

Vehicles of Nostalgia in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

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[**Abstract:** Jhumpa Lahiri, though born in England and brought up in America, has a commendable bond with and an appreciation for the land of her origin and the country of her parents-India. In almost all her writings, various aspects of the Indian culture are found to be strikingly conspicuous. The emotions of her Indian characters (living in America) for their native land and its people and their tendency to adhere to their native culture along with their nostalgic sentiment find wonderful expressions in many ways in her works. This article shows how Jhumpa Lahiri has used, in her novel, *The Namesake*, different traditionally Indian social and religious rituals and behavioral and culinary practices of the Indian diaspora to show their nostalgic preoccupation.]

Key words : nostalgia, native culture, Jhumpa Lahiri, India, emotion, America, diaspora

Introduction:

The full name of the writer Jhumpa Lahiri is Jhumpa Sudeshna Nilanjana Lahiri. She is an erudite American writer born in London of the Indian parents on July 11th in 1967. However, she was brought up in The United States of America. She went to America at the age of two. She grew up there and, eventually, became a famous writer earning so many awards at different times in her life. Her works include, two short fiction collections: *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), three novels: *The Namesake* (2003), *The Lowland* (2013), *Dove mi trovo* (2008), etc. She married Alberto Vourvilius-Bush in 2001 and now has been blessed with two children: Octavio and Noor. Subsequently in 2011, she moved to Italy-her husband's country and has been living there since then. It is praiseworthy that her rich upbringing could not steal her innocence at all. She has never denied her primary root-India-the country of her parents,

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which is quite apparent in her works; she, rather, has always shown her inclinations towards the Indian culture and its values, which is usually not found among the members of the second generation of the Indians living in America. Interestingly, Jhumpa Lahiri has written even in the Italian language also. She still continues her writing almost all of which have drawn critics' attention and readers' appreciation a lot.

Asima Ganguly stands in the kitchen in Massachusetts, "combining Rice Crispies and Planter peanuts and chopped red onion in a bowl. She adds salt, lemon juice, thin slices of green chili pepper, wishing there were mustard oil to pour into the mix" (Lahiri 2003: 1). This is how the novel, *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri, begins. Ashima prepares and relishes this common Indian snack, thinks of its availability in terms of place and money in paper cones in Calcutta and becomes nostalgic about her country. Or, we had better say it the other way round-due to her nostalgia for her country, she prepares it. The country she was born and grew up in, the foods her appetite was accustomed to, the way and the atmosphere she used to taste them in, work subconsciously in her mind and pan out in a way to make her prepare it.

It started the very moment she left India; and, not a single day goes without her pining for her country. In the novel, we see that Ashoke Ganguly and Ashima Ganguly are a Bengali couple living at Cambridge in Massachusetts, USA. Ashima has shifted from Kolkata to this place while Ashoke had been an engineering student of MIT. But, like most of Lahiri's diasporic characters, Ashima becomes very homesick and reminisces her days in India. The commonly anticipated excitement of coming to a fast-paced first-world country like America from India does not excite her agitated, nostalgic mind; nor does it soothe her aching heart. She has been uprooted from her home; and, home is to her neither a physical structure nor a geographic location; it is rather a sentimental word in her psychic vocabulary. Here, the writer, Roberta Rubenstein, in one of her books, comments "...the original home is less an actual place than a site located in memory..., a psychic space invested with nostalgia..." (Rubenstein 2001: 127). The novel, *The Namesake*, bristles with instances that show no matter where she and her husband belong, they bear India in their mind. And, it speaks through their thoughts, words, behavior, and the social and religious practices and rituals they observe and celebrate.

Lexically, nostalgia is a melancholic and sentimental longing for people or things of the happier past which are mingled with pleasure which one cherishes within and likes to ponder over sometimes. If we dissect the word, "nostalgia", we find here two Greek words-"nostos" or "homecoming" and "algos" or "pain or despair". So, the word literally

signifies one's painful yearning for home. There was a time when only a few people travelled far off home. So, far from the introduction of any other form of it, no question of even nostalgia arose. Though modern researchers have come up with quite a type of nostalgia and are using it differently, historically it first turned up only as a pathological disorder-not a feeling to enjoy or a memory to reminisce. In the 17th century, the Swiss medical personage, Johannes Hofer, found symptoms of depressions in the Swiss mercenary soldiers fighting abroad in the French army. Hofer discovered that it happened due to their homesickness; they longed to go back to their Alpine village homes. Subsequently, nostalgia afflicted the other European soldiers and sailors in many other wars in the eighteenth century which detached them from home. But, as it has been mentioned above, nostalgia is not only about one's homecoming or longing for home. Commonly, nostalgia is mixed feelings of pain and pleasure of the happier past. This article uses the word, nostalgia, in both the senses.

Vijay Agnew refers to the writer Gayle Greene in the Introduction of a book he edited in which he distinguishes between nostalgia and remembering the past. She says that "nostalgia" is one's desire to return home which is static while "to remember" is "to recollect" which is transformative. (Agnew 2005: 9). But there is no gainsaying that this recollection engenders nostalgia. Sinead McDermott differs from Greene in this regard and is of the opinion that it is impossible to maintain this distinction because nostalgia is a necessary ingredient of memory work. He says further: "when we long for the past, we long for what might have been as well as what was; it is only by incorporating such longing into our narratives that we can suspend the past and ultimately change its meaning in the present" (McDermott 2002: 405-6).

According to Svetlana Boym, author of *The Future of Nostalgia*, nostalgia is basically of two kinds- Restorative and Reflective. Restorative nostalgia, opines Boym, involves a desire to recreate the past; it emphasizes "nostos" or "homecoming" and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gap. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, allows people to accept the memories as they are since there is no retreat; it dwells in "algos" or "despair".

In Jhumpa Lahiri's novel, *The Namesake* Ashima's nostalgia appears to be mostly of reflective kind. She gives birth to Gogol, her first child, in America. Ashima is despondent since the unfortunate child enters the world "so alone, so deprived" (Lahiri 2003: p 25). In America, she strongly feels the absence not only of her parents, but also of her uncles, aunts, and grandparents. Without them, the most important event in her life seems only "half true" to her. But, when the other Bengali acquaintances come to see

the infant Gogol, Ashima is pleased to have the substitutes of her own relatives who should have been there beside her. Because of this ability to be happy at the substitution of one's own people, Psychologist, a researcher of and an expert on nostalgia and APA (American Psychological Association) member Krystine Irene Batcho, PhD, describes nostalgia as a "a pro-social emotion". She says, in an interview with APA, that "when we're very young, it's part of what bonds us to the most important people in our life, our parents, our siblings, our friends. As we go through life, it can broaden out and extend to a wider sphere of the people we interact with. It's a social connectedness phenomenon and nostalgia is in that sense a very healthy pro-social emotion" (Batcho 1919: 93).

Interestingly, in Jhumpa Lahiri's novel, it is seen that Ashima's substitutive pleasure melts soon. Ashoke becomes occupied with his studies. And Ashima feels distressed and finds herself dejected as the child grows up alone and without the direct blessings, pampering and doting of her near and dear ones. She demands that after his degree, they must leave this country.

Ashima has not forgotten their long-term family practice of naming a child. The new parents decide to let Ashima's grandmother who named her other great-grandchildren to have the traditional honor to name the child. The setting of the novel, *The Namesake* is 17th century America. In the middle of 1700's, it takes more than one month to reach them the name that is written, sealed and posted by the woman above eighty herself. They wait patiently. But a baby would not be released from the hospital without a birth certificate which requires a name. The compiler of the hospital birth certificates asks if they have any backups in case they do not like the name which surprises them as there is no question of not liking it, they cannot even imagine to "disregard an elder woman's wishes in such a way" (Lahiri 2003: 28). They do not find a modern name on their own. A distance of thousands of miles could not blur the loving memory of an aged woman; a new modern country and its exotic traditions could not supersede the old and native ones.

Though Ashima wants whole-heartedly to leave America, she, in reality, happens to stay there because life is not meant to be simply forestalled and stuck in the quagmire of memory. Gradually, she collects herself and goes on. Here, again, Batcho is worth-mentioning. She says, in the same interview mentioned above, that "it is likely that nostalgia waxes and wanes over the lifespan as a function of major developmental or life-stage transitions. During times of transition, nostalgia helps us maintain a sense of stability, ensuring that the person we are not lost amid the inevitable flux of life". Researchers Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut,

Jamie Arndt, and Clay Routledge, in their joint online research article, claim that nostalgia generates positive effects, increases self-esteem, fosters social connectedness, and alleviates existential threats. In the novel, Ashima is found to be essentially nostalgic; she cries her heart out, but does not deny her life at present.

Ashoke is also drawn to their his country. However, Ashima is far more passionate in this regard. In spite of their yearning for India, they live in America. However, living in American cannot make them Americans. They always try to maintain a close contact with their Bengali acquaintances. Ashima acclimatizes to an extent with the American culture especially for her children and because life demands it. She prepares typical American food for her children and celebrates Christmas. However, she cooks Indian cuisine on a regular basis in her residence. People's behavior is a token of their identity. Ashoke and Ashima always manage to find an excuse to arrange programs inviting their Bengali friends. In all these programs, she serves Indian food and never forgets to remember her family members in India. There is hardly any part of the book that excludes their reminiscence of their parents and relatives, of their country or of their ingrained ways.

When the couple celebrates *annaprasan*-rice ceremony of Gogol-their only boy-child-they do it with perfect fidelity to the program arranged in India and try to fill up the want of Asima's brother requesting an acquaintance, Dilip Nandi to play his part.

Asima prepares biryani, carp in yogurt sauce, *dal* and six different vegetable dishes which takes her a week to do all these and which the guests eat cross-legged on the floor. A conch shell is played and blades of grass and flames of a pradeep are held to Gogol's head. When Gogol is first fed, Asima cannot hold her tears back. She wishes her brother and parents were there to bless her son. In the Novel, the writer has beautifully depicted a woman who has been taken out of India, but India could not be taken out of her.

In the novel we see that Not only on occasions, Ashima ceaselessly plunges into her memories of the place she belonged to as if it is her favorite pastime to cry out of mingled pain and pleasure. She thinks quite often about her pre-bridal and bridal days and the rituals associated with them. She remembers well the day when Ashoke and his parents first came to see her. She, without any prior notice, learns that they would come to see her. Thus she obediently wears a *sari* selected by her relatives. She untangles her hair, braids and re-braids it, wipes smudged kohl from under her eyes. Having been made presentable by her cousins and with all her aunts and other relatives swarming around her, she enters the sitting room,

sneaks a look at Ashoke and listens silently to her mother's exaggerated words of praise on her. The marriage gets fixed. She remembers the way she was prettified; her lips colored, her forehead and cheeks dotted with sandalwood and her hair wound up and bound with flowers with a hundred wire pins to hold it to the proper place. The marriage takes place and Ashima Bhaduri turns into Ashima Ganguli. After coming to America, she cooks Ashoke's favorite food which she has learnt from her mother-in-law. She cooks lamb curry with potatoes. She knows that her husband likes to round his dinner off with a meager helping of rice and *dal*.

Ashima gives birth to a girl five years after Gogol who is christened as Sonia. The parents teach Gogol to memorize children's poems written by Rabindranath Tagore. Gogol also learns the names of Hindu deities in detail. He is sent to learn Bengali language to one of their friends' house. Ashoke and Ashima are not at all oblivious of their native culture even in the face of the fact that they might not need to nurture and hold back their native tradition since Ashoke wants to settle there. However, this very idea of staying in America for long makes them unhappy in one way or the other. They even find themselves helpless when their children appear to speak like the Americans. Sometimes they visit India. Ashima knits sweaters for her father, father-in-law, brother, and three favorite uncles. She buys gifts for all of her relatives living permanently in India. It is worth noticing that all her thoughts linger with her memories of her birthplace and her own culture; and everything she reminisces is about her near and dear ones. This is what nostalgia is all about.

Nostalgia is a painful pleasure one loves to cherish within. In Jhumpa Lahiri's novel, *The Namesake*, we see that Ashima cannot let go of the tattered magazine she brought with her from Calcutta. There is a pain mingled in the vicarious comfort which she derives from gliding her fingers across the pages of Bengali words. The act of staying abroad seems to her "a lifelong pregnancy-a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts". Lahiri 2003: 49). So, Ashima cries every now and then. She cries when the mailman comes without letters from Calcutta. Vijay Mishra's is of the opinion that "All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way." (Mishra 2007: 1). The diasporic characters created by Jhumpa Lahiri hardly fall short who exhibit this unhappiness. Here, Mrs. Sen, in "Mrs. Sen" in *Interpreter of Maladies*, a short-story collection, is quite apt to mention who is head over heels overwhelmed with her country, India, while living in America with her husband. She listens to a cassette made for her as a farewell present where her relatives say something for her and she identifies each speaker there. This is a unique way to bridge the gap of space between her and her

relatives and feel proximity though it does not ease the pain; it only offers solace to her.

In every nook and cranny of the novel, *The Namesake*, there are instances of nostalgic feelings. Thus, this text appears to be a veritable repository of homesickness. When Ashima is expecting a baby, she sometimes feels averse to work and expects a helping hand for her. She craves for such amenities which are much available in her own country-India. During the period of her leisure time, with all her work done, she knits sweaters for her own relatives and her in-laws. She now lives a dual life, often calculating Indian time, and conjures, according to the phase of the day, what may her family members in Calcutta be doing: a servant is pouring tea, arranging Marie biscuits on the tray, her mother untangling her hair in front of the mirror, her father listening to the programs produced by the Voice of America, her brother studying for an examination etc. What can be more nostalgic than feeling the chill of the gray cement floor of one's former abode in a hot summer day? Who can be more homesick than someone who clearly sees, sitting in America, the black and white photograph of her deceased parental grandfather in India instead of the blue strip of Charles River before her in Massachusetts?

So, in spite of research claims of the positive aspects of nostalgia, the invisible dents on the mind left by the dislocation from a place, detachment from a culture, departure or death of somebody close, cannot be filled up. It hampers one's wholeness, dividing the self, and pressing hard one's true, spontaneous identity. Rubenstein comments, "For the culturally displaced person, self-division is inevitable." (Rubenstein 2001: 65). Even Lahiri, in an interview, states, "It bothered me growing up, the feeling that there was no single place to which I fully belong." (Lahiri 2016). Again in another conversation with the famous economist Tyler Cowen, she discloses: "I think I write about loss. I write less about nostalgia."

In the novel, Ashima is found to be nostalgic even when her son, Gogol, goes to a nursery school. When Gogol was a toddler, he used to hold on to the free end of her sari when they walked together or demanded her attention in his childish voice when he needed to go to the bathroom. Now that he has grown up a little, he sticks to her mother a little less; a little less he now needs her. But Ashima longs for the smaller Gogol who was dependent on her more than now. Her motherly heart cannot easily accept the vague distance created between them.

However, when Gogol grows up a little, Ashima and Gogol enjoy together seeing pictures of their relatives in India. Interestingly enough, little Gogol also misses his mother when he and his father eat chicken curry and *dal* without his mother when she is pregnant again. He does not feel

like eating without her at the table. He misses the conversation of his parents at the dining table. And he does not like to see the empty kitchen that is now without his mother. It seems weird to him to see his father take over the kitchen. This small version of nostalgia as well is introduced into the novel with much care. However, this would change with the passage of time when he would be better off without his parents which is an attribute of a young man in the first flush of youth.

Gogol and his sister Sonia's food habit becomes shaped like the Americans; but, Ashima confines their demand for an American dinner to once a week only. Ashima's choice of food items, even the dresses she wears never undergo a change. When Gogol is in the third grade, he is given lessons on Bengali language and culture. It is due to their love for their country- India-that they cannot be happy that their children are becoming exactly like the Americans. Gogol and Sonia talk to their parents in English but Ashima and Ashoke speak back to them in Bengali. By now, Ashoke has been hired as an Assistant Professor at a university. They live here in America, but do not completely feel at home here. They always suffer from their partial existence in America. They are never more enthusiastic, their voice is never louder and their smiles are never wider when they are in India on a visit. Their true selves are revealed in their own country with their own people. It is beyond the realm of the experience of their children. The lack of the exact things that brings this enthusiasm in them in India gives them nostalgic feelings in America. They do not belong here anymore but "Home, it has been said, is not necessarily where one belongs but the place where one starts from." (Nasta 2002).

On one occasion of their departure from India, Ashima and Ashoke were seen weeping like children while standing in front of the framed photographs of their dead parents on the wall. The deep feelings, equally for the living relatives and for the dead ones, stem from the core of their heart. Their relatives came to the airport to see them off. They assembled on the balcony to wave good-bye. Gogol perceives that they would stand there until the flashing lights of the airplane are no longer visible. He knows that his mother would sit all the way back silently. But, he feels relieved because, being born in America, there is no bond being created between him and India or his parents' relatives.

So, nostalgia has got something to do with mutual attachments, between persons and things. But his ties even with his parents become loose. Ashima, still now, misses her son as she did when he was little. She has been helplessly suffering the mental agony of leaving her dear ones thousands of miles away in India. Here she suffers the same for her own son in the country they both live in. She mentions the exact time it has been

since they have met which hardly touches him. Gogol, after growing up, falls for an American girl-Maxine Ratliff-who is born of rich parents. Gogol starts staying with her and feels mortified of their own "non-standard" living, compared to theirs. Now he keeps himself aloof from his parents. He is even embarrassed at the enormous efforts his mother gives on food when he brings Maxine over for the first time in his residence. This is quite contrary to the sophisticated gustatory habits of Maxine's parents. His mother, Ashima, prepares samosas, chicken cutlets, chickpeas in tamarind sauce, lamb biriyani, tomato chutney, etc in the hot summer days. Although Ashima is living in America, she does not prepare American food items to treat an American girl even at the risk of incurring Gogol's displeasure. She knows quite well how much he loves American food and is averse to Indian food which attributes to his growing up there. The reason of her culinary behavior is her frequent delving in the life in her native country that gives her a sense of belongingness with her own people which, in another term, is nostalgia. Food culture and nostalgia are quite interrelated with each other. Hofer, who coins the term, "nostalgia", first states that, nostalgia was triggered when Swiss mercenaries ate soups and village milk from home.

This same feeling makes Ashima consider herself as fortunate to have the Bengalis to share rice with. So much is she into the past and so much engrossed is she with her past memories that she saves the letters of her dead parents on the top shelf of her closet in a purse until the strap breaks. This very purse is kept by her with enormous passion since her younger days in India. This kind of sentiment in her is associated with nostalgia. Once a year, she dumps the letters onto her bed and goes through them, and thus devoting an entire day to her parents, and allowing herself a good cry. "She revisits their affection and concern, conveyed weekly, faithfully, across continents-all the bits of news that had had nothing to do with her life in Cambridge but which had sustained her in those days nevertheless." (Lahiri 2003: 160). Gary Cross has shown how nostalgia is hard to separate one from his or her heritage with the advancement of time and that the longing for the past could take a more private, familial form "evoked and realized through personal possessions." (Cross 2015: 9). The regularity of intervals at which she connects with her parents through their old letters is an indication of her act of staying back in the past memories which no layers of dust of time could hide. She suffers much the excruciating pain of bearing the burden of the memories of her parents who died in India.

However, her own children-Gogole and Sonia-now both grown up, do not accompany their mother any more. She feels a pain while driving to places that they will never sit with her in the back of the car again as they had before. It is due to her own deprivation of her parents' company since

she came to America that she cannot accept her children's independence which has created a distance between them. Vice versa, the distance with a piece of her own self makes her nostalgic to a great extent.

Ashima feels it even more now after the death of Ashoke. She, from time to time, remembers him deep with pain in her heart and continuous tears in her eyes. Sudden nostalgic feelings sweep over her; and she remembers his act of surprising her with an early return from the university and their digging in a proper Bengali lunch instead of sandwiches. She now remembers boiling some rice and warming the leftovers of the previous night, sated and sleepy, yet talking at the table, as their palms change color and become dry. She is haunted by his memories every now and then. There was a time when she had to leave her country- India-with a heavy heart. Now, after being extricated from the conjugal bond, she is totally reluctant to leave America. Sometimes, to quench her nostalgic thirst, she visits India. She cannot contemplate staying there forever now that Ashoke is gone. Most would argue that it is due to her children. But, the fact is that she chooses to stay in a place where her husband is buried even with the awareness in her mind that she would be left almost unattended or unaccompanied, uncared-for in this busy country. Still she could have left America, but she could not leave her husband Ashoke's memory behind. "Ashima has no desire to escape to Calcutta, not now. She refuses to be so far from the place where her husband made his life, the country in which he died." (Lahiri 2003: 183).

However, nostalgia is an unbridled horse that manhandles everybody who embarks upon it. Not only spouses like Ashima, Gogol-a man of meager emotion-who once cared a little about the oriental emotion of his parents, now misses every phase of his journey from his childhood to youth. He lived with a girl, visited his parents infrequently, ignored to see it when they waved him goodbye on his departure. Then, after the death of his father, Gogol is nostalgic to such an extent that changes his whole disposition altogether.

Gogol's father used to live alone in an apartment in a complex called, Baron's Court; and, he died there. Now, Gogol comes here to collect his father's belongings. He drives his father's leased car and intensely feels his father which he has never felt before.

Now Gogol deeply feels about even the paths his father trod; he wanders whether his father took this very route when he drove himself to the hospital. His feelings for his father which stayed dormant so far and which sweep over him with massive intensity at his sudden departure, render the first threat of tears. Everything once used by his father now makes him very sad. A picture of himself, his mother, and sister in his

father's apartment reminds him of their beautiful old days. He feels guilty about throwing the leftover food away since his father abhorred wastage of any kind. He decides now to spend the night here before he goes back the next morning, though his beloved finds it extremely weird to stay here. Ignoring her instructions to check into a hotel, he stays here where his father stayed just one day ago. He imagines his father's act of going about and doing regular works. He wonders what he was doing when he had felt badly. Had he been making tea or sitting silently on the sofa he is sitting on right now?

Gogol and his sister used to feel ecstatic on each of their departures from India after their periodical visits. Now, he feels how his parents used to feel in these occasions. He realizes now the guilt his parents carried inside after being able to do nothing when their parents had died in India.

He remembers, in the wake of his father's death, a practice of shaving head of a Bengali son as a duty after his parent's death. When his paternal father dies, his father one day emerged from the bathroom shaved and bald. As he was very little then, he laughed and Sonia, who was even younger, cried, being totally ignorant of the ritual their parents valued so much.

In delineating a life-picture of a young couple, winged from India to distant America, and their pleasure and pain, laughter and cries, we do not find a differently and modernly molded family; its members rather bear in the core of their hearts their native country-India. They adore and wholeheartedly cling to their native culture. After Ashoke's death, the house is full of sympathetic, mournful well-wishers just like in India where all the neighborhood and people from far break down to bid the dead person the final adieu. When Gogol returns after collecting his father's belongings, he realizes that their home is "No longer a family of four, they become a household of ten, sometimes twenty, ...a cluster of people attempting to make up for his father's loss." (Lahiri 2003: 179).

Gogol is appalled most to see his mother appearing as a traditionally devoted Hindu woman who has lost her husband. Her mother wipes the vermilion from the part of her hair. Her wedding bracelet is forced out of her hand by using cold cream along with all the other bracelets she has always worn.

For ten days following the death of Ashoke, the living members of the family eat a mourner's diet while avoiding meat and fish. They eat plainly cooked rice, *dal*, and vegetables. There was a time when Gogol felt extremely resented when his father performed these austere rituals that entailed gustatory sacrifice. But, now he feels differently while looking at the empty chair of his father.

On the eleventh day, they invite their friends and acquaintances to mark the end of the mourning period. There is thus a particular religious ceremony conducted on the floor. Gogol is asked to sit in front of the picture of his father as a priest chants verses in Sanskrit there. They arrange a meal of meat and fish and cook them the way Ashoke liked. When they shut their eyes, they feel that it is just another day with Ashoke. In this program, their house becomes full of innumerable guests; their entire neighboring road is today full of parked cars from six different states of America.

In this particular program, Maxine also comes. Once, Gogol used to feel ashamed of the lack of sophistication of his parents. So, he wanted to keep Maxine away from them. But, today, he does not care at all about the house, especially the way it appears now with a pile of guests' shoes heaped by the doorway. Maxine tells him of their previous plan of going away together, just two of them, to spend and enjoy a vacation so that he could get away from all these things. Gogol says in reply that he does not want to "get away"!

It is due to the fact that Gogol was born an American and it is also because of his tender age that he, very naturally, has adopted American ways and is, so, bored of observing the dull Indian rituals. Today, it is his nostalgic memories of his father that turn even a young man like him into a mature adult. In fact, his father Ashoke's death and his feeling about him and the family ultimately push him far away from Maxine and eventually bring him close to his family. Now, he is quite close to his dead father both emotionally and culturally. He becomes more dutiful to his mother. He sometimes drives to his father's university. After parking behind his father's department, he runs across the beautiful campus roads which once had been his father's world. His father's birthday was never celebrated when he was alive; but, now they three (mother and the two children) stand up silently together before his photograph, drape it with a garland of rose petals and anoint his photographed forehead with sandal wood paste.

Another precious memory Gogol holds dear deep into his heart. Once all the four of them had gone to a cape-Cape Cod- by driving along the curving piece of land until they could drive no farther. His father and he had walked and ran too far out of the sight of Ashima and Sonia. It was their own, exclusive trip his father asked him to remember. "Remember that you and I made this journey, that we went together to a place where there was nowhere left to go." (Lahiri 2003: 187).

Gogol now lives with his father's memory. His late father, more powerful than when he was alive, holds enormous power to bring about all the changes. Once he hated his apparently weird name. He did not even

touch the book his father presented him once. It was a book written by the eminent writer, Nicolai Gogol. This is the writer his father once admired so much and he is the one Gogol is named after. Now, he does not hate his name anymore. Today he has started reading the book. Thus, Jhumpa Lahiri's novel, *The Namesake*, stresses the power of nostalgia and conforms and adds to its positive effects. Suffice it to say that it is not Gogol only, the main Characters of the novel exhibit, through their thoughts and behavior and their devout involvement in the various rituals and practices, their nostalgic emotions for something or other.

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