ISSN: 2395-7852

International Journal of Advanced Research in Arts, Science, Engineering & Management

Volume 12, Issue 2, March- April 2025

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBER INDIA

Impact Factor: 8.028

+91 9940572462 +91 9940572462 ijarasem@gmail.com www.ijarasem.com

International Journal of Advanced Research in Arts, Science, Engineering & Management (IJARASEM)

| ISSN: 2395-7852 | www.ijarasem.com | Impact Factor: 8.028 | Bimonthly, Peer Reviewed & Referred Journal|

| Volume 12, Issue 2, March- April 2025 |

Fragments of the Past: Exploring Trauma and Memory in Diasporic Writings of Jhumpa Lahri's the Namesake and Zadie Smith's White Teeth

Vanshika

PG Student, Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT: This dissertation explores the complex interplay of trauma and memory in the diasporic narratives of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*. By examining how personal and collective histories shape immigrant identities, the study investigates the psychological and cultural impact of displacement across generations. Through a close textual analysis, the dissertation highlights how memory—fragmented, inherited, and reconstructed—functions as both a burden and a bridge within diasporic experiences. The study also considers how trauma informs cultural hybridity, belonging, and identity formation, offering new insights into postcolonial and diasporic literature.

KEYWORDS: Diaspora, Trauma, Memory, Identity, Displacement, Cultural Hybridity, Postcolonial Literature, Jhumpa Lahiri, Zadie Smith, Intergenerational Memory

I. INTRODUCTION

Diasporic literature serves as a rich site for exploring the intricate intersections of identity, memory, trauma, and cultural displacement. Literary texts from diasporic contexts provide critical insight into the emotional, psychological, and cultural costs of dislocation as waves of migration reshape global demographics, whether driven by sociopolitical unrest, economic necessity, or colonial legacies.

These narratives frequently function as textured spaces of negotiation, where personal histories intersect with collective memories and trauma reverberates across generations and borders. They frequently go beyond the straightforward recounting of the lives of immigrants. In the context of global diasporas, the notion of the "fragmented self" frequently emerges as characters navigate the tensions between inherited traditions and adopted cultures. In this context, the diasporic subject constructs identity and processes loss through the use of memory and trauma. The act of remembering becomes both a means of preservation and a means of survival through silence, storytelling, and cultural rituals. As a result, diasporic literature fulfills a dual function: it imagines modes of continuity, belonging, and transformation while simultaneously evoking historical and personal ruptures.

This dissertation examines how trauma and memory are portrayed and reimagined in Zadie Smith's White Teeth and Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake, two significant pieces of contemporary diasporic literature. While Lahiri's novel is a quiet, introspective meditation on Bengali-American life and Smith's is a vibrant, polyphonic portrayal of multicultural London, these novels share a concern with the psychological effects of migration and the difficulties of inheritance across generations. The ways in which identities are constantly rearranged in diasporic spaces, how trauma is experienced and passed on, and how cultural memory is maintained are the subjects of both texts.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The legacy of colonialism, patterns of transnational migration, and the shifting landscapes of global capitalism are all deeply intertwined with the concept of diaspora as a lived experience as well as a theoretical construct. In addition to reshaping national boundaries and demographic profiles, these forces have profoundly influenced the psychological and cultural landscapes of those who traversethese liminal spaces. In this context, trauma and memory emerge as essential lenses through which to understand how diasporic identities are formed, contested, and remembered.

During the postcolonial era, large numbers of people moved to metropolitan areas like the United States and the United Kingdom from formerly colonized areas like South Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa. These migrations were often driven by a mix of aspiration and necessity: the pursuit of economic opportunity, educational advancement, and political stability, alongside the dislocations prompted by war, partition, and decolonization. As a direct consequence of this, diasporic communities developed into both agents and products of global modernity.

They had to deal with demanding requirements for assimilation, cultural retention, and self-definition, all of which were often contradictory. South Asian immigration to the United States marked a significant shift in the country's demographic and cultural composition in the context of the United States, particularly following the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act's passage. This legislation dismantled restrictive immigration quotas and facilitated the entry of highly skilled professionals from countries like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri depicts the socioeconomic aspirations of first-generation immigrants and the subtle, frequently internalized trauma of cultural dislocation through the lens of the Ganguli family.

The difficulties that these characters face are not only external, manifesting in racial marginalization and cultural estrangement, but also internal, as they try to reconcile the alienation of their professional identities with the indifference or hostility of living in a society that occasionally remains hostile to them. Their American-born children, such as the novel's protagonist Gogol, inherit this dual consciousness: caught between loyalty to ancestral heritage and the pull of American individualism, they grapple with the burdens of memory and the uncertainties of belonging.

In contrast, Britain's post-World War II landscape was shaped by a different, though equally transformative, wave of migration. The UK welcomed immigrants from Commonwealth nations as part of its post-imperial reorganization to fill labor shortages and rebuild a war-ravaged economy. The lives of Bangladeshi, Jamaican, and working-class white British families in North London are the focus of Zadie Smith's film White Teeth, which depicts the cultural effects of this migration. The novel foregrounds the multicultural reality of late twentieth-century Britain, where the ideals of inclusivity frequently clash with enduring racial prejudices, economic disparities, and the legacies of empire. Through her satirical and multi-voiced narrative, Smith traces how the children of immigrants wrestle with inherited traumas—both familial and historical—while forging identities within a society that continually questions their legitimacy.

Both Lahiri and Smith's narratives share a commitment to personalizing these massive historical events. While grounded in distinct national and cultural contexts, both novels foreground the intimate dimensions of diaspora: the fractured relationships, the generational misunderstandings, and the silent weight of memory that lingers within families and communities. These texts frequently depict trauma in the tiniest, cumulative instances of cultural dissonance, loss, and longing, rather than in a dramatic or obvious manner. Similarly, memory operates as both a connective tissue and a site of rupture—linking characters to ancestral pasts while also exposing the discontinuities and distortions that migration inevitably introduces.

how trauma, whether directly experienced or inherited, shapes the inner worlds of their characters and permeates their familial and social relationships. In The Namesake, personal trauma is subtly yet powerfully woven into the lives of the Ganguli family. Ashoke Ganguli's survival of a devastating train accident in India marks a defining rupture in his life narrative. He doesn't talk much about the incident, but it has a lasting impact on his identity and values. The image of Ashoke clutching a page from Nikolai Gogol's The Overcoat during the wreck becomes a potent symbol of survival, fate, and the arbitrary nature of life and death. Ashoke makes this traumatic memory a living legacy by giving his son the name Gogol, which Gogol does not know he has. For Gogol, the name initially functions as an alien marker—an awkward cultural artifact that distances him from his American peers. As he matures and learns the origin of his name, the trauma it signifies becomes part of his own identity formation, complicating his relationship with heritage, family, and selfhood.

III. THE GENERATIONAL DIVIDE BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

One of the most persistent and emotionally charged themes in diasporic literature is the generational divide between immigrant parents and their children. This divide is not simply a difference in age or temperament but stems from profound disjunctures in cultural orientation, historical consciousness, and existential priorities. In Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake and Zadie Smith's White Teeth, this generational conflict is portrayed as both inevitable and deeply formative. The parents, shaped by memories of their homelands and the traumas of displacement, often view cultural preservation as a means of survival and identity maintenance. Their children, by contrast, are raised in the cultural milieu of the host country and thus internalize a different set of values, leading to tension, miscommunication, and sometimes estrangement. Yet, both novels also explore the possibility of transformation, understanding, and reconciliation across these generational divides.

In The Namesake, Lahiri presents a subtler, more introspective rendering of this generational conflict. Gogol Ganguli, the American-born son of Bengali immigrants Ashoke and Ashima, is the protagonist of the novel. The story follows Gogol as he struggles with the burdens and contradictions of his hybrid identity. From an early age, Gogol experiences a sense of alienation not only from American culture, in which he is superficially integrated, but also from his parents' Bengali heritage, which feels distant, foreign, and imposed.The symbolic crux of this conflict is his name. "Gogol," a

name chosen by his father in memory of the Russian author who indirectly saved his life, becomes a site of discomfort and rejection for the young protagonist. Gogol views his name as a sign of otherness, a linguistic anomaly that distinguishes him from his peers and embodies the awkwardness of his bicultural identity rather than a bridge to his father's trauma or a sign of survival. His decision to change his name to "Nikhil" during his teenage years is a powerful assertion of agency and an attempt to erase the past.

The act of renaming signifies Gogol's desire to control his narrative and conform to the normative identity structures of American society. However, this choice also causes a symbolic and emotional divide between him and his parents, particularly his father, whose mute grief over Gogol's rejection of the name highlights the emotional stakes of passing on an identity from generation to generation.

The parents, particularly Ashoke, carry with them the trauma of migration and survival; the name "Gogol" is a vessel of memory and a tribute to the fragile continuity of life. Gogol's rejection is thus not only personal but cultural—it severs the symbolic thread linking him to his ancestral history. From a theoretical perspective, these intergenerational conflicts resonate with Homi Bhabha's concept of the "third space," where new cultural identities are formed through negotiation and hybridity. This liminal space is occupied by the children in both novels, who are neither fully embraced by the host culture nor fully rooted in the heritage of their parents. Initially alienating, this hybridity becomes a creative setting for identity formation. Marianne Hirsch's idea of "postmemory" is also pertinent here. The children, particularly Gogol and Irie, acquire memories of their parents' traumas through stories, silences, and cultural practices rather than direct experience. Their struggles to make sense of these inherited narratives underscore the emotional labor involved in negotiating diasporic identities.

IV. UNDERSTANDING MIGRATION AND TRAUMA

Migration, particularly when it is involuntary or undertaken under duress, often leaves deep psychological scars. Even though these scars aren't always visible, they continue to affect generations and shape people's identities, relationships, and memories. In diasporic literature, the challenge lies in how to represent this trauma—how to give form and voice to experiences that are fragmented, disjointed, and often resistant to language. The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri and White Teeth by Zadie Smith take radically different narrative approaches to this task, each illuminating the inner landscape of migration trauma in distinct ways. While Lahiri employs a linear, restrained formto echo the quiet interiority of her characters 'pain, Smith embraces a chaotic, multi-voiced structure that mimics the fractured, contested terrain of multicultural Britain. Together, these works not only narrate migration trauma—they embody it, using form and structure as extensions of emotional experience.

At first glance, The Namesake might appear deceptively simple in its narrative style. Lahiri's prose is spare, her chronology largely linear, and her emotional register understated. However, her narrative's power is precisely due to this restraint. In The Namesake, migration trauma seeps into the rhythms of daily life, the silences between family members, and the rituals of food, naming, and remembrance rather than through overt breakdowns or grandiose displays of suffering. Early in the book, Ashoke's near-death experience on a train in India that led to the name "Gogol" for his son is introduced, and it reverberates subtly throughout the text. Despite the fact that Ashoke recovers from the accident, he never explicitly addresses the emotional impact. Instead, he embeds its memory in the name he gives his son—a gesture that transforms personal trauma into familial inheritance.

According to Cathy Caruth, trauma's resistance to full narration is reflected in this subdued transmission of trauma: "The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them." Gogol's name—an awkward, unsuitable label that becomes a site of discomfort and eventual transformation—lives on in Ashoke's name, which carries the full weight of his survival in his inability to articulate it. Gogol's struggle with his name becomes a metaphor for his connection to his family's past as he grows up. Initially, he rejects it, seeking to assimilate into American culture by adopting the more palatable "Nikhil." However, as he comes to understand the history behind the name, particularly after his father's death, Gogol begins to reconcile with his heritage. This arc —from rejection to understanding—unfolds through Lahiri's chronological structure, which mirrors Gogol's psychological journey and his slow, painful integration of past and present.

V. INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICTS AND THE BURDEN OF HISTORY

One of the most enduring tensions in diasporic literature arises from the generational conflict between immigrants and their children—a dynamic rooted not only in cultural and linguistic differences but also in the disparate relationships each generation has with history. The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri and White Teeth by Zadie Smith both depict history

as an active, shaping force rather than a passive background. It determines how identity is constructed, how relationships are navigated, and how trauma is inherited or resisted.

Whether it is a name, a mythologized ancestor, or a silenced trauma, the burden of history frequently manifests as a generational divide as parents struggle to pass on a legacy that their children do not necessarily want or understand. In The Namesake, Lahiri presents history as both a source of silent pain and of potential reconciliation. Ashoke Ganguli's experience of surviving a catastrophic train accident in India becomes a formative moment in his life, but rather than openly recounting it, he encodes this trauma into his son's name—"Gogol." This seemingly insignificant choice of name has a significant emotional impact. For Ashoke, the name is a tribute to the Russian author who indirectly saved his life and a reminder to cherish the gift of survival. Yet for Gogol, the name becomes a source of embarrassment, alienation, and identity confusion. He does not learn the origin of his name until adulthood, and thus the historical trauma it signifies remains abstract and inaccessible for much of his life.This narrative arc illustrates what Marianne Hirsch terms postmemory—the transmission of trauma from one generation to another through indirect channels such as stories, silences, or symbolic acts.

While Ashoke's trauma is not directly imposed on Gogol, it creates a psychic inheritance that shapes his self-perception and emotional landscape. Gogol doesn't know what it is, but after his father's death, he learns that his hybrid identity causes him to feel something heavy. He experiences a moment of late comprehension when he discovers the full meaning of his name—a form of historical consciousness that enables him to reconnect with his cultural and familial roots. The turning point comes with this realization. Gogol decides to keep his father's books as a means of preserving the memory that is embedded in them and begins to embrace his Bengali heritage by visiting Kolkata with renewed curiosity and empathy. The intergenerational conflict here is thus not based on direct confrontation but on miscommunication and emotional distance.

Lahiri's subtle narrative style reflects this—her prose avoids dramatic outbursts, instead conveying the slow, often painful process of realization and reconciliation. In The Namesake, the burden of history is not used as a weapon; rather, it is internalized, simmering beneath the surface until it quietly alters Gogol's life. This quietness is key to understanding the kind of trauma Lahiri explores —trauma that is not explosive but persistent, encoded in the rhythms of everyday life and the choices characters make without fully understanding why. By contrast, White Teeth deals with history more overtly and contentiously. Samad Iqbal, a Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant living in Britain, is consumed by the memory of his supposed ancestor, Mangal Pande, a figure linked to the Indian Rebellion of 1857. For Samad, this connection to a "freedom fighter" becomes a cornerstone of personal and cultural pride.

Nevertheless, Smith's depiction of this historical obsession is profoundly ironic. The actual details of Mangal Pande's legacy are ambiguous and contested within the novel, and Samad's reverence for him often borders on the absurd. This ambiguity allows Smith to critique the dangers of relying on mythologized history to define identity in the present. Magid and Millat, Samad's two sons, respond to his historical fixation in very different ways, and neither of them shares Samad's romanticism for the past. Magid, the son Samad sends to Bangladesh in an attempt to preserve cultural authenticity, returns more secular, rational, and Westernized than ever. Millat, raised in Britain, seeks belonging through religious extremism, ironically clinging to a rigid ideology that Samad cannot fully comprehend.

White Teeth's central theme of history as contested terrain is highlighted by this fragmentation of historical memory. Unlike Lahiri's meditative approach, Smith's narrative is irreverent, polyphonic, and chaotic, capturing the multiple and often conflicting interpretations of cultural legacy in a multicultural society. Samad's inability to control how his sons engage with their heritage underscores the futility of trying to impose a singular historical narrative in a diasporic context. "Constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference," as Stuart Hall puts it, is what diasporic identities are doing. Samad, on the other hand, resists this fluidity and clings to an idealized, static past in a world that has already changed. The conflict between Samad and his sons is also a reflection of larger ideological conflicts, such as those between tradition and modernity, secularism and religiosity, and the West and the East. These tensions are not just generational but epistemological: they reveal competing ways of knowing and interpreting the world. While Samad sees history as a moral compass, his sons view it as either irrelevant or deeply flawed. Millat's involvement in the radical group KEVIN (Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation) reflects a desperate attempt to find meaning in a fragmented identity, while Magid's embrace of science and rationalism represents the opposite extreme. In bothcases, the burden of their father's historical legacy is not embraced but reacted against—reconfigured into new, and at times destructive, forms.

| ISSN: 2395-7852 | www.ijarasem.com | Impact Factor: 8.028 | Bimonthly, Peer Reviewed & Referred Journal|

| Volume 12, Issue 2, March- April 2025 |

VI. REPRESENTATION OF RELIGION AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS IN COPING WITH TRAUMA

In diasporic literature, religion and cultural traditions are often portrayed as central to the immigrant experience, acting both as anchors of identity and as sites of internal conflict. In Jhumpa Lahiri's*The Namesake* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, these elements take on significant roles in the characters 'navigation of trauma. Whether serving as sources of comfort, identity preservation, or ideological tension, religion and cultural traditions provide a vital lens through which to examine the psychological and emotional consequences of migration, dislocation, and generational fragmentation.

In *The Namesake*, religion and culture are not portrayed as dogmatic or overtly institutional but as intimate, daily practices that sustain the Ganguli family amidst the alien landscape of American life. Ashoke and Ashima's religious rituals—such as the naming ceremony, death rituals, and Durga Puja celebrations—are rendered with quiet reverence. These acts are not just cultural performances but deeply felt connections to the homeland and its values. For Ashima in particular, the act of sustaining cultural rituals becomes a form of resistance against assimilation and a strategy for coping with the loss and loneliness of immigration. Cooking Bengali meals, wearing saris, observing Hindu customs, and fostering relationships within the Bengali-American community are not passive acts of nostalgia but vital gestures of resilience and continuity.

Ashima's relationship with cultural tradition is also deeply gendered. As the mother and homemaker, she becomes the primary custodian of cultural transmission. Her role echoes what Chandra Talpade Mohanty describes as the "ideological construction of the 'third world woman 'as the bearer of tradition," but Lahiri complicates this by emphasizing Ashima's quiet strength and agency. She does not enforce tradition through coercion but practices it as a way of sustaining her own identity in a space that consistently renders her invisible. Her trauma, rooted in cultural dislocation and loss, finds a measure of healing in these rituals, which create a sense of order and familiarity. Cultural traditions in *The Namesake*, therefore, function not just as memory but as embodied resilience.

Gogol, however, initially finds these traditions alienating. For much of his adolescence and early adulthood, he views religious and cultural practices as foreign impositions that underscore his liminality in American society. His rejection of the name "Gogol" is emblematic of a broader refusal to embrace the cultural identity that his parents attempt to preserve. This detachment is not merely aesthetic or rebellious but deeply psychological. As Erik Erikson theorizes, adolescence is a critical stage for identity formation, and for diasporic children like Gogol, this process is complicated by the competing demands of cultural heritage and societal integration.

Over time, however, Gogol's perspective begins to shift—especially after the death of his father. The mourning rituals, which once seemed archaic, take on new emotional resonance. Participating in these customs allows him to connect with his family's grief and, in doing so, with the cultural framework that gives that grief shape and meaning. His journey toward cultural reconciliation is subtle but significant, marked not by dramatic conversion but by a growing appreciation for the traditions that once seemed burdensome. Through this arc, Lahiri suggests that cultural and religious practices, though initially perceived as oppressive, can become essential resources for healing and belonging when approached with empathy and openness.

In contrast, *White Teeth* offers a more contentious and pluralistic representation of religion. Smith's portrayal is far more fragmented and ideological, reflecting the complex dynamics of multicultural Britain. Religion in *White Teeth* is not just a private source of comfort but a public and often polemical force that intersects with politics, gender, and race. Samad Iqbal's adherence to Islam is framed as both sincere and performative—an attempt to assert moral clarity in a world he experiences as culturally disordered and personally emasculating. His longing for cultural puritydrives him to send one of his twin sons, Magid, back to Bangladesh for a "proper upbringing,"reflecting his belief that religion and tradition can counteract the corrupting influences of Western society.

VII. CONCLUSION

In *The Namesake* and *White Teeth*, Jhumpa Lahiri and Zadie Smith craft nuanced portraits of diasporic life, illuminating how trauma and memory permeate individual psyches, familial relationships, and broader cultural landscapes. These novels, situated in two distinct cultural contexts—South Asian-American and multicultural British—serve as vital literary spaces where the complexities of displacement, historical legacy, and intergenerational tension are brought to the fore. By engaging with themes of personal and cultural trauma, generational divides, historical burdens, and the ambivalent role of religion and tradition, both texts underscore the psychological and emotional dimensions of diaspora.

Trauma in these novels is not presented as a singular, catastrophic moment but as a slow-burning, multi-layered process. It exists in the silent grief of Ashima Ganguli, the unresolved longing of Samad Iqbal, and the conflicted identities of their children. Lahiri's understated prose captures the subtle accumulation of everyday alienation, while Smith's polyphonic narrative embraces the chaos of a multicultural society in flux. Despite their stylistic differences, both authors converge on a central truth: the diasporic condition is marked by a continual negotiation between memory and the present, tradition and autonomy, roots and routes.

One of the most compelling insights emerging from this comparative analysis is the persistence and fluidity of cultural memory. Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory offers a particularly useful lens through which to view the intergenerational transmission of trauma and identity. Characters like Gogol Ganguli, Millat Iqbal, and Irie Jones inherit not only cultural practices but also unresolved emotions and historical anxieties. These inheritances, however, are not always welcomed. For many second-generation diasporic individuals, they become sites of resistance as well as self-discovery. Gogol's name, initially a burden, becomes a symbol of reconciliation, while Millat's radicalization and Irie's cultural searching reflect alternative pathways shaped by memory's influence.

The generational divide, as explored in both texts, is symptomatic of deeper ideological tensions. Parents, shaped by the trauma of migration and the desire to preserve cultural purity, often impose rigid expectations on their children. This is seen in Ashoke and Ashima's hope that Gogol would remain connected to his Bengali roots, and in Samad's obsession with instilling traditional values in his sons. However, the children, shaped by the host country's cultural milieu, often respond with ambivalence, rejection, or reinvention. These intergenerational dynamics demonstrate the limits ofcultural preservation in diasporic spaces and the necessity of adaptive identities that reflect hybrid realities.

History, in this context, is both a weight and a wellspring. Ashoke's train accident, a personal tragedy rooted in real historical contexts of political unrest and infrastructural fragility, is transformed into a narrative inheritance for Gogol. In *White Teeth*, Samad's fixation on Mangal Pande and colonial rebellion reflects a desperate attempt to reclaim agency from a past defined by subjugation. Yet, as Smith's novel makes clear, clinging to history without engaging its contradictions can lead to dogmatism and disconnection. Her critique extends to the broader sociopolitical landscape of Britain, where national narratives often obscure the contributions and struggles of immigrant communities. The unresolved traumas of colonialism, racism, and socioeconomic marginalization continue to ripple through contemporary diasporic identities.

The novels also highlight how religious belief and cultural practices serve dual roles: they offer comfort, meaning, and continuity, but they can also reinforce patriarchal norms and ideological rigidity. Ashima's quiet adherence to tradition becomes a form of resilience, while Samad's religious orthodoxy becomes a site of conflict. For younger characters, religious and cultural engagement is often reframed in more personal, fluid terms. Irie's eventual embrace of her Jamaican heritage and Gogol's gradual appreciation of Bengali customs reflect how second-generation individuals often curate their identities from both inherited and discovered cultural elements. What emerges from *The Namesake* and *White Teeth* is not a monolithic experience of diaspora but a spectrum of responses to trauma, memory, and cultural difference. Lahiri's characters tend toward introspection and emotional restraint, mirroring the quiet burdens of immigrant life. Smith's characters, in contrast, navigate their worlds with urgency and irreverence, reflecting a postcolonial landscape marked by complexity, contradiction, and unresolved tensions. These tonal differences are not simply stylistic but reflect the specificities of American and British multiculturalism, the differing historical trajectories of immigration, and the distinct social climates in which these characters live.

From a theoretical standpoint, the insights of Bhabha, Hall, Gilroy, Caruth, and Hirsch remain central to interpreting these narratives. Bhabha's notion of the "third space" is especially relevant, as it encapsulates the cultural hybridity at the heart of both novels. The diasporic subject, according to Bhabha, is not rooted in a singular origin but lives in the liminal space between cultures, constantly negotiating meaning. This is vividly embodied in characters like Gogol, who inhabits the margins of Indian and American identities, and Irie, who finds empowerment not in choosing one cultural lineage over another, but in embracing multiplicity.

Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, which emphasizes the belatedness and unrepresentability of traumatic experience, also finds resonance in these texts. Trauma, as depicted by Lahiri and Smith, is often invisible, embedded in everyday interactions, silences, and familial tensions. It is not always articulated but is deeply felt. Likewise, Hirsch's postmemory articulates the emotional inheritance of trauma in powerful ways, showing how historical pain is not limited to those who directly experience it but is carried forward in altered, often unconscious, forms.

Ultimately, both *The Namesake* and *White Teeth* remind us that diasporic literature is as much about survival as it is about storytelling. It is about finding voice amidst displacement, piecing together identity from fragments, and

| ISSN: 2395-7852 | www.ijarasem.com | Impact Factor: 8.028 | Bimonthly, Peer Reviewed & Referred Journal|

| Volume 12, Issue 2, March- April 2025 |

reimagining the past to make sense of the present. Through theirexplorations of trauma and memory, Lahiri and Smith elevate the ordinary experiences of diasporic subjects into profound meditations on belonging, grief, and transformation.

Their works suggest that the process of healing, for individuals and communities alike, lies not in erasing difference or forgetting the past, but in acknowledging complexity, embracing hybridity, and cultivating empathy across generations. Diaspora, in their hands, becomes not only a site of rupture but also a site of possibility—a terrain where new forms of identity, kinship, and narrative can emerge.

REFERENCES

1. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
2. Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
3. Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard University Press, 1993.
4. LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
5. Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The Namesake*. Houghton Mifflin, 2003.
6. Smith, Zadie. *White Teeth*. Hamish Hamilton, 2000.

International Journal of Advanced Research in Arts, Science, Engineering & Management (IJARASEM)

| Mobile No: +91-9940572462 | Whatsapp: +91-9940572462 | ijarasem@gmail.com |