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Ditsa Ajay Rathod

Voices of Diaspora: Equating The Namesake and Anita and Me

Diasporic literature narrates stories about people migrating to new places, showing how they deal with different cultures and stay connected to where they come from. Plato's concept of art as imitation, simply means that literature depicts society which helps us better understand different scenarios since the immemorial ages of different regions. It also helps in bringing countries closer in every aspect. The term "Diaspora" originates from the Greek word 'diaspeirein,' where 'dia' signifies 'across,' and 'speirein' denotes 'scatter.' Historically, it has been employed to characterise the dispersal of Jewish communities. "The study of diaspora in contemporary times has become multi-directional." (Laxmiprasad 99). A thorough examination of literature and critical analysis related to diaspora provides evidence to support the widely accepted belief that diaspora is a continuous and ongoing phenomenon that brings advantages to both the country of origin and the country of residence, despite the various socio-cultural and geo-political disparities. Sometimes the economic, social, and political unrest in the homeland prompts the phenomenon of migration. The process of translocation does not simply involve the physical relocation of individuals from one location to another. Rather, it entails a comprehensive reorganisation of the fundamental operations and coding of a person's social and cultural being. Diasporic writers are particularly focused on the matter of the physical and emotional adaptation of the diaspora. The themes include discrimination and cultural shock, reverse cultural shock and problems in adjustment and assimilation, orientalism and identity crisis, alienation and displacement, dilemma, hybridity, and generational gap. "The arrival and rule of British Empire in India can be linked to the existence of Modern Indian Diaspora all over the world" (Macwan 45). Indian Writing in English has undergone significant development since the two world wars and India gaining independence from the British in 1947. Before the renaming of Indo-Anglian Literature to Indian Writing in English, there were only a handful of notable writers contributing to this body of work. The canon of

writings in English by Indian authors was relatively limited at that time.

Jhumpa Lahiri and Meera Syal, are two new female writers, who have enriched the genre of Indian English fiction, and their imagination goes beyond the boundaries of their gender. They speak to an Indian culture marked by social distress and cultural dislocation, both domestically and internationally due to globalisation and immigration. These writers articulate the suffering of Indian immigrants residing in foreign lands, expressing the profound emotions of solitude and displacement, often facing limited options for alternative freedom on various fronts. They have so many commonalities and inherent differences which are both overt and covert. But the literary oeuvre they offer to the readers is outstandingly overwhelming and they lend their voices to the voiceless immigrants from across the globe.

The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri narrates the tale of a Bengali immigrant family residing in the United States. They hastily name their firstborn Gogol after the father's beloved author. Struggling to navigate both Indian traditions and American life, Gogol desires to distance himself from his embarrassing name and family. However, as he forges his path, he realises that identity is shaped by various factors beyond a name. Moreover, he also appreciates the significance of family bonding in forming one's personality.

**1 Anita and Me by Meera Syal** is a coming-of-age novel set in the 1970s in the fictional English mining village of Tollington. The story revolves around the protagonist, Meena Kumar, a young Indian girl growing up in a predominantly white community. Meena befriends Anita, a rebellious and charismatic girl, leading to a series of adventures that explore themes of identity, cultural clashes, and self-discovery. The novel delves into Meena's struggles with her dual cultural identity and the challenges she faces as she navigates the complexities of adolescence in a small English town. As Meena grapples with cultural differences and societal expectations, the narrative unfolds with humour and deeply affecting moments. The story highlights the tensions between Meena's Indian heritage and her desire to fit in with her English peers.

In an increasingly globalised world, diasporic literature offers profound insights into the

complexities of cultural identity, belonging, and the psychological struggles of individuals caught between two worlds. Anchored in a psychoanalytical framework, the study utilizes Freud's model of the psyche, comprising the id, ego, and superego, to dissect the inner conflicts faced by diasporic protagonists grappling with cultural dissonance, systemic racism, and generational divides.

By examining Gogol Ganguli's negotiation of his Bengali-American identity through the symbolic weight of his name and Meena Kumar's struggle to reconcile her Indian heritage with the realities of growing up in 1970s Britain, this comparative analysis highlights the universal yet intensely personal challenges of assimilation and tradition.

The paper further emphasizes the gendered dimensions of diasporic identity, shedding light on the unique experiences of female characters as they navigate cultural alienation and displacement. In doing so, it seeks to broaden the understanding of diaspora as a multifaceted phenomenon marked by resilience, complexity, and an enduring search for selfhood. By juxtaposing these narratives, the study not only captures the shared anxieties and aspirations of diasporic individuals but also celebrates their diverse journeys.

Ultimately, this exploration offers a poignant reflection on identity formation within the liminal spaces between heritage and modernity, contributing to a richer dialogue on the psychological and emotional contours of the diasporic condition.

The main characters find themselves in a struggle as they navigate and come to terms with the complexities of having dual cultural identities. In both *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri and <sup>1</sup> *Anita and Me* by Meera Syal, protagonists navigate the complex terrain of dual cultural identities, a theme that resonates strongly throughout the narratives. Both novels skilfully delve into self-discovery and the constant negotiation between cultural worlds.

In *The Namesake*, Gogol Ganguli, born to Indian parents in the United States, grapples with the clash between his Bengali heritage and the American society in which he is raised. This struggle is exemplified by his name, chosen by his father as a tribute to the Russian author Nikolai Gogol, a choice that reflects his father's attempt to bridge the gap between his Indian roots and the Western environment.

Similarly, <sup>1</sup> in *Anita and Me*, the protagonist Meena Kumar is a young British Indian girl growing up in the mining town of Tollington. Meena's journey revolves around reconciling her Indian heritage with the cultural dynamics of her predominantly white, working-class surroundings. The arrival of Anita, a charismatic and rebellious friend, prompts Meena to question and explore her own identity.

In Jhumpa Lahiri's novel, *The Namesake*, Freud's psychoanalytic theory of id, ego and superego can be applied to explore Gogol Ganguli's internal conflict as he navigates between his Indian heritage and American upbringing. Gogol, the American born child experiences identity fragmentation.

When Gogol grew up, he did not know the meaning of his name and used to love his name. If someone in the school would ever call him with his original name, he used to refuse by telling them that his name was Gogol and not Nikhil. The id, representing the instinctual, unconscious desires, manifests in his early attachment to his name. As a child, he unreflectively embraces his name, rejecting "Nikhil" when others call him by it, reflecting his sudden sense of self. His pleasure driven, id-dominated identity is satisfied being "Gogol" without the burden of cultural expectations. But one day, during a literature class he got to know about the Russian author Nikolai Gogol, and from then he started hating his name. This knowledge about his name triggers discomfort and selfconsciousness. He realizes, "Not only does Gogol Ganguli have a pet name turned good name, but a last name turned first name. And so, it occurs to him that no one he knows in the world, in Russia or India or America or anywhere, shares his name. Not even the source of his namesake." (Lahiri 68) As a name plays a crucial role in forming one's identity. His id's contentment is disrupted by the emergence of his ego.

The ego, acting as the rational, reality-oriented aspect of personality, begins to mediate between the conflicting cultural forces and his developing self-awareness. Gogol struggles with the practicality of his dual identity. The name rooted in Russian literature, seems absurd and meaningless to him: "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" (Lahiri 67). The ego seeks balance but cannot fully reconcile his desire for cultural acceptance with the heritage imposed upon him. Gogol, throughout the novel tries hard to find a way in between of the two different cultures.

The superego, representing internalized societal norms and parental expectations, intensifies his conflicts. His parents emphasis on Indian traditions pressure him to connect with his roots, while the American society he lives in values assimilation and conformity. His decision to adopt "Nikhil" represents an attempt to construct a socially acceptable persona, aligned with superego's moral demands. When he introduces himself as Nikhil to Kim, his name is accepted without question, providing a sense of normalcy and belonging that he craves. This shift reflects his effort to suppress the discomfort associated with his original name and navigate a path between competing identities.

Throughout the novel, his internal struggle illustrates Freud's concept of a divided psyche. His id-driven attachment to simplicity, his ego's attempt at rationalizing his identity, and the superego's influence of cultural expectations create a psychological tension. This mirrors Freud's notion of conflict within the mind: " the task of reconciling instinctual impulses with the demands of external reality". The name of " Gogol" symbolizes this enduring conflict between desire, rationality, and morality, shaping his complex journey of self-discovery and identity formation.

It is a compelling journey marked by the challenges of cultural assimilation, societal expectations, and the quest for self-discovery. Growing up as a British-Indian girl in the mining town of Tollington, Meena Kumar grapples with the complexities of straddling two distinct cultural realms. From the beginning of the story is conscious of her dual identity. She grows up realising that her identity is not clear-cut. Although she feels English, her family constantly reminds her that she is related to another country, India.

The id, representing Meena's desires, drives her initial fascination with Anita Rutter, a charismatic and rebellious older girl. Anita symbolizes freedom from cultural constraints, appealing to Meena's desire to fit in and be expected by her British peers. Meena's id-driven need for belonging is evident when she says, "I'd been having the best day of my

life being Anita Rutter's new friend" (Syal 60). Her attempts to imitate Anita's Brummie accent and adopt English behaviours demonstrate her longing for social acceptance and a sense of belonging within the host culture.

The ego, functioning as the rational mediator, emerges as Meena becomes increasingly aware of the complexity of her identity. But her mother has made a rule that Meena would not use particular words and phrases in the home. "You take the best from their culture, not the worst" (Syal 53) reflects the ego's role in balancing external influences with internal values. Meena's creation of fantastical identity as a "Punjabi princess who owns an elephant" is a playful but immature attempt to reconcile the tension between her Indian roots and her desire for acceptance. However, her growing realization that her father's Punjabi songs evoke a deep connection within her, "the songs made me realise that there was a corner of me that would be forever not England" (Syal 112), marks a pivotal movement of ego-driven self-awareness.

Meena has never been to India till now. Her superego is significant for her identity. She had heard about the country from her maternal grandmother, Nanima. "experience and her exposure to her indigenous culture in her Nanima arrived from India draw her closer to her own Punjabi culture." (Samanta 108). During the conversations with her Nanima, she used to be very curious about knowing the history and culture of India. It was her inner desire to know about her root culture. She had learnt about Indian history in her school but from a British perspective whereas on its contrary her family members have shared very different scenarios of India. After listening to such vibrant and active stories from her different relatives she accepted the fact that India is a very lively and cultural country and rejected her notion of India as a traditionally orthodox country. This evolving understanding reflects the superego's influence in guiding her toward a more integrated and mature sense of self.

Meena thus discovers her dual identity of being an Indian and a British partially. She also accepts the fact that her identity will always be divided between her family's norms and British surroundings.

In both novels, protagonists Gogol Ganguli and Meena Kumar grapple with the delicate balance of preserving their cultural roots while navigating the demands of the foreign societies they find themselves in. This tension manifests in the clash of traditions, values, and expectations inherited from their heritage with the often-contrasting norms of the American and British communities they inhabit.

The protagonists' journeys illuminate the internal conflicts that arise as they negotiate the intricate chain between honouring familial traditions and assimilating into a new cultural backdrop. The narratives impressively depict the struggles inherent in maintaining a sense of identity while adapting to the evolving landscapes of their lives, underscoring the complexity of the immigrant experience and the universal quest for belonging. "Gogol never thinks of India as desh. He thinks of it as Americans do, as India" (Lahiri 118). The reason why Gogol's receiving of both cultures create a sense of Double Consciousness which is evidently reflected in the text.

Both the authors have depicted the protagonists as second-generation immigrants as they are the same. It is also assumed that <sup>1</sup> *Anita and Me* is a semi-autobiographical novel by Meera Syal. And as per the psychoanalytic theory, texts and characters represent the author's psyche at some point. So, it could be said that the protagonists' struggles, and acceptance is a way of portraying authors' struggles. Also, this brings out a clear picture of her unsettled Indian diasporic life and therefore the aspect of Double Consciousness left a deep influence on her writing to shape the subjects of unsettlement. Also, both the novels have systematically portrayed the struggles of female characters in the host lands. Being females themselves it could be analysed that the authors themselves resonates more with different female characters framed by them or it could also be said that female members in their own life are one of the sources for their characters.

In examining the divergent approaches to depict racism and prejudice in *The Namesake* and <sup>1</sup> *Anita and Me*, a notable aspect is the focus on the female characters and why they face the challenges of discrimination within their respective cultural contexts. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, Ashoke's wife, Ashima, grapples with the subtler,

more systemic forms of prejudice as an Indian woman in the United States. Lahiri delves into Ashima's experiences, shedding light on how she copes with cultural isolation, subtly confronting racial biases, and preserving her cultural identity.

On the other hand, Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* centres around Meena Kumar, who, as a British-Indian girl, confronts overt racial prejudices in her predominantly white, working-class community. The character of Anita, a close friend, becomes a conduit for Meena's experiences with explicit racism. Also, the boy towards whom Meena initially felt attracted treats her racially biased. The novel vividly portrays the challenges faced by Meena and Anita as they navigate societal biases, portraying the harsher realities of racial discrimination and its impact on female characters in a British setting.

By focusing on the female characters, both authors who are female themselves, offer a different exploration of racism, highlighting the varied ways in which women confront and respond to prejudice within the unique dynamics of their cultural and societal environments.

In the context of psychoanalytical theory, one can analyse Ashima Ganguli's experience through the lens of Sigmund Freud's personality theory which includes concept of id, ego and superego. The id is the primary and instinctive component of personality. Freud's superego is the moral component of psyche, representing internalized societal values and standards. And Freud's ego is the rational part of the psyche that mediates between the instinctual desires of the id and the moral constraints of the superego.

The discomfort Ashima feels in the hospital, especially when changing into a knee-length hospital gown, "She is asked to remove her Murshidabad silk sari in a favor of a flowered cotton gown that, to her mild embarrassment, only reaches her knees." (Lahiri 2) This may symbolise a clash between her cultural upbringing and the new environment, reflecting the tension between Freud's idea of conservative superego and the liberating influence of the id.

When other couples in the hospital were openly affectionate towards each other, Ashima and Ashoke had a different bond than them which was deeper and more loyal.

Ashima has never called her husband by his name till now, "It's not the type of thing Bengali wives do- a husband's name is something intimate and therefore unspoken, cleverly patched over" (Lahiri 2). Ashima's hesitation to address her husband by his name aligns with Freud's concept of the superego, representing societal norms and moral constraints. Her adherence to traditional ethics, avoiding the use of her husband's name, highlights the internalised cultural expectations shaping her behaviour.

Ashima had the whole American staff with her. When she had a small walk with a nurse, Patty, she tried to translate a Bengali idiom into English and that resulted in wrong grammar the nurse had a smile on her face, " "As long as there are ten finger and ten toe," Ashima replies...Patty smiles, a little too widely, and suddenly Ashima realises her error, knows she should have said "fingers" and "toes." " (Lahiri 7) The embarrassment Ashima faces during the language mishap with Nurse Patty could be interpreted as a manifestation of the ego's struggle to reconcile her cultural identity with the demands of the unfamiliar surroundings in accordance to Freud's idea. The fear of judgement from the American staff underscores Freud's idea of psychological conflict between conforming to societal norms and maintaining one's cultural authenticity.

Another female character, Maxine Ratcliff, second girlfriend of Gogol, whose behaviour could also be analysed through Freud's structure of psyche. They were in a serious relationship. It is evident that she tried to merge herself with Indian family. "I want to go to Calcutta," Maxine says. (Lahiri 155). But she was not accepted by them.

They did not even include her in the last rites of Ashoke. Hence, through Freud's lens, Maxine Ratcliff's behaviour to merge in the family depicts her instinctual desire of the id but the rejection she faced through the Indian family could be due to superego of the Indians to not to include American in the family due to societal constraints.

Maxine Ratcliff's experience with discrimination during Ashoke's last rites could be analysed through the lens of Erik Erikson's psychosocial stage of Identity vs. Role confusion which mainly deals with the age of adolescent in which an individual tries to cope up with her/his partner (Erikson 261). Maxine's desire to connect with Gogol's culture and

the subsequent exclusion from family plans may trigger identity crisis issues related to Erikson's theory, where individuals seek a sense of belonging and struggle with their cultural identity (Erikson 262). The trauma Maxine experiences could contribute to a weakened ego, impacting her ability to cope with the challenges of the relationship.

Gogol's unconscious discrimination, influenced by cultural factors, may reflect unresolved conflicts within himself, affecting the dynamics of their relationship.

The protagonist, Meena, who is a British-Indian girl growing up in an English working-class community, faces overt racism and cultural insensitivity. In psychoanalytic terms, Meena's experiences can be analysed through the lens of Sigmund Freud's structural model of the psyche. The protagonist's journey reflects the interplay between the id, ego, and superego. The character of Sam Lowbridge, a boy towards whom Meena feels a close bond and she was initially attracted to him, becomes a lens through which these experiences unfold. In the novel, the racism begins when the economy is disturbed by those living in Tollington. Non-white people were frustrated by the system as they sought these non-white families as scapegoats.

There was an English festival in the town when Sam gave a speech. In that speech, Sam argues against Indians and terms them as blacks which hurts the protagonist, Meena.

"This is our patch. Not some wogs' handout." (Syal 193). She considers Anita, Sam and others as her bosom friends, but young adolescent Meena feels betrayed when they show racial bias against her and unleash attacks on Asians. She senses racism when she reads the news under the headline of a newspaper. Meena's initial attraction to Sam Lowbridge might be seen through Freud's idea of an id-driven response, representing her instinctual desires and emotions. However, Sam's hurtful speech triggers a conflict between her id and ego. The ego, according to Freud, striving to maintain a sense of reality, confronts the painful realization that her close friends harbour racial biases.

Meena's mother, Daljit undergoes insults while driving on the road on account of being an Indian. She narrates how they have been insulted during their visit to Gurudwara in Birmingham by their car being driven by her mother. There the car starts rolling back at the

top of the hill and it creates inconvenience to other vehicles. Meena gets out of her car and humbly requests the old lady sitting in a car to move her car a little back to rid the inconvenience which depicts Freud's ego to maintain the balance. But the English lady reacts in a humiliating tone "Bloody stupid wog. Stupid woggy wog. Stupid" (Syal 97). Meena feels as if she has been punched. She is haunted by this incident the whole day. The incident at the Gurudwara serves as a traumatic encounter, imprinting itself on Meena's psyche. Freud's concept of the superego, representing internalized social norms and morality, becomes activated as Meena grapples with feelings of inadequacy and a sense of being a secondary citizen. (Freud 11)

In an incident when she was lying beside an injured bank manager in a hospital, she was wondering if he must be Sam who had hurt the manager. She was so sure because she knew what Sam's perception was towards non-white people. She says, "Anita and I had never been meant for each other: Sam and Anita, Anita and Sam, it sounded as natural as breathing." (Syal 282) These words of Meena depict the effect on her psyche. The injury to the bank manager becomes a symbolic moment where Meena contemplates Sam's involvement, linking it to his prejudiced views. This internal conflict exemplifies Freud's concept of psyche through the struggle between Meena's unconscious desires (id) and the moral standards imposed by society (superego).

After such incidents, Meena gradually realises that she is a secondary citizen in the country where she was born and reared. Her perception towards herself is evident in the novel. Such harsh realities of racism have affected the young mind of Meena.

Because they are Indian women no matter in the foreign land they have to cooperate and adjust according to others. In both the novels, it could be traced that female characters try to assimilate even at the cost of their disturbed psyche.

In both, *The Namesake* and *Anita and Me*, as mentioned above, different characters were being subjects of prejudices and that led to adverse effects on their psyche and their doubts on their self-perceptions. The challenges they faced in the host land for being an outsider have been described with the help of instances. Now, in this argument, the reward

they got was in the form of assimilating into their host land and adapting the reality of their lives which could justify the research question.

In *The Namesake*, as mentioned above, Ashima Ganguli struggles to assimilate into the host land culture, but she manages to do so successfully by the end of the novel. Initially, she resisted assimilating into American culture which could be considered as Freud's concept of id due to which she was resisting. "I'm saying hurry up and finish your degree...I'm saying I don't want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It's not right. I want to go back." (Lahiri 33) Through this, it is depicted that Ashima dislikes living in America. She unconsciously demonstrates the desire and insult that she felt in the host land at different times. She initially resisted assimilation because of fear of being judged and created a small circle of her friends with those who were Bengali immigrants.

As time went on, Ashima overcame her fears and tried to assimilate which could be seen as the projection of Freud's concept of psyche in a proper chain. It could be said that it was her id to go back to India but then it was the ego (unavoidable compulsion) to stay in America and trying to assimilate demonstrates the superego that she found a middle way to balance her id and ego. Ashima shows her assimilation through willingness to celebrate American festivals for her family but at the same time, she makes her children celebrate Bengali traditional activities which depicts balance between id and superego, resulting into ego as per Freud's idea. At the end of the novel after her husband's death, she decided to stay abroad for six months and another six months in

India. "Ashima has decided to spend six months...in India, six months in the States...In Calcutta, Ashima will live with her younger brother...In spring and summer she will return to the Northeast, dividing her time among her son, her daughter, and her close Bengali friends" (Lahiri 275-276) This instance support the theory of Freud which describes the concept of ego.

While looking into the other novel, *Anita and Me* it could be observed that the protagonist Meena is easily able to assimilate in the host land as she was born and brought up there. Since the beginning of the novel, if applied Freud's idea of psyche, it could be seen as her

id to be like a British girl. She tried hard to be friendly with Anita Rutter. Despite all her trials and desires her mother was still somewhere resisting her to not be like English people. Her mother's resisting nature could be analysed through Freud's superego where her mother want her to be indulged in root culture more which is a type of social constraint. However, the assimilation of the elder generation of her family is different from hers. Daljit, mother of Meena was a first-generation migrant in the host land. If her character would be analysed through Freud's concept of psyche, it could be seen that she was unable to accept the host land driven by her id to save the Indian authenticity. She <sup>1</sup> was born in a small village in Punjab and then shifted to Delhi and then to Tollington. "She didn't follow the news, no telly, no radio, no inclination, being a simple Punjabi girl suffering from culture shock, marooned and misplaced in Wolverhampton" (Anita and Me Epigraph). This quote suggests the condition and behaviour of Daljit as she was resisting assimilation in the host land. She always wore her Punjabi attire in the host land. She never tried to jell up with those who were the natives. This depicts her adamant psyche and not to follow Freud's concept of ego and unable to overcome the cultural shock.

<sup>1</sup> In Anita and Me unlike The Namesake, the characters did not fully assimilate in the host land. Syal's portrayal of Daljit somewhere represents the psyche of her mother. It could be analysed that the author's own experiences in life tend to represent the characters she is trying to frame. In the first novel, Ashima accepts and adopts the host land despite being a first-generation migrant like Daljit in the other novel.

In both The Namesake and <sup>1</sup> Anita and Me, characters experience challenges assimilating into the host land, leading to doubts about self-perception. Applying psychoanalytical theory of Freud, Ashima's journey in The Namesake reflects a balance between id (desire to return to India) and ego (compulsion to stay in the U.S.). Her eventual assimilation suggests a superego compromise.

Contrastingly, Meena <sup>1</sup> in Anita and Me desires Britishness from her id since birth. However, her mother, Daljit, resists assimilation, reflecting cultural shock. Daljit's adamant psyche, depicted through her attire and isolation, signifies an inability to overcome the

shock, unlike Ashima. Psychoanalytically, Ashima's evolving attitude aligns with Freud's theory, while Daljit's resistance echoes the conflict between id and superego, contributing to the characters' distinct assimilation outcomes.

The protagonists of both the novels are second generational immigrants, meaning they were born and brought up in a host land where they did not have their ancestral roots. This causes generational conflict after a certain stage in lives. This theme of generational conflict is also be analysed with Freud's triplet because such conflicts with parent directly affects one's psyche.

In both *The Namesake* and *Anita and Me*, generational conflicts significantly impact the characters' attitudes toward life. Gogol Ganguli's struggle with traditional expectations and desire for individuality aligns with Freud's psychoanalytical framework. His journey reflects the interplay between the id (personal desires), ego (mediation with societal norms), and superego (parental and cultural influences). Gogol's final attitude seeks a synthesis between his Bengali heritage and personal identity, illustrating a psychological resolution to the generational conflict.

Likewise, Meena Kumar <sup>1</sup> in *Anita and Me* experiences a clash between her British upbringing and traditional Indian values. Applying the id, ego, and superego framework of Freud, Meena's desire for assimilation represents the id, while her parents' expectations embody the superego. The tension between these forces, mediated by the ego, shapes Meena's final attitude, reflecting a psychological reconciliation of generational influences. In both novels, the psychoanalytical perspective enhances the understanding of characters' responses to generational conflicts, revealing the intricate psychological processes that contribute to their final attitudes toward life.

In *The Namesake*, the author has depicted the differences between two different generations as "The Namesake spans two generations of the same Indian American family." (Barbhuiya 168) She might have faced the same conflicts with her parents as she is also a second-generation migrant as the protagonist, Gogol. Gogol's journey of changing his name reflects Freud's psychoanalytical theory. His decision to adopt the name Nikhil

represents the id, driven by an impulsive desire to assimilate into American culture and assert personal autonomy. The clash with his parents' resistance signifies the superego, embodying cultural and traditional values that resist such changes.

One day before shifting to Yale for his higher studies, he thought of changing his name and after researching the procedure he got to know that thousands of people in America every year change their names and that was very normal. He brought up this idea of his to his parents which could be seen as his id to change the name. But contrastingly, his parents did not allow him to do so which shows superego as in form Indian societal norms to not change name. Ashoke argued that "What's done is done,...Gogol has, in effect has become your good name." (Lahiri 99). Ashima also agreed with her husband's point and added that "It's too complicated now...you're too old." (Lahiri 99). Ashoke and Ashima said so because in Bengali tradition people do not change their names hence to maintain the culture of their root society could be seen as the superego.

According to Gogol, his first name was his nick name. Such a counter argument coins the conflicts between people of two different generations. The opposition his parents had could be interpreted as the superego upon the id he had. After a while, Ashoke suddenly told him "Then change it...In America anything is possible. Do as you wish." (Lahiri 99) Ashoke's initial opposition, stating that Gogol's name has become his "good name," echoes the superego's influence, emphasizing the significance of tradition. With application of Freud's concept of psyche, Ashoke's eventual acceptance and encouragement to change the name symbolize a more lenient superego, highlighting the evolving nature of the first generation's perspective.

The romantic relationships in the novel also align with psychoanalytic elements of Freud. Gogol's relationships with Ruth, Maxine, and Moushmi depict the id's pursuit of individual growth and forming a new identity through love. The secrecy of his relationship with Ruth indicates a conflict between the id's desires and the superego's societal expectations.

In the novel, the author has portrayed romantic relationships of two different generations which are different from each other. Ashoke and Ashima, the first generational couple think

of love and marriage in Indian traditional terms which is for the sake of companionship and family growth. But the protagonist had three serious relationships in his life with Ruth, Maxine and Moushmi. For this new generation love and marriage is a way of forming new identity and individual growth as well which is contradicting from the older one, depicting generational gap. It could also be said that for the first generation, marriage is an institution which includes society and hence it is driven by superego and for the second generation, marriage is for personal growth which is driven by id if looked upon by Freud's idea of psychoanalytical framework.

His first girlfriend was Ruth whom he dated for more than a year and that could also be analysed through Freud's idea. Initially, he kept their relationship secret from his parents might be because of fear of not being accepted as it is not normal to date someone in Indian culture, and the reason could be seen as superego. Ruth's parents accepted him very easily and it was his id that his parents should also accept Ruth. When Ashoke and Ashima got to know about Gogol's relationship, they simply said "You're too young to get involved this way." (Lahiri 117). It was the superego, the social pressure that they did not accept Ruth as she was an American and later in the novel, Ashima sets a date for his son Gogol with Moushmi who is a family friend and second generational migrant in America with Bengali roots, like Gogol. Ashima advises him to move on in his life and should get married which depicts the id of first generation. The superego's disapproval of Ruth due to social pressures illustrates the generational clash, where traditional values challenge the evolving perceptions of love and marriage. Ashima's encouragement for Gogol to marry Moushmi, a second generation migrant, reflects a compromise (ego) between the id's desires and superego's expectations, emphasizing the importance of shared cultural roots.

<sup>1</sup> **Anita and Me is** claimed several times that it is a semi-autobiographical novel in which author represents herself through the protagonist Meena Kumar. Meena's relationship with her family and community is intricately woven with the concepts of id, ego and superego by Freud which provides a psychoanalytic lens to understand the generational conflicts she experiences.

Meena as a second-generation migrant, wanted to assimilate in the new land where she was born and brought up which could be considered as her desire of the id in terms of Freud. But the elderly people of her family were initially in 'cultural shock' which is the superego and they gradually adapted from the host country while continuing with their own culture as the mediating force between id and superego contributing to the resulting ego. Meena had never been to India thus she imagines India in an English frame, which she narrates as "basically English streets with a few cows lounging around" (Syal 32). Meena, as a second-generation migrant, experiences generational conflicts as she tries to assimilate into her new environment. Her desire to adopt British culture reflects her ego, seeking a balance between her individual identity and societal expectations. However, the elderly members of her family initially face a cultural shock, representing the clash between the id (individual desires) and superego (cultural and societal norms).

Meena's mother whenever they were supposed to go out wears her Punjabi attire to show their distinctiveness. If looked by Freud's idea, it was her constant id to show off her Indianness. The people there outside used to give different gazes to Daljit upon which Meena says she "would get fewer stares and whispers" (Syal 25) if she wore British trousers rather than Indian. She also used to force Meena to wear such clothes, but Meena found English clothing more sophisticated. Meena's mother's insistence on wearing Punjabi attire and preserving their distinctiveness illustrates the id, emphasizing her need to showcase her Indianness. This cultural pride becomes a constant struggle, portraying the superego's influence on maintaining traditional values.

The conflict intensifies with Meena's preference for British food and Christmas over traditional Indian cuisine and Diwali. Meena liked the food of British people more than that of Indian food. She liked to have restaurant food showing her id, but her mother never ate outside instead she used to argue that she could make those things at home better, it could be seen as ego as her mother tries to resolve Meena's id and her own superego. Meena describes the importance of Indian cuisine for people of her community, saying, "This food was not just something to fill a hole, it was soul food" (Syal 61). So, when

Meena asks for chicken fingers instead of “rice and daal” (Syal 60) it is different from the elderly generation’s perspective. Through Freud’s lens, Meena's inclination towards Western customs represents her ego, while her mother's insistence on homecooked Indian food and Diwali celebration reflects the superego, emphasizing cultural preservation. The tension further unfolds in Meena's interactions with Anita and her mother's reservations about their friendship. Daljit did not want Meena to spend time with Anita because she bought a dog, a black poodle and named it the N-word. Also, the girls used to wear short clothes to represent their femininity by physical attractiveness. The difference in both the cultures visible through Daljit’s view also shows the societal and family barriers upon Meena due to Indian culture leading to Freud’s idea of superego.

Meena also tried and applied her mother’s makeup, but she looked like “Cheshire Cat” (Syal 107). Meena's experimentation with makeup and Western clothing signifies her id's exploration of individuality, while her mother's concern mirrors the superego's adherence to cultural norms.

But then her mother allowed her to go to the fairgrounds if she would come to the Diwali celebration in the evening, solving the id of Meena and social constraints or the superego resulting into Freud’s concept of ego which is mediating way between the former two.

Ultimately, the first-generation characters in the novel, play a crucial role in balancing the id and superego, embodying the ego which is Freud’s framework of psyche. They contribute to the resolution of conflicts within the family and community, demonstrating a mature understanding of cultural adaptation and identity formation.

In both *The Namesake* and *Anita and Me*, traditions play a significant role, and applying psychoanalytical theory helps unravel the complex dynamics surrounding cultural heritage and individual identity.

In *The Namesake*, Gogol's connection to Bengali traditions can be analysed through a psychoanalytical lens of Freud. The celebration of festivals and adherence to naming conventions form part of his superego, representing the cultural norms and expectations imposed by his parents and community. Gogol's conflict arises as he grapples with his id's

desire for autonomy and assimilation in the American environment.

The clash between his individual identity (id) and cultural heritage (superego) becomes a source of tension, mirroring the broader struggle of second-generation immigrants.

1 In *Anita and Me*, Meena's adherence to Indian traditions is similarly examined through a psychoanalytical perspective of Freud. Her family's commitment to traditional practices represents the superego, instilling a sense of cultural pride and identity. However, Meena's id, driven by the desire to assimilate into the British community, experiences conflict as these traditions set her apart. The tension between her individual identity and cultural expectations becomes a central theme, echoing the psychoanalytical struggle between id and superego.

The psychoanalytical approach also sheds light on the role of traditions as a bridge in both novels. Within the family unit, traditions serve as a source of connection, providing a sense of belonging and continuity (superego). Yet, these same traditions contribute to conflicts when faced with the external pressures of the broader society, highlighting the intricate interplay between individual desires (id), cultural norms (superego), and the pursuit of identity (ego).

Ultimately, psychoanalytical theory enriches the understanding of how traditions serve as a double-edged sword, offering both connection and conflicts in the characters' journeys of self-discovery and cultural navigation.

In conclusion, exploration of *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri and 1 *Anita and Me* by Meera Syal has provided a profound analysis of themes such as identity, culture, and belonging. By incorporating a psychoanalytical lens, we have gained valuable insights into the characters' struggles, particularly the nuanced experiences of the female protagonists grappling with alienation and assimilation.

The psychoanalytical perspective allowed us to dissect the intricacies of cultural adaptation, where the id, ego, and superego played crucial roles in shaping characters' decisions and conflicts. The clash between individual desires and societal expectations, as well as the delicate balance between cultural heritage and the pursuit of self-identity,

emerged as central themes.

These novels serve as literary mirrors reflecting the universal human journey of self-discovery amidst cultural complexities. Through the prism of psychoanalytical theory, we have unravelled the characters' unique struggles, triumphs, and the evolving dynamics of their identities within the broader context of cultural adaptation. This deeper analysis enhances our appreciation for the profound intersections of psychology, culture, and personal growth woven into the fabric of these compelling narratives.

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Rathod 1

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