**Jhumpa Lahiri, The Namesake**

Happiness is elusive for the characters in *The Namesake*. Everybody is just a little bit lost. Lahiri explores the ideas of cultural and personal isolation and identity struggle through her various characters showing what it means to be culturally dislocated and growing up in two worlds instantaneously.

Happiness is a complicated matter for characters of the novel Namesake by J. Lahiri. It is a ambiguous task to ensure that you are happy without knowing the exact definition of being happy. Each character represents happiness in different manners. Gogol is the central character of the novel and experiences first-generation challenges when growing up. Sonia, Gogol’s sister, is raised without difficulties of her brother’s childhood. Mrs. Ganguli, an immigrant from India, is immersed in a completely new culture with numerous differences from her own. Maxine, at some point Gogol’s girlfriend, is born and raised in the US, which gives an interesting perspective for analysis. Every character has a unique experience, which directly correlates with the level of happiness each one of them has.

Gogol’s life path consists of rises and falls and is predetermined when his parents immigrate to the US. He is born in the US, raised in an Indian family, and learns how to communicate in both American and Indian societies. Taking all of the cultural exposures and differences, it is definitely a compound beginning of his life. It is important to mention the nature of his name, which he acquired from Nikolai Gogol, one of the greatest Russian authors. His father gave his son this particular name because of the accident that happened to Mr. Ganguli years ago and has had a great impact on his identity and life “He has never been told why he was really named Gogol, doesn't know about the accident that had nearly killed his father.” However, the meaning behind the name is not inherited from father to son without Ashoke’s story, which Gogol learns much later. It turns out that Gogol does not see the reason why he has the name he has. It doesn’t mean anything in English or in Hindi. Moreover, he learns about the tragic life of Nikolai Gogol. The new discovery puts the young boy under stress because he associates himself with Nikolai Vasilyevich and feels ashamed because of that “His parents have never told him any of this. He looks at his classmates, but they seem indifferent, obediently copying down the information as Mr. Lawson continues to speak, looking over one shoulder, his sloppy handwriting filling up the board. He feels angry at Mr. Lawson suddenly. Somehow, he feels betrayed.” This entire situation concerns Gogol, and he feels distant from his own name. Later, Gogol changes his name to Nikhil and gets to the point where he splits his identity in two. During his college life, he is Nikhil, but when he gets home, he is back to being Gogol. This affects young man unestablished personalities. Gogol has a childhood, where he is loved, and he has everything he needs to become a promising young man. However, he still has some hesitation about himself, and it turns out to be an inner conflict and insecurities. When Gogol enters his college stage of life he immediately separates from his parents. This separation lasts for the rest of his life and brings unnecessary difficulties in his life. In college, Nikhil enters into a relationship with Ruth, in which he does not introduce his girlfriend to his parents and does not invite her home. “As much as he longs to see her, he cannot picture her at the kitchen table on Pemberton Road, in her jeans and her bulky sweater, politely eating his mother's food. He cannot imagine being with her in the house where he is still Gogol.” He cannot blend his new American life with the one he had with his parents, Indian life. He experiences the same with his next relationships. This distance grows with age, and he does not feel a connection to home. The concern about his Indian heritage arises when Nikhil is dating Maxine. He experiences cultural shock when he gets to know her family better. He realizes the way his parents live differs completely from Maxine’s family in aspects of food, culture, expression of love, and ability to enjoy life. At this point in time, Nikhil feels mostly disconnected from Indian culture and his family. Nevertheless, he has parts of his life that can be seen as happiness. He grows up in a full(whole) family, which takes care of the young boy. He experiences both cultures, and it helps him to broaden his view of the world. Regardless of cultural differences, he has a great family that supports him at every stage of life. His father helps him in many different ways that Gogol understands later. Ashoke tells his son a story about the accident that created a bond between his name and his father’s story. Moreover, one of the birthday presents for Gogol was a book by Nikolai Gogol from his father with the words: “The man who gave you his name, from the man who gave you your name”. His father discovered the significance of thoughts in Russian literature and emphasized this significance by combining his own experience and sharing that with his son. Ashoke shares part of his soul with his son and, thus, Gogol can be happy because his father’s knowledge will stay with him forever and will help him to go through tough times. (unfinished)

Sonia has a unique experience of being happy in a sense of going through immigrant adaptation to a new culture by acquiring her brother’s experience and maneuvering through difficulties Gogol has experienced, but she does not necessarily have to. That could be observed even at the rice ceremony: “She plays with the dirt they've dug up from the yard and threatens to put the dollar bill into her mouth. "This one," one of the guests remarks, "this one is the true American.”

 Moreover, Sonia does not have a pet name, which makes her better suited for American culture. Throughout her life, it feels like Sonia has a much easier time coexisting between two cultures. She does not keep her distance from her parents even though she moves to San Francisco. It becomes clear when she moves back to her mother after Ashoke’s death. She leaves all her life in San Francisco and supports her family and does not show hesitation about her decision, despite the fact that it is not an easy decision in any sense.

Mrs. Ganguli learned how to be happy. It did not come right away to her when she moved to the US with Ashoke. She left her home, parents, job, and friends back in India and started her life all over again. It took her time to fall in love with her husband, with their lifestyle, home, and America. She preserved her Indian culture and did not become an American. However, her identity was also influenced by American culture and some aspects of Indian culture were changed. She empathized with her feeling about immigrating to the US by “For being a foreigner, Ashima is beginning to realize, is a sort of lifelong pregnancy—a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding.” Her life became centered around family and her husband. Those two pieces made her happy. However, time flew by. Her children are living separately. After Mr. Ganguli traveled for work, Ashima felt lonely and had to get used to being alone, to find new happiness in her life. At the time of Ashoke’s trip, Ashima’s happiness was a hope that he would return home. However, that did not happen. After his death, Mrs. Ganguli had to change her lifestyle completely and that meant she would not be able to reach the previous source of happiness any longer. It is not easy to reconsider your life at any point, but it becomes even harder with age. Ashima faces a harsh reality. However, she gets support from Sonia and Gogol. Ashima continues her journey to find happiness.

Maxine,

In conclusion,