

**REPUPLIC OF TURKEY**  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF YÜZÜNCÜ YIL**  
**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**ALIENATION IN *THE NAMESAKE* BY JHUMPA LAHIRI**

**POST-GRADUATE THESIS**

**A.VAHAP SÖNMEZ**

**VAN -2014**

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**VAN -2014**

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## ABSTRACT

Alienation is an unavoidable aspect of modern life. Nevertheless, it is as old as human beings. The analysis of the interaction between the two sides (the oppressors and the oppressed) sheds lights on the emergence of alienation and the ways it exists. Postcolonial authors try to explain this relationship through novels and short stories. A daughter of an immigrant couple, Jhumpa Lahiri is one of these postcolonial writers. *The Namesake*, her first novel, skillfully reflects the situation of the diaspora and the feeling of alienation through its Bengali immigrant couple and their son, Gogol. Lahiri carries out certain types of alienation through her characters' life adventures: Gogol's alienation as becoming Nikhil and then embracing his Bengali identity exemplify both Fichte's triad and Hegel's dialectical process. Characters from *The Namesake* experience alienation as powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement. Moreover, there is a slight hint of Feuerbach's alienation in the novel. It is also possible to find examples of existential alienation. The main interest of this thesis is to examine the theme of alienation and how it manifests itself in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* by considering Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Albert Camus and M. Seeman's approaches to the term of alienation in the light of postcolonialism.

**Key Words:** Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake*, alienation, colonialism, postcolonialism.

## ÖZET

Yabancılaşma modern hayatın kaçınılmaz bir özelliğidir. Yine de o, insanoğluyula yaşittir. Ezen ve ezilen arasındaki etkileşimin incelenmesi yabancılaşmanın doğuşu ve varlığını devam ettirme yöntemlerine ışık tutar. Post-kolonyel yazarlar roman ve kısa hikayeler aracılığıyla bu etkileşimi açıklamaya çalışırlar. Göçmen bir çiftin kızı olan Jhumpa Lahiri, bu tür post-kolonyel yazarlardan biridir. Onun ilk romanı olan *Adaş*, kendi ülkesinden uzak yaşama durumunu ve yabancılaşma duygusunu Bengalili çift ve oğulları Gogol aracılığıyla etkili bir biçimde yansıtmaktadır. Lahiri bazı yabancılaşma çeşitlerini karakterlerinin yaşam serüvenlerini kullanarak gerçekleştirmektedir: Gogol'un Nikhil olarak yabancılaşması ve daha sonra Bengali kültürünü kucaklaması hem Fichte'nin üçlemesini hem de Hegel'in diyalektik sürecini örneklemektedir. *Adaş*'taki karakterler yabancılaşmayı güçsüzlük, anlamsızlık, normsuzluk ve öz yabancılaşma olarak yaşarlar. Bunlara ilaveten, Feuerbach'ın yabancılaşmasını belirten küçük bir ima da mevcuttur. Varoluşçu felsefenin yabancılaşma tanımına uygun örnekler de bulmak mümkün. Bu tezin temel amacı yabancılaşma temasını ve bu temanın Jhumpa Lahiri'nin *Adaş* adlı romanında dışavurum şeklini sömürgecilik sonrası dönem ışığında Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Albert Camus ve M. Seeman'ı dikkate alarak incelemektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Jhumpa Lahiri, *Adaş*, yabancılaşma, sömürgecilik, sömürgecilik sonrası.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First of all, I would like particularly to thank my supervisor Assist. Prof. Mehmet Recep TAŞ for his professional guidance, his encouragements and insight throughout the research. Also I am deeply indebted to him for his psychological support. I also would like to thank Assist. Prof. Memet Metin BARLIK and Assist. Prof. Aydin GÖRMEZ, who are the members of the jury, for their guidance, advice, and criticisms.

I would like to thank many people who supported me both mentally and emotionally. Here, my sincere thanks are to my wife who believed in and encouraged me to conclude this study.

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## INTRODUCTION

Human beings' history comes into existence with either negative or positive involvements. Each involvement either confirms or disturbs the flow of the history. However, it is an undeniable fact that the negative involvements, i.e. whatever disturbs human beings' conformity accelerates the development of human-beings in their race for a wealthier, more comfortable and peaceful world. One of these disturbing aspects is alienation.

Alienation is an inseparable characteristic of human beings. It is the reason and the ultimate result of each step human beings take. It can be said, "The history of man could very well be written as a history of the alienation of man." (Kahler 43) Alienation is a process the results of which are the reasons for a new start. Alienation is also a term on which there is no consensus about either its definition or its results. Idealists and existentialists consider the term of alienation as positive. Materialists regard it as negative, however. Whatever their approaches to the term of alienation are, they are all aware of the vitality the term of alienation accommodates.

Seizing the importance of the term, philosophers tried to locate the starting point of alienation. The dismissing of Eva and Adam from the Paradise, Plato's cave or the emergence of the hegemony, whatever the precursor event of alienation is, it is the core of the human beings' intellectual inquiry.

There are several reasons for emergence of alienation but this thesis will bring the ones related to colonialism and postcolonialism into the forefront. Thus, in order to clarify postcolonial motives behind the term of alienation, the start and the process of both colonialism and postcolonialism are going to be explained in details.

The struggles between even two people to be a leader and lead the other can be assumed as the first conflicts for power. With the development in social and military means, the conflicts for control brought about conquering new lands. Therefore, battles divided the

conflicting powers into two opposite categories: the conqueror and the conquered. The battles for conquest were quite simple without any ideological motivations backing up. However, with the addition of religious motives to the battles, they gained a holy mission: to change a group of people into what the conqueror fought for. Thus, the series of battles were not just for conquering a land but either to eradicate the indigenous because of their religion or to make them to tergiversate. In addition to tergiversation, the need for spices, raw material, exotic food and markets to buy or sell things were other reasonable motives of wars. By introduction of these motives into war's reasons, the simple conqueror and conquered varied into colonizer/colonized, oppressor/oppressed, central/periphery and Orient /Occident.

When the West advanced in technical meaning especially in transportation such as ocean-passing ships, they try to find raw materials to manufacture or clean some lands to create new settlement places. Portugal and Spain were the first Europeans to colonize the exotic places. Then England and France involved in the rush for exploitation. Meanwhile advance in machinery changed the economic means of colonies from mercantilism into industrialization. The rise of industry brought with itself a more complicated colonization.

With the enlightenment in the Centre, the colonizers continued colonization under the guise of civilizing the East because the West regarded the periphery as uncivilized, primitive and ugly. Binary oppositions enabled the colonizers to occupy, set up settlements and rule the virgin lands under the guise of rearing, educating and humanizing brutal and barbaric indigenous people.

At the beginning of colonialism, the indigenous people were made to leave their places and live in the Centers as either slaves or indentured workers. Then, they willingly moved to the imperial centers for better life conditions, education or because of political reasons. Whatever the reasons were, they felt the sense of being uprooted. The flow of people from underdeveloped and developing countries to the developed ones are still common because of same reasons except from slavery. People still experience the same feelings: displacement and alienation.

The torturing feeling of displacement stems mostly from the lack of the physical country just like a baby's leaving the womb. A new-born baby's displacement reveals itself throughout life of immigrants because, as Dr. Amit Shankar Saha says, "Since by birth human beings are exiled from the womb; one's home, one's family, one's country, one's culture and so on stand as metaphorical imagery of that natal refuge."(25) It is a bit easy for a baby to adapt to his/her new world but the first generation immigrants experience the feeling of being outsiders and the sense of alienation because their displaced values lose ground against hegemonic values and life style. Thus, they develop two identities and carry these identities out in different places: their values at home (family environment) and the hegemonic values in public. The diaspora's efforts to keep the balance between the two opposite culture generally fail and the in-between individuals become estranged both from society and themselves, which is the main theme of postcolonial literary production.

As to postcolonial literature, it took much time to develop. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the decolonization process started but it was after the Second World War when the process gained pace. The indigenous people's interest and wish for the authenticity gave way to the rise of postcolonial literature. Postcolonial literature created an intellectual area for the colonized to express themselves. The postcolonial writers either in exile, migrants or living in their own country try to picture the diaspora in a multicultural postcolonial world where imperialism keeps on taking advantage from them.

Those authors who are the diaspora or write about the diaspora try to depict the experiences of immigrants' alienation stemming from displacement.

A daughter of an immigrant couple, Jhumpa Lahiri is one of these postcolonial writers. *The Namesake*, her first novel, skillfully reflects the situation of the diaspora and the feeling of alienation through its Bengali immigrant couple and their son, Gogol. Although Bengali couple experience estrangement because of displacement, Gogol is influenced by insults, and shame because of his name. He and Moushumi develop a sense of hate toward their cultures. Lahiri carries out certain types of alienation through her characters' life adventures. Gogol's alienation as becoming Nikhil and then embracing his Bengali identity

exemplify both Fichte's triad and Hegel's dialectical process. Characters from *The Namesake* experience alienation as powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement. Moreover, there is a slight hint of Feuerbach's alienation in the novel.

The main interest of this thesis is to examine the theme of alienation and how it manifests itself in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* by considering Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Albert Camus and M. Seeman's approaches to the term of alienation in the light of postcolonialism. To achieve this, I have separated my thesis into three chapters.

In the first chapter, I will shed light on colonialism and postcolonialism in separate parts. In colonialism, I will write about the process of colonization chronologically starting from the exploitations of Portugal and Spain to the decolonization movement at the beginning of twentieth century. Then I will concentrate on the definition of postcolonialism and then the emergence of the postcolonial literature and its characteristics.

In the second chapter I will give a brief account of alienation and then I will examine idealist philosophers, Fichte and Hegel; materialists, Feuerbach and Marx; and existentialists, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre and Albert Camus one by one. Then I will write about Seeman's fivefold classification of alienation.

In the third chapter, I will give information about Jhumpa Lahiri and then I will summarize the *The Namesake*. Then I will analyze the novel under five parts: Triad of Fichte in *The Namesake*, Hegel's alienation in *The Namesake*, existentialist alienation in *The Namesake*, Melvin Seeman's fivefold classification of alienation in *The Namesake* and Feuerbach's alienation in *The Namesake*. In the end, I will summarize the analyses in the third chapter.

## **CHAPTER I**

## INTRODUCTION TO COLONIALISM AND POSTCOLONIALISM

The appearance of human beings on the earth brought with itself the quarrel for the control of one person or a group of people over the others psychologically, politically or economically. For the sake of control, there had been many destructive wars between conflicting powers. Although at each stage of history, there has been a winner, the conquerors' rule never last much longer.

Through the history of colonialism with the advance in technology and globalization, the means of power and quest for power have varied. Although the first quarrels were believed to be done by stones and simple sharp materials, in the Middle Ages, the means of war shifted to gunpowder that enabled more destruction and farther distance. Moreover, with the advance in technology, the means of control of colonizers got more; in addition to weapons, cultural elements such as religion and language were used to guarantee the rule of metropolis.

Language and its production, literature, are the most powerful weapons of each nation and its culture. If the “the mother country” manages to use its literature as a means of control tactfully and apply it to the periphery under the guise of a notion that the periphery will respect and even adore to, the process (colonization) will become more successful. England, one of the imperial powers of the time, used this tactic skillfully. The authors of *The Empire Writes Back* say

British administrations, provoked by missionaries on the one hand and fears of native insubordination on the other, discovered the ally in English literature to support them maintaining control of natives under the guise of a liberal education. (qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 3)



England's application of literature in India turned out to be a specific goal with two adhered aspects: the study of English and the growth of empire as stated in *The Empire Writes Back*.

It can be argued that the study of English and the growth of Empire proceeded from a single ideological climate and that the development of one is intrinsically bound up with the development of the other, both at the level of simple utility (as propaganda for instance) and at the conscious level, where it leads to the naturalizing of constructed values (e.g. civilization, humanity, etc.) which, conversely, established 'savagery', 'native', 'primitive', as their antithesis and as the object of a reforming zeal. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 3)

As it is stated in the abstract, by the use of literature as a means of control over the colonized, the center defines them (the colonized) as 'primitive' to justify their application of control over them. Because the civilized nations regard themselves responsible for civilizing the primitive, and literature is one of the tools of civilizing.

The indigenous people become immersed in the imperial culture and an act of mimicry appeared. The mimicry sometimes became so dense that they were "more English than the English" (ibid 4) Mimicry was the result of imperial surveillance. When the colonized sensed the gaze of the colonizers, the indigenous people tried to act in accordance with the master's rules and customs. The more the colonized acted properly; the more value was adhered to them by the colonizers.

Even after the colonized nations got their flag, free land and national anthem, they realized the fact that they were not independent because the colonizer had left a class called comprador who serves the Imperial legacy and capitalist system. Comprador "...was originally used to refer to a local merchant acting as a middle-man between foreign producers and a local market." (ibid 55) However, the usage of this term in Post-Colonial theory is "the term has evolved a broader use, to include the intelligentsia-academics,

creative writers and artists –whose independence may be compromised by reliance on, and identification with, colonial power.”(ibid 55) The rise of this class ensured the existence of imperialism under the guise of independence. Instead of the colonizers, the compradors themselves started exploiting their own people.

Although imperialism and colonialism are used interchangeably, they are different terms. Imperialism requires one nation’s control of other nations economically and in a military sense. Nevertheless, colonialism is just one of the ways of imperialistic attitudes. Imperialism has many ways to control the colonies/ ex-colonies in addition to colonialism. That is why postcolonial nations may not be independent totally despite their flags, free lands and national anthems. With the independence, the postcolonial countries appropriated some means of the once colonizers.

However, the appropriation of the colonizing means of colonizers by the colonized becomes a threatening process for the Empire. Because the Imperial-centered values and tools become degenerated and so, a new entity appears. This is called hybridity. Hybridity in postcolonial literature means “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization.”(Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Key* 118) As it is proclaimed by Homi Bhabha, hybridity is a tool that will eventually weaken the colonizers’ means of power (culture, literature, social and political aspects), which will also weaken the so called superiority of the colonizers. Through this turmoil, both sides of colonization (colonizers and the colonized) suffer. The main source of their suffering is to lose their connection with what they regard as unchangeable reliable rules, customs and their homelands. Going through such a suffering leads to alienation, a term used in many fields from sociology to religion.

Immigrants, the people who suffer from compulsory exile or chose to leave their homeland willingly to work abroad or study in a more sophisticated environment, do not just suffer from physical alienation but it is psychological alienation which disturbs their lives and discourages them from being part of either a melting pot or a salad bowl.

The need to sound these feelings of the diaspora has contributed to the rise of postcolonial literature. Postcolonial literature is the only means of communication through which immigrants can express themselves and the degree of alienation they have experienced. In this chapter, after colonialism and postcolonialism have been explained, postcolonial literature will be described under a different heading.

## I.1-COLONIALISM

Having an instinct for controlling everything surrounding them, human beings have created a history parallel to the act of exploitation and colonialism. Whatever its reasons are, the desire for leading and controlling takes a great part of human beings' efforts. The desire for controlling and exploiting leads to one of the aspects of imperialism, colonialism. According to Ania Loomba, *Oxford English Dictionary* writes:

Colonialism is a settlement in a new country... a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors, as long as the connection with the parent state is kept up. (Loomba 7)

In addition to this definition, Elleke Boehmer says, colonialism is “the ‘settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands.’”( qtd. in McLeod 8) When the both definitions are considered, the elements of colonialism appear: settlement in a new territory, connection with the mother land, exploitation, ruling, invaders and the indigenous people.

There are two kinds of colonies in colonial discourse: Settler colonies and the colonies of occupation. The authors of *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* say, settler colonies or settler invaders are the ones where “..., the invading Europeans (or their descendants) annihilated, displaced and/or marginalized the indigenes to become a majority non-indigenous population,...”( Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 221) On the other hand, the colonies of occupation are ones “where indigenous people remained in the majority but were administered by a foreign power.”(ibid 221)

Although the exact date of colonialism's start is not known, it is known that Roman Empire in the Second Century AD, Mongols in the thirteen century, Aztecs and Inca Empire conquered many parts of the world for economic and strategic use. Some say colonialism got started when "Columbus lands in the America."(Macqueen XVII) In fact, "...colonialism grew organically from a long narrative of European imperial expansion in the post-medieval world, one that began with the Spanish and Portuguese empires which were established in the fifteenth century."(Macqueen XVII)

Despite their religious motivation, the European Crusades to the Middle East regarded a step in development of colonialism towards a more sophisticated one.

With the advance in astrolabe, compass and fast ships, Portugal and Spain reached Asia and America. Both powers signed Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 to take their colonies in different parts of the world under guarantee. This treaty is also an agreement between two European powers on the exploitation of the new world. Portuguese was using the colonies to enlarge her trade or as a way to larger places where she created compradors. On the other hand, Spain was carrying a mission of settlement by pushing the indigenous forward and opening new places for incoming settlers in Central and South America. But, afterwards, with the rise of Britain and France, Spain first lost the rule and then total control of her some colonies. The rule of Portugal colonialism in Asia was handicapped by Holland. Therefore, Portugal shared the same destiny with her once ally, Spain, on the colonialism of the new world.

The decline of Spanish and Portuguese powers gave way to Dutch especially in Asia. The way the Dutch colonized resembled to the Portuguese in that the Dutch searched for commercial benefits instead of a quest for settlement.

The emergence of France in both Canada and India made her rival to the Britain, and there had been bloody conflicts between two settler colonizers over their interest in colonies. The Dutch had to give way to the Britain when the Britain constructed a powerful naval force and lessened her internal economic problems. The British Empire settled colonies in North America in the beginning of seventeenth century. Sugar, cotton and tobacco were main

goods the British purchased. The plantation colonies of Britain mainly depended on the labor of slaves. This situation fostered the transportation of slaves from Africa to America. MacQueen proclaims, “The racism that was inseparable from the great colonizing surge of the late nineteenth century derived in part from the dilemmas of the slave colonialism which preceded it.”(MacQueen 16)

The British’s colonial superiority over other colonizers especially France faded with the decolonization effects of the American War of Independence. However, the French Revolution pushed France into the same position. Both Imperial powers lost their control over most of their colonies.

The advance in machinery changed the economic means of colonies from mercantilism into industrialization. MacQueen claims, “The vast increase in manufacturing production in Britain brought by industrialization changed the economic basis of colonialism.”(19) The colonies of plantation lost their significance, and metropolitan economies gave importance to manufactured goods; the aim was produce more with the less.

There was a reciprocal relationship between colonies and the mother country. Raw material, slaves, indentured laborers and goods were sent to the metropolis and the manufactured goods were sent to the colonies for the indigenous people to buy with a high price. Although there were two flows (from colony to metropolis and from metropolis back to colony) the profit always flowed to the center, which was the destiny of the colonized but the means of improvement for the colonizers.

Technical advance changed the shape of colonialism by giving much more opportunity of exploitation to the imperialists. The steam power used in transportation enabled the colonizers to transport raw materials, goods and armies easily. In addition to the easiness of transportation, technical advance created more powerful weapons that led to disastrous conflicts and enormous deaths. Until then there was almost equal weaponry used by both the colonizers and the colonized.

The advance in technology and the rise in industry fastened the rush for exploitation.

By 1900 colonial rule had already been imposed on 90 per cent of Africa, more than half of Asia and almost the totality of the South Pacific. More than a quarter of the Americas remained under colonial rule despite the disintegration of Spain and Portuguese power over the previous century. (Macqueen 24)

The twentieth Century brought about new colonizers such as Germany, Belgium, Italy, Japan and the USA, which were hungry for tropical possessions. These countries reached the colonizer level in a short time and their economy grew enormously so the over-production of these countries needed an outlet. Therefore, the process of colonization got harsher than ever, the result of which led to the First World War.

Although Lenin took the First World War as the doom of capitalism and a step to socialism, the capitalist economies reshaped themselves.<sup>(34)</sup> Moreover, the colonization got more sophisticated. Although the real ambition of colonization was economic, the colonizers needed some camouflages to cover their capitalist zeal and justify exploitation. Joseph Schumpeter “suggested that the root cause of colonial expansion lie deeper in human history than transitory economic cycle.” (qtd. in Macqueen 35) For him, “colonialism was the result of a ‘natural’ disposition on the part of the state to expand its territory.” (ibid 35) Therefore, the state is somehow programmed to actualize this mission; army and its staff are preconditioned to make this atavism real. The second reason of the colonialism, for the colonizers, was that the center is superior to the periphery. For them, the periphery was savage and needed to be civilized. Therefore, the colonizers took over a noble mission of civilizing the barbaric and primitive new world.

At the end of the nineteenth century, for example, the idea of civilizing mission to the less favored races overseas was a real and potent force in shaping public attitudes towards colonialism. Whether religious or secular in inspiration, self-aggrandizing or altruistic in its intentions, the idea that colonization was in a real sense a ‘duty’ was widespread and influential. (Macqueen 37-38)

The other camouflage of the West's exploitation was security. The Centers tried to secure their colonies because the new colonizers were real threat for their colonies. So "it is not difficult to see the colonial scramble of the late nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries less as an avaricious land-grab than as a sequence of defensive reactions to (mis)perceived threats." (ibid 43) By security, they mean securing both their colonies and their commercial routes.

The wars over occupied lands between colonizers turned into the wars for freedom between the colonizers and the colonized after decolonization process started. The USA is the first colonization that disconnected herself from the mother country, England. Unfortunately, the USA's colonized past did not prevent her from becoming one of the leading colonizers in the race for exploitations. Despite this, she became a prototype for the colonized nations and inspired them for their freedom. The struggles for freedom brought the end of colonialism, and postcolonialism have emerged.



## I.2-POSTCOLONIALISM

Postcolonialism is a controversial term because of its both many definitions and two kinds of spellings. Postcolonialism is spelled in two ways: hyphenated post-colonialism and postcolonialism without hyphen. McLeod writes,

There is a particular reason for this choice of spelling and it concerns the different meaning of 'post-colonial' and 'postcolonial'. The hyphenated term 'post-colonial' seems more appropriate to denote a particular historical period or epoch, like these suggested by phrases such as 'after colonialism', 'after independence' or 'after the end of Empire' .( 5)

However, postcolonialism(without a hyphen), as indicated in *The Empire Writes Back*, refers to "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day."( Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2) Therefore, it is over the time sequence and serves as an umbrella that gathers all cultural interactions of both colonialism and after colonialism under its shadow.

According to McLeod, postcolonialism can be defined according to its relation with its root terms 'decolonization' in the twentieth century and 'intellectual developments' in the second part of twentieth century. He writes "..., the twentieth century has been the century of colonial demise and of decolonization for millions of people who were once subject to the authority of the British crown."(McLeod 6)

The main motive for decolonization movement that took place at the beginning of twentieth century and gained pace after the Second World War was nationalism spread among the colonized. Nationalism and nativism were regarded as the ways out of colonial oppression. The authors of *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* writes that nativism "is most

frequently encountered to refer to the rhetoric of decolonization which argues that colonialism needs to be replaced by the recovery and promotion of pre-colonial, indigenous ways.”( Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 159) Nativism requires the erase of after-colonial values and instead of it, the reload of pre-colonial values of the society. The pre-colonial values of the society signify the authenticity of that society’s ethical, social and political life. This authenticity of a colonized society is nearly impossible because the interaction took place between the colonizers and the colonized has affected, changed and even uprooted the authenticity. In the course of interaction between the colonizers and the colonized, people from both sides were affected. Both sides of colonization process were estranged and alienated. Moreover, through this interaction a third entity which descended from the both cultures but were different from the both roots emerged. This hybrid entity immersed so dense into the psychological, social and religious values that it was impossible for the societies to create a pre-colonial authentic environments to survive.

The movement of both colonizers as either settlers or occupiers and the colonized as slaves, indentured workers and the diaspora created a multi-cultural environment where an authentic single culture was impossible. The people from the Centre got accustomed to the place and the requirements of that place where they settled or occupied. In addition, their interaction with the indigenous people affected their ‘superior’ culture so dramatically that they became somewhat alien to their citizens in the Empire, which led to the creation of the term of ‘going native’. The authors of *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* utter the fact that

The fear of contamination that is at the heart of colonialist discourse, and which results in the menacing ambivalence of mimicry or the obsessive colonialist fear of miscegenation, is often expressed through a fear amongst the colonizers of going native, that is, losing their distinctiveness and superior identity by contamination from native practices.( Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 159)

It can be deduced that the fear of losing authenticity was shared by both the colonizers and the colonized. Furthermore, the impossibility of reloading of pre-colonial era values was out of question for the ones on the quest for purity in this multi-cultural age. People those are estranged and alienated from their lands, environments, religions, societies and even themselves -whether colonizers or the colonized- can neither assimilate into the globalized world easily nor put the effects of interaction with others aside and get authenticity.

The second motive behind decolonization process was security. The colonizing powers reached the farthest frontiers and the colonies were far from the controlling Centers. Moreover, there was a quarrel between the Empires to take and control other powers' colonies. The situation became impossible for the Centers to control all the colonies so they handed the rule of some colonies to either their descendants living in the colonies (settler colonies) or to the indigenous people who would keep the Imperial profits. These kinds of people are called compradors that are also the guarantee of the imperialism in the colonies even after the independence.

As it has stated above, postcolonialism, despite its controversial structure and definitions, becomes an umbrella for different cultures and literatures to come together. Before stating the unifying aspects of postcolonial literature, the reason of diversity in postcolonial literature should be explained. Although all once-colonized nations have gathered at the threshold of postcolonialism, the literatures produced by these nations are diverse. Because the process of colonization of all nations are different from each other stemming from who the colonizer was, the way it was colonized and how successful the colonizer was by applying its means of colonization. For example, the literature of colonies of the Britain and the one of Spain's colonies are very different in that the Britain implemented English and the Literature of England into her colonies as a means of colonization of indigenous culture. In spite of the differences, all postcolonial literatures have common characteristics. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin write in *The Empire Writes Back* that "They emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial Centre."(2) Peter

Childs and Patrick Williams summarize the postcolonial reality of a text as “... , texts which are anti-colonial, which reject the premises of colonial intervention (the civilizing mission, the rejuvenation of stagnant cultures) might be regarded as post-colonial insofar as they have ‘got beyond’ colonialism and its ideologies, broken free of its lures to a point from which to mount a critique or counter-attack.”(Childs and Williams 3-4)

The writings of the first Europeans footed on the ‘New World’ created a pre-description for the following ones and the readers from the Empire. The first explorers identified the people of the New World as ugly, evil, uncivilized and even monster-like creatures. This kind of mapping of the Other was the real reason for the people from the Empires to assume themselves superior to the people from the periphery. Some imperial power encouraged adventurers by supplying them with enough equipment. Although the second flow of the colonizers themselves saw the real nature of the East, they kept the mystification for the benefit of the Empire. This mystification process existed until the colonized started their own literature and uttered their own nature. The appearance of the postcolonial literature created demystification. Edward Said, the author of *Orientalism* decoded many mystifications of the Empire by shedding light on the binary opposition created by the Centre. He writes in the introduction to the *Orientalism* this aim.

My idea in *Orientalism* is to use humanistic critique to open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis to replace the short bursts of polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison us in labels and antagonistic debate whose goal is a belligerent collective identity rather than understanding and intellectual exchange. (Said XII)

Moreover, he stressed the fact that the binary opposition created by the Empire was unrealistic and when this pseudo-fact is examined more deeply, it will reveal that the representation of the East by the West is totally a creation of their phantasies to justify their superiority and colonization under the guise of civilization.

Postcolonial literature is not just a kind of tool for the colonized to represent themselves in an Imperialist world; it is also a means of appropriation of the literature of the colonizers. The colonized uses means of colonizers' literal form to both represent and defend themselves.

The end of colonization does not mean the end of imperial attitudes. McLeod accounts for this as "...colonialism is a particular historical manifestation of imperialism, specific to certain places and time."(8) Therefore, the demystification process with the end of colonization appears again as neocolonialism. However, the proceeding of colonization under different shapes, ways and names does not manage to hide itself from the eyes of postcolonial authors.

### **I.3-THE RISE OF POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE**

There are three periods in the writings of colonized nations. The first period is the literature imposed on them by the colonizers as in the example of England's imposition of English on Indian people. In this era, the language and the literal works were of the colonizers. The literal works of this period served the requests of the metropolis. Their main motive was to show the superiority of Occident in all means over the Orient. Edward Said explores these writers by analyzing "the fiction of Honoré de Balzac, Charles Baudelaire, and Lautréamont (Isidore-Lucien Ducasse), and explored how they were influenced, and how they helped to shape the societal fantasy of European racial superiority."(Wikipedia)

Centre produced the second period by putting forward the literature that was created by the intellectuals who were educated in metropolises by the colonizers. Although the authors were indigenous intellectuals, the literature they produced was in colonizer's language. In addition to language, theme and the way themes were written were also carried out by indigenous writers as the authors *The Empire Writes Back* confirm.

The institution of 'Literature' in the colony is under the direct control of the imperial ruling class who alone license the acceptable form and permit the publication and distribution of the resulting work. So, texts of this kind come into being within the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage system which limits and undercuts their assertion of a different perspective. The development of independent literatures depended upon the abrogation of this constraining power and the appropriation of language and writing for new and distinctive usages. Such an appropriation is clearly the most significant feature in the emergence of modern post-colonial literatures. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 6)

The means of publishing and the allowance for so doing was in the power of colonizers and their backings, compradors. Thus, indigenous writers had to be congruent with the benefits of the colonizers. Moreover, the books written in colonizer's language had more chance to be popular and read by more people. In short, it was both advantageous and compulsory to write in the language of the Center and obey the rules the colonized had indicated.

The waves of nativism and then decolonization process have brought the end of literature under the rule of colonizers. The main aim of the literature of this period is to decolonize all national values and gain authenticity. The literature that reflects the real motives and arguments of the once colonized people is in the third period because there is a tense relation between the periphery and the Centre. This third period literature is called postcolonial literature.

In a general sense, postcolonial literature is the literature produced which has been "affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2). It is a reaction to colonization, the effects of colonization on the values of the indigenous and an effort to decolonize all values to reestablish authenticity if possible. Because the reciprocal involvements between the colonized and the colonizer has affected both the invaders and the indigenous. Thus, the interaction between them has changed the both. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 21-22) Moreover, the desire to go back to the pre-colonial era brings the term of essentialism into action, which is a dangerous act for the improvement of that culture.

Postcolonial literature is written either in the language of the colonizer as Edward Said does or in the language of the indigenous as a Gikuyu writer from Kenya Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o does by turning away from English. Those writers who write in their language hold that "you can't dismantle the master's house with the master's tools". (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 5) They think that the language of the colonizers has a paradigm that does not include any elements from their culture and more importantly, colonizers' language is not sufficient for the colonized to illuminate their experiences. In fact, this supposition can be true because the displaced language of the colonizers does not have the experiences of the indigenous. Therefore, a version of English has come into existence: english (without a

capital letter). This appropriation of English enabled the indigenous to express themselves because English contains words and experiences of the indigenous people.

Now people from postcolonial countries are all over the world because of various reasons: migration, education, better life and health means, work, wars and political reasons. Thus, it is not possible to draw a line and confine the effects and the results of postcolonialism to a certain place. The dense interaction between the once-colonized (now the diaspora for the ones living abroad) and the once-colonizers brings about new problems with itself. The diaspora do not fight for physical survival anymore but they struggle to survive from cultural hegemony and neo-colonialism that degenerate them and disconnect them from their cultural and spiritual values.

These sufferings of the diaspora are the themes of postcolonial authors. Postcolonial authors struggle to convey these feelings to the other parts of the world to create awareness about the situation of these people go through.



## CONCLUSION

The appearance of the human beings on the earth brought the need for interaction between people with itself. Through interaction, even between two people, one is the controlling and the other is the controlled, i.e. there appears hegemony of one over the other. To take advantage from the other is the beginning of exploitation that leads to colonialism. Colonialism is just one means of Imperialism.

The quest for colonialism gained momentum with the technical advance in journey and voyage means especially in ocean-crossing ships. People from the Centre set off to explore new places. The first explorers and adventurers mapped the New World as brutal, barbaric, uncivilized and ugly. The labeling of East by the West contributed to the ideological preparation for colonization and hegemony. Therefore, the West created a notion of superiority over the East, through which the act of colonization got faster. The quest for exotic places and religious motives accelerated the occupation of virgin lands. Colonization brought about industrial development in the West.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, decolonization started with the help of demystification process created by indigenous intellectuals as anti-colonial activities that aimed at rejection of the West based values and creations. In addition to the purification of the indigenous aspects, indigenous intellectuals appropriated the characteristics of the Empire to devalue the superiority of the Center over the periphery.

After the decolonization process, the colonizers handed the rule of the colonies to either their descendants or the compradors to ensure the existence of their benefits in the exotic places.

Although the once colonized people are now free and have their own lands, flags and national anthems, they are still in a way connected to the once mother country. Their dependence on the Centers creates an opportunity for the indigenous people to live, work and study in the imperialist countries such as the USA and England. The diaspora living in

these countries are both estranged and alienated from their lands, societies, families and even themselves. Therefore, a part of the postcolonial literature mirrors the diaspora in a multicultural capitalist world where they try to survive.

## **CHAPTER II**

## INTRODUCTION TO ALIENATION

Alienation is an unavoidable aspect of modern life because of the cumulative effects of hegemonic war between the oppressors and the oppressed. Nevertheless, it is as old as human beings themselves. The analysis of the interaction between the two sides (the oppressors and the oppressed) sheds lights on the emergence of alienation and the ways it exists. Thus, the problem to locate, define and explain the term of alienation has been the focal point for many philosophers. However, a systematic approach to the term of alienation starts with Hegel.

Hegel, a German idealist, is one of the philosophers who consider alienation as a positive and obligatory process. Hegel's dialectics states that alienation is a process that starts with consciousness, leads to self-consciousness, and results in reason. For Hegel, the Geist actualizes itself by the production of people and the nature because actualization requires concrete. The productions of nature and human beings are means of actualization of the Geist. Hegel stresses the importance of producing power of human beings.

The other philosopher who sheds light on the term of alienation is Feuerbach, a contemplative materialist. He rejects the Hegelian notion that human beings are processes of alienation for the Geist, and proclaims that God is the alienation of man. According to Feuerbach, human beings are alienating themselves by creating God. Moreover, he proposes that human beings should divert their love for God to each other.

A cornerstone materialist, Marx changed the general flow of the history via his Dialectical Materialism. He considers alienation as a result of the emergence of the capitalist economic system and the rise of bourgeoisie. For Marx, there are four kinds of alienation each of which contributes to the emergence of the following ones. The first one is alienation of the working class to the means of production. The second is alienation of the workers to their products. The next one is the working class's alienation to itself. The last one is the workers' alienation to the society. Marx prescribes socialism and the communism to the

alienation for the workers. He considers alienation a negative aspect created by capitalist economic system.

Philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre and Albert Camus have many diverse philosophical aspects; they still can be gathered under the umbrella of existentialism. They put forward that existence comes before essence and they deal with human condition. In addition, they share the belief that human beings should get rid of all systems surrounding them. For Kierkegaard, an individual can get over alienation by getting authenticity via his/her conduct with the others. According to Nietzsche, the way out of alienation is not through an encompassing system. It is just through acceptance of the world as it is and acceptance of us as we are. Jean Paul Sartre states that we are playing ourselves excluding our authenticity, which is a hinder for getting over alienation. However, he also suggests that being aware of the authenticity is the first step towards the gate off the alienation. On the other hand, Albert Camus stresses the absurdity of the life and he suggests three ways out of absurdity and alienation: rebellion, suicide and hope. He proclaims that writing is an intellectual rebellion against absurdity of life.

In addition to existentialists, Melvin Seeman contributes to the enlightenment in the definition of the term of alienation. According to Seeman, alienation can be classified into five categories: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement.

This chapter will give core and brief information on the philosophers who have just been introduced and their philosophy about alienation.

## II.1-ALIENATION

Human beings' life depends mostly on interaction with either other people or the nature. Through interaction with other persons, there appear two groups of people: the oppressed (the colonized, the periphery or the indigenous) and the oppressors (the invaders, the colonizers or the Centre). The colonizers are the ones who are different from the colonized in many ways and they are a threat for the indigenous and their way of life. Therefore, the interaction between these groups creates a tension that goes in the colonizers' favor. Thus, the colonizers create hegemony over the colonized. The culture of the oppressed is subject to degeneration or the indigenous are subject to live in exile. Those people who are degenerated or displaced experience a feeling of alienation stemming from displacement.

Alienation is a process of estrangement of an individual from himself/herself, his/her society, root, environment, intellectuality and products as a result of either a quest for self-consciousness or an imposition of an outer force. Honderich defines alienation as "A psychological or social evil, characterized by one or another type of harmful separation, disruption or fragmentation, which sunders things that belong together." (22) The definition and the probable precursors of this term mainly depend on the philosophy of the person who tries to define it. Therefore, there are many definitions and different perspectives about the term alienation.

The Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines alienation as "the act, or result of the act, through which something, or somebody, becomes alien to something, or somebody, else." In social life, it is a person's turning away from his/her friends and relations. A property's transfer from its owner to another person is the term of alienation's definition in law. Whereas Hegel treats the term as a process of estrangement to get the unity, Marx perceives it as man's estrangement from himself and his production under the capitalist rule. Therefore, Hegel and existentialists take the term positive, as a chance to get self, self-consciousness and authenticity but Marx evaluate it as something negative that deprives man from his

nature. That is whatever its definition is, it is an important term for intellectuals to understand and define man and his life.

One of the first philosophers who tried to understand the life was Plato. His allegory of the cave utters the physical world as a faint picture of the perfect world of ideas. When the perception of people in the cave is taken into consideration, it is clear that people are estranged from their reality and authenticity. This can be the first utterance of the alienation in philosophy but in religion, the dismissing of Eva and Adam from heaven may be the first experience of the term of alienation.

Adam and Eve were expelled from the paradise of the Garden of Eden, because they ate the forbidden fruit that gave them knowledge of good and evil which destroyed their natural innocence and immediacy. (Skemption 21)

In order to understand the term of alienation better, some philosophies will be studied one by one to detect the term and its usage in that philosophical stream.

## II.1.1-ALIENATION IN IDEALISM

Idealism is a metaphysical philosophy proclaims that only ideas can be known. Consciousness is the only source of knowledge and through it, ideas and thoughts can be known. Nevertheless, we cannot be sure about the outer world, the concrete. Therefore, when the individual's priority shifts from idea to the concrete, alienation takes place because human being become estranged to his/her essence.

### II.1.1.1-Johann Gottlieb Fichte

Being a link between “Kant’s ‘critical philosophy’ and Hegel’s ‘absolute idealism’”, Fichte has crucial importance in the history of philosophy. (Taber 68) Fichte’s philosophy “...centered in a passionate espousal of Kant's practical reason or of autonomous good will as the creative source of all that is distinctive in personality.” (Runes 109) He is mostly known for his Triad that consists of three stages: thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Despite the fact that the triad stems from Kant’s philosophy, it is generally regarded as the dialectic of either Hegel or Fichte. However, it was used by Fichte before the emergence of Hegel’s philosophy as it is stated by Franz Brentano, “Kant was followed in Germany by Fichte with his method of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.”(Brentano 102 )

Thesis is the first stage of the Triad of Fichte. Dagobert D. Runes defines the term of thesis as “any proposition contrary to general opinion but capable of being supported by reasoning.” (Runes 317)

Antithesis is the negation of the thesis and the second stage of the triad of Fichte. *The Dictionary of Philosophy* defines the term of antithesis as “...a proposition opposed to a given thesis expressing a fact or a positive statement.”(Runes 14)

Synthesis is the last stage of the Fichte’s triad. Synthesis is defined in *The Dictionary of Philosophy* as “The third phase in the dialectical process, combining the thesis and the



antithesis for the emergence of a new level of being.” (Runes 310) The last stage is the result of the first two stages but it is different from the both; it is over the both with a new entity. Therefore, idea goes through a tunnel of estrangement. It contradicts itself and then it melts into its contradiction, which results in a new idea that is very different from the one in the first stage. The estrangement of the idea to itself leads to a sense of alienation in human beings.

### **II.1.1.2-G.W. F. Hegel**

He is one of the cornerstone philosophers and he “concerned with rationality, freedom and self-consciousness, but saw them as historical phenomena, developing through an intelligible succession of forms, moved by ‘spirit’ and structured by ‘dialectic’.”(Bunnin and Tsui-James 741)

One of his dialectic’s key terms is alienation. Alienation, in Hegel’s philosophy, means diffusion; it is a diffusion of a simple mixture that unites with its negation’s experience and becomes itself. According to Michael Inwood, there are two terms used in Hegel that stand for alienation: estrangement and externalization. The key term for the process of alienation is Geist. Geist is translated into English as both spirit and mind. In addition, the movement of mind through alienation is Dialectic. In Hegel, the movement of Geist, that is the dialectic, should be perceived as a whole. In his famous *book The Phenomenology of Mind*, he proclaims that

It is only spirit in its entirety that is in time, and the shapes assumed, which are specific embodiments of the whole of spirit as such, present themselves in a sequence one after the other. For it is only the whole which properly has reality, and hence the form of pure freedom relatively to anything else, the form which takes expression as time. But the moments of the whole, consciousness, reason and spirit, have, because they are moments, no existence separate from one other.( Hegel 689)

The total unity of Geist requires a holistic perspective to see the truth because, as stated in the abstract, truth can only be seen by uniting the parts of Geist's journey in a circle. So what are the different parts of Geist's journey that should be adhered to each other? They are consciousness, self-consciousness and reason. In the first stage, the spirit knows itself as something different from the object. Consciousness is sensuous, perceiving and understanding; in the next stage (self-consciousness), it returns to itself with a finite consciousness. The last stage shows spirit's awareness of nature and history as the demonstration of Infinite Spirit.

Alienation is externalization and estrangement in Hegel. It is the externalization of spirit. This situation (alienation) remains until spirit recovers itself completely. In order to recover itself, spirit objectifies itself first, looks at itself as if it were someone else. Through this process, spirit gets its actuality. In *The Phenomenology of Mind* he says

Such process and activity again, through which the substance becomes actual, are the estrangement of personality, for the immediate self, i.e. the self without estrangement and holding goods as it stands, is without substantial content,...

(Hegel 510)

But the process of actualization requires objectification. Spirit objectifies itself; its objectification is nature and human beings. Although spirit and its perception are abstract, Spirit requires concrete to objectify the actualization process. Nature, human beings and human beings' labour are objectification means of spirit. Why does Spirit need human being for objectification? Because human beings are both dependable on nature and have the ability to convert it in the light of their need or desire. Human-beings have both the God-like characteristic and characteristics of simple creatures like animals. Human-beings obey the rules of nature and satisfy their instinctive desires such as hunger, thirst, sex etc. meanwhile they convert and change the nature according to their needs especially security like a God. Culture and history are two of some achievements of human beings for Spirit to

actualize itself through human beings' labour. Therefore, it is natural for Spirit to choose human beings for its actualization. That is why alienation is not a negative process in Hegel's philosophy. On the contrary, alienation is a necessary process to get a higher level intellectually and theologically. As it is stated by Ted Honderich, "it is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom." (Honderich 339)

According to Hegel, an individual is not free when he/she does whatever and however he/she desires. On the contrary, he/she is free when he / she draws limits of his / her freedom by reason and respects others' private lines. That is an individual should be alienated to himself/herself and realize his/her objectivity. Through this objectification the subject and its limits appear. When the subject differentiates himself/herself from the object (the alienated self) and accept this negation, the process of reason comes into existence. In short, freedom can be achieved through consciousness and self-consciousness:

For Hegel, however, the problem is overcome when we recognize that all human beings share a common ability to reason. Hence if a community can be built on a rational basis, every human being can accept it, not as something alien, but as an expression of his or her own rational will. Our duty and our self-interest will then coincide, for our duty will be rationally based, and our true interest is to realize our nature as a rational being. ( Honderich 341)

In short, according to Hegel , "...we are free only when we act in accordance with our reason,..." (ibid) When members of a society respect each other's private zone and behave themselves, that is when they reach logic level, this particular society gets an ethical atmosphere. Because all human-beings activities and labour lead to a spiritual end, to the Absolute Spirit. Hegel states this in *The Phenomenology of Mind* as "This world is a spiritual reality; it is essentially the fusion of individuality with being." (Hegel 509)

In Hegel's philosophy, ethical substance is comprised of the family, civil society and the state. Family is an agreement of two free individuals who sacrifice their individual freedom for the sake of universality. In civil society, each individual is free and can quest his/her

own end (aim), but at the same time he/she is responsible for his activities against other individuals, that is society. The State is the last stage of ethical substance where all free individuals are united under the umbrella of a political constitution. In the State stage all individuals can get self-actualization, which is the last phrase of Hegelian philosophy.

## **II-1.2-ALIENATION IN MATERIALISM**

According to materialists, reality is concrete and is outside the mind. For Marx there are two kinds of materialists: contemplative materialism and sensuous materialism. For Marxist Philosophy, Feuerbach is a contemplative materialist because he deals with a spiritual matter, religion and he tries to justify the concrete by abstract means such as thinking.

### **II.1.2.1-L.Feuerbach**

Feuerbach is a contemplative materialist because he states that human beings are both nature and spirit, and so alienation is a discord between nature and the spirit for him.

Feuerbach proclaims that human beings alienate themselves by religion and God. Religion and God (love of God) are the alienation of human beings. Moreover, human beings' need for love inverts itself into love of God. Because love is universal and I-You love manifests itself via religion. The main aim of Feuerbach here is to return the love of God to the love of humanity that is called humanism. As Brazill stated in *The Young Hegelians*, "He wanted the spirit to return to man" (148). Because God is self-alienation of human beings. Thus, Feuerbach replaces Hegel's idealism with naturalism.

According to Feuerbach's philosophy, will, love and consciousness are three basic human aspects that are the ways for the improvement of human beings. Moreover, the unification and effective use of these aspects discourages alienation from prevailing.

### **II.1.2.2-K.Marx**

Marx's philosophy was affected by Hegel's dialectic and Feuerbach's criticism of Hegel. Feuerbach's materialistic criticism influenced Marx but he criticizes Feuerbach's

theory because Feuerbach gives importance to religion. Feuerbach's putting human-beings into subject position and God to the state of alienation of human-beings appeals to him, however. Because Feuerbach shifts the subject from abstract to concrete (from God/Spirit to human beings). In addition to Feuerbach, "through his [Hegel's] influence on Marx, Hegel's thought has changed the course of nineteenth and twentieth century..." The two precursors' (Hegel and Feuerbach's) philosophies challenge each other. While Hegel suggests the term of alienation as a path to unity(authenticity) and wholeness of Geist via human beings' labour, Feuerbach says that religion and God is the alienation of human beings by shifting the subject from God to human beings. Marx takes Hegel's labour and Feuerbach's human being as the subject into consideration and creates his criticism by adding capitalist economy to them.

Marx in *The Holy Family* (1845) and *The German Ideology* (1846) presents the key concepts of his philosophy: alienation, labour and division of labour. According to Marx, Hegel's philosophy itself is an alienation of man.

Hegel sets out from the estrangement of Substance (in Logic, from the Infinite, the abstractly universal) - from the absolute and fixed abstraction; which means, put popularly, that he rests out from religion and theology.( Marx 108)

Marx appreciates Hegel for putting labor in focal place where Hegel says spirit objectifies itself through human-beings activities but he also criticizes Hegel for Hegel's returning to spirit after objectification. Labor is an important key term for Marx because he thinks that labor is the way human beings actualize themselves. Work creates and shows human beings' essence and aspects. According to Marx, work declares social and material characteristics of human beings. Marx in *The German Ideology* proclaims that "they [human beings] themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization."(Marx 150)

But when human beings are deprived of their control on the process of their production, they are alienated from their work. This kind of alienation takes place in capitalist economies; this is an inescapable characteristic of labor under the rule of capitalism. There are four kinds of alienation in Marx's philosophy: alienation from the means of work, workers' alienation from their production, workers' alienation from themselves and as a result of these three alienations, workers' alienation from the society and nature.

With the introduction of machines to the production, the role of human beings in production process decreased from producers to observers. They were just observers or mechanics who checked if the machine worked properly. So the skillful human beings were made to either specialize in just one field by narrowing their capacities to just one spot or work in ordinary works such as observing machines that did not require any skill, humane activity to actualize themselves. Therefore, workers began to alienate from the process of production and this led to alienation, workers' alienation from their production.

Workers were deprived of their control over the production process and they were made to produce whatever they were told. Workers sometimes produced something which they had no idea about what it was or they never touched. When human beings produce something, they want to know every detail of their production because the product is a reflection of their nature and essence. If they are deprived of this necessity, they become alienated from their production.

Moreover, alienation from the production process and the product bring about a sense of alienation of worker from himself/herself. This is the moment an individual feels a sense of nonsense and nothingness. Because the actualization of human being requires his/her conscious production every step of which he/she controls. The bourgeoisie make workers to produce whatever they (the bourgeoisie) want and however they wish by neglecting any interference of working class. Therefore, the working class becomes alienated from means of work, the production and themselves, which leads to another alienation: alienation from nature and society.

The production means and the product are the social identities in a community. Human beings objectify their labor so as to contribute to the life of community. Each contribution like a snowflake represents that worker's identity and each snowflake has a different pattern that enriches the society like culture patterns. For Marx, a deprived worker cannot contribute either to himself/herself or the others because he/she is alienated. That is why alienation is a negative term for Marx. To overcome alienation, according to Marx, the capitalist system should be destroyed and so workers can be freed from the alienation. Then a social revolution is required to build a socialist system that will lead to a communist rule. For Marx, all problems of workers (alienation, class division, private property) will be solved under the rule of communism.



### **II.1.3- ALIENATION IN EXISTENTIALISM**

Existentialism is a philosophical movement which emerged from the nineteenth century and gained more attention at the second part of twentieth century especially after the Second World War. Soloman says, ‘‘Existentialism is best thought of as a movement, a ‘sensibility’ that can be traced throughout the history of Western philosophy.’’ (Soloman 4) Although there are many existentialists, they share some common aspects that gather them under the same umbrella. One of them is human condition. Existentialism is a philosophical movement that deals with human condition, the problem of life as a human being.

The message of existentialism, unlike that of many more obscure and academic philosophical movements, is about as simple as can be. It is that every one of us, as an individual, is responsible for what we do, responsible for who we are, responsible for the way we face and deal with the world, responsible, ultimately, for the way the world is. It is, in a very short phrase, the philosophy of ‘‘no excuses!’’ Life may be difficult; circumstances may be impossible. There may be obstacles, not least of which are our own personalities, characters, emotions, and limited means or intelligence. But, nevertheless, we are responsible. (Soloman 1)

In addition to the human condition, all existentialists share the belief that existentialism is the denial of all-encompassing systems in which human beings shelter to get the given meaning of life as in religion.

The themes of existentialism are existence precedes essence, anxiety (the sense of anguish), absurdity, nothingness, death and alienation or estrangement.

Soren Kierkegaard, Frederich Nietzsche, J.Paul Sartre and Albert Camus are regarded as the forerunners of the existentialist movement.

### **II.1.3.1-S. Kierkegaard**

The first forerunner of the existentialist movement is Soren Kierkegaard. Hegel influenced him, and Kierkegaard's philosophy is a response to Hegel's dialectic. Kierkegaard especially attacked the Hegelian notion that "in the modern world the individual can find reconciliation and alienation is overcome" but in modern age "individuals are estranged from the world." (Sayers 5) Hegel's Universalist view of human beings is objected by Kierkegaard and he prefers an individualistic view. For Kierkegaard "...one is able to make sense of one's life as whole only through personal conduct and relationship with others which manifests the virtues." (Honderich 260) Despite his stress on the personal conduct, Kierkegaard agrees with Hegel and Marx on the fact that "the self is necessarily engaged in the world and the others." (Sayers 6) They share the idea that if an individual is left alone and disconnected from the society, he/she cannot overcome alienation and get authenticity. Therefore society is necessary for human beings because "authenticity is a mode of being-in-the-world and being with others." (ibid) As stated above, according to Kierkegaard the individual may overcome the alienation by getting authenticity via his/her conduct with the others. Nevertheless, they reject the possibility of an individual's overcoming alienation through social roles. "..., both Kierkegaard and Heidegger reject the Hegelian view that the way we find or realize ourselves is in and through our social roles. On the contrary, we tend to lose ourselves in them." (ibid) As a result of this statement, alienation, for existentialists, is not inescapable but there is a dim light of the hope for authenticity.

This is not to say alienation is inescapable. Authenticity is possible, but is an individual rather than a historical achievement. To find myself and be authentic, I must stand back. I must detach myself from the 'they', from my social existence, and make contact with my authentic individual self. However, this is not our natural or normal way of being and it is complacent to believe that mere social change is going to bring it about. On the contrary, for Heidegger, as for Kierkegaard, the

‘present age’, the era of mass society, has only made the situation worse.’”(Sayers 7)

Although Kierkegaard and Heidegger believe in the compulsory existence of society and social life, they do not confirm that individuals’ social roles will help them overcome alienation and get authenticity. According to Kierkegaard, authenticity can only be achieved with Christianity as he states in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.

If someone were to say plainly and innocently that he was worried for himself, that as far he was concerned it might not be quite right for him to call himself a Christian, he would not exactly suffer persecution or be put to death. But angry glances would come his way and people would say: ‘How tiresome to make such a fuss about nothing; why can’t he behave like the rest of us who are all Christians? ...’ And should he happen to be married, his wife would say to him, ‘Dearest husband, how can you get such notions into your head? Aren’t you a Christian? ... You aren’t a Jew, or a Mohammedan; so what can you be? After all, a thousand years have gone since paganism was replaced, so I know you are no pagan. Don’t you attend to your duties at the office as a good civil servant should; aren’t you a good subject of a Christian nation, a Lutheran Christian state? Then you must be a Christian.’ (44-45)

Religious rituals are carried out willingly and the individual feels inner relief during these rituals but social roles are given and the doer often does his/her social role reluctantly, which keeps the individual far from the authenticity. Thus, existentialists do not believe that fulfilling social duties will lead to the emergence of selfhood. On the contrary, self-creation via will and choice can bring authenticity about in an individual’s life.

In short, unlike Hegel and Marx who prescribe the cures for alienation (for Hegel reconciliation is possible and for Marx, socialism and then communism are the remedy of the alienation), existentialists define no solution. Instead, they see the possibility of a way out of alienation, authenticity that is not easy to accomplish. While Heidegger proclaims that “normal social life is no guarantee of authenticity”, “Kierkegaard identifies authentic selfhood with true Christianity.” (ibid)

### **II.1.3.2-F. Nietzsche**

Although Nietzsche is sometimes regarded as a fatalist, he encourages the existentialist freedom. But his notion of freedom differs from the other existentialists' in that he advocates for free-will which he perceives as a kind of shaping the pattern of 'given' freedom, “*amor fati*” that is “the love of fate.” (Soloman 31) For Nietzsche, human beings are born with their limited capacity and what they should do is to manage to become who they are and use their capacity to achieve this. Nihilism is a necessary step for Nietzsche to reach the end, the 'self'.

Nihilism “might be summarized, in his [Nietzsche's] phrase, as ‘the highest values devaluing themselves.’ Among these values are truth, religion, and morality.” (27) Despite the fact that he is not a nihilist, he applies to this term to demonstrate “the values we hold are themselves nihilistic, self-undermining.” (ibid) Therefore, he uses nihilism as a means to reach the self, an individual who is born to be and he uses it to revalue the devalued. The nihilistic life style and its exhaustive results puts burden on the individuals' shoulders, and estranged individual becomes much more alienated.

For Nietzsche, the way out of alienation is neither heaven nor classless society. It is just the acceptance of the world as it is and acceptance of us as we are.

Another aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy is perspectivism. According to Nietzsche, a universal and objective knowledge is impossible because the knowledge of everything is a

subjective acquirement that is gained through a subjective perspective so the availability of scientific facts is impossible, too.

### **II.1.3.3-J.Paul Sartre**

Sartre himself was an outsider. In his *Words* he describes a child's isolated life, which can be regarded as an autobiography because he was one of few Protestants in a large Catholic France when he was a child. However, his philosophy gets a shape via his novel, *Nausea* that is about a bachelor's life and his anguish. The Bachelor, in the end, achieves a solution to his meaningless life: "The answer, he discovers, is that there is no reason for anything to exist at all." (Thody and Read 18) For Sartre, the meaninglessness and reasonlessness of life derives from "the fact that there is no God to provide an ultimate justification for the world..." (ibid) So he invents the term of existentialism. Sartre defines existentialism as "the attempt to draw all the conclusions from a position of total atheism." (25)

According to Sartre, the death of God leads to the fact that human beings have an agitating freedom. On the other hand, human beings are not in the same category with animals in the means of determinism owing to freedom. Animals are to act whatever and however their essence requires. Human beings are free to make choices and accept the result of these choices, however. That is why "in human-being, and in human-being alone, existence precedes essence. We are... free before we are anything else." (32)

Human-beings have an inescapable consciousness. They know they shape their life by making choices and they can evaluate each choice by taking its results into consideration and behave in accordance. Therefore, the mind is in control not the body or emotions. For Sartre, emotions are just the relationship between mind and body.

For Sartre, human body is 'In itself' while human consciousness is 'For itself'. 'In itself' has a totality and it represents the world of non-living objects. It never makes contacts with anything else. On the other hand, 'For itself' exists and manifests itself via its relation with

the others. In addition, human being is the combination of both 'For itself' and 'In itself'. Inescapable consciousness, for Sartre, prevents human beings from being what they really are. "Because of the awareness which we always have of ourselves, we can never be completely ourselves. We, therefore, play at being ourselves, which is one way –and dishonest or 'inauthentic' way – of dealing with problems." (Thody and Read 57) Human-beings' inauthenticity and theyness( like a herd) are inescapable so they are always in a situation of alienated from themselves. Sartre's the term of alienation is not like Marx's Notion, it rather has a positive meaning. Because being aware of something is the first step to overcome it even if it seems impossible.

#### **II.1.3.4-Albert Camus**

"For Camus and Sartre, life is alienating, absurd; we inhabit an irrational world as exiles, separated from meaning, denied truth and abandoned by God"(Bloom 162), which leads to absurdity. For Camus, the term absurdity has two levels: the Notion and feeling of absurd. The Notion of absurd is embedded in the feeling of absurd. Great literal works are signs of the feeling of absurd. In addition, his works, *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger* are examples of this categorization of absurdity. In both of his works, he utters absurdity via either notion or feeling.

When M. Seeman's definitions of alienation taken into consideration, it is clear that Camus portrays his character with isolation: "The outsider he wants to portray is precisely one of those terrible innocents who sock society by not accepting the rules of its game"(Bloom 161) According to the definition of the term of isolation, the individual protests the rules and values of the society, which is called rebellion.

Rebellion is one of the three means of waging a war against absurdity in Camus's philosophy. The other means are suicide and hoping. However, Camus perceives rebellion as the only way that has possibility of leading out of absurdity, if possible. Nevertheless, the notion of rebellion in Camus is different from the normal usage of the term. According

to Camus, creating is the basic of rebellion. In addition, the meaningful creation is art itself. For Camus, novel is the most appropriate means of conveying rebellion through art.

..., the very fact that M. Camus delivers his message in the form of a novel reveals a proud humility. This is not resignation, but the rebellious recognition of the limitations of human thought. It is true that he felt obliged to make a philosophical translation of his fictional message. (Bloom 164)

So novels lighten the burden of isolation on the shoulders of individuals by opening a path to the world in which individuals can live despite the absurdity of life.

#### **II.1.4-THE FIVE-FOLD CLASSIFICATION OF ALIENATION BY MELVIN SEEMAN**

In addition to philosophers, Melvin Seeman, a sociologist, shows great efforts to clarify the term alienation. He classifies alienation into five categories: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement. Powerlessness “can be conceived as the expectancy probability held by the individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes or reinforcement, he seeks.”(Seeman 783-791) Furthermore, it is a conflict between internal and external “control of reinforcement.”(ibid) The second type of alienation is meaninglessness. When the individual cannot make up his/her mind about something (beliefs, choices etc.) he/she should because of the uncertainties about the choices, meaninglessness arises. “One might operationalize this aspect of alienation by focusing upon the fact that it is characterized by a low expectancy that satisfactory predictions about future outcomes of behavior can be made.”(786) Normlessness (or as some call it anomie) is to achieve a socially accepted goals via socially unaccepted means. It is “a high expectancy that socially unapproved behaviors are required to achieve given goals.”(788)The next alienation is isolation that is an intellectual rebellion that challenges the rules and basics of a society’s life. “The alienated in the isolation sense are those who, like their intellectual, assign low reward value to goals of believes that are typically highly valued in the given society.” (ibid)

However, the individual alienated in the means of isolation still keeps social adjustment. The last type of alienation is self-estrangement. It is “a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself.”(qtd. in Seeman 789) As Melvin Seeman indicates, a worker’s labor for salary and an actor’s performance for his influence on the crowd alienate them from themselves because they ignore their instinct need and desires.



## II.2--ALIENATION AND LANGUAGE

Alienation is an inseparable aspect of postcolonial literature. Two characteristics of postcolonialism, dislocation and cultural denigration, require the existence of alienation throughout its emergence.

Dislocation, according to the authors of *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, is “a term for both the occasion of displacement that occurs as a result of imperial occupation and the experiences associated with this event.”( Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 73) Both the invaders and the indigenous people subject to the exploitation suffer from dislocation. Because Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin proclaim this in *The Empire Writes Back* as

The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are a feature common to all post-colonial literatures in English.( 9)

Moreover, in the same book they says, “a valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or ‘voluntary removal’ for indentured labour.”(9)

The other aspect of postcolonial literature that triggers alienation is cultural denigration. According to the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, “it [a valid and active sense of self] may have been destroyed by cultural denigration the conscious or unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model”(9), which, as a result, leads to the sense of alienation.

The alienation in language, for the writers of *The Empire Writes Back*, is “obviously the case in which a pre-colonial culture is suppressed by military conquest or enslavement.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 10) The suppression of the colonizers over the language of the indigenous people opens an area for the language of colonizers to flourish. The colonizers encourages the indigenous to write and speak in the language of the Centre. Moreover, as it is stated above, the colonizers can put a ban on the usage of the language of the indigenous by the means of military. This displacement of language in colonies worsens the degree of alienation felt by the indigenous. The alienation in language is a serious case for the colonizers, too. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin proclaim the inadequacy of colonizers’ language for the colonized in *The Empire Writes Back* as

Such alienation is shared by those whose possession of English is indisputably ‘native’ (in the sense of being possessed from birth) yet who begin to feel alienated within its practice once its vocabulary, categories, and codes are felt to be inadequate or inappropriate to describe the fauna, the physical and geographical conditions, or the cultural practices they have developed in a new land.( 10)

Therefore, English fell short of the utterings of both the indigenous whose language was under ban and the colonizers whose English was inadequate for the fauna and geographical conditions of the colonies. So a new version of English –it is written without capital letter-, english, emerged. The rise of english was a result of the inadequacy of English (the authentic language of the Empire).

## CONCLUSION

Alienation has been the prevailing aspect of human life psychologically, sociologically, philosophically and economically. The study of illuminating the term of alienation has been a focal concern for philosophers and scientists to understand and rotate adventurous life of human beings.

The dismissing of Eva and Adam can be considered human beings' first experience of alienation or Plato's cave may be the first illustration of that feeling. In addition to these theses, philosophers like Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, J. Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and sociologist Melvin Seeman supply us with different perspectives on the term of alienation.

Fichte develops his philosophy on Kant's thoughts. Fichte's philosophy deals with alienation via his triads: thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Each stage of this triad pushes the individual into the feeling of alienation. Thesis creates its antithesis, and antithesis unites with thesis to constitute a synthesis. The synthesis arises out of thesis and antithesis but it is transcendently above the both.

The other philosopher that sheds lights on the term of alienation through his philosophy is Hegel. Hegel's Dialectic consists of three parts: consciousness, self-consciousness and reason. In the first stage (consciousness), the spirit knows itself as something different from the object. In self-consciousness, it returns to itself with a finite consciousness. Reason, the last stage, shows spirit's awareness of nature and history as the demonstration of infinite spirit. The spirit or mind carries out these steps through externalization and estrangement. In Hegel's philosophy, alienation is not an ultimate aim but a means of actualization. Therefore, the human beings' going through these stages gives them a change to become themselves in the end.

A contemplative materialist, Feuerbach proclaims that human beings are not alienation of God but God is alienation of human beings. The need for love leads human beings to create

God and religion. The aim of Feuerbach's philosophy is to return the love of God to human beings back. According to Feuerbach, this (humanism) will put an end to alienation.

The other materialist philosopher who deals with alienation is Marx. For Marx, the reason behind human-beings alienation is the deterioration of the relationship between workers and their production stemming from capitalistic economies. He classifies alienation into four types: workers alienation from the means of production, workers alienation from production, workers alienation from themselves and workers alienation from society. According to Marx, socialism (and then communism) is the only solution to alienation.

The existentialists deal with human condition and they deny all-encompassing systems (like religion) that give ready answers to human beings' questions. In addition, they believe that existence precedes essence. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, J. Paul Sartre and Albert Camus are the leading existentialists. Although they have different perspectives on alienation of human-beings in a chaotic world, they do not perceive alienation as a negative process. For them, alienation is an effort to give meaning to this chaos.

The author of "On the Meaning of Alienation", Melvin Seeman classifies alienation into five categories. Powerlessness is individual's disability to control and lead events and his life. Meaninglessness is individual's uncertainty about himself/herself or suspense between two or more choices. Normlessness is to gain social goals via socially unaccepted means. Isolation is to devalue what the society gives value to. It is an intellectual rebellion against a society and its norms. Self-estrangement is an individual's estrangement from himself/herself.

All these philosophers have contributed to the clarification of the term of alienation via their philosophies.

## **CHAPTER III**

### III.1-JHUMPA LAHIRI

Born in 1967 in London and raised in Rhode Island, Jhumpa Lahiri is an Indian-American author who won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, *Interpreter of Maladies*, short story collection.

At an early age, she tasted the feelings of being dislocated, and experienced the feeling of being one of the diaspora: torn into two identities.

When I was growing up in Rhode Island in the 1970s I felt neither Indian nor American. Like many immigrant offspring I felt intense pressure to be two things, loyal to the old world and fluent in the new, approved of on either side of the hyphen. Looking back, I see that this was generally the case. But my perception as a young girl was that I fell short at both ends, shuttling between two dimensions that had nothing to do with one another. (Atwan103-104)

When Lahiri was two years old, her parents who were Indian immigrants moved to the USA. She experienced the duality and ambivalence of the immigrant life of Indians more clearly. This kind of meaninglessness is stressed: “In spite of the first lesson of arithmetic, one plus one did not equal two but zero, my conflicting selves always concealing each other out.”(Atwan 104) As she underlines, it is meaninglessness because she could not make a choice between the two identities, which is an enormous motive for her postcolonial writings.

She was an Indian at home but when she stepped out of the threshold of the family zone, she had to conceal her Indian identity. “At home I followed the customs of parents, speaking Bengali and eating rice and dal with my fingers. These ordinary facts seemed part of a secret utterly alien way of life, and I took pains to hide them from my American

friends.”(Atwan 104) Her experiences of the early ages have been her motives to write about the alienation in the lives of the diaspora. Her fiction draws pictures, which contains her experiences and dreams of her homeland, India. As Salman Rushdie states this is true for nearly most of the postcolonial writes who are dislocated.

It may be that writer in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, one haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, event at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge- which gives rise to profound uncertainties that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (Rushdie 10)

Although Lahiri’s parents were encouraging for her to be more Indian than American in the USA, the hegemonic elements of the American culture were more effective. “I also entered a world my parents had little knowledge or control of: school, book, music, television, things that seeped in and because a fundamental aspect of who I am.”(Atwan 104)

Jhumpa Lahiri had written four books so far. *Interpreter of Maladies* is her first short story collection which was on the shelves in 1999. Her second short story book, *Unaccustomed Earth*, was released in 2008. *The Namesake*, her first novel, was published in 2003 and her second novel, *The Lowland*, in 2013.

In fact, Jhumpa Lahiri’s both short story books and her novels reflect her diasporic experiences as a postmodern migrant living in the USA. Therefore, her characters derive mostly from the real people around her either in her past or present. What she does is to combine the India she has created in her dreams with her experiences she has lived as an immigrant who looks forward to embracing her root. The re-embracing of roots requires a

philosophical journey because of the immigrant experiences of powerlessness and meaninglessness, i.e. alienation. She utters, “No country is my motherland. I always find myself in exile in whichever country I travel to. That's why I was always tempted to write something about those living their lives in exile.”(Jawaid)



### III-2-SUMMARY OF *THE NAMESAKE*

The novel opens with the scene in which Ashima, a pregnant woman from Calcutta-India, tries to cook an Indian meal that dissatisfies her. She lives in a small and cold apartment and she is alone despite her pregnancy, which is an abnormal situation for the Indians.

She is married to Ashoke Ganguli, who is an engineering student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Their families arranged their marriage and she moved to the USA to live with her husband.

She successfully bore a boy. The baby is named after Nikolai Gogol, famous Russian author. Ashoke chooses Gogol as the pet name for the newborn baby. Because Bengali culture requires a baby to have two names; a pet name to be called by family and a good name to be called in the society. While Ganguli couples are about to leave the hospital, they are asked to write a legal name for the baby. They cannot give a legal name to the baby because in Bengali culture only an elder can give a good name to a newborn baby. Therefore, they prefer waiting for a name by Ashima's mother from India. They just write Gogol on the birth certificate as an official name for their boy with a hope that they will change later with a good name.

The reason of Ashoke's choosing Gogol as a pet name for his baby is that he is indebted to *The Overcoat* –a short story by Gogol- because in a train accident the book saved his life. While he was reading the book, an accident happened and almost all the bones of his body were broken. Therefore, he could not shout for help but only raise a page that aroused the attention of the medics searching for survivors.

Gogol has no problem with his name until he enrolls a kindergarten. Although Ashima and Ashoke enroll him as Nikhil, Gogol does not respond when he is called by this name. Therefore, the manager enrolls him as Gogol. Moreover, when he is fourteen years old, he and his social environment at school realize the peculiarity of his name. Therefore, he hates

his name and accuses his parents for this label. Unaware of the fact that Gogol saved his father's life, he changes his name into Nikhil before he starts the college life.

An Indian Gogol shifts into an American Nikhil. The change in his name affects all his life style. Nikhil gives him an American way of life freedom that does not exist and is not accepted in Bengali culture. Under the name of Nikhil, he smokes, uses drugs and loses his virginity with a girl he does not know. An American Nikhil is the negation of an Indian Gogol.

His immersion in American way of life gets peak with his meeting Maxine, an only daughter of a wealthy American couple. Gogol moves to her house where she lives with her parents a comfortable and free life. When Gogol introduces Maxine to his family, his parents do not approve her manners and they hope that this relationship will be a temporary one.

After the meeting his parents with Maxine, Gogol goes to the countryside where Maxine's family owns a cottage and lives there in the summers. Under the name of Nikhil, Gogol experiences insults about his Indian origin. Then he perceives the news of his father's death. Ashoke dies of a heart attack while giving a seminar away from Ashima. He goes to Ohio to bring his father's belongings and ashes. He feels something inside him re-activated and he feels sorry for not behaving his father properly. His father's unexpected death wakes him up from the American lifestyle and there occurs a gap between him and Maxine, which ends in their separation. Therefore, he visits his mother and sister, Sonia, regularly.

Ashima offers him to meet Moushumi, an Indian origin, whom Gogol met at a party when they were young. Although Gogol accepts his mother's offer reluctantly, he likes her when they meet. They get married but their marriage does not last for a long time because Moushumi is very bound to her freedom and she does not like being tied to a person. In addition to her feelings, her disloyalty ends their marriage and they get divorced. Meanwhile Sonia is arranging to marry Ben who is "half-Jewish, half Chinese" and "an editor at *Globe*".(Lahiri 270) Moreover, Ashima sells her house and plans to spend half the year with her relations in India.

In the end of the novel, we see that Gogol is alone again. Two different conclusions can be drawn from his situation in the end of the novel: Either he manages to embrace both his past and present life in a more mature way and he comes a total or he is different from both Gogol and Nikhil.

### III.3-ALIENATION IN *THE NAMESAKE* BY JHUMPA LAHIRI

#### III.3.1-ALIENATION THROUGH TRIAD OF FICHTE IN *THE NAMESAKE*

Human life has a vortex flow that develops transcendently and keeps changing through its adventurous voyage. This flow is best identified by Fichte via his triad, which states that a being/ an idea starts with the proclamation of the thesis. Furthermore, the declaration requires the opposite of the thesis, i.e. antithesis. The crisis between thesis and antithesis is tension that creates the most suitable (or sometimes destructive) elements for improvement in human life. The outcome of this tension is synthesis that is the embracement of both thesis and antithesis but which is also different from the both when each one is taken into consideration separately. Fichte's triad is the formulation of this vortex flow as Gogol's life has been pictured by Jhumpa Lahiri in *The Namesake*.

Gogol is the first child of Ganguli couple who are immigrants from Bengali, India. The naming of Gogol, his ambivalence towards his culture, his struggle for acceptance by his American friends, his duality in social life (Indian and American), his choice of being an American by depriving himself from his root and his confrontation with his reality are of crucial importance and focal events as symptoms of Fichte's triad in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*.

As it has been stated, Fichte's triad consists of three stages: thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Each stage depends and develops on the previous stage or stages, and contributes and constitutes the following one i.e. thesis brings about antithesis, and antithesis leads to the mixture of both thesis and antithesis that result in a new entity. This occurrence, despite its roots with thesis and antithesis, is transcendently a new idea of entity. Jane Kneller states this proclamation in *Fichte Studies*, "Life is something composed of synthesis, thesis and antithesis and yet none of three." (Kneller 6) Therefore, I will shed light on Gogol's life

adventure and separate his life into three parts to study his adventurous life and the feeling of alienation in each part of the flow.

### **III.3.1.1-Thesis: Gogol, a Bengali Immigrant Couple's son in the Cambridge**

The emergence of thesis in an individual's lifespan through social interaction takes place when the individual proclaims himself/herself as an "I". Therefore, Gogol's involvement in social life brings about his "I" and the first stage of triad, thesis, starts.

The thesis of Gogol as a self consists of many elements that are characteristics of postcolonial life of an immigrant couple's child/children. I will delve into the Gogol's life and list the aspects that have constituted his personality, i.e. his thesis but before that, Ashima and Ashoke's life as the diaspora will be studied briefly because their experiences contribute to Gogol's life as a result of being a son of a diasporic couple.

Ashoke, "a doctoral candidate in electrical engineering at" Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Ashima are descendants of the Bengali who are strictly bound up with their customs and relatives. (Lahiri 2) Being far away from their roots and the suitable place to fulfill Bengali customs, they experience displacement, psychological and social alienation. The Ganguli couple's life in the USA prevents them to carry out the same tasks as their parents do stemming from the lack of environment that creates an appropriate atmosphere, a result of displacement. *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines the term of displacement as "the enforced departure of people from their homes, typically because of war, persecution, or natural disaster." The sense of not being at home where they are accustomed to carry their rituals easily creates an idea to take precautions against the total degeneration of their values. Being under the effects of American's cultural hegemony, they especially stress and carry out some Bengali customs to prevent the degree of degeneration on the following generation, which also constructs Gogol's early personality. The early construction of Gogol's personality constitutes his thesis that consists of mainly

Bengali values. The cornerstone of this construction is the process of naming and how it affects Gogol's life.

In Bengali culture, a newborn baby should be given two names: a pet name and a good name. Pet names are used by people such as relatives between whom intimacy emerges.

..., there are always pet names to tide one over: a practice of Bengali nomenclature grants, to every single person, two names. In Bengali the word for pet name is *daknam*, meaning, literally, the name by which one is called, by friends, family, and other intimates, at home and in other private, unguarded moments. (Lahiri 25-26)

On the other hand, good names are used for social life where the level of intimacy decreases.

Every pet name is paired with a good name, *abhalonam*, for identification in the outside world. Consequently, good names appear on envelopes, on diplomas, in telephone directories, and in all other public places. (For this reason, letters from Ashima's mother say "Ashima" on the outside, "Monu" on the inside.) Good names tend to represent dignified and enlightened qualities (Lahiri 26)

Moreover, a good name can only be given by an elder member of the family. Therefore, the Ganguli couple does not offer any name when the officer in the hospital asks for a name to write on the birth certificate. They explain the naming process in Bengali culture and ask the officer to wait for an advice from the grandmother in India. Nevertheless, they have to

tell a name and the first name occurs to Ashoke is Gogol. They hope they will change this name when they receive a name from the grandmother.

Gogol is the surname of Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol, “a Ukrainian-born Russian dramatist, novelist and short story writer.”(qtd. in Wikipedia) This name has a special meaning for Ashoke because in the train accident in India, “The Overcoat” by Nikolai V. Gogol has saved his life. Although the name of Gogol reminds him the terrible condition he went through, his leaving India, being married to Ashima and moving to the USA are also results of that train accident. Thus, the name has a positive meaning for him and he is indebted to the author of the short story. Despite Ashoke’s positive approach to the name, the name haunts Gogol’s life and makes him to hate everything that this name represents in the following years. However, he has a sympathetic approach to his name until his enrollment to the kindergarten.

There is a reason Gogol doesn't want to go to kindergarten. His parents have told him that at school, instead of being called Gogol, he will be called by a new name, a good name, which his parents have finally decided on, just in time for him to begin his formal education. (Lahiri 56)

Ashoke realizes Gogol’s half-heartedness about going to kindergarten and he ensures him about that even if Gogol’s name is changed, they will embrace him as always. He adds, “To me and your mother, you will never be anyone but Gogol.”(Lahiri 57) In fact, this utterance by Ashoke reveals the fact that Gogol is a label for them that embraces Indian identity.

To the surprise of Ganguli couples, “At the end of his first day he is sent home with a letter to his parents from Mrs. Lapidus, folded and stapled to a string around his neck, explaining that due to their son’s preference he will be known as Gogol at school.”(Lahiri 60) They have to accept what has been done and Gogol becomes the good name for their child. With an encouragement from his family, Gogol finds his name and Indian way of life

appealing at first. “Then one day the peculiarity of his name becomes apparent.”(Lahiri 68) Eleven years old and a student at sixth grade, Gogol goes to a field trip with his friends. They visit a graveyard there and their teacher asks them to find their names on the gravestones and draw the name on a piece of paper. Gogol examines many graves but he does not manage to find his name on any. He realizes the peculiarity of his name. He notices the fact that his name is neither Indian nor American, it is Russian. Moreover, whenever he is introduced to anybody he has to explain that he does not know the meaning of it and it is not an Indian name.

For by now, he's come to hate questions pertaining to his name, hates having constantly to explain. He hates having to tell people that it doesn't mean anything "in Indian." He hates having to wear a nametag on his sweater at Model United Nations Day at school. He even hates signing his name at the bottom of his drawings in art class. He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian. He hates having to live with it, with a pet name turned good name, day after day, second after second. (Lahiri 75-76)

The name becomes an obstacle for him to attend the social life of his peers. The degree of hate towards the name becomes so serious that he loathes everything under this name. This disgust affects his identity in his family too. He is not willing to take part in Indian rituals and Bengali family gatherings any more. What he has experienced under the label of Gogol disturbs him from then on.

Because of the obscurity of his name, Gogol “cannot imagine saying, ‘Hi, it’s Gogol’ under potentially romantic circumstances.”(Lahiri 76) Thus, he does not manage to date with any girl around. He has not made a romantic relationship with any girl at high school. However, this situation is normal for Ganguli family because they did not do the same thing, either. Meanwhile Gogol’s grudge for this name becomes more serious. One day he realizes that



Gogol is not the Russian author's first name. It was his surname. Thus, he is the first and only person with the name of Gogol in the world. In addition, the more he learns about Nikolai Gogol, the more he hates him. The reason behind his estrangement and alienation is Gogol and the precursor is Nikolai Gogol himself.

One Saturday, Gogol manages to break the wall of convention his name constructs around him. His family drives to Connecticut for the weekend so he is alone at home. Although he is scheduled to take exams, he goes to a dorm party with his friends. He meets a girl named Kim there and when Kim asks him for his name for the first time, he says Nikhil. Moreover, for the first time a girl likes his name and kisses him, which is an impossible act for Gogol even to imagine. His friends declare their amazement over the kisses. He wants to say it was Nikhil not Gogol "but he doesn't tell them that it hadn't been Gogol who'd kissed Kim. That Gogol had nothing to do with it." (Lahiri 96) Gogol realizes the fact that he is freer and more comfortable with self-respect when he is called Nikhil.

The daily life of displaced Indian people in the USA necessitates laying emphasis on some symbols of their culture to keep their identity alive. In addition to name and naming, food is another aspect that contributes to both the existence of Bengali culture in an imaginary homeland and the construction of Gogol's personality as a thesis, the first step of the triad. The Ganguli couple uses food as a symbol for resisting to the hegemonic effects of American culture. Preparing and consuming food is not a materialistic thing, it conveys and symbolizes the emotions of the diaspora. Ashima prepares an Indian dish in her pregnancy days but the feeling of alienation stemming from displacement and estrangement symbolize itself through the food she tries to cook. "Tasting from a cupped palm, she frowns; as usual, there is something missing." (Lahiri 1) Although she has prepared the same meal many times in India, it is not the same one in the USA. The Indian dish here is a reflection of her desperate need for place. Terry Eagleton utters, "If there is one sure thing about food, it is that it is never just food-it is endlessly interpretable materialized emotion." (Eagleton 204) This materialized emotion is one of the main elements that constitute a family and a homely environment. Bengali families live with their relatives and they get together as much as possible. They enliven and enrich their

gatherings via food with different kinds of spices. According to De Vault, family meals are means of “producing home and family.”(79) Moreover, when a couple decides to divorce, they do not have meals together anymore, which is also a sign of the consolidative effects of food in marriage and family.

Food is not just a cement aspect between two opposite gender or family members; it can also be a connective element between nations and religions. Irma Maini says, “Food is clearly an important part of the culture that binds them despite barriers of nation, nationhood and nationalism.”(161) It can be concluded that through food Bengali families reaffirm their identities.

Rice and fish are two important meals for Jhumpa Lahiri to mirror her characters’ struggle for reaffirmation of their identities. Krishnendu Ray states the importance of rice and fish for Bengali families:

Rice and fish become particularly potent symbols of Bengaliness precisely because outsiders, be they other Indians or Americans, are considered unable to appreciate them or incompetent in handling the bones. Rice and fish is considered a real insider delicacy.... There is also a sense that you have to keep doing it – repeat the recipes over and over and keep eating rice and fish in the Bengali style. There is anxiety that it will vanish if it is not repeatedly performed.... Through repetition, rice and fish become the quintessence of Bengaliness. (190-91)

As it is stated in the abstract, rice has a vital role in the life of Bengali people in both annaprasan for six months babies and the ceremony for the death. Annaprasan is “the ceremony for the first feeding of cooked rice. The object of this ceremony is to pray to the gods with Vedic Mantras to bless the child with good digestive powers, good thoughts and talents.”(Kayal) When Gogol is six months old, his annaprasan takes place.

Gogol's feeding begins. It's all just a touch, a gesture. No one expects the boy to eat anything more than a grain of rice here, a drop of dal there—it is all meant to introduce him to a lifetime of consumption, a meal to inaugurate the tens of thousands of unremembered meals to come. (Lahiri 40)

Gogol experiences ceremonies for the death based on rice two times until his mother decides to leave the USA and live in India. The first one is when his grandparents die. The second one is his father's death ceremony. In these ceremonies, the relatives of the dead person are supposed to do without meat and fish. "They eat only rice and dal and vegetables, plainly prepared." (Lahiri 180) Thus, food is not a sign of life and affirmation it is also a sign of loss for Ganguli family. It is a crystal-clear fact that these food-based rituals contributed to the forming of Gogol's Bengali identity as well as name giving.

### **III.3.1.2. Antithesis: Nikhil, an American man**

Through overwhelming psychological struggles, Gogol perceives the fact that he has the power of control to change or invert the flow of his present life into another direction. The immediate detail of his life that should be changed is his name that is the source of amusement for his social environment and source of shame for him. This is also the choice of American way of life over the Indian one. The process of Gogol's becoming Nikhil is necessary for the second stage of the triad as Jane Kneller states, "There has to be a Not-I, in order that I can posit the I as I." (Kneller 7) Gogol becomes Nikhil and he alienates himself from who he is as Gogol, and by becoming Nikhil he can observe the I under the label of Gogol. But becoming Nikhil is not so easy and it requires another process full of troubles.

Owing to a loophole from the name Gogol with his friends on a Saturday while his family is out of the city for the weekend, Gogol discovers that when he puts his name aside and takes a new name such as Nikhil, his life inverts into a direction he wants to go to.

However, at first the conventional life style of his parents prevents him from going in the direction he desires. He desires a name with which no one will insult on him and which will not raise inquiry of people about its origin. So he decides to change his name and shift from Gogol to its opposite, Nikhil. The change of name is not just a change in the label but it is the total change in his identity.

Plenty of people changed their names: actors, writers, revolutionaries, transvestites. In history class, Gogol has learned that European immigrants had their names changed at Ellis Island, that slaves renamed themselves once they were emancipated. Though Gogol doesn't know it, even Nikolai Gogol renamed himself, simplifying his surname at the age of twenty-two from Gogol-Yanovsky to Gogol upon publication in the Literary Gazette. (Lahiri 97)

He expresses his plan of changing his name to his parents but they go counter to his plan by bringing forward his age and Nikolai Gogol's cleverness. However, Gogol insists on proclaiming "his mental instability" and "how he'd starved himself to death." (Lahiri 100) He adds that Gogol is not a Bengali name and people do not take him serious because of that name.

...;the only person who didn't take Gogol seriously, the only person who tormented him, the only person chronically aware of and afflicted by the embarrassment of his name, the only person who constantly questioned it and wished it were otherwise, was Gogol.(Lahiri 100)

He makes his mind and applies to Middlesex Probate and Family Court to change his name. When the judge asks him what the reason is behind his wish to change his name, he at first

says “personal reasons” but when the judge insist on a specific answer he says, “I hate the name Gogol” and he adds, “I have always hated it.” In fact, Gogol does not just hate the name Gogol; he hates everything that constructs his identity under the name Gogol. The most contributing aspect is Bengaliness beyond any doubt. Therefore, Gogol starts constructing a new identity under the name Nikhil and leaves Bengali aspects gradually out. He is nervous about his new name with undefinable feelings. “He wonders if this is how it feels for an obese person to become thin, for a prisoner to walk free.”(Lahiri 102) He challenges one of Bengali’s priorities. Bengali people choose to be students at engineering departments (at Massachusetts Institute of Technology) but Nikhil attends an architecture department (at Columbia University). He decides about Columbia because he does not want to live with his family and attend family rituals any more. He moves to a new state to live in a student dormitory with his peers. Gogol constitutes Nikhil, his antithesis, and estranges himself from Gogol to give way to Nikhil’s rise. He is called Nikhil at university and he is free from Gogol’s chains. Then his roommates ask if he wants “to smoke a bowl.” He thinks that attending his roommates for a drink means erosion on his Bengali identity but he knows he has a new name with a new life in front.

Since everything else is suddenly so new, going by a new name doesn't feel so terribly strange to Gogol. He lives in a new state, has a new telephone number. He eats his meals off a tray in Commons, shares a bathroom with a floor full of people, showers each morning in a stall. He sleeps in a new bed, which his mother had insisted on making before she left. (Lahiri 104)

Gogol drinks, smokes and loses his virginity with a girl he does not know her name. He creates an identity totally opposite of Gogol in every means. He estranges himself from his former identity, Gogol, and immerses into American way of life. He experiences everything that Gogol stands apart. He is the negation of Bengali way of life. He can easily introduce himself to people proudly and write his name on his assignments peacefully.

After the disappearing of unsocial Gogol, the rise of social Nikhil emerges. During this emergence, he meets a girl called Maxine, who represents American way of life. She is rich, free and she can take her boyfriends to her house where her family lives. She has a comfortable life without any restrictions. She succeeds in tagging Gogol like an oasis in a desert. Gogol hits the top with her in American way of life as Nikhil. While he is with Maxine, he abandons all customs and beliefs that remind him of Bengali-ness. Maxine's family never looks down on him but they encourage him to immerse into that kind of life. Nikhil spends his summer vacation with them on countryside far away from city and disturbing effects of city life. Despite Gogol's disturbing past, Nikhil manages to complete constituting his American identity.

### **III.3.1.3.Synthesis: Gogol and Nikhil, Above the Both**

A thesis creates its antithesis by constituting its opposite as Gogol creates Nikhil by empowering Nikhil with what Gogol does not have. So Gogol and Nikhil are two parts of the same unity but it is not possible to bring the both together despite the fact that they both stem from the same being. Therefore, the two identities in the same beings lead to tension and create crises. The tension between the two opposing identities generates a synthesis as Kneller says, "The highest presentation of the incomprehensible is synthesis—unity of the un-unifiable."(Kneller 11) Thus, a synthesis is not a simple mixture of a thesis and an antithesis but it is something more than the both are. This does not mean that a synthesis is something completely different from a thesis and an antithesis, however. As Jane Kneller proclaims, "The synthesis is, or can be, thesis and antithesis."(Kneller 9) The synthesis is transcendently more than the mixture of thesis and antithesis. Therefore, each stage of the triad alienates the previous from the following. Nikhil is alienated from Gogol's life sphere and Gogol is alienated from himself by becoming Nikhil. In the synthesis stage, the degree of alienation decreases but the outcome is transcendently above the both. This does not mean that the process of estrangement is complete. Whenever there is a chain reaction of the triad, there is a process for alienation, too.

In this section, I will shed light on the tension between Gogol and Nikhil, and then I will present the rise of the synthesis of Gogol and Nikhil.

Although Gogol has made his mind about changing his name into Nikhil, he feels a sense of sorrow even before the court starts.

"Gogol Ganguli," the clerk says, motioning for Gogol to approach the dais, and as eager as he is to go through with it, he is aware, with a twinge of sadness, that this is the last time in his life he will hear that name uttered in an official context. In spite of his parents' sanction he feels that he is overstepping them, correcting a mistake they've made. (Lahiri 101)

He is aware of the fact that this name is the first thing his father has given to him. Although both his father and mother have reluctantly confirmed his plan of name changing, he knows that they feel a sense of departure from him because a new name will bring about a new identity as he plans. He lives a sense of dilemma for a short period in the court because of his parents' reluctance.

Another place where a tension occurs between Gogol and Nikhil is the time when he is at university. His friends call him Nikhil but this disturbs him because he thinks that they have no idea about Gogol and his past. Gogol wants to live an American way of life as Nikhil but it is not easy for him to ignore and silence his Bengali past. Feeling the sense of duality, he suffers a pang of conscience.

There is only one complication: he doesn't feel like Nikhil ... But after eighteen years of Gogol, two months of Nikhil feel scant, inconsequential. At times he feels as if he's cast himself in a play, acting the part of twins, indistinguishable to the naked eye yet fundamentally different. (Lahiri 105)

His conscience suffers from the sense of duality that leads to remorse. The most agitating part of this duality is his parents' reluctantly calling him Nikhil, which he thinks estranges him from his family. "Though he has asked his parents to do precisely this, the fact of it troubles him, making him feel in that instant that he is not related to them, not their child." (Lahiri 106) This kind of flux and reflux constitutes tension between Gogol and Nikhil.

One evening Gogol misses "his commuter rail connection in Boston" and waits forty minutes for the next train unaware of his father's waiting at the station in Boston. (Lahiri 121) Meanwhile his father relives the horror he had in the train accidents in India. When Gogol manages to reach Boston, Ashoke meets him and tells him about his train accident in India for the first time. Moreover, Ashoke adds that owing to "The Overcoat" by Gogol he survived. Gogol gets "feeling awkward, oddly ashamed, at fault" when he learns that his father feels indebted to Nikolai Gogol because of his survival from the accident. (Lahiri 130) "And suddenly the sound of his pet name, uttered by his father as he has been accustomed to hearing it all his life, means something completely new, bound up with a catastrophe he has unwittingly embodied for years." (Lahiri 130)

One of the first knock at Gogol's hearth from his Indian identity is the time when he faces an insult from a friend of Maxine's parents because of his Indian roots despite being Nikhil not Gogol. This insult demonstrates that even if he has changed his name and adapted himself to the American way of life, he is still of Bengali culture. While he is with Maxine on the vocation, he takes the news of his father's loss so the removal of the dust on his Bengali identity completes when his father dies of a heart attack during a seminar. His father's death makes him to face his previous life. He mourns in accordance to Bengali culture: He shaves his hair and does not eat meat and fish for ten days. He eats with his mother and sister, Sonia. This eases their distress but at the same time reminds them Ashoke's compulsory loss. The death of Gogol's father fastens the erosion on Gogol's American way of life, which ends in his leaving from Maxine, the symbol of Nikhil's desired life. When she asks Gogol to come with her "to get away from all this", he replies in a rather cold manner, "I don't want to get away." (Lahiri 182) Gogol does not want to



leave his family anymore. Although he is now formally Nikhil, Gogol is the dominant identity.

After his father's death, his mother interests in Gogol more than ever and Gogol's marriage is one of her priorities. One day while speaking on the phone, she asks him if he is "willing to call someone" (Lahiri 192) and if he is willing, she recommend him Moushumi Mazoomder, "the daughter of friends of his parents who lived for a while in Massachusetts then moved to New Jersey when he was in high school."(Lahiri 192) She lives in New York at that moment and is a graduate student. She has had a disturbing experience when her fiancée left her on the eve their marriage, which does not bother Gogol at all. After several meetings, they decide to marry and they marry according to Bengali traditions. During the ceremony, Gogol wears clothes of Bengali tradition but he hesitates because

He imagines his father wearing an outfit similar to his own, a shawl draped over one shoulder, as he used to during pujo. The ensemble he fears looks silly on himself would have looked dignified, elegant, befitting his father in a way he knows it does not him.(Lahiri 221)

Even though Gogol tries to make connections with his past and his father's way of life, he still observes the impossibility of such an attempt. Because, as it is implied in the previous abstract, he cannot carry out traditional rituals properly and intimately. He is neither Gogol, a symbol for culturally raised immigrant child, nor Nikhil, a Bengali boy assimilated into American way of life. Although Gogol is the dominant identity then, Nikhil still affects his life and his choices. In fact, his marriage to Moushumi is a symptom of Nikhil's survival deviously. He marries to Moushumi not because her family is of Bengali culture but she is semi-assimilated, like him, into modern life style of that county. Although this resemblance sounds as an encouraging aspect for their unity in the future, Moushumi's ignoring an

ethical value, loyalty to family life, that characteristics of all cultures puts an end to this marriage.

The end of marriage is the climax of the tension between Gogol and Nikhil, which leads to the rise of the synthesis of Gogol and Nikhil. As his father tells him, "Try to remember it always...Remember that you and I made this journey, that we went together to a place where there was nowhere left to go." (Lahiri 187) Gogol finishes his journey and there is no place left for both Gogol and Nikhil to go. The tension between Nikhil and Gogol is over then. Gogol is now both Gogol and Nikhil but, at the same time, different from the both with a new dignity.

Gogol knows that his life chain starts with his father's survival from a train accident owing to "The Overcoat", and he goes to his room that was his room when he was still Gogol and takes his father's birthday present from the dusty selves. It is "The Overcoat" by Nikolai Gogol. He reads "The Overcoat" and "...he has salvaged it by chance, as his father was pulled from a crushed train forty years ago." (Lahiri 291) Although Lahiri finishes the novel by leaving Gogol with a kind of dignity, it can be predicted that Gogol transcendently has a new identity.

### III.3.2-HEGEL'S ALIENATION IN *THE NAMESAKE*

Alienation for Hegel is crucial for the development of Spirit and it is also a process of human-beings self-development. According to Hegel, humans are historical and social beings so the process of self-consciousness is not an unchanging prescription. Human-beings go through alienation by dividing themselves and then uniting again. Alienation, in Hegel's philosophy, is an individual's doubling, externalizing and confronting himself/herself.

Alienation takes place through nature and the social environment in which the individual lives. Thus, the only way for a human-being to overcome alienation is through his/her participation into the social life, and lives "Hegelian account of the moral life, in which the self is fully realized by fulfilling its role in the social organism which grounds its duties" as Bradley thinks.( Candlish, Stewart and Basile) In *Aesthetics*, Hegel proclaims that

...the purely finite human spirit is bounded and restricted by its opposite, namely nature. This restriction, therefore, the human spirit in its existence only overcomes, and thereby raises itself to infinity, by grasping nature in thought through theoretical activity, and through practical activity bringing about a harmony between nature and the spiritual Idea, reason, and the good. (454)

Therefore, an individual is to theorize and practice his/her social involvements willingly and properly to overcome alienation as it is stated in the previous abstract from *Aesthetics*. According to Hegel, social involvement and production are two essential means of actualization. As to *The Namesake*, the process of Gogol's estrangement and objectification starts with his involvement in American society, too.

In this section, I will divide Gogol's life into three sections according to the alienation philosophy of Hegel.

### **III.3.2.1-Consciousness: Gogol**

Consciousness is sensuous, perceiving and understanding. Sensuous is the gratification of the senses either aesthetically or in the meaning of desire and consumption. Perceiving is to be aware of the place or time, and understanding defines the process through which brain takes a stimulus and gives meaning to the stimulus related to time and/or place. It is the basic characteristics of human beings and slightly animals.

In consciousness stage, the important thing is that the individual is aware of his/her existence. The individual perceives himself/herself as an ongoing phenomenon. The individual senses himself as an unsatisfactory and incomplete person as Gogol does.

Gogol is born “in a place most people enter either to suffer or to die”, a hospital in Cambridge. (Lahiri 4) Ashima Ganguli gives birth to Gogol without any relatives around, which is an odd situation for Bengali people because “In India ...women go home to their parents to give birth, away from husbands and in-laws and household cares, retreating briefly to childhood when the baby arrives.”(Lahiri 4) Although Gogol is not aware of this displacement at his birth, his identity takes shape under the shadow of displacement his mother has experienced at his birth.

Gogol as a son of immigrant Bengali couples experiences deficiency, inadequacy and estrangement through his life until he overcomes the feeling of alienation he undergoes. Gogol’s first experience of estrangement is his name. His name is neither Indian nor American, it is Russian. Lahiri skillfully pictures newborn baby’s reaction to his name both literally and metaphorically. When Ashoke whispers to his ear, “The baby turns his head with an expression of extreme consternation and yawns.”(Lahiri 28) His name symbolizes his father’s past nuisances in India and present hopes in the USA. Thus, Gogol is a sign of hope and future at home but a sign of shame and disturbance in the society. Gogol never esteems himself through the time he is called Gogol and the better he learns Nikolai Gogol’s life, the more he hates him and his name. His disgust for his name enlarges and turns to whatever is related to it. He hates his family rituals, Bengali custom and regular meetings of Bengali families.

His name makes him feel incomplete, and he takes his name as a handicap between himself and the opposite sex. "Other boys his age have begun to court girls already, asking them to go to the movies or the pizza parlor, but he cannot imagine saying, 'Hi, it's Gogol' under potentially romantic circumstances. He cannot imagine this at all." (Lahiri 76) He does not manage to have intercourse with any girl even though his peers have already experienced it because he is afraid of being asked questions like what your name is, how strange it is! Whether it is a Bengali name and what it means. Thus, he prefers looking at girls from a distance without giving them a chance to ask these disturbing questions.

The sense of incompleteness and queer is not just a characteristic of Gogol. After visiting India, he and his family return to home in Cambridge. Instead of relaxing, they experience a sense of unsatisfactoriness and alienation.

Though they are home they are disconcerted by the space, by the uncompromising silence that surrounds them. They still feel somehow in transit, still disconnected from their lives, bound up in an alternate schedule, an intimacy only the four of them share. (Lahiri 87)

The sense of still being on the way points to the Gogol and his family's route from consciousness to self-consciousness. Although they all set off for the second stage of Hegel's dialectic, Gogol manages to experience the journey. This may stem from the possibility that the other members, excluding Sonia, have already completed the journey to self-consciousness.

In short, Gogol perceives himself as unsatisfactory and incomplete in consciousness stage, which is a stimulus for him to negate himself and climb to the second stage, self-consciousness.

### **III.3.2.2-Self-consciousness: Nikhil**

When an individual is not satisfied with his life or lives a common life without any effort and immerses himself in a decayed conformity, the boredom emerges and he becomes in straits. This common life restrains the individual from actualizing himself. As Georg Lukacs states

A restricted mode of life of this kind presupposes an insufficient development of spirit...A full and entire human life requires higher urgings, and this closest association with nature and its immediate products cannot satisfy it any longer. Man may not pass his life in such an idyllic poverty of spirit; he must work. What he has an urge for, he must struggle to obtain by his own activity. (qtd. in Sayers 122)

As it is stated in the abstract, Hegel points to the importance of the process of self-conscious for the development of human mind practically. But the process does not take place automatically, i.e. there should be an alerter to invoke the process. It is negation. Marxists.org quotes Llyod Spencer and Andrzej Krauze from *Hegel for Beginners* as saying that “It is by means of this ‘negativity’ of thought that the static (or habitual) becomes discarded or dissolved, made fluid and adaptable, and recovers its eagerness to push on towards ‘the whole’.” Therefore, Gogol needs to negate himself to turn to himself with a fine spirit and then he can improve his mind and have the sense of being at home that is the end of alienation. Gogol’s negation starts when he changes his name into Nikhil.

In fact, he has already experienced being called with another name apart from Gogol. When he and his friend are at a dorm party and a girl asks his name, he first hesitates and then Nikhil gets out of his mouth. It is as if a magic stick touches him he becomes someone Gogol can never be. Being shy, embarrassed and far from self-confidence, Gogol, that evening, proves himself that if he can change his name, his unsatisfactory and incomplete situation is to be over. Moreover, he reads in a magazine that many famous people have

changed their names. The precursor of his name changed his name, too. “Though Gogol doesn't know it, even Nikolai Gogol renamed himself, simplifying his surname at the age of twenty-two from Gogol-Yanovsky to Gogol upon publication in the Literary Gazette.”(Lahiri 97) Despite his parents’ reluctant approval, he applies to the court and the change takes place. He is officially Nikhil from then on.

The change in a name cannot be restricted to just a change in labels but the change brings about a new life for the individual as in Gogol. After he has become Nikhil, he leaves everything reminds him of Gogol one by one. First, he goes to Columbia University instead of keeping the custom of Bengali people by going to Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Then he moves to another city to be far from his family and their rituals because the regular meetings of Bengali people in the USA bore him. Thus, he wants to live his own life far from restrictions from his family and their values. There is a resemblance between Gogol and his father in that both of them leave their home. Ashoke left India not just for his education but India reminded him of the train accident and his being confined to bed for many months. Thus, he can understand Gogol but reluctantly.

The negation of Gogol, Nikhil, opens a door to a new life that he has always observed but has not dared to attend. He smokes, consumes alcohol and even loses his virginity with a girl that he does not remember. It is impossible for Gogol to do such thing but it is casual for Nikhil to do as it is stated in the novel,

“I can't believe you kissed her, Gogol,” his friends exclaim as they drive home from the party. He shakes his head in a daze, as astonished as they are, elation still welling inside him. “It wasn't me,” he nearly says. But he doesn't tell them that it hadn't been Gogol who'd kissed Kim. That Gogol had had nothing to do with it.(Lahiri 96)

It is not Gogol who kisses the girl but it is Nikhil. Nikhil easily adapts himself to the American way of life. With his meeting Maxine, he peaks this life style. He moves to her house where she lives with her parent and stays there. Thus, he alienates himself from his Bengali values and custom, and immerses into a lifestyle that is just opposite to the lifestyle of Gogol and his parents. Therefore, he completes the creation of his negation and is ready to bring re-live Gogol to become a whole.. As the self-consciousness stage takes place by the introduction of Nikhil into Gogol's life, the reason stage starts with the reentrance of Gogol into Nikhil's life.

Gogol, after his father's death, mourns for ten days by avoiding eating meat and fish. Moreover, he buzzes cut his hair, which is also a sign of mourning for Bengali people. He visits his mother and sister, Sonia, more often. More importantly, he leaves Maxine, the sign of American way of life for Nikhil. Thus, it can be concluded from what he has done after his father death that he tries to make a peace deal with his roots, Gogol, and find the balance between Nikhil and Gogol.

It is this effort to find the balance between Gogol and Nikhil that made him to accept to marry Moushumi, daughter of a Bengali couple. Moushumi lives an American way of life as Nikhil does. Despite her modern life, she harbors remnants from her Bengali identity. Gogol witnesses this while visiting her house. "He recognizes versions of things he knows from home: a Kashmiri crewelwork carpet on the floor, Rajasthani silk pillows on the sofa, a cast-iron Natraj on one of the bookcase"(Lahiri 208), which are the signs of Bengali culture's existence in her. In addition, Moushumi speaks in Bengali language with Gogol while they are in public and do not want anybody to know what they are talking about. "At restaurants and bars, they sometimes slip Bengali phrases into their conversation in order to comment with impunity on an-other diner's unfortunate hair or shoes."(Lahiri 211) Thus, while they are together, Gogol manages to keep his both Bengali and its negation, American identities together. Their marriage supports Nikhil and a balance between Gogol and Nikhil takes place. Thus, desire for ex-identity, Gogol, takes place. The completion of the retuning is also the end of alienation. It is stated in "Creative Activity and Alienation in



Hegel and Marx” that “Hegel...treats alienation as a universal, ontological, characteristic of self-conscious spirit.”(Sayers 120) Thus, everything falls into its place.

Nikhil’s acceptance of Gogol and turning to his roots again means that negation has successfully carried out its duty. Gogol returns to himself.

### **III.3.2.3-Reason: Recovery and being at Home**

The act of overcoming alienation is a fundamental task for human beings because it is a historical task and can be achieved historically. This historical task is in self-consciousness’ power. Although self-conscious spirit causes the raise of alienation and separation, it is also the only constructor that can solve the problem of alienation. Sean Sayers states this fact in “Creative Activity and Alienation in Hegel and Marx” as

..., Hegel does indeed regard alienation from nature as a characteristic feature of spirit. And yet, for Hegel, it is equally a part of the essence of self-conscious spirit to strive to overcome its alienation, its separation, from nature. This sets for it a historical task which is also a characteristic feature of human spirit. It strives to heal its breach with nature and be at home in the world. (120)

There are two explicit changes in Gogol’s life that make readers to be sure about the completion of his mind/spirit’s cyclic process: a development in his intellectuality and his embracing his Bengali identity with a holistic perspective.

Gogol in the end of the novel, goes to the bookcase, takes “The Overcoat” and reads it. Through his life for the first time, Gogol willingly, enthusiastically and nostalgically prepares for doing an intellectual activity, which is a sign of his achievement of reason that is the last stage of Hegel’s philosophy. In “Creative Activity and Alienation in Hegel and Marx”, Sean Sayers states that the highest stage of human development “continues further

through art, religion and philosophy.”(119) Gogol’s return to his essence and taking up an intellectual activity proves his reconciliation beyond any doubt. As it is stated in “Creative Activity and Alienation in Hegel and Marx”, “Alienation can and will be overcome when spirit has completed its development and come to be at home in the world.”(Sayers 120)

He has completed his development through consciousness, self-consciousness and reason stages, and defeated alienation. Moreover, he reasonably embraces his essence, unites his consciousness and self-consciousness under the commandship of reason. Thus, he becomes himself as total because, for Hegel, without totality unity is impossible.

For Hegel, only the whole is true. Every stage or phase or moment is partial, and therefore partially untrue. Hegel's grand idea is "totality" which preserves within it each of the ideas or stages that it has overcome or subsumed. Overcoming or subsuming is a developmental process made up of "moments" (stages or phases). The totality is the product of that process which preserves all of its "moments" as elements in a structure, rather than as stages or phases. (Spencer and Krauze)

Totality is the ultimate result of Hegelian Dialectic. The improvement of mind and roaming of spirit end in totality that harbors the experiences of conscious and self-conscious. The unity of these experiences as a historical process helps the individual get his essence and be at home. In the end, Gogol is at home both literally and metaphorically.

### **III-3.3-MELVIN SEEMAN'S FIVE-FOLD CLASSIFICATION OF ALIENATION IN *THE NAMESAKE***

Melvin Seeman is famous for his article “On the Meaning of Alienation” in which he deals with the term alienation psychologically and sociologically. In this article, he classifies the term of alienation into five categories: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement. Powerlessness is the individual’s inadequacy to control what is going on. Meaninglessness is agent’s disability to choose between choices or predict the outcomes of ongoing events. Normlessness is individual’s efforts to gain social goal via unaccepted means. Isolation is an intellectual’s looking down on social norms and trying to produce new values. Self-estrangement is an individual’s feeling alien.

In this section *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri will be analyzed through the five-fold classification of alienation by Melvin Seeman. Although the first two section just shed light on Gogol’s life, this section will consider the other characters to place the kinds of alienation considerably but the emphasis will be on Gogol again.

#### **III-3.3.1-Powerlessness**

Although Gogol, Ashoke and Moushumi experience the feeling of powerlessness somehow, Ashima is the most suitable character to analyze powerlessness in this part. Ashima is pregnant and at hospital. There are not any acquaintances around, which is not an acceptable situation for Bengali culture. In Calcutta, when a woman is about to give birth, she is taken to her parents’ home, and her connection with her husband her husband’s relations is cut until the baby is born. However, Ashima is alone and lonely in Cambridge; there is neither her relations nor Ashoke’s.

Her experiences in hospital add to her view of life about America. She thinks that she will never get accustomed to the lifestyle on this continent, a life totally different from her life

in India. In addition, she gives birth to a baby that she will bring up in this country where she does not have any relations to take advantage from her/his experiences, except Ashoke. One day she expresses her anxiety to her husband. “ ‘I am saying I don’t want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It’s not right. I want to go back.’ ” (Lahiri 33) Nevertheless, she has to face the unbearable loneliness of this place despite her unwillingness. For, she does not have the power to divert the flow of her family’s life in this land. She experiences this feeling of powerlessness until she decides to move to India after her husband’s death.

Ashima and Ashoke plan to visit their relatives in Calcutta in the following months. Ashima takes Gogol and goes shopping. Ashima buys presents for both her and Ashoke’s parents. While coming back from the shopping on the subway, she is late and takes Gogol out of subway clamp. Then someone from the crowd shouts to her, “your things.”(Lahiri 42) But the doors of subway clamp has already shut. She looks behind their present bags in the rear car disappearing from the sight helplessly.

She stands there watching until the rear car disappears into the tunnel, until she and Gogol are the only people remaining on the platform. She pushes the stroller back down Massachusetts Avenue, weeping freely, knowing that she can’t possibly afford to go back and buy it all again. (Lahiri 42)

In India, there was not such a possibility for her to experience such an event and aftermath, to feel so desperate.

She suffers from knowing that the events taking place in this country is not in her power. Everything is challenging culture, life style, climate and the relationship between people. Thus, she experiences powerlessness because she cannot make sense of all these.

Ashima’s pregnancy is one of her unbearable sufferings that defines the limits of her ability to bear any difficulty. Thus, she defines other sufferings by connecting them to the pregnancy metaphorically.

For being a foreigner, Ashima is beginning to realize, is a sort of life long pregnancy - a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that that previous life had vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding. (Lahiri 49-50)

Ashima has been tolerant to displacement and pregnancy in displacement despite her silent rebellions that never go beyond an idea. She is aware of the fact that Bengali identity is not equipped enough to wage war against the displacement and the hegemonic values of the country. “Who had forsaken everything to come to this country, to make a better life, only to die here?” is her another silent rebellion that passes through her mind when Ashoke is dead of a heart attack in a remote part of the country. (Lahiri 180) After her husband’s death, Ashima

...feels lonely suddenly, horribly, permanently alone, and briefly, turned away from the mirror she sobs for her husband. She feels overwhelmed by the thought of the move she is about to take, to the city that was once home and is now in own way foreign.(Lahiri 278)

In fact, Lahiri pictures the dramatic life adventures of immigrant people and meanwhile how they feel all around the world. These immigrant people are disappointed because they recognize that they do not gain anything despite their sufferings that has lasted for many years.

### **III-3.3.2-Meaninglessness**

Before analyzing Gogol's life in the light of meaninglessness, the distinction between powerlessness and meaninglessness should be presented briefly. For Seeman, powerlessness is the disability to control the events while meaninglessness can be summarized as the individual's disability to predict the "behavioral outcomes" of the events or disability to make a choice between two or more choices. (Seeman 786) Thus, meaninglessness stems from indecisions and senselessness, which is the most prevailing characteristic of Gogol's life.

He has to suffer from being called Gogol until he changes his name into Nikhil but then he experiences the indecision between Gogol and Nikhil. In addition, his dichotomy does not take place just in names but it includes lifestyle, culture and identity.

At first, he does not want to be called by another name when he is about to attend the kindergarten. Because "He is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know. Who doesn't know him."(Lahiri 57) After he starts the school, he experiences first insults about his name, and he afterwards decides to change his name. Before he attends the university, he changes his name into Nikhil. However, Nikhil is not just his new name but it is the symbol for his new life. Therefore, Gogol experiences a dichotomy that takes place between Gogol and Nikhil, Bengali and American.

Nikhil brings a sense of self-confidence and self-esteem to Gogol's life even for a short period of time. He can easily communicate with girls and have fun with them. He ignores his family, smokes and loses his virginity, neither of which is acceptable for Bengali people.

But now that he's Nikhil it's easier to ignore his parents, to tune out their concerns and pleas...It is as Nikhil, that first semester, that he grows a goatee, starts smoking Camel Lights at parties and while writing papers and before exams, discovers Brian Eno and Elvis Costello and Charlie Parker. It is as Nikhil that he takes Metro-North

into Manhattan one weekend with Jonathan and gets himself a fake ID that allows him to be served liquor in New Haven bars. It is as Nikhil that he loses his virginity at a party at Ezra Stiles, with a girl wearing a plaid woolen skirt and combat boots and mustard tights.(Lahiri 105)

While he is taking up the American type of life style enthusiastically, his other part, Gogol, pricks his conscience. While he is at Maxine's parents' cottage in the country consuming expensive wine and having fun, he suffers from a pang of conscience. "At times..., and another bottle of wine is opened, and Gogol raises his glass to be filled yet again, he is conscious of the fact that his immersion in Maxine's family is a betrayal of his own." (Lahiri 141) The meaninglessness of his life either under the name Gogol or Nikhil is crystal-clear. In addition, he understands that the problem with his life is not just a name even if it has haunted his life. The senselessness of not knowing the real precursor of his life and the pangs of conscience deepen his disability to make a choice between the two identities and make sense of his being as a Bengali immigrant couple's son.

In short, an "American-born confused Deshi", Gogol is a symbol for the confusion that immigrants experience under the conditions of displacement. (Lahiri 118)

### **III-3.3.3-Normlessness**

It is not normal for Bengali people to express and discuss sexual feelings with others. (Aziz) Ashima and Ashoke represent this Bengali custom successfully and they make an effort to instill this tradition into Gogol and Sonia. In fact, the other immigrant families endeavor to do the same thing, too. However, two characters in *The Namesake*, one is of Bengali descent and the other is Russian, Moushumi and Dimitri commit an indiscretion, cheating.

Moushumi had an undesirable puberty. Despite her need for love of the opposite sex especially the white, no one was interested in her. "The shameful truth was that she was not

involved, was in fact desperately lonely. She had rebuffed the Indian men she wasn't interested in, and she had been forbidden as a teenager to date.”(Lahiri 213) So she harbored infatuations with her teachers and friends at school until she went to Paris for her education. Everything suddenly changed there and she started to go out with men and gave permission to them to seduce her anywhere they wanted in a pub or at a park. Thus she gained her self-confident.

She seems to a perfect match for Gogol because she undergoes the same experiences: both of them are Indian, they both have artistic tastes; they both have suffered their foreign names. However, Moushumi does not want to be engaged to a person for all her life and she “...wondered if it was her horror of being married to someone she didn't love that had caused her, subconsciously, to shut herself off.”(Lahiri 214) In addition to this feeling, one day she comes across the name Dimitri who she met when she was a teenager and he was about thirty. “The name alone, when she'd first learned it, had been enough to seduce her. Dimitri Desjardins.”(Lahiri 256) Seeing this name, something reignites her years with him and she phones him although she is aware that she is married.

Middle aged and an unemployed, Dimitri is living in a dirty apartment. He is just the opposite of Gogol, which makes him attractive for Moushumi. She does not like Gogol's name, she thinks that Dimitri's name reminds her of her days in Paris. Moushumi regularly visits Dimitri's apartment and she cheats on Gogol. Thus, Moushumi and Dimitri breaks a social rule which is valid in both Bengali and American society to gratify their desires. Gratification of desires is not something wrong but the means they apply to gratify is unacceptable by the society. In addition, a married woman's quest for adventure in the arms of another man apart from her husband is an unwelcome act in both Bengali and American cultures.

In short, Moushumi and Dimitri experience normlessness by gratifying their desires in socially unacceptable means.



### **III-3.3.4-Isolation**

The way Bengali people try to survive as the diaspora is not appealing to their descendants. The Bengali immigrants have two efforts to carry out at the same time. First, they endeavor to keep their Bengali identity alive by instilling it in their children. Second, they try to keep the balance between their values and the hegemony to enable their children to attend the society more easily. Nevertheless, it is not so easy for their descendants to find the balance between home (Bengali culture) and society (modern culture). In addition, when a descendant of the diaspora experiences a sense of being outside, they may develop a feeling of dislike towards home. Therefore, they rebel against their culture, and they even try to replace their values with the values of hegemonic culture.

Moushumi and Gogol, two outsiders, have an effort throughout the novel to keep themselves off their Bengali identities and deny the importance of Bengali values. In so doing, they isolate themselves from their roots and society that they are brought up in accordance with.

There are two reasons or accelerating aspects behind Gogol's isolation: the peculiarity of his name and the attractiveness of American culture. His name is the reason of his estrangement from the society although it represents his Bengali identity. Bengali lifestyle is somehow restricted to the home and family environment. However, his anxiety, fear and shame start when he steps out of the threshold of the house.

His anger and dislike to his name spread to the Bengali values. Thus, by changing his name, he somehow rebels against Gogol and what institute Gogol. In addition, "...now that he's Nikhil it's easier to ignore his parents, to tune out their concerns and pleas."(Lahiri 105) His rebellion is not restricted to refusing Bengali values. In addition, Gogol is inclined to immerse into American culture. For him, American culture is a shelter that will keep him out of questions and aspects related to Gogol. By the same token, he involves in many love affairs to forget the experiences of Gogol's embarrassments towards girls. The more he rejects his Bengali roots, the better he adopts American way of life. Then, He goes to extremes when he and Bridget, a married woman, become together regularly. (Lahiri190-

191) Thus, he peaks devaluing Gogol's values and presents a new identity instead of Gogol.

Moushumi's motives for isolation differ partly from Gogol's reasons in that her reaction to Ganguli culture and values is not just a kind of anger or vengeance. Although she suffered from the conventions of Bengali life style when she was a teenager, she does not try to devalue these conventions just because of this. The precursor of her rejection of Bengali values stems from her outlook on life she gained while she was a student in Paris. Paris's existentialist environment and people's interest in foreigners encouraged her to constitute a modern world view of hers.

Her outlook on life contains characters of existentialist philosophy that rejects any conventional thought and life style. Thus, she cannot do without her free life style, which makes her to betray her husband, Gogol.

In short, both Gogol and Moushumi experience the feeling of alienation as isolation despite their different motives.

### **III-3.3.5-Self-Estrangement**

Self-estrangement is a characteristic of individuals who want to be either accepted or appreciated by the society in which they live. However, this alienates them from their essence as Fromm writes in *The Sane Society* "...By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become one might say, estranged from himself."(qtd. in Seeman 789) They become estranged from themselves because they think that they lack something that is necessary for the society. Thus, they experience the feeling of being marginalized in the society. Gogol has the same problem and he needs the acceptance of American society.

He feels to be alienated from the society he lives in because of his name. The peculiarity of his name makes him to be ashamed of introducing himself to the others. Being hindered by

his name to attend the social life, he loses his self-esteem and self-respect. Therefore, he changes his name in order to be both accepted and respected by the society.

Although he disconnects himself partly from his Bengali values, his diasporic family does not react to him. Nevertheless, Gogol, by becoming Nikhil, quests acceptance of the community. According to Seeman, when an individual accepts a reward or acceptance from the outside for his behaviors, thought and belief, he is estranged from himself.(Seeman 790) So Gogol's changing his name just for the sake of acceptance by the society means he becomes alienated as self-estrangement.

### II.3.4--EXISTENTIALIST ALIENATION IN *THE NAMESAKE*

Alienation, for existentialists, is not a result of human beings' relationship with material world as in Marx's philosophy but it is rather psychological and even spiritual. Alienation is an aspect of human condition despite its prevailing in modern world. Unlike Hegel's philosophy about alienation that says alienation will end in modern times, existentialists like Kierkegaard believe that the individual in modern world is estranged from himself/herself more tragically. Thus, modernism has brought inauthenticity with itself.

Sean Sayers in "The Concept of Alienation in Existentialism and Marxism" says that existentialists take alienation as a universal aspect of human condition. (9) And according to Sayers, Kierkegaard draws the picture of disabled modern man as

Just as desert travelers combine into great caravans from fear of robbers and wild beasts, so the individuals of the contemporary generation are fearful of existence, because it is God-forsaken; only in great masses do they dare to live, and they cluster together *en masse* in order to feel that they amount to something.(qtd. in Sayers 12)

Therefore, the modern man has lost his ability to live his own life with his will and choice. He is a fallen who looks for authenticity in a corrupted social life where he is being estranged from himself day by day as some characters in *The Namesake*.

Bengali immigrants and the first-generation US-born children are exposed to the such postcolonial themes of existentialism as freedom, subjective self, denial of traditional values, institutions and philosophy, and exercise of will and freedom.

Freedom is the most sensed theme of existentialism in the novel. Freedom of willpower is the protagonist's focal quest throughout the novel. Freedom to rename himself, freedom to choose any culture, university, department; freedom to live where he wants are what Gogol wants consciously or unconsciously.

As it has been stated in previous chapters (chapters on Fichte and Hegel), Gogol's life is haunted by his name. Being a son of an immigrant parent, he has already been alienated in the hegemonic values and means of the American culture. In addition, his peculiar name makes the burden on his shoulders heavier. The weight of the name on his shoulders becomes so heavy that he cannot carry it anymore and looks for ways to get rid of this weight. He idealize that “ ‘There's no such thing as a perfect name. I think that human beings should be allowed to name themselves when they turn eighteen,’ he adds. ‘Until then, pronouns.’ ” (Lahiri 245) This also proclaims the motto of existential philosophy that says, existence precedes essence. “To existentialists, human beings-through their consciousness- create their own values and determine a meaning for their life because, in the beginning, the human being does not possess any inherent identity or value.”(Wikipedia) Thus, an individual can have the possibility to constitute his/her identity according to his/her essence. This notion ends the effects of conventional values.

For Gogol, existence precedes essence because he objects the traditional values of Bengali culture and he, in many situations, makes choices that are just the opposite of the values he is expected to obey. He loses his virginity, moves to another city to live alone, consumes much alcohol, ignores his family by rarely visiting and he changes his name that is the first thing his family gave him.

By becoming Nikhil, he thinks everything in his life will be on the right track but contrary to his expectations, his loneliness and the sense of isolation do not leave him in peace. He understands the fact that he cannot be at ease without gaining his authenticity. Therefore, instead of making reforms that address to the society, he sees the necessity of changes in his inner world that he has neglected for years. Although his denial of Bengali values is an

aspect of existentialist philosophy, regaining of these values for the sake of authenticity can be an aspect of existentialism and deconstruction of hegemony, too.

The way to the authentic self is through the deconstruction of Nikhil and the quest for Gogol. Although it cannot be put forward that Gogol has gained his authenticity, he makes an effort to be so. In fact, the result is not important for a seeker the way he takes gives him the relief of being on the way towards himself. Maybe, this is the reason behind Gogol's calmness in the end of the novel.

Moushumi is another character that experiences existentialist themes of freedom/freewill, denial of conventional values and a quest for authenticity. She is especially addicted to her freedom that gained in Paris.

France is the country of two representatives of existentialist philosophy, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, where self-determination was gained via the French Revolution. Having been educated in Paris, Moushumi is a mixture of both Revolution and existentialism on freedom. Although she is a member of the immigrant Bengali people, her life style and behaviors are not confined to a specific culture. She is the symbol of existentialist thoughts.

In addition to her free life style and her addiction to her freedom, she, meanwhile, is struggling to disconnect herself from whatever constitutes her Bengali identity. Bengali values hinder her from achieving whatever she believes to be her essence.

Her regular visits to Mimitri's apartment and thus her betrayal to Gogol are the results of the struggle for keeping her freedom and does not lose the connect between her identity and the term freedom. The reasons behind her betrayal is not just a quest for adventure or lust but "It reminds [Moushumi] of living in Paris - for a few hours at Dimitri's she is inaccessible, anonymous."(Lahiri 264) Dimitri's apartment is a shelter for her to escape from the conventional rules of marriage and Bengali tradition. She relieves for a while when she is with Dimitri.

Moushumi experiences another theme of existentialist philosophy, death. Death is a crucial problem for existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger. According to him,

In the everyday mode of being, *Dasein* interprets the phenomenon of death as an event constantly occurring in the world. It is a 'case' that happens to others. The general comment is "One of these days one will die too, in the end; but right now it has nothing to do with us." Dying remains anonymous and it has no connection with the 'I'. (Peach)

The death of other does not affect observers as it should because, as it is stated in the abstract, the death of other is a normal flow of life in the world. Nevertheless, it reminds the observers of the approaching end that means the end of their possibilities.

When Moushumi witnesses Alice's death, the administrative assistant, who "Moushumi had never been particularly fond of", She "feels sick at the thought of it, of a death so sudden, of a woman so marginal and yet so central to her world." (Lahiri 255) The death makes her feel sick because it demonstrates the desperation of human beings when they face the reality of death. The extinction of a being that makes effort to make sense of his/her life is somehow absurd. By the same token (the meaninglessness and horror death harbors), human beings are challenged to quest for authenticity. On the other hand, Heidegger proclaims that death is not a hinder for human beings to get authenticity if they realize that authenticity is "Being-towards-death". (Peach) For Heidegger, dread is both alienating and a stimulus for human beings to get authenticity. Thus death is not something that should be afraid of. Filiz Peach says, "...if man cannot face up to death existentially, he either preoccupies himself with worldly things or escapes into a mystical realm." (Peach) Thus, being courageous is not enough for man's stance against death but he should face it existentially.

It is not stated in details what Moushumi's comprehension about death is but it is neat that she feels a sense of dread that is a sign of reaction to the extinction of a being, which is also considerable for existentialists because

..., according to Jaspers, the individual's 'unfounded belief' in immortality stops man from seeking his true self. I would argue that human beings understand the horror of the experience of death whatever their belief is. However much they may believe in immortality, when they come face to face with death sooner or later they may still feel despair. In the face of death no belief can guarantee the individual a sense of relief or a sense of 'exemption' so to speak. (Peach)

Thus, alienated human beings become more estranged from themselves when they cannot control the occurrence of death but as it is stated by Filiz Peach the belief in immortality is worse than the dread against mortality. Because immortality ends existentialist inquiries and the quest for authenticity. By the same token, Moushumi's dread against death is confirmation of her existential inclination. After a short time, she meets Dimitri's name and she forgets everything about Alice. Afterwards, she thinks that marriage is a convention on her ideal life and her freedom.

And yet the familiarity that had once drawn her to him has begun to keep her at bay. Though she knows it's not his fault, she can't help but associate him, at times, with a sense of resignation, with the very life she has resisted, has struggled so mightily to leave behind. (Lahiri 250)

In addition, she tries to live a free life that does not contain any conventional values especially from Bengali culture.



### III.3.5-FEUERBACH'S ALIENATION IN *THE NAMESAKE*

Although *The Namesake* does not contain any explicit elements that may demonstrate the relationship between material world and human essence, I will deal with alienation in Feuerbach by benefitting from an implicit sign of materialistic alienation.

Feuerbach, forerunner but not father of materialism, makes a connection between human beings' need for and creation of God. He asserts that human beings' need for love and being loved motivated them to create the love of God. People regarded God as the symbol of ultimate love, grace and justice. Feuerbach states that "God is the principle of [man's] salvation, of [man's] good dispositions and actions, consequently [man's] own good principle and nature." (Wikipedia) Thus, human beings estrange themselves from their essence by creating God. With the creation of the love of God, human beings become alienated from their nature. Because they diverted the object of love from concrete (human beings) to abstract (God). The diversion in love also estranges and isolates individuals from the society in which they live. Individual's estrangement and isolation hinders the emergence of humanism because humanism is the combination of I-You love. It diverts human love's flow from God to human beings. For Feuerbach, humanism is the end of alienation of human being.

In *The Namesake*, although there are many rituals that are carried out by the Ganguli family, none of these is religious but the rituals are Bengali customs. Thus, the Ganguli are not fundamentalists and even not religious despite their dependency on India. Moreover, neither the Ganguli nor their relations are grateful to God for Ashoke's survival from the train accident but instead, they chose to thank Nikolai Gogol, the author of "The Overcoat".

...he thanks his parents, and their parents, and the parents of their parents. He does not thank God; he openly reveres Marx and quietly refuses religion... He cannot thank the book; the book has perished, as he nearly did, in scattered pieces, in the

earliest hours of an October day, in a field 209 kilometers from Calcutta. Instead of thanking to God, he thanks Gogol, the Russian writer who had saved his life.

By so doing, Ashoke backs up Feuerbach on the returning of love and thanks from God to human beings. He changes the object of human love from God to human beings as Feuerbach says, “The task of modern era was realization and humanization of God-the transformation and dissolution of theology into anthropology.”(Feuerbach 1) This is the end of alienation in Feuerbach’s philosophy.

Ashoke is the most comfortable individual among Ganguli family’s members when his life in the USA is taken into consideration. Ashima suffers from displacement. Gogol is isolated and estranged. Sonia, who prefers materialistic satisfactoriness, is as reserved as his father. The difference between Gogol-Ashima and Ashoke-Sonia stems from their outlook on life and what they centers in their thoughts. Ashoke manages to find the balance between his essence and the material world by loving and thanking people not any spirituality.

## EVALUATION

Although human beings have always had to tackle with alienation, it is more common in modern world especially because of colonization and post-colonization activities. The increase of alienation in modern world stems mostly from wars of hegemony as a result of colonization and decolonization. Colonization is an accelerator of alienation in the flow of human history by creating opposing sides for hegemony. The more human beings have involved in wars for control and exploitation, the more common alienation has become.

The quest for colonization made the settlers and occupiers to leave their mother countries. They settled in foreign land that was totally different from their experiences. In addition, the arrival of the masters estranged the indigenous from their lands and values. The colonizers either killed or enslaved the indigenous by depriving them from their lands. Thus, the displaced colonized were strangers not only to their values but also to themselves. Meanwhile, the colonizer, after experiencing an interaction with the indigenous and their exotic land, becomes estranged from their values of Mother Country by “going natives”. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 115) Thus, colonization alienates both the colonizers and the colonized at the same time.

Colonization affects both the invaders/occupiers and the indigenous from the periphery. However, the indigenous are more vulnerable against such a degenerating effect because they do not have enough means for quarrel against colonizers who are superior in economic and military means. Moreover, the West is more successful in using her culture as a means of assimilation against the colonized as England did.

Being uprooted and displaced, the indigenous were made either to live a life in poverty in their country or to move to a metropolis where they expect better opportunities for living and education. In addition to willingly moving to another country, some sheltered to a metropolis because of political reasons that gained momentum after decolonization process. Because the colonizers have left the reign of colonies to either their descendent or the

compradors to ensure the progression of imperialism there. Especially the oppressive reign of compradors accelerated the flow of immigrants to metropolises.

Those people who have left their country behind, unfortunately, have to face another hard period in the Centers. Being displaced and subject to hegemony of the Center, they try to find the balance between their values and the degenerating values of the hegemony. Their struggle to cope with the effects of being in-between and displaced generally results in any variant of alienation. Thus, alienation has been a common theme of postcolonial literature. Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* is a good example for mirroring lives of the Bengali family by underlining the sense of alienation as a result of being the diaspora.

*The Namesake* has been studied and analyzed in the light of alienation as a result of colonialism and postcolonialism. Although all characters of the novel have been considered in the course of analyses, more importance has been given to Gogol because his life adventure appeals to both Fichte and Hegel's philosophy on alienation.

Gogol's life has been studied by considering both the triad of Fichte and Hegel's notion of alienation. Fichte's thesis and antithesis have equaled to the first two steps of Hegel's philosophy (consciousness and self-consciousness) because they have illuminated the diversion of Gogol into Nikhil. The alienation of Gogol to his Bengali identity by becoming Nikhil has been evaluated in different ways because alienation in Fichte is different from Hegel's notion of the term. For Fichte, alienation is an ongoing process and each stage (thesis-antithesis-synthesis) requires it. Moreover, for him, the result of alienation is alienation again. On the other hand, Hegel comprehends alienation as a means of negation to become oneself/authenticity. For Hegel, alienation is not an aim but it is a way to reach the reason.

Another aspect that differentiates Hegel from Fichte about alienation in Gogol's life is the results of their process of alienation. There is a unity of thesis and antithesis in Fichte. For him, the person that has been born in the end of the novel is the combination of both Gogol and Nikhil. But there is not such a combination in Hegel's philosophy on alienation. The second stage in Hegel, negation, is just a stimulus for the spirit and mind to take advantage

from self-consciousness' experiences and become itself, be at home. When these two philosophies have been considered, Jhumpa Lahiri implicitly depicts Gogol as both a new person and a person who has gained his authenticity. Whether the person in the end of the novel is Gogol, Nikhil or both does not concern the theme of the thesis. The process of alienation is the focal point of this thesis. Besides, the end of novel is regarded as the combination of Gogol and Nikhil for Fichte, and the Gogol's gaining his authenticity for Hegel to complete the process.

The feeling of alienation that is experienced by the characters of *The Namesake* cannot be confined to just Hegel and Fichte's notion of alienation. Thus, Gogol and Moushumi's motives have been analyzed by considering existentialist alienation. Human condition and existence precedes essence have been shown as two crucial characteristic for Gogol and Moushumi's motives. Gogol's insistence on freedom of self-naming, choosing an appropriate way of life for himself and his sufferings as result of human condition. Moushumi's persistence on her freedom and her explicit connection with France have been regarded as her existentialist motives.

In addition to philosophical approaches to alienation, Melvin Seeman's scientific five-fold classification of alienation has been used in the analyzing of *The Namesake*. A character can be in many variants of alienation because of the contiguity. Thus, Ashima has been put in powerlessness because of her sufferings during her pregnancy and the displacement of her Bengali values. Gogol has been listed in meaninglessness, isolation and self-estrangement. Normlessness and isolation are two classification of alienation Moushumi experiences.

Despite the fact that there are not explicit signs of Marx's alienation, an implicit utterance has been regarded as an evidence to add Feuerbach's alienation to the analysis. Ashoke Ganguli and his parents' being grateful to Nikolai Gogol instead of God has been taken as their denial of spirituality. According to Feuerbach, human beings can only overcome alienation by diverting the flow of love and gratitude for God towards human beings. Ashoke does the same, and he is freer than the other characters.

In short, Jhumpa Lahiri successfully tells the story of the diaspora through a Bengali family by underlining the feeling of alienation throughout *The Namesake*. She emphasizes the psychological displacement of the alienated diaspora to create awareness about their efforts for psychological and physical survival.

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