

INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICTS IN SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORIC LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF JHUMPA LAHIRI AND MONICA ALI

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ABSTRACT

Migration often brings about a complicated process of negotiation around identity, belonging, and continuity of culture in immigrant communities. One of the more prominent examples of these negotiations relates to intergenerational conflicts that can develop between migrants and their children. In this article, the intergenerational conflicts are explored in the works selected by Jhumpa Lahiri and Monica Ali, particularly *Brick Lane* and *The Namesake*. Starting from ideas from diaspora studies and theories of cultural hybridity, the study examines how the family as a site of origin and connection is transformed into a space of contestation where multiple and conflicting cultural values, social expectations and identity constructions converge. The analysis shows that both authors do not only describe intergenerational conflict as a family conflict, but as a sign of the conflicts that are caused by migration, cultural displacement, and social adaptation. In contrast to Lahiri's focus on the emotional and psychological aspects of diasporic life, Ali brings a socio-political and gendered perspective to the dynamics among the family. The article posits that these stories all point to a fluid sense of cultural identity and a cultural hybridity that can change through dialogue, negotiation, and cultural exchange with other peoples in diaspora.

KEYWORDS: The South Asian Diaspora, Intergenerational Relations, Cultural Hybridity, Identity Construction, Jhumpa Lahiri, Monica Ali, Migration Studies are the Key Words.

Article History

Received: 10 Nov 2025 | Revised: 15 Nov 2025 | Accepted: 18 Nov 2025

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a significant theme in contemporary literature, especially in the West as it affects the writing of South Asian authors. Frequent themes of diasporic literature are those of displacement, nostalgia, cultural adaptation, and identity negotiation. The latter themes, however, take a central place in the discussion, with intergenerational conflict as the point of focus since immigrant families often face conflict as a result of differences in responses to the host culture. Immigrants are usually first generation and they will make a concerted effort to retain their cultural heritage, traditions and values. In contrast, their children, raised in multicultural environments, tend to embrace aspects of the host society. This difference can lead to disputes regarding language, marriage, education, social behavior and identity. Jhumpa Lahiri and Monica Ali have become important authors for these experiences.

This paper examines the intergenerational conflict that is explored through the characters of Lahiri and Ali in the South Asian Immigrant community. The study illustrates how cultural negotiation and identity construction occurs through the characters' conflicts with cultural expectations and personal aspirations in the context of family relationships.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DIASPORA AND INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT

The focus of diaspora studies is on the interdependent nature of the homeland and the host land. The contemporary scholars like Stuart Hall and Homi K. Bhabha support that identities are not static, but are constantly negotiated and constructed through interactions. Bhabha's idea of hybridity is especially useful to understand how second-generation immigrants live in multiple cultural spaces. In diasporic communities, intergenerational conflict may be a manifestation of varying levels of attachment to cultural traditions. The older generation might think that cultural preservation is necessary to preserve identity, while younger generations might want to be independent and integrated into the dominant culture. Literature is a good medium to explore these tensions and how they affect individual lives.

BILATERALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S WORK: A STUDY ON INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT

Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction often depicts Bengali immigrant families in the United States. Her characters traverse the difficulties of reconciling their culture and heritage with the harsh realities of life in America. The battle between Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli and their son Gogol reflects the challenges of cultural transmission in *The Namesake*. While Ashima is deeply rooted in the Indian traditions and customs, Gogol is facing a problem with his inherited identity. He is unhappy with his name, as it is not a common one, and represents his general sense of unease with cultural norms. The second generation immigrant's quest for self-definition is evident in Gogol's desire to reinvent himself.

As Gogol starts to pursue relationships and lifestyles different to his parents' wishes, the tension builds. Lahiri refrains, however, from this binary opposition between tradition and modernity. In contrast, she shows both generations the experience of displacement and uncertainty. Toward the end of the novel, Gogol begins to understand more deeply the history of his family, and is potentially able to find a path toward reconciliation through empathy and self-understanding.

Likewise, the themes of emotional distance in immigrant families are addressed in the stories of *Interpreter of Maladies*. Often there are misunderstandings between characters, stemming from an interpretation of different cultures. While the emphasis is not on dramatic confrontations, Lahiri highlights the subtle emotional conflicts that take place between generations in day-to-day life.

INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT IN MONICA ALI'S BRICK LANE

Brick Lane is a unique and connected examination of immigrant family life by Monica Ali. The novel is set in the Bangladeshi community in London and explores the changes that occur to family relationships and gender roles due to migration. Nazneen is the protagonist who follows the traditional roles expected of her by her husband Chanu. As she adjusts to life in Britain, however, she slowly gains in agency and independence. The differences between generations are most clearly seen in terms of the experiences of Nazneen's daughters, who feel more connected to British culture than to their parent's country.

In Shahana, one of Nazneen's daughters, her parents' attempts to instil traditional values often fall short as she refuses to follow their lead. Her rejection of cultural practices represents the challenges encountered by second generation immigrants who are trying to establish themselves in the framework of British culture. Chanu's frustration is a symptom of the fears of first-generation immigrants of losing their cultural identity. Ali points to the significance of class, race and gender in intergenerational conflict as well as cultural differences. There is a conflict between the young generation's aspiration for freedom and the concerns of their parents regarding cultural continuity, and the expectations of their community. Brick Lane depicts diaspora as a process, as a happening, as a fluid encounter.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

While Lahiri and Ali are writing from different cultural and geographical outlooks, there are a number of common concerns that can be found in their works. Both writers portray immigrant families dealing with differing cultural forces. The characters are engaged in a process rather than an experience of identity, a process that is contested.

One key similarity is how they depict second generation characters. In *The Namesake*, Gogol meets resistance to his inherited cultural expectations, and *Brick Lane*, Shahana meets resistance to her inherited cultural expectations. The obstacles they face demonstrate how to deal with multiple cultural identities and the feeling of belonging.

The emphasis of the two authors' narratives is, however, different. Lahiri's main emphasis is on interpersonal relationships and emotional intricacies of the family. She brings out mini-action-drama scenes that tend to be introspective and nuanced. Ali, however, puts the family conflicts in a social and political context—racism, economic difference, and gender discrimination, among other things.

The other significant difference has to do with women's involvement. Lahiri's characters such as Ashima focus more on the maternal experiences whereas Ali focuses more on female empowerment and social transformation. Nazneen's development illustrates the evolving role of immigrant women in diasporic communities.

The writers of these papers both propose that intergenerational conflict is a necessary part and parcel of migration, however. Instead of portraying such conflicts as destructive, they portray them as opportunities for culture adaptation and self-discovery.

CONCLUSION

One of the most prominent issues in South Asian diasporic literature is intergenerational conflict. Jhumpa Lahiri and Monica Ali bring to life the complexities of the immigrant family through their subtle characterizations to show how culture is maintained as it is passed on to a new social context. Their works illustrate how identity is constantly negotiated across generations, and how it is affected by the changing historical and cultural contexts.

Both emotional relations and social realities are intertwined in the experiences of the diasporic community, with Lahiri highlighting the former and Ali the latter. They illustrate how disputes between parents and children speak to larger issues of belonging, cultural continuity and cultural change. Finally, they suggest in their literature that by understanding and speaking with each other, people can construct complex and hybrid identity and overcome inter-generational differences.

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