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## Differences and Similarities in the Life Paths of Gogol Ganguli and Malala Yousafzai

In many people's lives, there is something, someone, or somewhere that helps make them learn who they are. "The Namesake" is a book by Jhumpa Lahiri which is about a boy named Gogol Ganguli born in America to two Indian immigrants as parents, throughout the book he tries to find out his identity as an American or a stereotypical Indian, and his name and the mystery behind it.

Meanwhile, "I am Malala" is an autobiography by Malala Yousafzai, which tells her life story and how she became a women's rights and education activist in her country of Pakistan and how it led her to getting shot in the head by the Taliban, and to her life now. In "The Namesake" by Jhumpa Lahiri, the protagonist Gogol (Nikhil) Ganguli had tried to hide who he is, meanwhile in "I Am Malala" by Malala Yousafzai had not tried to change who she is and embraced it, yet in both books the protagonists both have been through tragedies that helped found who they are.

Although Gogol's parents were from Calcutta, he never quite fit in with his culture even though his parents had wanted him to, yet he tried so hard to fit in with American culture despite his parents' wishes. Gogol had never liked his given first name as no one could pronounce it or come up with a proper nickname that was not insulting thus leading to "And so he had obtained a Commonwealth of Massachusetts change-of-name form, to submit along with a certified copy of his birth certificate and a check to the Middlesex Probate and Family Court." (Lahiri Chapter 5) Gogol had changed his name to "Nikhil Gogol Ganguli", Nikhil the good name that his parents had given him at a young age, yet he did not like it then but adopted it later in life.

Gogol had done this to try to change who he is as he was starting college and trying to find out who he truly is. Maxine was one of Gogol's girlfriends that he had, he had lived with Maxine and her parents, which had taught him a lot about how others live their lives and how he could, as well "That here at Maxine's side, in this cloistered wilderness, he is free." (Lahiri Chapter 6) Gogol had wanted to be free, he wanted to be free from his parents and his life, he wanted to be a new person. Yet, by being a new person he forgot his parents and his life beforehand, which could trouble him as well, as he was not connected to who he was anymore. Gogol had learned a lot about himself by trying to change and hide who he was truly, yet he did not know that he could embrace and love who he is.

Unlike Gogol, Malala had embraced who she was and unwilling to hide who she was for the world. In Pakistan, women are expected to not be educated, let men speak for them, and conform to societal rules, yet Malala did not fit under these rules, she instead spoke up for those who did not as "If I am speaking for my rights, for the rights of girls, I am not doing anything wrong?" (Yousafzai 141) As mentioned earlier in Pakistan women are expected to conform to societal rules, yet breaking these rules can risk your wellbeing. That is why it is a risk for Malala to speak up about her opinions, to be in interviews, but she still does this because she knows it is important to speak up, and that this allows her to be true to who she is not just someone else, which is what makes her unique in Pakistan society. Malala's father had often said that "Malala will be free as a bird" (Yousafzai 26).

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Birds have free roam of the world, they can do what they want, when they want, and how they want, since they are free. Malala's father had considered her "as free as a bird" because she did not want to be like the other women who could only go out of the house with a male relative she had wanted to be her one person and have her freedoms like a bird. Malala's willingness to be her person and protest for other women to do the same allowed her to help break stereotypes in her culture, yet it could have also led to the tragedy in her life.

Even though they are both different in the way they live their lives one in self-discovery and another educating and protesting for women's rights in Pakistan, they both had faced tragedies in their lives that changed their ways of thinking. Gogol's father had gone through an accident while reading a book by the author Gogol, and that is how Gogol had gotten his name, "Until moments ago it was destined to disappear from his life altogether, but he has salvaged it by chance, as his father was pulled from a crushed train forty years ago." (Lahri Chapter 12)

Gogol had never read the books that his father had given him, that was because he had hated his name, so he never had read them to spite him. Yet, right before he was going to throw away or donate the book, he read the book, by reading this book he learned his father's love for the author, and how it reminded it of him, and he had only learned this after his father had passed away years before. However, Malala did not lose her father, she had almost lost something different: her life, "As I found with my ear, no one knows how much power they have in their each and every organ until they lose one." (Yousafzai 301) Through this experience she had learned a valuable lesson in life; not to take your life for granted. This had changed her view on life to live every day like your last, and this had only strengthened her girl's activist movement. Even though Gogol and Malala had lived different lives, they had both been through hardships that they had overcome them and learned new things about themselves, for Gogol it was his namesake, and for Malala it was a valuable life lesson.

The main characters of the books had both lead different lives, Gogol a person who hid from his name, and Malala a young scholar and an activist, yet they both had something in common, they both had events in there lives that had improved their lives. Gogol had wanted to hide away from his identity, and create a new one, to stray away from the name that his father had given him for he thought for no reason. Yet, he finally read his namesake and learned that his father had given him this name for a reason.

Differently, Malala was one to embrace her identity, and help others to embrace theirs. Gogol and Malala are different people, yet they learned new life lessons through their experiences in life. As Malala and Gogol had experiences in their lives that changed them, so will you someday.