

The namesake



The protagonist, Gogol, illustrates the intrinsic nature of family and its role in shaping our sense of belonging. As a second-generation migrant, he struggles to find a balance between his family's Indian values and those of American society. His namesake had always been a subject of internal conflict and metaphorically it symbolised his Indian heritage and everything else that was forcefully placed upon him.

This resulted in the disassociation from his Bengali culture, and the changing of his name to Nikhil. Anaphora and references to American pop culture, It is as Nikhil that he grows a goatee, starts smoking Camel lights at parties and discovers Brian Eno and Elvis Costello and Charlie Parker highlights his adoption of all things typical to America to achieve a sense of affiliation. The use of juxtaposition, There is only one problem, he doesn't feel like Nikhil emphasises his contradictory feelings and unclear sense of identity.

In contrast, Gogol's disdain towards his culture was not always apparent. As a younger child, he felt quite comfortable and through flashbacks of Gogol's childhood are readers made aware of his peculiarity between both American and Indian culture. Gogol's school trip to the cemetery was the first time he experienced a sense of connection to his first name, he likes these names, likes their oddness, their flamboyance, and by keeping the grave rubbings, he feels attached to them. Also, while viewing the Taj on his father's annaprasm, the hyperbolic statement, no other building he's seen has affected him so powerfully, emphasises despite Gogol's difficulties in feeling connected with India, and this building symbolises and foreshadows the innate influence of culture

on one's identity. However, the inability to comply completely with either culture leaves Gogol feeling confused, unsettled and uncertain, and the metaphor, 'for now he reads' is symbolic of Gogol finally embracing his culture.

He had spent years maintaining distance from his origins and despite changing his name, dating American girls, living in New York, Gogol realises ironically, the power of instinctual belonging and family.