CHAPTER II

JHUMPA LAHIRI’S ‘NAMESAKE’ AND CHETAN BHAGAT’S ‘REVOLUTION 2020’

It is not too absurd to claim that no single person in the so-called civilized world is a native, all are migrants. The validity of this statement can be ascertained by going through the outline of the history of human race since the pre-historic time, when all land was Pangea.

“From Pangea’s heart of darkness originated the human race and migrated to different parts”. ¹ During the glacial phases of the Quaternary or Pleistocene age the local migration in a geographically defined single landmass was transformed into cross-continental migration”²

When the separation in continental plates took place, the local migration within a geographically defined single landmass was transformed into cross-continental migration. Aided by the tectonics of the earth, the earliest human beings became great migrants but they were not yet civilized and hence the first civilization came into being, they became the first civilized natives.
“Still, the civilization of Indus Valley (India), Yangtze-kiang valley (China), Tigris-Euphrates basin (Mesopotamia) and Nile basin (Egypt) cannot be said to have been inhabited by the original natives as they were periodically over-run by newer migrant groups.”

The newer migrant groups either scattered the former groups or amalgamated with them to become the new natives. The process continued till ages and allied with the increase in population. Ultimately, it gave rise to the concept of a ‘melting pot’. India became the first melting pot of the world and since the arrival of Aryans, India has received invaders, traders and refugees in various migratory patterns. There are the Greeks and Macedonians who come with Alexander; then the spread and dominance of Mohammedanism saw the displacement of the whole Parsi community from Persia to India; then came the Arab traders followed by Persians, Afghans and Turkish traders as well as invaders; and finally came the Mughals. All these migratory people have been through such assimilation in the melting pot of India that they have become its natives. Even the colonial powers did not escape effects of the melting pot of Indian that they could not help but become the natives. The Anglo Indian community in India is more Indian than anything else. Of late, the Second World War caused the migration of some Jews to India; the 1970s welcomed ‘Hippies’ and along there has been constant
migration of traders and refugees from India’s neighboring countries like Burma, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal and China. These groups are still going through the process of assimilation. The concept of melting pot is not an isolated concept related to India only. The United Kingdom is also an excellent example of Melting pot.

“Since the early Phoenicians to the Angles, the Jutes, the Saxons, the Normans and the Romans; all have become the dwellers of Britain”.  

The British Society have been made multicultural by the later day migrants from the British colonies of Africa and Asia along with the Irish, Poles, Jews and those from the Common Wealth countries. The United States of America is perhaps the most active melting pot of the world. The migrant population from Europe, especially UK, along with the indentured labourers they brought from Africa now constitutes the native population of USA. The migrants of newer kind like the Chinese, Indians, Mexicans and so on are providing constant fuel to keep the multi-ethnic melting pot of the American society to boil. In the introductory part of the book entitled (Multiculturalism in Global Society) the author Peter Kivisto relates five major world migration patterns in the year 1999:
“From Asia to US and Canada; from Central America to Canada; from Africa to Europe, from Asia to Europe; and from India and South-East Asia to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries.”

This simply hints towards the fact that migration is as good as any natural phenomenon.

The treatment of migrant condition in literature is the most engrossing topic exciting intellectual debate. The Post modernist world has seen the emergence of interdisciplinary and cultural studies as the major thrust areas of academic exploration. The post colonial and diasporic novels are seen as appropriate texts for such exploration because they have to offer multi-voiced resistance to the idea of boundaries and present texts open to transgressive and non-authoritative reading. Thus in the academic world where identity, origin and truth are seen in diasporic terminology as ever haunting structuresless assemblages, the writer Jhumpa Lahiri appears to be a very good example in that regard. Her characters tend to be immigrants from India and their American reared children, exiles who straddle two countries, two cultures and on the realistic ground belong to neither: too used to freedom to accept the rituals and conventions of home, and yet too steeped in tradition to embrace American way of life more fully. A little unlike that of Anita Desai’s writings which are generally existentialist studies of individuals and her backgrounds are
only incidental, Jhumpa Lahiri writes about the uprooted people with an intimate knowledge of their conflicted hearts, using her lapidary eye for detail to conjure their daily lives with precision of extraordinary kind. Lahiri’s fiction delves deep into the universal theme of uprootedness and isolation. In the same thematic line comes the excellently crafted piece of work by Jhumpa Lahiri entitled ‘The Namesake’. By going down the lane of diaspora as historical reality ‘The Namesake’, carves out the felt but abstract form of isolation and struggle from the straw of ordinary lives. The pain and passion of Indian people living in America fabricate the subject matter of this novel. Though America is a real presence in the book as the characters must struggle and come to terms with what it means to live in an alien nation, to be brought up here, to belong and not belong in the most happening current melting pot of the world America.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s second publication ‘The Namesake’ is her first novel. The composition enjoyed the status of bestseller for several weeks on New York Times best seller list in the year 2003. From the pen of the author of ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ came the first novel representing finely wrought, deeply moving family drama that illuminates Jhumpa Lahiri’s signature themes: the immigrants experience with the utmost touch of Realism, the clash of cultures and the tangled ties between generations with all prevailing sense of loneliness in diasporic life.
‘The Namesake’ takes into consideration the Ganguli family, from their tradition bound life in Calcutta through their fraught transformation into Americans. On the heels of arranged marriage, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli settled in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where the husband Ashoke did his best to adapt while his wife pines for home. With the birth of their son, Gogol, the realistic drama further intensifies as the task of naming him betrays their hope of respecting old ways in a new world. Gogol is painted by the author very realistically, while stumbling along the first generation path, strewn with conflicting loyalties, comic detour and wrenching love affairs. Before going into details of the plot, to discuss the theme of diasporic conflict of dual identity in ‘The Namesake’ it would be helpful to mention Lahiri’s own remarks. In an interview released by Houghton Mifflin Company, Lahiri says that the novel is definitely about those:

“who are culturally displaced or those who grow up in two world simultaneously.”

Talking about predicament of immigrants Jhumpa Lahiri says:

“I think for immigrants, the challenges of exile, the loneliness, the constant sense of alienation, the knowledge of and longing for a lost world, are more explicit and distressing than for their children.”
As a realistic fiction book, ‘The Namesake’ takes place in many different places including Calcutta, India and in various places in The United States, some forty years ago. Gogol Ganguli, a smart, American Indian boy who is born in America to parents’ who emigrated from Calcutta, India is that protagonist of the story. He does not like his name Gogal and hates being compared to his namesake, Nikolai Gogal and is embarrassed by it. Though it was not the same during his childhood days. He loves his name very dearly. Jhumpa Lahiri very realistically details the child psychology while describing Gogol’s attitude towards his name when he was young. The paragraph is one of the most beautiful paragraphs of the book:

“As a young boy Gogol doesn’t mind his name. He recognizes piece of himself in road signs: GO LEFT, GO RIGHT AND GO SLOW. For birthdays his mother orders a cake on which his name is piped across the white frosted surface in a bright blue sugary script. It all seems perfectly normal. It doesn’t bother him that his name is never an option on key chains or metal pins or refrigerator magnets. He has been told that he was named after a famous Russian author born in a previous century. That the author’s name and therefore his, is known throughout the world and will live on forever, one day his father takes him to the university library, and shows him, on a shelf well beyond his
reach, a row of Gogol spines. When his father opens up one of the books to a random page, the print is for smaller than in the Hardy Boys series Gogol has begun recently to enjoy. “In a few years,” his father tells him, “You will be ready to read them.” Though substitute teachers at school always pause, looking apologetic when they arrive at his name on the roster, forcing Gogol to call out, before even being summoned. “That’s me,” teachers in the school system know not to give it a second thought. After a year or two the students no longer tease and say ‘Giggle’ or ‘Gargle’. In the program of the school Christmas plays, the parents are accustomed to seeing his name among the cast. Gogol is an outstanding student, curious and co-operative, his teachers write: year after year on report cards. “Go Gogol!” his classmates shout on golden autumn days as he runs the bases or sprints in a dash.

Throughout the book, Gogol has hard time trying to become “Americanized” while his parents want him to stay Indian. The title ‘The Namesake’ basically reflects the internal conflict that Gogol Ganguli goes through to identify with his unusual names. How does Gogol lose first his public name, his ‘bhalonam’ and then his private pet name, his ‘daknam’? How does he try to remake his identity after choosing to rename himself and, what is the result? These are some of the questions the novel tries to answer. The book starts off with Ashima and Ashoke Ganguli delivering
their first baby. At the hospital when they are asked by the hospital nurses, what they are going to name him, as they need to mention it in his birth certificate, they do not know yet. They are still waiting for a letter from the baby’s grandmother, who is designated to name the newborn. Helplessly, they finally decide on a name after an author that Ashoke; Gogol’s father was emotionally connected to. Gogol grows up in America and despite his parent’s best efforts to keep him ‘Indianized’, he starts behaving like his American friends and doing the same things that they do. For example his parents did not know about his smoking habits or his going to late night parties. At Yale, Gogol learns about his namesake, Nikolai Gogol, and that he was a mentally unstable pariah, and he starts to hate his name. Because of this, he changes it to Nikhil, and makes Gogol into his middle name. After a few years Gogol becomes an Architect and falls in love with an American girl Maxine. He starts to live with her family and starts to move away from his family. He starts to go on vacations with Maxine’s family by neglecting his own. For most of the time he starts staying away from his family. With Maxine’s family, Gogol is slowly becoming more ‘Americanized’, a thing that his parents had always tried to keep him away from, despite Gogol faces embarrassment every now and then about his origins. As he is dating Maxine, Gogal realizes his fate with the relationship as a piece of cultural eccentricity. In the real sense, he becomes an object of comparison.
through which Lydia and her friends are allowed to better express their Americanness. In these American-Bengali-American dialogues between the Ratliffs and their friends and Gogol, Gogol’s Bengali identity is entirely masked.

“I once had a girlfriend who went to India,” an American party guest of Lydia’s quips. Oh! where did she go? Gogol returns. “I don’t know”. All I remember is that she came back thin as a rail and I was horribly envious of her”. the American woman replies.9

It might seem easy to articulate that Gogol, then is an oriental conversation accessory for the hosts, but Lydia’s own reaction to introducing Gogol reveals something more horrifyingly telling:

“But you are Indian,’ Pamela says, frowning. ‘I'd think the climate wouldn’t affect you, given your heritage.’ ‘Pamela, Nicks’s American,’ Lydia says, Leaning across the table rescuing Gogol from the conversation. ‘He was born here.’ She turns to him, and he sees from Lydia’s expression that after all these months, she herself isn’t sure. Weren’t you?”10

Every now and then, Gogol realizes a total alienation from his Bengali roots. Lydia, Maxine and Gerald not only joke about mistaking Gogol’s cultural and ethnic heritage as Italian, they are entirely unknown about his
cultural values and background so central to his identity, as evidence in his constant mental assessment of the differences between the Ratliff’s American mores and his family’s Bengali-American values and actions. The feeling of uprootedness from Bengali identity, the loss of Bengali roots, Lydia blatantly and inadvertently expresses in presence of strangers becomes to Gogol insufficient for the purpose of defining and fulfilling himself. Later on Gogol, comes across the realization while comparing Lydia, Maxine and their non-Bengali Americanness to his mother’s Bengaliness, that he cannot deny his connection to his mother’s culture and his proximity to his mother’s essentialism. However, it is in realizing that his mother and Lydia are two distinct examples of two very different cultures that Gogol realizes his own need for American –American-Bengali hybridity, of his necessity to incorporate both Bengali and American elements into his characters. This realization, Gogol experiences, also comes as a result of immersing himself into an entirely Bengali-American relationship with his then-wife Moushumi. In concluding, Gogol and Moushumi’s marriage to be too Bengali-American, Lahiri implies that hybrid identity here Bengali-American identity is itself possible of the kind of essentialism that purer types of identity by which Bengali and Caucasian-American identity are sometimes typified. Lahiri implies that Gogol and Moushumi’s relationship is an example of Cultural identity construction that is too
local and too specific. Not only are the two partners Bengali-Americans, but they are Americans in the northeastern United States who rely too much on typical Bengali identity.

Stereotypes such as over-education, preoccupation with parental influence and city and suburb living, tropes Lahiri identifies as too regularly followed by Bengali-Americans seeking to carve out their own identity. At concluding part of the novel, it is Gogol’s own multicultural identity placed not only between Bengali and American culture, but between American and Bengali–American culture, which can support not only the physical but the cultural maternity he has received throughout his life’s journey so far, in addition to his own maternity, resulting from his exploration of maternity, resulting from his exploration of maternity past and impeding. In the final pages of the novel, Gogol envisions not only his potential for physical paternity and thus cultural maternity of another as well as he examines a copy of Nikolai Gogol’s “The Overcoat”, presented to him, a sign of cultural maternity like his name, by his father:

“Gogol gets up, shuts the door to his room, muffling the noise of the party that swells below him, the laughter of the children playing down the hall. He sits cross-legged on the bed. He opens the book, glances at an illustration of Nikolai Gogol, and then at the chronology of the
Gogol’s contemplation of his own future and his wondering about naming a child are examined in this quote which coincides with Gogol’s undertaking a unique self examination instigated by his father’s gift to him- a culture giving name and a literary means by which to explore his own very unique identity. In this passage, Jhumpa Lahiri weaves a kind of cultural rearing, male and female cooperation, and self and communal examination and growth that greatly exemplify a quest of a person struggling hard to define his identities. But, the realization does not come all of the sudden in fact as a gradual development. One day, Gogol gets a call from his mother. She informs him that his father had a massive heart attack and had died. Gogol goes down to his father’s apartment to collect his belongings. While he is there, he realizes that he needs to fulfill his duties as a son, and now that his father is no more, he needs to
take responsibility for the family. When he returns to his mother’s house he reads a book entitled ‘The Overcoat’, given to him by his father, but he had never read. Just remembering his father, made him realize that he should be like his father, and not be selfish about himself. After staying with his mother for a few weeks, and performing all the required Bengali rituals, Gogol decides that he has to go back to his work. When he returns to his apartment he has a fight with Maxine and breaks up with her. He now realized even more that he should do what his parents had always wanted to do, and marry a Bengali girl. A few months later, his mother refers to him a Bengali girl called Moushumi, who he starts going out with. After a year he marries the Bengali girl but this was not the marriage of then-lived-happily-ever-after-kind.

Gogol lives with Moushumi for a while. He was happy that he has done what his parents had always wanted him to. One day he finds out that Moushumi is having an affair with another man, and he divorces her. This brings him to the conclusion that just because he is Bengali, it does not really mean that he is going to find happiness in just a Bengali girl, and that he can marry anyone. The book comes to an end with Gogol thinking that he is now free to do what he pleases without having to worry about a trouble in his life. In form of Gogol, Jhumpa Lahiri has created a wonderful legendary character who is struggling with
displacement, guilt and fear as he tries hard to find a balance between the solace and suffocation of tradition and the terror and excitement of the future into which he is being thrust.

The title of the novel, ‘The Namesake’ and its significance seems to deny the very popular statement by William Shakespeare, that says “What is there in a name?” In ‘The Namesake’, everything is in the name.

Gogol’s father Ashoke and his mother, Ashima are very important characters of the novel. Their personalities have been shaped and reshaped internally by the circumstances. Ashoke, though quieter and far more introverted and autonomous than his wife takes far less space in the novel. This lifelong love of books bestows a very unique cultural identity on his son- his namesake-which forms the entire thread around which Gogol’s narrative of identity and self discovery is told. Ashoke’s own narrative gives birth to Gogol, both physically and culturally. After a life-threatening train accident, which leaves Ashoke incapable of movement for nearly a year in his parents’ home in Calcutta. Ashoke decides to father, like Ashima(though far more intentionally), an exploratory transnational identity for himself and later his children by moving to America to pursue his life and career. “After lying on bed thinking all the time only of his immobility, Ashoke upon healing, begin to envision another sort of future. He imagined not only walking, but away, as far
as he could from the place in which he was born and in which he had nearly died. ----his bewildered father had protested. His siblings had pleaded and wept. His mother speechless, had refused food for three days. Inspite of all that he'd gone.”

While continuing this move and in naming his son after his own favourite author, the engrossing pages of whose book saved his life in train accident, Ashoke bestows a kind of multicultural identity to his son. Ashoke’s action both physical and mental presents Gogol with a multicultural heritage; integrating elements of Russian literature, Bengali Culture and American geographical space. When Ashoke tells Gogol the origins of his name when Gogol is a grown up man that the pages of his favourite author saved him after a train accident, Gogol asks:

“ Is that what you think of me?---“ Do I remind you of that night?”
“Not at all.” Ashoke replies “You remind me of everything that followed.”

In naming his son, Ashoke not only nurtures Gogol’s multicultural identity; he nurtures like Ashima, a new identity that is all his own and this independence provides Gogol with yet another means by which to explore himself and his origin. And with the arrival of Gogal in their lives, things have been changed. People started identifying them. When Gogol is born, the Ganguli’s meet other Bengali families with small
children, and Ashima finds that with a new baby perfect stranger, all Americans suddenly take notice of her, smiling and congratulating her for what she has done. The novelist tries to emphasize over the fact that how children change one’s place in a community. It doesn’t really matter where does one reside, whether in India or abroad, and the change brought by children certainly brings good tidings with it. Children work as connector between two groups and they bridge the gap up to some extent and thereby the social circle is sure to extend. The novel throughout tries to find the answers of many questions, most of them are related to the crisis of identity. Like, how do the expectations change between generations in a family? What does Gogol want most from his life? How is it different from what his family wants for him, and what they wanted when they first came to America to start a family? In an interview Lahiri has said,

“The question of identity is always a difficult one, but especially for those who are culturally displaced, as immigrants are---who grow up in two worlds simultaneously.”14

The novelist very beautifully explores in several ways the difficulty of reconciling cross-cultural rituals around death and dying. In his youth, Ashoke Ganguli is saved from a massive train wreck in India. When his son is born, Ashoke thinks,
“Being rescued from that shattered train had been the first miracle of his life. But here, now, reposing in his arms, weighing next to nothing but changing everything, is the second.”}

Here Ashoke’s love for his family appears to be more poignant because of his brush with death. And in a kind of role reversal Gogol shoulders the responsibility of his family after the death of his father. Lahiri appears to put a kind of question to the readers asking what moments define us more accident or achievements, mourning or celebration. For instance Ashima refuses to display the rubbings of gravestones young Gogol makes with his classmates. And when Gogol’s father suddenly dies, Gogol’s relationship with Maxine is strained and quickly ends. Their love affair could not survive Gogol’s grief and the cultural gap may have the answer of the break up. The loss of Gogol plays very pivotal role in bringing him back to his family and responsibilities associated with a family life. This loss has also changed the relationship of Sonia and Ashima.

Beautifully crafted, lucid and revelatory, universal and deeply felt, ‘The Namesake’ has captured more clearly than ever before a restless feeling of uprootedness that is as representative of America now, in the Post 9/11 era, as the credo of wide-eyed openness ever was.
“Lahiri is far too accomplished and empathic a writer to relax her gaze; she excels at uncovering character and choosing detail.”¹⁶

The remarkable poignancy that the author achieves in her work is the result of her tying examination of exile to other, more universal moments of essential sadness in our lives: the death of a parent, the end of a love affair, the ravages of alcoholism on a family. All her efforts result in a wonderful craftsmanship in the field of literature by the name, ‘The Namesake’.

While the exploration of African and Africana Womanism is under progression rather well under way, as can be found in the works like African Womanism: Reclaiming ourselves by Hudson-Weems and other womanist texts,

“Indian/Bengali-American Womanism is yet to be heard of, let alone articulated, and this somewhat unfortunate.”¹⁷

Although Jhumpa Lahiri never explicitly addresses Womanism by name in her works, the womanistic manifestations of the author in her various works of fiction provide an insightful point of exploration. When viewing her works through a womanist lens, one can find that Lahiri goes far ahead in manifesting womanism and its presentation, if only unintentionally or unadmittedly, challenges to the critiques of womanism.
in Indian-Bengali-American form. Lahiri’s fiction throws light on the struggle of both Indian-American women, first and foremost, and the role of Indian-American men individually and collectively creating in their new American landscape. Lahiri’s technique of both raising awareness of the power of women in the lives and actions of Indian/Bengali-American women is greatly aided by the representation of positive. Indian and Indian American men, after narrators of much of the story themselves, and this collaborative womanism greatly exemplifies even as it re-articulates a brand of womanism that is unique in Lahiri, Indian-American Literary culture and womanism alike. While painting various characters in ‘The Namesake’, Jhumpa Lahiri carves out the characters of Ashima as the most prominent figure in giving shapes to the incidents of various kind. ‘The Namesake’ opens with Ashima Ganguli trying to make a spicy Indian snack from American ingredients – Rice Krispies and planters peanuts-but as usual:

“Tasting from a cupped palm, she frowns, there is something missing.”

Ashima’s efforts to make over her home in Cambridge, to remind her home in Cambridge to remind her what she has left behind in Calcutta initiates the feeling of the dominance of the womanism in the novel. Throughout ‘The Namesake’ the author uses food and clothing not only to
explore cultural transitions but also to sustain the importance of the presence of a woman in the scene. That’s why the rituals like the annaprasan, the rice ceremony has been introduced by the author. Some readers have even said that Lahiri’s writing makes them crave the meals, she evokes so vividly.

The author of a very popular book on womanism entitled ‘*African Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*’, Hudson-Weem employs the family metaphor that manifests itself two distinct ways: maternity and male-female cooperation. Maternity can represent both physical mothering and the resulting caretaker roles. Maternity often engenders and the cultural maternity that embodies individual, familial and communal identity formulation and nurturing. Multi-gendered cooperation, typified in womanism by male-female relationships implied but as less articulated in most of feminist theoretical work. Nowhere, it seems, could the mix of individual, familial and communal maternity, intricately woven with inter-gendered, inter-cultural work be better exemplified than in the novel ‘*The Namesake*’ in which the female lead Ashima, still a young Bengali-American immigrant gives birth to both physically and culturally, her son Gogol whose search for identity is completely grounded on positive role models, who nurture his intercultural identity growth.
At the very onset of the novel, Ashima is pregnant arriving in Cambridge from Calcutta. Ashima’s physical maternity begins early in ‘The Namesake’. She almost immediately gives birth to and rears Gogol, but the rearing Ashima takes on is greater than traditional childbearing, and, as Gogol soon learns during his own coming-of-age story, is generously bestowed upon many Americans who have no blood ties to himself or Ashima. Indeed, Ashima purposefully becomes a mother of culture for herself, her son and many young Bengali-Americans both early on in the novel and in its later pages, where she foster new cultural transmissions with her caucasian Amercian friends. In the beginning, Lahiri’s unnamed, third person omniscient narrator writes of Ashima’s approaching to motherhood.

“As the baby grows, so too, does their circle of Bengali acquaintances….They all come from Calcutta, and for this reason alone they are friends. Most of them live within walking distance of one another in Cambridge. The husbands are teachers, researchers, doctors, engineers. The wives, homesick and bewildered touch to Ashima for receipes and advice and she tells them about the carp that’s sold in Chinatown, that it’s possible to make halwa from cream of wheat.”

69
In this quote, the novelist interweaves Ashima’s well perceived realistic physical maternity. In helping others Ashima’s ability to mother herself culturally is laid forth and she exemplifies both autonomous and communal growth, which are necessary to feminist ideas of maternity. Ashima’s maternity, individual, familial and communal, only grows throughout the novel, as Gogol and his intercultural identity develop and as the novel and Gogol’s narrative concludes, Ashima begins a new chapter of her life in which she plans to travel, splitting her remaining years between Calcutta and the American homes of Gogol and her daughter Sonia. One can only envision Ashima further materializing herself and others in the next stage of her life, as she had in the previously narrated portions which readers are permitted to ponder over. As she sells her house which is no longer necessary in her retirement, she hosts a final Bengali-American party to mark the end of her days in the home she shared with her son, daughter and now deceased better half. At this party Ashima’s rearing of the community is remembered and honored by guests who will, of course, miss Ashima’s parties and the cultural teachings:

“Gogol does not know to whom these children belong- half the guests are people his mother has befriended in the recent years, people who were at his wedding but whom he does not recognize. People talk of how much they have come to love Ashima’s Christmas Eve Parties that
they have missed them these past few years, that it won’t be the same without her. They have come to rely on her Gogol realizes, to organize the holiday, to convert it to introduce the tradition to those who are new. It has always felt adopted to him, an accident of circumstance, a celebration not really meant to be. And yet it was for him, for Sonia, that his parents had gone to the trouble of learning these customs. It was for their sake it had come to all this.”

Here again, the author emphasizes Ashima’s communal maternity in her communal sharing of Cultural translations; here she translates the Christian Christmas holiday into a Bengali gathering where Bengali-Americans learn about the American holiday and at the same time express their own cultural rituals. And at the other side of the overall growth and the development Ashima’s communal maternity is tied with her physical maternity of Gogol and his sister Sonia, who are the basic reason for Ashima’s own learning about the Americn version of the Christmas holiday. The transformation of Ashima from an Indian woman to an American; is one of the most prominent features of the growth in her personality. According to Hudson-Weems American Women longed to be “liberated to the community.”

The incidents of Ashima’s going away to various social gathering like Christmas parties well expounds her own liberation. No longer the
isolated, frightened Bengali who arrived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, unsure of how to retain her cultural heritage, thanks to her self-initiated familial and communal development liberated from powerless to powerful and even empowering. Indeed throughout the novel, it is obvious that the tie to Ashima’s cultural maternity is the physical maternity of raising her son and daughter. In the quoted part of the novel, Ashima’s learning about Christmas for Sonia and Gogol is central, yet it enables her to later provide communal maternity at gatherings like her farewell-Christmas party. And yet this womanistic rendering of maternity, apparently is not only extended to women in the novel. The American woman has never been restricted to the home and household chores and her male counterpart had more often than not shared the role as homemaker. This is certainly true of Lahiri’s men, like Ashoke, and Ruman’s father in ‘Unaccustomed Earth’ also, who wash dishes, help prepare meals, plants gardens and generally refute Eurocentric notions of males dictating and controlling households. Undoubtedly in ‘The Namesake’ Ashoke, Ashima, Gogol and Sonia take on to their Bengali-American culture. And in addition to doing household chores, Ashoke takes a uniquely maternal role in the development of his son, one that is certainly transbiological.
Jhumpa Lahiri; both exemplifies and proposes a redefinition of Womanism in her work. The novelist best exemplifies the family centeredness of Africana Womanism, the most thoroughly articulated theory of Womanism to date, in her narratives of Bengali-American families, whose members well describe both physical and cultural maternity, a great tenet of Womanism as defined by Womanism scholars Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi and Clenora Hudson-Weems. However, a revision and through articulation of Indian and Bengali Womanism as explored by Lahiri can be proposed by adding characteristics such as intergenerational exchange.

Emotionally intricate and exquisitely crafted, ‘The Namesake’ is the wonderful description of love and conflict which are rendered through marriages and cultural cohesion. Much of the older generation seeks to honor tradition and the younger seeks to explore personal choices. Ashima as a strong woman hold tries to bridge the generation and cultural gap. One of Lahiri’s great strengths is to concentrate myriad conflicts into individual scenes where cultural, romantic and family betrayal coalesce. Lahiri’s enormous gifts as a novelist are on full display in ‘The Namesake’: the gorgeous, effortless prose; the characters haunted by up rootededness, regret, isolation, loss and tragedies big and small, and most of all, a quiet emerging sense of humanity.
The Intergenerational Aspect, Revision and Retention of Cultural Elements in the novel ‘The Namesake’

In the novel, ‘The Namesake’, the leading characters Ashima, Ashoke and Gogol collectively structure a potential new tenet to Womanism that is intergenerational learning. And this potential characteristic might well suit an Indian kind of Womanism, which is the marked characteristics of Indian culture as well. In an alien surroundings and background not only does Gogol learn from his parents, but they learn from him. This is most apparent in Ashima’s pride, after Gogol’s failed marriage to the Bengali-American Moushumi; that her daughter Sonia is marrying for love, to a Chinese American, rather than for mutual cultural similarity or because of Cultural tradition:

“Something tells her Sonia will be happy with this boy.—quickly she corrects herself—this young man. He has brought it to her son. That it was she who had encouraged Gogol to meet Moushumi had never brought it to her son. That it was she who had encouraged Gogol to meet Moushumi will be something for which Ashima will always feel guilty. How could she have known? But fortunately they have not considered it their duty to stay married, as the Bengalis of Ashoke and Ashima’s generation do. They are not willing to accept, to adjust, to settle for something less than their ideal of happiness. That pressure
has given way, in the case of the subsequent generation, to American common sense.²²

Lindsey Pentolfe Aegerter, who points that Womanism should emphasize ‘revision and retention’ said in her exploration of Sindiwe Magona’s work ‘To My Children’s Children’ that narrative enables Magona to communicate to future generations.²³ The narratives of both Gogol and Kaushik imply that cultural retention is important, but that equally important is the revision of cultural elements so that they are useful and realistic. For example, throughout the novel, ‘The Namesake’, Gogol sees no use for Bengali religious ceremony, but when faced with the death of his father, Gogol finds solace in the Bengali religious tradition of mourning. With the usefulness of this Bengali tradition, Gogol locates another piece of his Bengali identity that he can revise, by using it to mourn his father, and retain to pass on to his children when they are faced with his own death. Later in the essay, Aegerter builds on the opportunity for generations to learn from one another:

“The younger and experienced narrators perform, then, in a dialogic manner suggesting the inadequacy of a single perspective or singular voice and demonstrating the contradictions of identity.”²⁴

The characters may very realistically be called ‘Communal Protagonists’, incorporating and revising with specificity to their own culture, Western
theory. Certainly, the intergenerational aspects can be well applied to the connection between Gogol and Ashima, and possible connections between Gogol and his own children and their connection to Ashima one day. Ogunyemi, earlier, hints at the possibility of intergenerational exchange in her explorations of Nigerian novels by women when speaking of cross gendered co-operation:

“If we play our politics shrewdly, as men and women, we can live to honour our mothers and encourage fathers, who conveniently absent themselves for a while when there is trouble, to accept responsibility. This is homecoming time; we must put the house; we inherited in order.”

On describing the story of Gogol’s life, his psyche and bent of mind has not only been exemplified but further articulated by a generational gaze that Jhumpa Lahiri very artistically institutes. Indeed not only have Ashima and Ashoke retain the cultural and traditional elements they received from their parents and forefathers but also they too have passed on up to a considerable extent, the same elements in an alien land to their children Gogol and Sonia. At the same time the parents too have learned from their children in an exchange that suggests the presence and dominance of a Realism of new-age-kind that brings forth the process of
learning moving from older generation to younger and from younger to older.

As one begins to read ‘The Namesake’, the reader senses it is something special, something different. But as a few pages are flipped through a kind of realization comes to the mind that it is not too different from the numerous “Indian immigrant experience novels” churned out by expatriate Indian authors. The same cleverly masked American disdain for anything remotely Indian, the same description of India as seen by Indians right off the boat, the same confusion faced by the so called “ABCDS” - American Born Confused Desi and the same stereotypical depictions of their lives, a mosaic of Indian values and American upbringing is not very tough, though, to point out the reasons that set ‘The Namesake’ apart from hundreds of novels of the same genera. The narration, the matter-of-fact tone, vivid characterization and the story itself about an Indian who is so unhappy with his given name that it threatens to cloud his entire existence, all work together to make ‘The Namesake’ an extraordinary piece of composition. Around this central theme, the novel very realistically takes into consideration, the incident of globalization which is yet to make mark as per the setting and background of ‘The Namesake’.

No doubt, the globalization has nowadays rightly termed as globalization as it has open up the world. It has brought in dynamism, mobility,
freedom, exposure within its scope. Change, innovation and transformation dominate to be the prominent features of life in the globalized world. At the same time, it has also created contradiction, confusion and many other contentions issues in different levels of society. Not only has it affected the very physical and visible aspects of human lives but also acutely wobbled their consciousness and psyche. It is in this background that the novel ‘The Namesake’ unravels beginning with Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli, a Bengali couple living there or rather Ashoke’s American dream in Boston. Due to strange set of circumstances in a strange world the couple names their first son ‘Gogol’. So ‘Gogol’ it is for the boy till he decides to change it to Nikhil, when he is old enough to. The novelist still refers to him as Gogol till the end. The name honors the legendary Russian writer Nikolai Gogol, whose book almost saved Ashoke’s life years ago in an unfortunate incident. When Gogol hears about this incident from his father it is too late.

“He already hates his name too much for it to be of any significance to him. He now has the additional burden of hating himself for hating his name.”

Gogol is an Indian, but his upbringing may have the touch of Bengali culture but he is a born American. Like every American kid, Gogol eventually moves away from home. He does not hate his parents rather he
is very devoted to them. But the things they say do not interest him and their Indian way of life means nothing to him. He detests the way they hold onto Indian traditions and functions that are of no importance to his American Mind. He hates it when his parents whisk them off to Calcutta, a place the couple still considers home, for months together disrupting his entire schedule. In spite of his early sojourns to Calcutta, he does not feel bound to India as they are.

Jhumpa Lahiri has been very successful in presenting this aspect of diaspora from her first hand experience. Modernity and globalization have acted as catalysts to the contours of diaspora and raised several contentious issues. Diaspora in the post colonial context embodies various concepts as transnationalism, hybridity, multiculturalism and essential identity. The effects of which have been painted by the novelists in ‘The Namesake’ as very unfortunately parents of Gogol fail to understand him, though they do try very hard to give him the best of both worlds by religiously celebrating every American and Indian holiday. But the host of Bengali acquaintances he meets at these gathering tends to put him off and distances him further.

The same kind of sentiments have been explored by John Maxwell Coetzee, in his novel ‘Slow Man’, which captures the impact of globalization and diaspora as it grapples with the eventuality of a
multicultural society. Like ‘The Namesake’ the book ‘Slow Man’ explores the isolation of an alienated immigrant individual in a hostile host land. Sadly, there is hardly any genuine emotion depicted in the parent-child relationship and this makes the book seem a little unreal. There are a few poignant moments that involve Ashoke and Gogol, but beyond that the feelings seem to be lost in the humdrum of daily lives. None of the characters have much to grieve about in their comfortable lives, but it seems as if the environment is one of the cheerlessness and permanent mourning. Ashima, for one is a perpetually depressed character that goes through the motions of life without any enthusiasm. Is she sad because she misses her country? Is she sad because her relationship with her husband is not what she hoped it would be? Does the family never do fun things together? The novelist never tells her readers. Ashima is like an objective correlative for Jhumpa Lahiri to unfold the experiences of an uprooted person who is very deeply rooted to her past experiences at the native land. For being a foreigner, Ashima is beginning to realize, is a sort of lifelong pregnancy. A perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sort. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that the previous life has vanished, being a foreigner, Ashima belief is something that elicits the same curiosity from strangers, the same combination of pity and respect. Despite some articulation, Ashima is in fact in the
condition of an expatriate in the sense of Bharti Mukherjee, one of the first leading Indian American writers uses the term. In her ‘Introduction to Darkness’, a collection of short fictions, she differentiates the ‘expatriates’ from the ‘immigrants’. Immigration according to her has ‘exuberance’. Immigrant experience is a series of reincarnations, deaths of earlier experiences followed by rebirths full of promise. She hails immigrant Indianness as:

“A set of fluid identities to be celebrated”.27

Expatriation on the other hand is a sort of static state, it is a refusal to be amalgamated into the new society. An expatriate considers his or her stay in the new country as a temporary matter and looks back to the home country for emotional sustenance. Both Ashoke and Ashima at the moment are therefore not in a position of ‘exuberance’. Jhumpa Lahiri very systematically depicts that between 1968 and 2000, Ashoke and Ashima make progress regarding their relation with the U.S but they mainly have not been able to move beyond the Indian frame of mind. While at Cambridge they have been paired as neophytes (particularly Ashima) unable to settle down mentally. When they moved to small University town outside Boston, Ashoke was particularly aggregating to the academic space and through it to the national space. He got a new office.
“With his name etched on to a strip of black plastic by the door”\textsuperscript{28}

And his name was printed under faculty in the University directory. These are in a way official affirmation on one who in a certain way belongs. One way of finding connectedness is to purchase a house which becomes a symbol of belonging. Gangulis too purchased a house at the Pemberton Road in a white neighbourhood with residents like the Johnsons, the Metrons, the Aspris and the Hills which is indication enough of their acceptance in the secular civil space. In the end they decide on a shingled two-story colonial in a recently built development, a house previously occupied by no one, erected on a quarter acre of land.

“This is a small patch of America to which they lay claim.”\textsuperscript{29}

By and by in a very calculated tone Jhumpa Lahiri pictures forth their ties with the ancestral land begin to weaken.

“As their lives in New England swell with fellow Bengali friends, the numbers of that other, former life, those who know Ashima and Ashoke not by their good names but as Monu and Mitu slowly dwindle”.\textsuperscript{30}

They are therefore forced by the circumstances of their lives to distance themselves from the endearing family and community back home. They slowly but surely allow themselves to move towards a hybrid cultural
location. Towards the end of the novel Ashima’s change has been summarized in the following way:

“She has learned to do things on her own, and though she still wears saris, still puts her long hair in a bun, she is not the same Ashima who had once lived in Calcutta. She will return to India with an American passport. In her wallet will remain her Massachusetts driver’s license, her social security card”.

Lahiri delves very deeply and richly into the lives of immigrants. Though immigrants may be the stories protagonists, their doubts, insecurities, losses and heartbreaks belong to one and all. Very less authors have mined so perfectly the secrets of the human heart. Lahiri’s gift to the book lovers is gorgeous prose that bestows greatness on life’s mundane events and activities. Lahiri handles her character without leaving any fingerprints. She allows them to grow as if unguided, as if she were accompanying them rather than training them through the espalier of her narration. With her modulated prose she explores a full range of relationship among her subjects. Her novel certainly makes a contribution to the literature of immigration, but it also takes its rightful place with modernist story from whatever culture in which characters find themselves doomed to try and fail to only connect. But it is her exploration of lost love and lost loved ones that gives her novel and
stories an emotional exactitude; few writers could ever hope to match up with.

**The Silver screen adaptation of ‘The Namesake’: The theatre and the pocket theatre**

In the field of the creative expression, stage and screens should not be seen apart from the creating writing. Writing is an essential for both theatres and cinema- the term scriptwriter is suggestive. Although literature and film are two very different mediums and when a successful literary work is adapted successfully on celluloid, cinematic consideration of various kind have to be made. The novels have been very aptly described as “the pocket theatre” and at the same time they have the advantage of keeping readers involved for a considerable period of time. Movies have only a couple of hours or so to keep viewers engrossed while sustaining the willing suspension of disbelief in the minds of the movie-goers. On the other hand, a film has advantage of visuals and music that impact the mind and stay in the memory for a long time fulfilling the Aristotelian requirement of spectacle and song in style in modern days with the help of state-of-art modern equipments. Since the media are different, most of the time it is not an easy task to say – whether a book or its silver screen adaptation is better. As far as the question of ‘The Namesake’ as a film is concerned, though not exactly
like the work of fiction by Lahiri, Mira Nair’s film is still a faithful representation of the novel. The difference between two medium of expression has good reasons to substantiate the causes of the reason. Fundamentally, the book and the movie both delve deeply and richly into the same topic of displacement and the crisis and creation of identity while having the lives of immigrants as the plot of the novel and the film both. The movie, for the most part, is true to the narrative of the novel. It is merely incidental that in the movie Ashoke and Ashima, the male and female lead respectively, come to New York instead of Boston, as the Queensberry Bridge over the East River in New York and Howrah Bridge over the river Hooghly in Calcutta cinematically connect the two cities and thereby bring in the comparison and contrast of two different cultures. While the film opens with Ashoke Ganguli’s train accident and progresses linearly with his arranged marriage to Ashima and their migration to the US, the book opens with the impending birth of Gogol and then flashes back to narrate Ashoke’s train’s accident and his marriage with Ashima. The book informs the reader about how Ashoke was miraculously rescued from the accident site very early in the story even though Gogol comes to know about it much later. Interestingly, the film keeps the viewers in the dark about how Ashoke was rescued until the moment when Gogol learns of it also. Thus, when Ashoke, looking at his newly born child remarks that his rescue from the shattered train was
the first miracle of his life and Gogol’s birth is the second miracle, it does not cause as much impact as the written words of the book do.

The book by Jhumpa Lahiri is dense in detail yet many incidents that are explained in the book naturally do not find place in the silver screen adaptation. For instance, the movie does not relate anything about Montgomerys, who were the first neighbours of Ashoke and Ashima in the US and with whom they share a washing machine. This omission very intelligently occasions Ashima’s visit to a seamy launderette and her realization that woolens shrink in a washing machine. This seemingly good-for-nothing event leads to an endearing scene between the husband and the wife depicting how the newlyweds find each other’s company comforting in an alien land. But this added scene comes at the cost of the interactions with the Montgomerys, as Americans must be Christian, when in fact they are Buddhist, and where Judy Montgomery mistakenly assumes that Gangulis, being Indians, are vegetarians, though they are not.

The growth of Gogol occurs at an unhurried pace in novel, but due to obvious time constraints, the movie had to leave out a few vital incidents in Gogol’s life. One such important incident is when Ashima lifts the baby Gogol high over her head and a stream of undigested milk regurgitates from the kid’s mouth into Ashima’s open mouth. This
incident throws light on a new aspect of mother-son relationship, emphasizing unseen ties that bind a family. Instead, much of Gogol’s life in the movie revolves around his romance with Maxine and his failed marriage with Moushumi. His other romantic tales with Kim and Ruth are not included in the film script. Similarly, Moushumi’s relationship and break-up with Graham is only cursorily mentioned in the film whereas the novel offers details of the relationship, thereby garnering greater sympathy for her character. However, given the number of episodes in the characters’ lives the movies does touch upon, it seems rather absurd to demand for more exposition or for greater depth.

The death of the male lead Ashoke is pivotal in both the medium of expression i.e in the novel and the film. In the book, son of Ashoke, Gogol becomes aware of the significance of his connection to the author, Nikolai Gogol; as an adolescent beginning to seek autonomy from his family, and from an early age begins to resent his namesake. In the film, Ashoke does not tell his son about his rescue from the train accident until shortly before his death, at that time revealing the impact in his life of the expatriate Russian author and the true reason behind his son’s name. Perhaps this is why the film does not end with Gogol retrieving the short stories of Nikolai Gogol, gifted to him long ago by his father Ashoke, and finally reading its first story, ‘The overcoat’. The movie conjures another
episode at the end, to show Ashima back in Calcutta, the homeland, practicing Indian classical vocal.

No doubt, ‘The Namesake’ is an extremely well written novel by Jhumpa Lahiri. Very realistically the book makes one realize and understand both immigrant families and first generation American born people as well. The book is written very exquisitely with just enough detail to keep one’s attention not go astray. The movie, despite various variances, is craftily made. Like the novel, it very faithfully renders what it set out to explore the universal themes in two worlds. A tribute to Satyajit Ray and Ritwik Ghatak, as the credit title suggest, the silver screen adaption of the novel is not the run-of-the mill cliché –ridden diaspora stuff with lots of melodrama. There is no doubt that it has been influenced by the aforementioned masters’ standard of film-making that Mira Nair very successfully negotiates such a daunting proposition is proof of her talent. The scene in the movie, where Ashima looks through pier glass window at the lonely figure of Ashoke walking through the snow to work very realistically, speaks volumes for the depiction of state of alienation in a foreign land that hundreds of words might fail to deliver. Similarly, when Ashima steps into Ashoke’s shoes, the low-angle shots of Ashima in her would-be husband’s shoes aptly display her clandestine pleasure associated with matrimony. Very often when the
literary medium puts up a challenge, the aid comes in music from Bauls and Bhatiali and Bollywood and Blues; and visuals too do wonder in the scenes when the narrative pauses at the time when the Ganguli family visits the Taj Mahal. The most realistic scene of the Howrah station, Ghosh’s voice urging Ashoke to go abroad, and Ashoke’s enigmatic presence even after his death generously compensate for any miniscule flaw. Over all it is Mira Nair’s wonderful direction, accompanied by competent acting from Irrfan Khan as Ashoke, Tabu as Ashima, Kal Penn as Gogol, Jacinda Barrett as Maxine, Zuleikha Robinson as Moushumi and many other wonderful talents that make this critically acclaimed film memorable and grand success.

‘REVOLUTION 2020’

With the publication of the fifth novel, Chetan Bhagat has successfully counted up to five. He loves numbers, earlier being a banker, as he started from ‘five’ in his first novel ‘Five Point Some One’ then in an act of jumbled counting he goes straight to ‘One’ in ‘One Night @ the Call Center’. Lets say some superstition or something, he cannot go to ‘Two’ after ‘One’ as his next novel has number ‘Three’ as the title was ‘Three Mistakes of My life’ where ‘three’ has got to do nothing in the story or the plot of the novel. It appears as if he used this number for the love of numbers only. Bhagat’s next novel has number ‘Two’ in his ‘Two States
of my marriage life’ and his fifth novel has two, ‘Twos’ numerologically making it ‘Four’ therefore, Bhagat has written five novels while using number ‘One’ to ‘Five’ in each of them.

The title of the latest novel has some commercial thinking in the back drop. Mr. Bhagat, in fact, does nothing without commercial thinking, as some artists do for the sake of art sometimes, at least once, in their life. One can remember the title very easily as 20-20 format of cricket is very popular and Ex-president of India Hon’ble A.P.J. Abul Kalam has used and popularized the some digits in one of his works as title. And in order to sell something, the popular and common brand name may be of great help. Unlike Chetan Bhagat’s first three novels, ‘Revolution 2020’ has a clear cut plot, which can be stated in one line as the ‘sacrifice of Gopal for the betterment of Aarti who was soul of his soul’. Though the plot has been unfolded by the novelist in a suprising manner. It is not very clear from the beginning of the novel as Gopal the male lead of the novel takes the help of wine to plunge himself in the forgetfulness. As it cannot be anticipated in part of any one that he or she would resort to wine after having done a grand and noble deed like sacrificing in love.

‘Revolution 2020’ is the story of three childhood friends Gopal, Raghav and Aarti. Though Gopal does not appear to fit in the school
where he has been painted studying, as the school appears to meant for the wards of rich and affluent as Aarti is the daughter of the DM of Varanasi and Raghav belongs to a well to do family, where as Gopal, considering his unsubstantial financial background, is a mere nobody among the trio. Gopal’s character is perhaps the best portrayed character of the story. His feelings, his emotions, his ambitions and his frustrations – really make the reader live the character. Aarti’s character is surprisingly strange. Her keeps-on-revolving-love make her character unlikable at times. Raghav’s character is perhaps one which only exists in Utopian world, but has been narrated well. His passion for bringing a change in the system is really well described by the author. The story gets back its touch in the climax. The sacrifice made by Gopal is really something which deserves appreciation. The final plot of the story gives a good feeling to the readers and connects the dots of the story as well. The narration style, the language used, the almost tangible romance, the plot and the depth in the characterization all add so much value to the story. We find ourselves carried on by the immense skill of the author in layering his story. Emotions have been portrayed subtly and the entire feel and flow of the story is extremely contemporary.

Chetan Bhagat also lies with the understanding of women and their nature. By design women are complex and confused. They contradict
themselves and the author has their pulse. This helps strongly when he adds depth to the female lead in his story.

Through this story Chetan Bhagat has asked the reader of the book to take the shelter of “willing suspension of disbelief” as the most of the schools in India have not yet started giving reservation for 25% of their seats to the students of the lower strata of society or economically backward. The story is narrated by Gopal therefore remains one dimensional throughout. The novel takes off in typical Chetan Bhagat’s style. The author himself comes to the fore to listen to the story of the protagonist, reminding the reader the novel has the similar beginning like that of ‘Three Mistakes’ and ‘One Night’ strata wise, the novel has the characters from almost every strata of society except that of industrialist. Gopal comes from a filmy Indian middle class background. Raghav is from an almost well to do family, Aarti comes from a kind of bureaucratic and political family. There are more people from political background like Shuklaji, the MLA and unnamed C.M. There are people from academic background and goons in form of recovery agents working under the prominence of politicians. The story revolves around the narrator Gopal as he shares his experiences with the author. Gopal, Raghav and Aarti have their own ambition in life. Gopal wants to be a rich man, Raghav wants to change the world and Aarti wants to become an air hostess. Gopal and Raghav
are school mates from the childhood and share the same bench in school and share the same girl as their girl friend, though for the most of the part Aarti loves Raghav. However, Gopal claims that

“Imagine every Sadhu and priest in Varanasi more than all their devotion put together, that’s how much I loved her”  

These lines of Gopal reminds the lines of Hamlet, where Hamlet explains his love for Ophelia beyond any match.

“I loved Ophelia, forty thousand brothers could not with all their quantity of love, make up my sum”  

May be Chetan Bhagat has started reading classics.

Gopal, the son of a retired school teacher, ridden with debt and litigation was bound to fall head first and hard in love with the daughter of the District Magistrate from the importunate day he decided to steal a slab of the chocolate cake she had brought in her tiffin box for lunch. The unmatched friendship, between rich and poor like Bollywood movies of 70s and 80s, that started through the hapless incident by and by took its own meandering course over the Ganga, over a number of improbable and impractical boat rides and unspoken ballads of love one sided, of course. The characters of Aarti is painted as an ambiguous girl, though the daughter of a DM she appears to be quite insecure for she underwent
the course of Air Hostess and later on joins a Five Star Hotel as caretaker of hospitality part. She was not only the daughter of DM but her grandfather was the CM of the state and she has been painted by the novelist seeking her love interest between two non-descript youth, friends from her school days. Character wise Aarti is not unlike the female characters of the first three novels of Chetan Bhagat, who very easily compromise with the situation in order to indulge herself in physical pleasure. If the novels of Chetan Bhagat should be considered as the realistic document of time and society it would be hard to locate a person in present day with the qualities of truth and honour.

Aarti, the insecure one, gropes for the possibilities. Her character and her dealing with Raghav and Gopal remind the Eighteenth century coquette Belinda, from ‘The rape of the lock’ by Alexander Pope:

“Favors to none, to all her smile she extends,

Off she rejects but never once she offends.

Bright as the sun, her egos the gazers strike,

And like the sun, they shine on all alike.

If to her share some female errors may fall,

Look on her face, and you will forget than all.”35
Where Aarti sees that Raghav, the ideal youth, has managed to secure a seat in a prestigious Engineering college, she roots for him. But never she drops Gopal as a reserve option. She appears to always be a good friend of Gopal but after the death of Gopal’s father when the lady luck shines on Gopal and he tastes the ultimate materialistic success as an owner and the Director of a massive Engineering college, she doesn’t hesitate to adopt Gopal as his prospective groom.

After the failure in getting through JEE and AIEEE exams, Gopal is forced by his father to repeat the exam next year. For that reason Gopal was forced to stay at Kota: the Gateway of JEE and AIEEE; by his father, who for this purpose, further, increases the pile of debt on his head. Chetan Bhagat describes the life of a struggling student in Kota, where initial few days are like hell before the final settlement at the place. The search for coaching centers, lodging and boarding, the kind of students who land at Kota, every thing, have been described by Chetan Bhagat with minute detail.

Chetan Bhagat includes the name of the maximum possible number of cities in this book. Raipur, Bhopal, Luknow, Varanasi, Indore, Kota, Allahabad and the names of other cities come every now and then in the pages of the novel. It may be a kind of marketing strategy in part of the novelist because a reader from a particular place loves to come across
with the name of his native city. And the sale of the novel must have increased multiple times with the inclusion of the name and description of the Kota city as almost every students in India studying in class 10th must have pondered over going to Kota and thousand of students physically stay there to crack Medicinal and Engineering entrance exam. As Mr. Bhagat does not do any thing without commercial consideration the inclusion of the names like Bansal, Career point, Resonance along with Kota may have helped the writer in making some money. It is like that of using a certain brand of potato chips by a popular Bollywood heroine in some scenes of a movie, thereby helping the financial cause of the producer of the movie. However, the description of the ‘psyche of an aspirant’ in Kota by Bhagat is a very pleasant experience to read.

The life of a student in Kota may have brought the thought of changing the entrance examination pattern in the mind of Hon’ble HRD minister. Chetan Bhagat writes about a day in the life of an aspiring student in Kota:

“I could call myself a true Kota. It's a month into moving there like thousands of other students; my life now had a rhythm. Career Path resembled a school but without the fun bits. Nobody made noise in class, played pranks on one another or thought of bunking classes.
After all everyone had come here by choice and had paid a big price to be here. We had three to four classes a day, which started in the afternoon, in theory, this allowed the current class XII students to attend school in the morning; in reality the class XII students never went to school. Career Path had an agreement with a cooperative CBSE school, which had a flexible attendance policy. It was rumored that the CBSE School received a handsome kickback from Career Path for the cooperation extended.

I hated the brutal Career Path schedule at first lectures started at two in the afternoon and went on until nine in the evening. After that the students rushed home to eat dinner, and do the ‘daily practices sheets’ a set of ten problems based on the current lesson. I usually finished by midnight after a few hours of sleep I would wake up and prepare for the next days classes. In between, I did household chores, such as washing clothes and shopping for essentials. I went along with the madness, not so much because of the zeal to prepare, but more
because I wanted to keep my self busy. I did not want Kota’s loneliness to kill me.”

The students are given various categories based on their performance. The novelist gives humorous detail of a special class of the student.

“The top twenty students in every class test received royal treatment. They were called Gems, a title still elusive to me. Gems stood for ‘Group of Extra Meritorious Students’. Gems comprised for ultra gees who prefer solving physics problems to having sex, and for whom fun meant memorizing the periodic table.”

And in Kota, People have no other consideration; it is a mad race. Either one is in or out. The writer gives words to a very realistic sentiments of youth trying hard to do the impossible.

“We don’t have a home we are like people stuck in outer space. No home, no school, no college, no body only Kota.”

Himself a fighter, who successfully have cracked the code of JEE, Chetan Bhagat gives advice to his readers on how to get through the exams. It may be a piece of advice to those who are fighting, from the author of course, and it may enable one to give advice to those who are fighting therefore the book ‘Revolution 2020’ is useful for one and all. The very realistic piece of advice by the author is quoted here:
“Grip yes, that’s the word. The trick to these entrance exams is that you have to get a grip on them; youth need a game plan, what are your strong subject which are your weak ones? Are you working with the teachers on the weak areas? Are you tracking your progress on the make tests? Are you thinking about nothing but the exam all day? Do you eat your meals and take your bath as far as possible so that you have more time to study. If your answer is ‘Yes’ to all these questions, that’s when you can say you have a grip. That’s the only way to have a shot at a seat of courses, you could one of those naturally talented students who need to have to study much but most of us are not, courtesy our parents mediocre genes take the longest time to understand that their child is not Einstein clone.”

Bhagat’s refection on the coaching system that forms the first check-in point at the pearly gate of technical higher learning is not just tongue-in check but a dark sensor of the reality for students who leave their homes to try hard repeatedly for a course that is mercilessly fabricated to eliminate the weakest. As the plot of the novel takes Gopal, Raghav and Aarti to the depths of desperation, love, ambition and crushing disappointment; the novelist very realistically tries to reflect the
state of India’s private education that is not just the lifeblood but sometimes the only hope for millions of students from small town and villages turning their bright eyes at an assured and uplifting future. ‘Revolution 2020’ can be seen as an attempt to bring to the fore the inherent corruption rooted in India’s education system and to bring out the anomaly of non-profit organizations and commercialization of education. The role of politicians who are not very literate but still holds the courage of opening an insatiate of higher education has been comically depicted by the author. Shuklaji, the MLA said:

“If we had a straightforward and clean system, these professors would open their own colleges, blue chip compares and software firms could open college. The system is twisted; they don’t want to touch it, that is where we come in.”

“The people involved in opening the colleges may have never been to a college, but they have guts to run one that’s why the author says “stupid people go to college smart people own them”

The description of job fair, where brothers who have fallen apart, compete to market their own private colleges is a laugh out loud moment from the book. People offering seats in their colleges like hawkers selling bananas in street throw light on the mushrooming of private engineering colleges.
The admission process comes to an end with a kind of comic pandemonium.

“Mahesh returned with three people who resembled bollywood thugs. Apparently they were faculty. They started to rip out all the hoardings of the chitunal stall; Jyoti ordered his own security men to fight them.

As I tried to escape one of Shri Ganesh’s goons pushed me. I fell face down and landed on a wooden table covered in a white sheet. It had a protruding nail that cut my cheek. Blood covered one side of my face. Sweat drops appeared on my forehead. I had finally given blood and sweat to study?”

Revolution part of ‘Revolution 2020’

As a realistic piece of compositing, ‘Revolution 2020’ offers nothing unusual or novel in rivalry between two friends vying for the affection of a girl. The fiery out of the way activism of Raghav who wants to bring about a change in society through journalism, despite having graduated as an engineer, is a diversion from the despondency of Gopal’s story, which is stronger and more rooted in real life. The character of Raghav can be described as the rarest of the rare ideal
characters from the novels of Chetan Bhagat, as all most all his characters do not show the idealism of traditional kind. Though a resident of a holy city, Varanasi who follows the path of an ideal social activist Raghav does not mind to have a girl friend with whom he may have casual sexual relationship. Chetan Bhagat never paints a guy with noble attributes with character intact as if satisfaction of physical need has become the top most priority of young generation that doesn’t care the loss of virginity even for a dead rat.

Raghav comes out with his thoughts of social change in his article ‘Because Enough is Enough’. Raghav writes :

“*What do you say about a society whose top leaders are the biggest crooks? What do you do in a system where almost anyone with power is corrupt? India has suffered enough. From childhood we are told India is a poor country. Why? There are countries in this world where an average person makes more than fifty times than an average Indian makes. Fifty times? Are their people really fifty times more capable than us? Does an Indian farmer not work hard? Does an Indian student not study? Do we not want to do well? Why, are we then deemed to be poor. Shut down*
everything, until things are fixed, when young people
will leave their classes and office and come on to the
streets, when Indian will get justice and the guilty will
be punished.

And it will all begin in Varanasi. For that
reason we bring you Revolution 2020.”

It all starts with a bang but in the name of “Revolution” Chetan
Bhagat promises no new solution. And a man trained as an engineer is not
doing the job of engineer instead of a journalist is a corrupt person
himself. So how can he talk of bringing change to the society and the
system?

Bhagat’s idea and description of people’s revolution is not just
naive but also incomplete and the reader is left wondering till the end,
what exactly the nature of it will be if at all it happens. Given that this
central theme is the surmise of the book, the idea of ‘Revolution 2020’
deserved more time and better indulgence instead of being relegated to a
few chapters in the end. The murky world of politics and manipulative
journalism is tackled with an outsider’s viewpoint and lacks sincere
research and depth. Similarly, the ending of the novel is unnecessarily
vague, clearly inspired by Bollywood family dramas of 90’s where the
antagonist-protagonist has a change of heart, gives up the girl in the
corniest situation possible and drinks himself silly as the narrator weaves a life story into a three hour long emotional wringer. The novel disappoints simply because a lot is expected from an author who is said to have not just nudged millions of youngsters from their iPod into reading, but also given a face to the average Indian students buried under parental expectations.
References

6. In an interview published by Houghton Mifflin company
7. Ibid-7
9. Lahiri, Jhumpa, Namesake, 157; Ch 6
10. Lahiri, Jhumpa, Namesake-151
14. In an interview published by Hougton Miffin company

15. Lahiri Jhumpa, The Namesake, 24


17. Kasun Genna Welsh, Womanism and the Fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri, A theisis submitted to the University of Vermont, May 2009 P.No.8

18. Lahiri, Jhumpa, The Namesake-1

19. Lahiri, Jhumpa, The Namesake, 15

20. Lahiri, Jhumpa, The Namesake, 286


22. Lahiri, Jhumpa, The Namesake, 276


24. Ibid-70


26. Vishwanathan, Nishi, Chillibreeze writer

27. Mukherjee, Bharti, ‘Introduction to Darkness, New York: Fawcett crest, 1985 xii-xvi
28. The Namesake-48
30. Ibid- 63
31. Ibid-276
32. Prasad B, A Background to the study of English Literature
33. Revolution 2020, page No.-07
34. Hamlet, William Shakespeare, Act V scene I 261-264
35. Alexander Pope,Rape of the Lock, canto II, 10-18
36. Revolution 2020 : 65
37. Revolution 2020- 68
38. Ibid : 69
39. Ibid : 81-82
40. Revolution 2020-166
41. Revolution2020-120
42. Revolution 2020
43. Revolution2020-115