

# Review of Literature Jhumpa Lahiri

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Jhumpa Lahiri, Pulitzer Prize winner was born on July 11, 1967 in London the daughter of Bengali Indian immigrant is an American author. *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) is Lahiri's debut short story collection. *The Namesake* (2003), was adopted into the popular film of the same name. In her recent *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) she moves on to a scrutiny of the fate of the second and third generation. *The Lowland* is the latest novel.

Lahiri's book *Interpreter of Maladies* collected nine stories. The all stories address sensitive dilemmas in the lives of Indian immigrants with themes such as marital difficulties, miscarriages and the disconnections between first and the second generation united states immigrants.

In *Interpreter of Maladies* Mr. and Mrs. Das Indian American visiting the country of their heritage hire middle aged tour guide Mr. Kapasi as their driver for the day as they tour India along with their children. Mr. Kapasi notes the parents' immaturity. Previous profession of Kapasi was an interpreter in clinic.

*Unaccustomed Earth* is Lahiri's second collection of short stories. All stories revealed that everyone has their secrets. In her stunning new collection of stories she gently lifts the veil to reveal how even the most ordinary lives have their dramas and tragedies and then as gently lets it fall back down again.

*Unaccustomed Earth* the title story of the book is about three generations and relationship between the three, the father, his daughter Ruma, and her son Akash. The father is retiree and a recent widower. He visits his daughter's new home. The story explores some of the difficult gender roles in America. Such as Ruma's decision to leave a successful legal carrier to raise her children and husband's hard work to support the family.

*The Namesake* is her highly-anticipated novel. The book spans more than thirty years in the life of a fictional family the Gangul's. The Calcutta born parents immigrated to the United States as young adults and their children, Gogol and Sonia grow up in United States experiencing cultural compromise and the constant generational and cultural gap between their parents and them.

In *The Lowland* Jhumpa Lahiri has dextrously portrayed the life of two brothers Udayan and Subhash and Udayan's wife Gauri and daughter Bela. When both brothers were child a policeman asked Subhash about the golf balls which they had taken from the Tolly Club that whose idea was that. At that time instead of Subhash Udayan boldly accepted that that the idea was his. Then policeman told if they wanted to conclude the conversation here, then he would not tell about the incidence to the club. But when they rejected the proposal, the policeman started beating Subhash, then Udayan came in between to protect his brother.

Subhash might have started school earlier being elder brother. But for the sake of convenience also because Udayan protested at the notion of Subhash going without him - they were put into the same class at the same time in a Bengali medium school for boys from ordinary families, beyond the tram depot, past the Christian cemetery. Subhash was not afraid to contradict their teachers about hydraulic and the plate tectonics. He gesticulated to illustrate his points, to emphasis his opinion, the action of his hand suggesting that molecules and particle were within his grasp. At times he was asked by their sir to step outside the room, told that he was holding up his class-mates, when in fact he'd moved beyond them.

Udayan and Subhash came to know about the Naxalbari which was one of a string of village in the Darjeeling District a narrow corridor at the northern tip of West Bengal. Tucked into the foot hill of the Himalayas nearly four hundred miles from Calcutta, close to Tibet than to Tollygung. Most of the villagers were tribal peasants who worked on tea plantation and large estate. For generations they had lived under a feudal system that hadn't substantially changed. They were manipulated by wealthy land owners. They were pushed off from fields they'd cultivated. They were preyed upon by money landers. Deprived of subsistence wages, some died from lack of food.

Once it was also reported that a group of peasants male and female attacked a police inspector with bows and arrows killing him. The next day the police force encountered a rioting crowd on the road. When Subhash asked Udayan about the incidence - whether he thought that had been worthy what the peasants had done. Then Udayan replied, of course that had been worthy. They rose up. They risked everything. People who were in power do nothing to protect them. And he asked Subhash if he had been born into that life, what he would have done.

Udayan came to know bloody suppression of revolutionary and ban by central Government carrying of bows and arrows in Naxalbari. At the same time Bengal Government authorized five hundred officers and men to raid the region. They searched the mud huts of the poorest villagers. They captured unarmed insurgents, killing them if they refused to surrender. Ruthlessly, systematically they brought the rebellion to the end. Udayan sprang up from the chair where he had been seated pushing a pile of papers away from him in disgust. He switched off the radio. He started to pace the room looking down at the floor, running his fingers through his chair, shaking his head resting a hand on his hip. For a moment he was speechless. The report has shocked brothers but Udayan was reacting as if those were a personal affront, a physical blow.

Udayan began bringing periodicals home when publication of *Liberation* in English *Deshbrati* in Bengali started in India. They reproduce articles from Chinese communist magazines. About those articles their father told that those rhetorics were nothing new and his generation read Marx too. Then Udayan reciprocated that his father's generation had not solved anything. Udayan thought that Naxalbari was an inspiration. That was an impetus for change.

Their father reciprocated that he had already lived through change in this country and according to him he knew what took for one system to replace another.

But Udayan persisted. He started challenging their father the way he used to challenge their teachers at school if he was so proud that India was independent why he had not protested the British at that time. Why he had never joined a labour union. Given that he voted communist in elections, Why he had never taken a stand.

When Udayan and Subhash happened to pass Tolly club together on their way to or from the tram depot, Udayan called that an affront. People still filled slums all over the city, children were born and raised on streets. Why hundred acres had been walled off for the enjoyment of few. According to him golf was the pastime of the comprador bourgeoisie. He said that the Tolly club was a proof that India was still a semicolonial country, behaving as if the British had never left. He pointed out that Che (Argentine Marxist revolutionary) who had worked as caddy on a golf course in Argentina, had come to the same conclusion. That after Cuban revolution getting rid of the golf courses was one of the first things Castro (Cuban communist revolutionary) had done.

Subhash was not convinced that an imported ideology could solve India's problem. Though spark had been lit a year ago, he did not think a revolution would necessarily follow. He wondered whether that was due lack of courage, or of imagination, that prevented him from believing in that (revolution). If the deficits he had always been conscious of were what prevented him from sharing his brother's political faith.

After both completed post graduation Subhash asked Udayan to apply for Ph.D. programme from MIT Princeton but that had not impressed him. He reciprocated to Subhash how he could walk away from what had been happening there of all places and he (Udayan) knew if he would go he would not come back.

Subhash went to America to pursue his Ph.D. He saw a married couple standing next to one another. That made him for the first time thought of his own marriage. For the first time, perhaps because he always felt in Rhode Island that some part of his life was missing, he desired a companion. He wondered what woman his parents would choose for him. He wondered when it would be. Getting married would mean returning to Calcutta. In that sense he was not in hurry.

Udayan sent a letter to Subhash along with the photograph of Gauri his beloved and mentioned that he is going to marry her. He also written that he had got to know her and fallen in love with her while he (Subhash) was still in Calcutta.

Udayan once mentioned to Gauri that he wanted to see more of India, the way Che had traveled through South America. He wanted to understand the circumstances of India's people. He wanted to see China one day.

In America Subhash interacted with a woman named Holly. She was separated by her husband and had a son. He wanted to confess his brother about his profound step which he had taken. He wanted to describe who she was. What she looked like, how she lived. But he did not like to convey in a letter, or in a telegram.

When Gauri heard police officer's accusation that Udayan had betrayed country, she sensed current radiating all the way to her feet. She felt litting sensation spreading from the base of her neck across her body. She thought that her legs would buckle., there was no strength in them. Nothing was supporting her. But she continued to stand as police's gun was still in her neck.

Udayan was arrested from the Lawland and shot dead by police. At that time Gauri was pregnant even though both never wanted to have children before Subhash's marriage. Gauri imagined, left was the future the place where the death unknown but certain, was an end point. In less than nine months baby would come but baby's life had already started whose heart already beating, represented by a separate line creeping forward. She saw Udayan's life no longer accompanying her own as she had assumed, but ceasing in October 1971. That formed a grave in her mind's eye. Only the present moment, lacking prospective, eluded her grasp. That was the blind spot, just over her shoulder. A hole in her vision. But the future was visible, unspooling incrementally. She wanted to shut her eyes to that. She wished the days and months ahead of her would end. But the rest of her life continued to present itself, time ceaselessly proliferating. She was made to anticipate against her will.

After Udayan's death his mother stopped talking to Gauri, barred Subhash to give shawl which he had brought from America. She had taken away her coloured cloths the fish and meat from her plate. Subhash's mother objected that those are their customs. But he reciprocated that is demeaning.

Subhash's felt that the way his mother behaving with Gauri was insulting even more than that was cruelty. Their treatment with Gauri was deliberate, intended to derive her out. He thought of becoming a mother only to lose control of the child. He thought of the child being raised in a joyless house. The only way to prevent her from those atrocities was to take her away. That was all he could do to help her, the alternative he could provide. And the only way to take her away was to marry her. To take his brother's place to raise his child, to come to love Gauri as Udayan had. To follow him in a way that felt perverse, that felt both right and wrong.

Subhash married Gauri and took her to America. She felt as if she contained a ghost, as Udayan was. The child was a version of him in that, which was both present and absent both within her and remote. She regarded that with a sort of disbelief, just as she did till then did not really believe that Udayan had gone, missing not only from Calcutta but from every other part of the earth she had flown across.

She married Subhash as means of staying connected to Udayan. But even as she was going through marriage she knew that marriage was useless, just as useless as to save a single earring when the other half of the pair was lost. Marriage had been a registry wedding. Her in-laws had refused their wedding.

When Gauri was sitting in a car in America and Subhash was outside of the car she found malleable red ring fleck with gold. She understands that their had been someone before her in America. A woman who'd once occupied the seat she was in that time. She thought perhaps that had not worked out for whatever reason. Or perhaps Subhash continued to see her, to get from her what she did not give. She felt no impulse to ask him about that. She was relieved that she was not the only woman in his life. That she, too, was a replacement. Though she was curious, she felt no jealousy. Instead she was thankful that he was capable of hiding something. That validated the step she had taken in marrying him. That was for like a high mark after a difficult exam. That justified the distance she continued to maintain from her new husband. That suggested that may be she didn't have to love him after all.

While Gauri was pregnant had felt capable of caring of the growing child. But after the birth of her daughter, she realized that she was aware of how the slightest oversight on her part could cause Bela to be destroyed. Carrying her out of the hospital, through the lobby that led to the parking lots where people streamed by briskly without a glance, she had felt

terrified, aware that America was just as dangerous a place as any. Aware that there was no one, other than Subhash to prevent Bela from harm.

Subhash and Gauri had begun their journey almost five years ago as husband and wife but he was still waiting to arrive somewhere with her. A place where he could no longer question the result of what they had done. She never expressed any unhappiness, she had not complained. But the smiling carefree girl in the photograph which Udayan had sent, that had been Subhash's first impression of her, that he had also hoped to draw that part of her he had never seen.

After years of his marriage Subhas hoped Gauri would be ready to have a child with him and to give Bela a companion. But she told him, she would think about child in another year or two. At times he feared that his one act of rebellion, marrying her, had already failed. He had expected more resistance from her then at the time of marriage not after five years of marriage. He wondered sometimes if she regretted marrying. If the decision had been an error in haste.

Gauri had fled to California from Rhode Island leaving her twelve years old daughter and husband. But there had never been a conversation between them in which she would have expressed a wish to leave them. He had sometimes thought, in the back of his mind that after Bela went off to college, after moved away from them, he and Gauri might begin to live apart. That a new phase could begin when Bela was more independent, when she need them less. He never thought she would lack the patience to wait.

Grown up Bela started a series of jobs on farms across the country, some close by, others far, when she used to come to her father she talked to him why people still died from famines, why farmers still went hungry. She blamed the unequal distribution of wealth.

Sometimes Subhash felt threatened that in Bela Udayan's inspirations and influence was greater. Gauri had left them and by that time he trusted her to stay away. But there were times, he believed that Udayan would come back, claiming his place, claiming Bela from the grave as his own.

Gauri had convinced herself that Subhash was her rival, and that she was in competition with him for Bela, competition that felt insulting, unjust. But of course that had not been a competition that had been in her own hand she had pointed herself into a corner, and then out of the picture altogether.

Impractically Gauri had remained a citizen of her birth place. She was still a green card holder renewing her Indian passport. For the sake of retirement for the sake of simplifying the end of her life she would need to become an American. In that way too, Udayan would soon be betrayed.

She thought her remarriage had not been a solution that had taken her away from Tollygaunge. He had brought her America and then like an animal briefly observed, caged, released her. He had protected her, he had attempted to love her.

When Bela was thirty four even that time Subhash had hoped she would surprise him and appear with a companion at the airport. Someone to care for her, to share the unconventional life she led. He had learned to set aside the responsibility he'd once believed would be his; to do his part to secure a daughter's future by pairing her. If he had raised her in Calcutta that would have been reasonable for him to bring up the subject of the marriage. In America that was considered meddling, out of bounds. He had raised her in a place free from such stigma.

When Gauri was in California it was appeared through her imagination about her past- standing on a balcony in North Calcutta, talking to Udayan, the library at Presidency where he would come to find her sometimes, sitting at a table barricaded with books, a giant fan rustling the papers. He had stood behind her, saying nothing, waiting for her to turn around to sense that he was there. She remembers reading smuggled books in Calcutta, the particular stall to the left of the Sanskrit College that carried what he liked that went out of its way for him. Ordering foreign volumes from publishers. She remembered the incremental path of her education hours shifting through and catalogues, at Presidency, then in Rhode Island, even early on in California.

When Gauri was in Hospital in California she thought that she had not been a patient in a hospital since Bela was born. Even at time her memory was intact. A rainy evening even in Summer. Twenty-Five year old. A typed bracelet around her wrist. Every one congratulating Subhash when it was over, flowers coming from his department at the University.

Afshin Assadnassab's *Displacement, an Unknown Freedom: Cultural Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake* illustrated that *The Namesake* is a story of identities. It begins with a migration in the first generation and follows with its

specific concerns to the second generation. The family is split; two are Indians and the other two are born in America. The juxtaposition of the different nationalities creates further tensions for the characters involved. As one sees all through the novel each Ganguli family member is a singular case and unique version who seeks for his or her own real self and tries to answer the question of identity. Although they live together and share much, they still have differences in their life orientation and their experiences with their identities which are mostly related to their Indian-American lives<sup>1</sup>.

*Interpreter of Maladies: A Rhetorical Practice Transmitting Cultural Knowledge* is written by Taylor Shea. This essay illustrated how Lahiri utilizes her cultural underpinning to creatively juxtapose various elements within her short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, in order to offer a balanced representation of her modern social group, the Indian diaspora within America. *Interpreter of Maladies* is used as an example of how cultural knowledge may be transmitted through literature-as-rhetoric whether or not an author is conscious of cultural influence.<sup>2</sup>

*Negotiating Borders of Culture :Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction* by Debarati Bandyopahdyay suggested that roots, origin, family bonds induce expatriate, immigrant nonresident Indians to return again and again to the point from where they move away. This emotional and spiritual bond gives form to Jhumpa Lahiri's stories and about such a state of expatriate existence.<sup>3</sup>

*Paradoxes of Generational Breaks and Continuity in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake* by Venkatesh Puttaiah expressed that Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* shifts its focal point from the first generation of immigrants to the second, in the process establishing interconnectedness of the two generations. While opportunity, movement, displacement and stabilisation form the sequence that defines the lives of the first generation immigrants, the lives of their children, the second generation, revolves around the issues of belonging – whether they belong to the country of their origin or to the country of their birth and whether to adhere to the culture and tradition of their parents or to subscribe to the standards of their immediate world outside home. The article analyses the movement of the two generations of Ganguli family in the United States and the various ways in which they are divided and united in the novel. The focus is on the aspects of cultural variance and assimilation between the two generations.<sup>4</sup>

*Diasporic (Dis)locations: Home, Garden and Third Space in Jhumpa Lahiri's Unaccustomed Earth* by Anil S. Sugate, Smt. Mathubai Garware Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Sangli explained that Literature of Diaspora as revealed in the writing of Jhumpa Lahiri seems to be most intensely connected with the notion of space and the characters in such literature are seen constantly negotiating space – both at the domestic sphere and at the public sphere. It could also be said that in literature of Diaspora, identities of individuals are closely linked to the space that they occupy and negotiate. Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction, explores this space-identity link. Her works also showcase international space or 'the third space' of Diaspora subjects as the sites of intersection of subjectivities, generations and cultures.<sup>5</sup>

*Diasporic Crisis of Dual Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake* by Sujata Rana manifested that the majority of Jhumpa Lahiri's stories are about exile, about people living far from home and moving to new world. Both *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake* explore the ideas of isolation and identity, not only personal but also cultural. When their cultural and ethnic identity is blurred in a foreign land, their personal identity, signified strongly by their name also stands vulnerable to change. The characters in both the works frequently encounter crisis of identity, which is tied to inability to reconcile the American identity with their Indian identity.<sup>6</sup>

*The Language of Diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri's Unaccustomed Earth* by Brittany Kemper expressed the combined study of concept of polyphony with diaspora because it allows for an inclusive study of the reciprocating relationships between culture, language, and the representation and acculturation of identity. Polyphony can not only address the present and future sense of self of characters, it can also keep diasporic studies from becoming too limiting by exploring the different voice sat work in the characters' construction of self.<sup>7</sup>

*The Treatment of Immigrant Experience in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Name Sake* by D.Ebina Cordelia rendered Indian America and the west have always been idealized by the Indians. But when qualified Indian migrate to America then the adjustment problems begin between the traditions, one has inherited and the day to day life one encounters there. There is a gradual adjustment, and assimilation and then a hybrid culture comes to the fore. Gradually one develops a respect for other cultures even though one's own culture remains ingrained within oneself. Culture is not defined now-a-days by a place, it is defined by time 'the now'.<sup>8</sup>

*Shattered Myth :Matrimony and Malady in Jhumpa Lahiri`s Unaccustomed Earth* by B. C. Anish Krishnan Nayar suggested that all the marriages portrayed in the book failed because they were not marriages of love but marriages of convenience. Similarly, through *Unaccustomed Earth*, Lahiri has shattered two established myths. The first myth is that the interracial marriages fail due to the shortcomings on the part of the Western partner. In *Unaccustomed Earth*, we find that the Western partners were loyal but it was the Indian partners, who went astray. The second myth is that interracial marriages fail due to cultural reasons. The analysis has disproved this too. The interracial marriages did not fail due to cultural differences but they failed due to the lack of love.<sup>9</sup>

*The American Dream in Jhumpa Lahiri`s Unaccustomed Earth and Only Goodness*, by Iwona Filipczak Lahiri offers yet new insights into immigrants' experience. In the two selected stories, the newcomers, the first generation immigrants, are successful, and adapt quite easily to American standards of life. The experience of the second generation, born in the U.S., is different. Their fulfillment of the American Dream cannot be taken for granted. Lahiri studies familial relations as well as cultural differences emerging between generations, which are presented as crucial in achieving success and the process of identity formation.<sup>10</sup>

A lot of work has been done on the writings of Jhumpa Lahiri and many research paper have been published on the work but nobody has attempted any research on their works from this point of view. The present work is focusses on how to make cultural compromise between two or more than two cultural worlds? What are cultural disparity and balance in multicultural world? What are difficulties and opportunities for Indians in America by cultural compromise?

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