



## Family and Intergenerational Trauma: A Comparative Analysis of Shafaq’s Honour and Lahiri’s The Namesake

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### ABSTRACT

The current study is a comparative exploration of intergenerational trauma within families and its effects on the various characters of the selected fiction namely, *Shafak’s Honour* (2012) and *Lahiri’s The Namesake* (2009). This qualitative inquiry is based on the close-text analysis of the selected passages. The theoretical framework employed in this paper borrows concepts from *Familial Trauma theory*. This research explores the following aspects: Firstly, it examines the intergenerational trauma within families. Secondly, it focuses on the ways the characters are left vulnerable and react to their corresponding trauma. Lastly, the research also explores the possible gender differences as a response to trauma. The research is significant in its understanding of the multi-faceted display of trauma within the generation of families and its role in shaping the life trajectories of the various characters, collectively as well as individually.

#### Keywords:

*Intergenerational Trauma, Trauma Theory, Family*



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## INTRODUCTION

“All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way” (Anna Karenina, 1877, p. 12). Intergenerational trauma is the trauma that is passed on from one generation to the next. Borrowing from the German words, *liebe* (love) and *albeit* (work), mental health is defined as the, “ability to love, work and play” (Matsuki, p.15). With the rise in discourse related to mental health, more people are returning towards fiction to better understand themselves. By using fictional characters to discuss such personal issues, people are more likely to find catharsis. Therefore, the present research takes *Shafak’s Honour* and

Lahiri's *The Namesake* and explores how trauma affects characters both as individuals as well as collectively, as a family. Family becomes a contentious site where trauma breeds and transfers, however examined closely, family also provides the crucial strength required to overcome traumatic experiences.

Elif Shafak is a Turkish-British novelist. Most Pakistanis recognize her by the book that brought her the most fame, *The Forty Rules of Love* (2009). However, she has other works that are just as impressive. Some of these works include *The Gaze* (2000), *The Bastards of Istanbul* (2006), *Black Milk* (2007), *10 Minutes 38 Seconds* (2019) and *The Island of Missing Trees* (2021). Many of her works draw inspiration from her own life including familial trauma, struggles of a single parent and/or emotionally unavailable adults. *Honour* (2012) is no exception. Jhumpa Lahiri is an English born Indian-American born in 1967 with both her parents associated with the educational and literary circles. She is mostly famous for her exploration of Indian-immigrant experience in America which is greatly inspired by her own experience as a second-generation immigrant. Her most popular works of fiction are *Interpreter of Maldives* (1999) and *The Lowland* (2013). She is also known for her nonfiction essays that explore her role as a multilingual writer. *Translating Myself and Others* (2022) is her most recent contribution towards the genre of non-fiction.

The story of Shafak's *Honour* revolves around a Turkish-British family, the Topraks. They are an immigrant family comprising of five members: a husband, a wife and three siblings. Despite sharing the same roof, there is a sense of displacement and alienation among them. Each one wallows in their own sorrows without realizing that the other is in a similar if not worse predicament. The parents are troubled by their abusive pasts and the crumbling marital ties while the children are discontent with the emotionally unavailable and borderline abusive adults around them. Lahiri's *The Namesake*, is her debut novel based on the Gangulis, a family of four living in the States. In contrast to *Honour*, this book is much more aware of the socioeconomic war between two traditions that do not mesh well together: India and Cosmopolitan America. The characters are not abusive per se but rather emotionally detached and have the clearly widening generational gap between the parents and the kids. The fictional families in both of the novels display experience of trauma, its effects on the familial bonds in multiple ways including physical, emotional, psychological as well as social. The consequent strain on familial bonds makes the family a site of mutual conflict and stress.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Trauma tends to be multifaceted; it can manifest itself in many different ways. It can even travel through generations resulting in intergenerational trauma. The current study explores how trauma is passed on through generations of trauma victims while using the characters of the chosen works.

### **Objectives**

While the concept of trauma is multifaceted, the current study has the following research objectives for the comparative analysis of the two works of fiction. First, the paper explores the link between Intergenerational trauma and familial ties. Secondly, it examines the display of trauma in specified characters in the story and the difference in their response to trauma. Lastly, this study evaluates the possibility of gender and biological sex playing a role in the demonstration of traumatic response.

## **Research Questions**

The focus of the research is on the following three questions.

1. What is the influence of Intergenerational trauma on familial bonds?
2. How do characters experience Intergenerational trauma?
3. Is there a gender-based response to Intergenerational trauma?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The first written record of the word ‘trauma’ was recorded in 1685. It originates from the word τραῦμα (traûma) in ancient Greek which means wound as in a physical injury. Today, this word is used in medical and psychiatric literature as a wound of the mind. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines trauma as ‘an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster.’ Giller (1999) argues that trauma is tremendous stress overwhelming one’s ability to cope. Caruth (1996) gives the word ‘latency’ to the period between the traumatic event and the realization of it. In 1896, Freud used the term to explain mass hysteria in his female clients. While many researchers talked about trauma as emotional strain on the body, it was only after the research of Hans Selye (1936) that the physical connection with trauma became apparent. He argues humans experience biological stress syndrome when they come in contact with nocuous agents like toxins, cold, infection but also when they experience trauma which disrupts the regular bodily functions. This research linked modern definition of trauma with its Greek roots of being a physical wound because Han Selye’s research shows that emotional abuse disrupts bodily functions in the same manner physical abuse and injuries do. This is known as biological stress disorder or general adaptation syndrome. Deckers (2018) discusses stress is the “body’s attempt to maintain a homeostatic function” (p.269). Caruth (1996) further differentiates psychological dysfunction from trauma. She argues that trauma is an event of catastrophic nature while psychological dysfunction is a response to that trauma. Terr (1991) proposes two classifications of trauma: type I and type II trauma. The former is the result of a single event or incident like an abrupt accident, death and/or sexual assault. The latter is unique in its pattern of repetition and is usually far destructive causing severe trauma over a longer span of time. It includes child molestation, verbal and physical abuse, toxic relationships and/or bullying.

Intergenerational trauma is the phenomenon in which the descendants of trauma victims exhibit adverse emotional and behavioural responses resembling their parents; responses like low self-esteem, suicidality, aggressive tendencies, helplessness, codependency and fickleness while nurturing new relationships. Its first clinical record dates back to 1966 in children of Nazi Holocaust survivors in Canada, United States and Middle East. In 1980, the popularization of the term ‘survivor syndrome’ led to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) being recorded in the medical manuals of that time. Menzies divides intergenerational trauma into four domains: individual, family, community and nation (2010. P. 63). Root (1992) draws the link between racism and discrimination with individual trauma, using the word ‘insidious trauma’ for trauma caused due to racial discrimination. Payukotayno (1988) and van de Sande (1995) emphasize role of individual and family in establishing trauma and encourage cultivating positive family values, constructive parenting and communal behaviour. Phillip debates that by depriving each other of tenderness and affection in relationships, one teaches the next generation the denial of love and mutual response to the point of making it seem as the new standard. Danielli (1998) maintains that the mere exposure to someone else’s trauma can render vulnerability and traumatic scarring while rupturing the tapestries of

life. Vera Muller-Paisner (2005) asserts that family tapestries standing on collective trauma and lies create people suffering from existential crisis; not knowing where or who they are.

Freud (1896) was the first psychoanalyst who used the Creative and Liberal arts to explain the psychology of real-world humans. Caruth furthered the field of Literary Trauma Theory with her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996). She gave the concept of 'Traumatic Neurosis' which will be explored later in this paper. In the same year, Tan drew the connection between individual trauma and cultural experience in his book *World of Hurt*. In 2011, Connolly proposed a study that looks at the history of Intergenerational trauma through both Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis. In 2018, Selfridge explored characters going through generational trauma in Tony Morrison's *Beloved* which was shown through temporal inflexibility and instances of emotional and physical abuse. In 2020, Eagle stone conducted similar research on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Taking from the predecessors in the field, the current paper builds up on that knowledge using the works of Shafak and Lahiri as source text.

Shafak's *Honour* is set in a world dictated by honour even if that honour entails killing someone in cold blood. It includes a major episode of honour killing, leaving a huge trauma for the family. Dr Haile (2007) suggested that more than 5000 are killed in the name of honour; most of them being females. Shafak's novel gives a voice to those victims. Rose (2017) lauds the writer for her ability to create such an emotionally charged story that gives a great insight into the mind of the murderer, Iskendar, who is himself a victim of intergenerational familial trauma. Rafique and et al. (2021) assert that the aggression in Iskender comes from his father Adem who, in turn, inherited it from baba, his own father. It is an "inherited ideology" (p.113). All in all, the studies show that the actions of the characters in the story are linked to their past.

In the case of *The Namesake*, David Kipen (2003) argues that the protagonist, Nikhil, is stuck between his Indian and American identities causing a great deal of stress. Field (2004) elaborates that he is continuously suffering from existential identity, having to juggle between identities. Although Heinze (2007) argues that this novel breaks the notion that diaspora equates to powerlessness; a notion expressed in many post-colonial writings. The characters start from humble beginning but advance in their socio-economic status so monetary concerns or racism are not the central focus. However, Friedman (2008) points out that Lahiri's portrayal is not from an outsiders' perspective. In fact, her characters are second generation migrants with "shifting national loyalties" (p. 112). Therefore, trauma of belonging and not-belonging is clearly manifested through characters' identity crisis. To conclude, all these studies focus on the characters' identity crisis and their shifting loyalties.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study follows a qualitative approach with the primary focus being on narrative criticism. Since the term criticism by its very nature biased, the research will incline more towards a subjective interpretation. The results are also author centered with a focus on context-based examination; drawing a link between the writer's personal experiences and the literary text.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Most dysfunctional families demonstrate behavioral patterns that are linked to their trauma. To evaluate the characters' response to trauma, the study takes the concept of 'Traumatic

Neurosis' by Caruth (1996). The first step to identification of trauma is to find those patterns. A dysfunctional family employs ineffective problem-solving strategies, does not communicate properly, lacks cohesion, is more blame oriented and has poor resource management. In general, such a family has more problem causing strategies than problem solving ones (Figley, 1983). According to Catherall, family and trauma share a 'bidirectional' link (2004). He expands on the four ways in which a family system can be traumatized, originally given by Figley. These include simultaneous effects of trauma, vicarious exposure to trauma, secondary traumatic stress and intrafamily trauma. Trauma and neglect at an early age can have catastrophic results.

Severe traumatic situations, especially at a young age, can have irreversible damage on one's mental health; the ability to love, work and play (ibid). These scars can develop into posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The PTSD cycle is characterized by states of hyperarousal or extreme numbing which, "can result in mental and emotional disorganization, leaving survivors feeling out- of-control, even terrified, unless they have ways of managing them" (p.16). For the trauma survivor, the inability to moderate one's own PTSD cycle are reminiscent of the powerlessness experienced during the original trauma.

### **Naze and Pembe - The Cracked Mother-Child Tie**

In the novel, *Honour*, the trauma faced by the Topraks, Pembe and her kins, can easily be traced back to one person: Pembe's mother, Naze. She is obsessed with the mere idea of a male child to the point she doesn't hesitate for a second during her last pregnancy, giving up her life to save her supposed son. It was merely the result of her vehement denial of it being another girl. The Topraks experience secondary and intrafamily trauma mainly because of Pembe. The main terroriser during Pembe's childhood is her mother who subjected her kids through repeated instances of abuse, both physically and psychologically. Consequently, she is the one leaving marks of type II trauma in a single parent trauma family during the earlier childhood of the girls. The only exception to this observation is long after Naze's death when the eldest sister, Hediye, who commits suicide as her elopement ensuing a brief love affair fails.

Nonetheless, coming back to Naze, Kubler Ross model (1969) of five stages of grief fits perfectly on her especially at the time Jamila and Pembe were born; since for Naze, these births were nothing but a sad reminder of her being cursed with daughters and no sons. The very first thought that crosses her mind on seeing her first twin baby is to run away, she "wanted to leave" (*Honour*, p. 5). She even refuses to embrace the girls. Child birth typically symbolizes laughter and joy while death is silent and melancholic. For Naze, the birth of the twin daughters symbolizes her own death... "She remained as silent as a graveyard" (ibid). She mourns their birth and shifts the tone of a usually happy experience with a traumatic one. She grieves the loss of a boy she never had while neglecting the girls she has. She questions her fate and even tries to negotiate. She does not suffer from postpartum depression as much as regret and sorrow of missing something/someone. She goes through a succession of rejection, resentment, bargain and depression; the successive stages of grief. Even after begrudgingly accepting her fate, she never fails to make it clear that the twins were unwelcomed. What the kids absorb from their mother is her hostility and callousness which creates an ever-present desire to prove their self-worth especially in the case of Pembe. Naze deals with her problems in a dysfunctional manner with her ability to put the burden of her own suffering on others making it a walk on egg-shells for those around her. "Why were perfect strangers more tolerant than one's closest kins?" (p.15). These dysfunctional

strategies are re-enacted by Pembe, a child parentified through trauma. Despite being a manipulative and unstable person, Naze's children are scared of her while also pitying her. That is the dilemma faced by many victims of familial trauma. To summarize, Naze is the cause of secondary trauma plaguing the Topraks. She is also the reason behind Pembe's diffident demeanour and lack of confidence.

### **Pembe and Adem - The Traumatized Oppressors**

Both Pembe and Adam have experienced trauma from a young age which is apparent in their dealing with their own kids. Pembe had a curiously captivating personality since a young age. However, after years of abuse that child-like curiosity died somewhere along the way. She was only seventeen at the time of her first child. When Iskender was born, she let her, "untenable thoughts and unfounded fears" (*Honour*, p. 17) get the better of her. That paranoia was not out of nowhere, though. She had witnessed her mother, Naze, obsessing over a son and even breathe her last in hopes to finally have one. Her wish never came true. That day is etched into the mind of Pembe. So, when she gave birth to a healthy boy, she grew overly protective of her son. She is constantly haunted by the ghost of her dead mother eyeing the boy with contempt and envy. She also has nightmares that internally trigger her PTSD. The hallucination of the dead mother are the crying wounds of Pembe's trauma. It is the reminder of the physical and verbal abuse she went through as a child. What she feels towards her first son, Iskender, is a little bit of guilt combined with a great deal of pride. She fawns over the boys to the point of unnatural since she directs the love, she craved from her emotionally unavailable mother herself. She projects her excessively strong emotions onto Iskender, weighing him down in the process. Just like when Naze hesitated while naming Pembe and Jamila, trauma is re-enacted when Pembe doesn't name her boy till the age of five, even then on the insistence of her husband.

Unlike her young counterpart, adult Pembe is diffident, introverted, shy, very vulnerable about her insecurities and lack pride in herself. According to Elias, the man she meets in England, she hid her smile awkwardly in her body gestures, demonstrating the universal body language of people "uncomfortable with either their teeth or their happiness" (p. 115). Another major traumatic part of Pembe's childhood is the suicide of her oldest sister, Hediye who died 'in the name of honour' having eloped with a man who left her. The words of Berzo, her father, rings in the sisters' ears for ages and come back to haunt Pembe. He said he was glad he didn't have a son otherwise that boy would have to dirty his hands with his own kin's blood and go to gaol. This traumatic scene becomes a macabre reality when Iskender, her own kin, her blood, her own son, goes to prison on the charge of attempting her murder; re-enacting the original trauma. Pembe adults into a stressed-out and traumatized parent but unlike Adem, her husband, she keeps her own past under the rug, growing slowly distant from others.

Adem was also born into a dysfunctional family with a drunkard father and a mother who is the victim of brutal domestic abuse. Over time, he develops a non-confrontational and blame-oriented personality, the traits he absorbed while being part of that negative environment. He projects the image of his mother, who he hates for having left him, onto the women in his life especially his wife, Pembe who "eclipsed all his memories" (p.39). He is easily intimidated and tries to mask his fears and insecurities by choosing violence. That is the most evident when he beats Iskender to the point of torture because he threatens his masculine ego. Adem is failed prototype of toxic masculinity in men. He wears his heart on his sleeves, is always stressed and perfectly aware of his pettiness. Yet, he is not brave enough to own up to his

mistakes and runs away from them. He dies a lonely death without anyone to even properly mourn him. The two spouses, Pembe and Adem, both carry their own emotional baggage but what differentiates them is how they face their trauma. She leans back and lets it pass while he runs away to avoid confrontation.

### **Trauma-stricken Siblings**

Iskender, Esma and Yunus are the products of a collective trauma that runs over the course of more than two generations. They were subjected to traumatic incidents to varying degrees while absorbing all the hostility and vulnerability that came with those traumas. However, the one incident that leaves the biggest impact on all of them is the murder of Jamila, their aunt. Although, it is not possible to discuss about that one event before mentioning the many events that brought them to that point and that is linked to Iskender's past, the boy who killed his aunt thinking it was his mother.

Iskender is the epitome of toxic masculinity. He may have pulled the trigger but what brought him to that point was not his baggage alone but the burden of familial trauma his family tried to suppress for decades. Those pent-up emotions exploded in the worst way possible. When young, Iskender was extremely adored by Pembe. That included encouraging all the violent and tyrannical traits in him since they made him 'more of a man.' When Iskender beat a bunch of street kids, she took a sense of pride in it and covered up for him. When he was about to get circumcised, the young child was understandably scared and ran away. Pembe lulled him back while making empty promises but punished him severely as soon as he let down his guard around his 'lovely' mother. This was Iskender's first betrayal. In another incident he was severely punished for empathizing with a poor animal being sacrificed on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha. He was never explained the importance or even purpose of the deed, he was just expected to follow certain traits that are 'manly and honorable' with little to no explanation from either of the two parents. All these parenting practices are the trademark of a dysfunctional family. Iskender was at such a young age that the confusing behavior of his parents perplexed him, leaving him begrudgingly full of contempt for his parents combined with the feeling of obsessive love since his parents gave him the impression: violence for the sake of love is righteous. Not-surprisingly, this is exactly what he did: killed his mother, the woman he loved the most (he didn't find out, till years later, it was his aunt not the mother he killed) because she was bringing shame to the family honour and it was his duty as the parentified son while the husband was absent. He is the result of both secondary trauma stress and intrafamily trauma; he is abused and also expected to be considerate of his trauma-inflicted parents without any explanation.

All three siblings take in the news of the murder differently. Iskender is impacted the worst, being haunted by her ghost. The ghost is his crying wound, a reminder for the past. In contrast to him, the other two siblings do not have sleepless nights like him. Esma is resentful towards Iskender but this hate stems more from her feelings of dissatisfaction and general inferiority complex than her unfathomable love for her aunt. Growing up, Esma was always neglected and while she wasn't physically abused, she was constantly reprimanded for not behaving in a certain feminine and modest way. Pembe inculcated the same teaching onto her daughter that Naze forced on her own children. As a result, it strains the mother-child relationship. All her life, she felt inferior to Iskender who apparently was much better off than her and so, when he commits such a felony, she blames her mother for the turn of events. Even her favorite can do something so despicable, if she was stricter with him, it would be different. However, the best counter-argument to this is given by Yunus when he said:

He was the eldest. You were always going on about being treated differently because you were a girl, and I found it tough to be the youngest child. But did you ever consider that maybe it was harder on Iskender? (*Honour*, pg. 331)

Corresponding to the sibling dynamics is another question raised in this paper: can the reaction towards trauma vary based on one's biological sex? The study shows that trauma is caused by external factors including social structures and upbringing but it does not include the sex of the person. The difference in response to the same set of traumas is dependent on the extent to which the victim is influenced and their general psychic energy which develops over time. In case of Esma, it is true she takes the longest to receive closure; forgiving Iskender and moving on. It can be attributed to her emotionally sensitive self, a trait more commonly associated with femininity. So, does that mean she is the most emotionally vulnerable because she is a girl? The answer is not necessarily yes. Past records show that Iskender and Adem are also equally vulnerable if not more; Adem even committed suicide because he couldn't cope up with everything. The difference lies in societal expectations. Esma is able to freely grovel and lament her woes since that is what society expects from her being a woman. She has that freedom. However, when it comes to vulnerability and men, patriarchy does not look at it in a positive light. Throughout the novel, Shafaq makes it a point to show how these men were constantly hiding their insecurities and vulnerabilities under the guise of violent outburst.

### ***The Namesake by Lahiri***

Lahiri's *The Namesake* is about the lives of the Gangulis; an Indian-Bengali family living in America over the course of two generations. What makes it a generational saga is the fact that it takes place when the parents of the main character are still young, unmarried and part of big joint families. While the previous generations do not have a direct effect on moving the plot, contrasting *Honour*, they influence the characters in significant ways nonetheless. This rings particularly true in the case of Ashima, a character whose traumatic stress is associated with her longing for her family she left behind when coming to America. The current study shows how the Gangulis, an apparently functional family also have some dysfunctional strategies that induce traumatic stress.

### **Father and Child – Emotional Unavailability**

Diving into the trauma history of the Gangulis, it is not wrong to place Ashoke at the centre of it. When only twenty-two years old, he got into a gruesome train wreck which paralyzed him for almost a year. Even after full recovery, the scars of that day never vanished. The unanticipated accident is the cause of Ashoke's traumatic neurosis who stayed in the latency stage for quite a while. As soon as he overcame his bewilderment, he took the decision to leave India and make a name for himself before "One day it will be too late" (*The Namesake*, p. 16). This decision is his attempt at discontinuity from his trauma and is just like Pembe who left her village with Adem thinking it will end the chain of traumatic past. However, unlike her who keeps on being pulled back to her trauma while hallucinating about a dead mother, Ashoke is better able to escape the trauma history. The drawback of it is that he keeps his trauma so shut in that it morphs his persona into that of an emotionally distant person.



The person who knows his history is his wife, Ashima but in an attempt to protect the next generation while simultaneously looking at the future and ignoring the past, both of them think it is okay to hide the trauma from their children who understand nothing. This proves to be a dysfunctional strategy. In an attempt to hide the past, Ashoke is emotionally unavailable for his kids. While young Nikhil remembers no incidences of abuse growing up, he doesn't recall any warm interactions either. The closest to a constructive exchange is when Ashoke gives Nikhil a book by Nikolai Gogol on his birthday. That gift is of great importance because it links Nikhil to his name, which was Gogol at that time, and also Ashoke to his trauma because that book is the reminder of his survival years ago. That is also the reason behind him naming his son Gogol because he wants to overwrite his trauma with the happy memories of his first child. The sentiment is awe-inspiring but the way it is exercised is dysfunctional. It is because these sentiments were never communicated properly to the young Nikhil; distancing him further from his family. The youngster develops feeling of annoyance and dissatisfaction towards his parents. Being a trauma victim, it is understandable that Ashoke is unable to logically examine his own dysfunctional tactics but does that mean he does not know how to deal with his trauma in a healthy way.

### **Ashoke and Ashima - Spousal Devotion**

The only person Ashoke openly leans on for emotional support is Ashima, his wife. The couple does not have the sort of relationship which can be called love but they exhibit signs of mutual respect. Unlike the example set by Adem and Pembe who do not properly communicate whatsoever, both Ashima and Ashoke let go of their emotions in a very admirable way. They talk it through and do not hide their sorrows from each other. When either of them received the news of a loved one dying, they expressed their grief by crying it out and leaning on one another. The kids heard "their parents screaming" (p. 63) behind the closed door. They did not keep it bottled up. By mourning, they allow their trauma to fade away over time instead of caging it inside. Ashoke openly admits his past in front of Ashima who in turn does not try to hide her vehemently passionate longing to go back home. They reach common grounds when making a decision. This shared intimacy allows them to develop a bond the children are unable to understand growing up. Ashima never uttered Ashoke's first name but their bond allows for such a relationship to blossom that does not need to be expressed through words.

An examination of the couples in the novels makes the reader better understand why couples like Pembe and Adem; and Nikhil and Moushumi do not work is because they do not share such proximity. The other two couples do not express their vulnerabilities in fear of seeming weak and being exploited. Throughout *The Namesake*, Nikhil is shown to have an inferiority complex about his name, Gogol and while Moushumi tells him some of her own traumatic past, she does not shy away from hiding things from him particularly about her infidelity.

### **Identity and Trauma:**

Throughout *The Namesake*, the protagonist, Nikhil has to juggle between two identities. His name is a form of distress because it is neither American nor Indian. For him, a name like Gogol takes away his right to belong to either group. However, what he does not realize is that his name is linked to his father's trauma. He was named as such as an ode to Nikolai Gogol's works that saved Ashoke when he had his near-death experience. This incident links trauma with identity and existential dread; something common in both Esmá and Gogol. Both the characters loathe their names because they overshadow their identity, clouding people's

judgement about them. Esma would often speculate “Why female names were so different from male names, more whimsical and dreamlike, as if women were unreal” (Honour, p. 183). She contemplates her name because it reminds her that she is a girl and a girl could never be like the boys of her household especially Iskender. Thus, Esma’s aversion is the result of the prejudice she experienced being a girl. She feels she is pushed to the side. Gogol, on the flip side, truly hates the very existence of his name. He hates that his name “has nothing to do with who he is” (The Namesake, p.76). His name garners unwarranted attentiveness towards as a consequence of his unusual name. His name is neither Indian nor American, making him an outsider to his own identity. The two characters are traumatized by the despondent memories and past reflections associated with their names. Their names contribute towards their crippling insecurities and low self-esteem. What makes the simple matter of a name an intergenerational concern is the fact; the children use their names to signify the uncomfortable and inkling feeling they feel towards decisions made by their parents. These decisions are affected in more ways than one by the trauma of these parents bringing everything back in full circles.

## CONCLUSION

The characters do indeed go through trauma. This is significantly more apparent in *Honour* which includes explicit depiction of physical and psychological abuse. Many characters including Naze, Baba, Tariq and Berzo employ manipulative strategies that root from dysfunctional parenting; using problem-causing and narcissist strategies instead of solving the problem. Naze emotionally manipulates her daughters while constantly inculcating the ideology that men are superior and a woman’s honour equates to her chastity. Berzo and his second wife emotionally manipulate Hediya by reminding her of bringing shame to the family when she ran away. Baba never beats his children, in fact, he beats his wife while indulging the boys. This sets the bar of his wrath while also making the children loyal to their ‘manly’ and assertive father. Tariq manipulates Iskender into killing his mother while backtracking from his words when the young boy actually committed the felony. Pembe manipulates the young Iskender by both showering him with love while also scolding him when he does something that she considers unmanly. She also manipulates him into lowering his guard by whispering affection which some morphs into anger when the child is caught off-guard. Many of the manipulative characters are trauma victims themselves. Yet, they exploit those with lesser control than them, creating an endless loop of trauma. In stark contrast is the example of *The Namesake*. Almost none of the characters employ any sort of manipulative strategies. That does not mean there is no trauma in the book. Having clear signs of emotional, verbal abuse and/or emotionally manipulative characters make it easy to identify a trauma fiction but there are other indications of trauma in fiction as well. The choice of the two works of fiction allowed for a contrasting study between a clear depiction of trauma and trauma in its subtlest form.

When it comes to family strategies, the characters in *Honour* employ predominantly dysfunctional strategies while the characters in Lahiri’s work engage in some dysfunctional strategies mixed with functional tactics. There is a lack of communication among the characters in the former. The family members do not talk things out, rather they use force when pushed towards a corner. There is generally underlying hostility with many problem-causing habits including alcohol addiction, gambling addiction, use of brute force as a cover up for vulnerability and insecurities. The characters, for the most part, suffer from intra-family trauma. Pembe was abused by Naze. She in turn abused Iskender and Esma. Adem is traumatized by his baba while he himself beats his wife and children. The characters also

suffer from secondary trauma stress. Adem is not physically abused by his baba. Rather he is traumatized by the harrowing experiences of his mother who is the trauma victim. The traumatic experiences of Pembe also impact her children despite not actually being abused. Many characters in *Honour* are also parasuicidal, intentionally trying to kill themselves without committing suicide. These characters include: Naze, Adem, Baba and Jamila. Naze, Adem and Iskender have a chaotic personality while Pembe is emotionally immature, diffident and feels herself as a fish in a kettle. Adem is haunted by his drunk baba and his mother. Iskender's crying wound is his mother's ghost while Naze hallucinates about her unborn son. The trauma of Naze's painful last pregnancy is re-enacted when Pembe is pregnant with Iskender. She hallucinates about her dead mother snatching her baby. The trauma of Hediye's death is re-enacted with Jamila's murder by Iskender. This is the summary of trauma as depicted in *Honour*.

For *The Namesake*, the characters like Ashima and Ashoke opt functional coping strategies to deal with their grief through mourning and communicating the sad emotions. By leaning on the other family members, they make up for problem-solving tactics for trauma. However, the dysfunctional family behavior that cause ruptures and ultimately trauma include lack of communication particularly between the parents and the children. By hiding the trauma history of Nikhil's name, the parents rob him of a connection resulting in a profound discontinuity. The biggest trauma of Nikhil's life is associated with his identity crisis. He adopts his mother's feelings of alienation and lack of belongingness. For his father, he has a certain hostility and detachment because there always was a divide between the two widened in Ashoke's attempt to protect his son from his own trauma. When it comes to the re-enactment of trauma, the original trauma of the train accident is re-enacted two times; the murder in India and the suicide on Nikhil's train home. Ashoke's triggers to his trauma include crowded and/or closed spaces, train rides, dreams and memories. His family, including his parents and siblings, experience simultaneous effects of trauma after his immediate accident and broken bones. They also receive secondary trauma during his recovery. Nikhil, on the other hand, is vicariously traumatized. Upon learning about his father's trauma, he feels saddened but also betrayed.

When it comes to gender differences in response to trauma, there is no change. The response is dependent on external factors i.e., the surrounding of the child, their upbringing or social pressures on them. So, when Esma cries out her emotions, it does not mean she is more emotionally vulnerable. Rather, it is another way to express her heart.

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