, identity, and social status. It strikes to his mind so deeply that he undergoes a substantial emotional undulation from surprise to anger, dejection, detachment, and stoicism. This sort of transfiguration status can be understood through the segment, where the people, to whom he earlier uses to mock and torture, other option except becoming a part of homeless society, hoping to grab a secure future ahead.

Pran's situation has declined up to that level when he has got imprisoned in a brothel virtually, and notices himself spontaneously intoxicated, has worn a silky dress and he is completely unable to differentiate between actuality and hallucination. He is locked up when he is only half-aware in a dark room, thinks flounders of his unpredicted future. His life becomes sheer dejected and pitiable in such a manner that he is unable to do anything to secure himself from them.

The succeeding transfiguration transpires in Pran's identity when he is moved out from the bagnio. Pran presumes that any type of transfiguration in his current position should have a constructive facet shortening the identity as well as freedom and then immediately, he has transferred to Fatehpur palace. He recognises at once that he is about to turn into a eunuch, as Rukhsana. He starts to come across embarrassing experiences. He is taken as a tool to be used in Fatehpur palace. He badly humiliated and insulted by the people there. Generally, he is exploited by all the people there in all the possible ways.

Pran also comes across unethical affinity and sextual molestation of Major Privett-Clampe. These

activities reflect unscrupulous intuition of Privett-Clampe. Pran turns into Clive, who is taught by Privett-Clampe and transfigured into a replica of a typical English school going champ. As Major Privett-Clampe recognises western blood in him, so he inclines to support Pran and he exaggerates this elements in him. However, the impact of western direction remains in Pran's life for a long time for he realises that his European blood as well as resemble can be helpful to make his upcoming life easy. He tries to secure his life in Fatehpur for he gets constant threat of death, without any sort of harm to any of the person around him; he finally gets succeeded to escape from there. At present, the succeeding moment, he discovers himself in Amritsar and he has comprehended like a European origin just because of his skin tone, so he is identified as a White Champ.

Pran contrives to travel to Bombay with other English colonialists for he has sparkling skin tone thereby, Pran secures himself exuberant domain. The next aspect of his life is related to the European sector that is his origin as well as his stay in Bombay with the Presbyterian missionaries, as a foster child, it is a skewed restitution to their two expired sons.

There is a person, named as Revered Macfarlane, who has motivated to foster, purifies his dirty origin moderately. So, he carries on acting to create allusion deliberately concerning himself to be an English boy, in very initial years of his life, as he passes his time with the missionaries. He acquires this sense by accepting a European name as 'Robert' and by adopting his exterior persona as well as resemblance to the European splinter group that assures by buying European dresses and following the British mode of life. He also pays a special attention on his language and accent appropriately, and this skill and talent of Pran is rewarded.

The transfiguration of Pran occurs in acculturating himself to the uneasy politics in Bomaby which imparts him a chance to hide his identity of English orphan Jonathan Bridgeman and in acting therefore, he leaves him at the mercy of mob to Indian instigators. At last, as he inhabits in London, it takes little time to Pran to obtain the image of a European persona like a common English champ in all manners, like appearance, etiquette and in general flavour and preference to set up as well as feel ease in the social structure. He nurtures the same tendencies within himself through managing dance centre. At present, he is satisfied to his advanced accepted English style.

He starts, taking himself as an original Jonathan, Hence, it is another thin g that a sort fear always linger in the very deep down his heart to get exposed therefore he estimates to escort magnificence as well as completion in his English because it reflects his identity at the time of leading at Oxford by being more acceptable. It is feasible to him for he is having the skills of sycophant, which make him capable to handle the situation to become a common one, has vanished in the mob of English student. He succeeds in increasing his connection with an erratic Astarte Chapel after some passing of years and now, he is completely prepared to relate himself to the aspiration of his father to undergo an in-depth study of a lost dynasty of Fotse in Africa. It is a sheer ironic condition that when he is discarded by her for becoming more conventional and English through his conduct. It disheartens the polished and perfect Englishness of Pran. In fact, it is a strange phase of Pran that has finished deplorably. He thinks profoundly after some time that he has done everything perfectly which can be fitted to the aspiration of Englishness.

#### **Transfiguration of Impressionist:**

Pran undergoes multiple changes, he has transfigured himself into the same persona as she has

expected. He remembers his previous series of transfiguration and verification an act in a Russian show that reminds him his person life experiences. He compares himself to a small a small statured person as he changes multiple attires on the stage the same way he encounters several identities continuously.

Nevertheless, Pran experiences his custom cleaning of the artificially presumed European identity of all ways like, norms, habits, and rituals which he anticipates traumatically formerly. He undergoes great sufferings due to the former problems. A person is fully free from all sort of bondages, the Impressionist starts his tour through the abscond province, a secluded domain where the tour is all in all. He is not having any notion about reaching to his destination. Therefore, the impressionist travels wholly secluded. Pran falls a victim of race, borders and nationalities. It is recorded in the entire novel that Pran is fully able to adjust and to frame his identity perfectly to the current aspirations of the situations. Nevertheless, he comes as a person who is highly adoptable to his new identities and this quality of Pran turns him in to most capable person to make his existence and handle all types of situations.

### **The Issue of accreditation in *The Namesake*:**

Jhumpa Lahiri is connected to an Indo-American writer, who always writes and depicts the vivid experiences of the first generation and second-generation Indian immigrants. Her present novel *The Namesake* depicts the hard scuffles of numerous characters that keep on interior and exterior both ways among the characters of the story. The novel also reveals comprehensive transfiguration as well as trans-cultural experiences of migrated Indo- Americans. The entire story revolves around single prominent character in *The Namesake*. The central topic of the novel is connected to the quest of genuine identity in the society.

The novelist reveals her characters of the novel, who are struggling hard to amalgamate between the both the worlds at a time encompassing the issues of culture, race immigration as well as identity. The current novel provides a deep instinct into the life journey of an Indian immigrant Bengali couple on the western country, America. The prior exponent of the novel is Ashima. She continuously carries on comparing two cultures together that is American and Indian culture and has a notion of homelessness. Ashima's awareness is penetrated, and she feels strangeness every moment, evocative and detached. She is very much nostalgic at the time of of her delivery, she recalls her family members to gain attention and love. She aspires to deliver her baby nearby her family members in India; she fears giving birth to her baby in America. She recalls Indian cuisines the very time. She has something deep down her heart that is something very important is shortage in her life. In the starting of the novel, she becomes very sentimental, and consummate, typical Indian lady, who prefers Indian culture and tradition. She always yearns that her son should follow Indian tradition, values as well as all types of sensibilities; he must respect their Indian culture. But she is disappointed for her son becomes quite varied to her expectations.

As the novel proceeds further, in the very later part of the novel she appears like a bold and powerful personality that commence on her journey without any disturbance about future ventures and oddities. The personality and image of Ashima acquires a particular transformation after her husband passes away, there is a visible transmutation in her images as well as conception. At present, she holds the charge of her life alone courageously to face all the oddities and difficulties of life even the foreign surroundings. At end of the story of the novel she takes a final decision of spending half time in both the places, Indian and America.

The story of the current novel advances mainly by the second-generation character Gogol. Lahiri reflects the identity clashes that she has come across herself; actually, it is just a long-lasting sentiment of Jhumpa Lahiri regarding her identity due to her Indian name, which provides a foundation to the scuffles of Gogol in the story. As the title of the novel *The Namesake* depicts itself the topic of structuralizing one's identity in transfiguring social as well as cultural framework to find out the power which a name can carry forward. In fact, name decides the actual recognition and identity of a person as well as adaptation in a new structure of the society.

In the story of *The Namesake* Gogol and other Indian immigrant characters come across a predicament and a state of confusion after getting migrated in the western country. The Indian immigrants struggle a lot to make their existence and identity in the advanced society. This is the main reason that the second-generation immigrants feel like that they have been crushed between the two cultures and two countries, one where they have taken birth and another one is of their parents. They try their level best to make amalgamation between the two at a time.

The description of Lahiri discloses this type of predicament as well as dilemma clearly by the character of Gogol. She explains differences of generations, conflicts, clashes, and flaccid nature of identities ensuing the feeling of detachment and passable instinct of the host country. Gogol suffers from inner scuffle and conflict due to his identity as well as existence because of his name that he takes very abnormal and queer in the society. He thinks that his name is the main reason of shame and humiliation to him. Therefore, he decides to transform his name to Nikhil before going to college that shows that he very particular about his existence and identity.

He is not intended to get recognized with the name that is not belonging neither Indian nor America. He aspires to be identified and recognized as a common American person, but his name is not sounding well with American culture for seems strange to him. When he comes across his namesake, the Russian Author, he has got perturbed because he is incapable to avoid his name. He is always in his inner scuffle, so he transfigures his name legally and finally he gets relaxed.

When Gogol approaches to Yale, he is new over there for nobody is aware about his former name and transfiguration of name. Therefore, he feels confident and relaxed. He does several surprising activities which he has not done becoming Gogol. He transfigures his name as Nikhil even then an unknown fear always lingers with him to get exposed of his previous life. He hates all the things which take him to his past. But it is very difficult to avoid past whenever, he goes to his home Nikhil disappears and Gogol returns. He undergoes multiple scuffles for his identity in the novel, the levels of his struggle have become more severe for the divided worlds culturally in which he grows up, Western that is America and his parents' original land, India. He ascertains a type of surge from both the sides. There are many decisions which Gogol takes shows that all are governed by his own aspiration to live a common life of an American person and to remain away from traditional and conventional ways of his family. He enjoys the company of Maxine, she is an advanced, affluent, and upper strata girl. Her home is another option for him. He avoids his family and prefers to pass his vacations with her family. Therefore, he is trapped between the two cultures and tradition.

Ashok, his father imparts him a name Gogol for there is close relation to his chance survival from the hazard of train accident in his past. But Gogol is not having any sensitivity about the same. He is not showing any sort of preference to his father's previous incident. He likes to do the things according to his own pretty wish; he wishes to be free from all restrictions. His father puts an

effort to make his son convince in regard of uniqueness of his name, but Gogol remains stubborn for such exposure. After some time, Gogol is recognized with the new name as Nikhil, he senses that this name will transfigure his personality, build confidence, and enjoy freedom. But he is unable to enjoy his life completely for unexpressed pain of double personality always follows him because in true sense he is Gogol under the mask of Nikhil. Therefore, it reflects that it is not very easy to avoid previous life fully, so he begins to lead his life in the mid of two past and present.

Gogol shows his obstinate to get himself introduced before Kim as 'Gogol', therefore, he does not reveal his present name as Gogol, and he reveals his name as Nikhil to him. It fills him with profound confidence, because it is not Gogol who has afraid of kissing Kim. Since he transfigures his name, his confusion removes altogether, and he is no more a confusing boy. He becomes a highly confident and close to tradition. He rejoices excessive liberty of his new identity in his personal relations with multiple ladies like Moushumi, Maxine, Ruth, and Bridget. Hence, it is different thing that these all the relations do not go lasting for some diverse circumstances as well as fluctuation of his nature. When his father dies, Gogol starts to avoid all these relationships and focus on his family. He misses his father very much. There are several observable transfigurations in Gogol's personality.

His perception takes a new turn, and he transfigures into a responsible person just after his father's death. He also discerns that it is quite unavoidable to him to reject his traditional and cultural values, the same moment in which he is tied fatedly. He also senses himself that the cultural are equally essential to him to transfigure his real personality. He realizes that it is the name of a person which brings recognition, identity as well as attachment of a person while a dull identity can detach a person from society. Nevertheless, Gogol gets completely transformed and responsible person after his father's death. He also begins to respect Indian culture, there has been a great transformation in his instinct, notion, and personality for now he depicts the same from his new perceptions.

### **Conclusion:**

Therefore, it can be stated that identity is all in all for a person for it is inseparable part of everyone's life as well as social ratification. There are several elements which make the identity of a person collectively. The identity is something, a constant procedure, reframing, transfiguring, and redefining remaining in society. The prominent characters of the story, Gogol and Pran Nath tolerate utmost pain. Their mental suffering as well as social discontent is the come out of grim suffering for them in the process of continuous transfiguration of situation. Gogol finds out that it is very difficult to modulate in the western culture with such a dull identity that provides him a sense of strangeness and embarrassment. It is intolerable to him; therefore, he transfigures his name and rises with a new identity to be adaptable in the current host society. While after his father's death, he becomes a changed personality completely, he shows his profound concern to his family as well as to his culture. While, in connection to Pran Nath, he undergoes to multiple new identities and carries on with his journey through out the novel. He manages the new conditions very patiently and smartly. Evidently, it can be said that the identities of both the characters are not constant rather these switching to new identities every time as they lead in that society which is always keep on transfiguring in its structure.

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