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A Study of the Shift in Diasporic Experience from the First Generation to the Second Generation in *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth*

Dr Rajesh Verma and Tshewang Lhamo

Dr Rajesh Verma (Ph.D) is a Colombo Plan Lecturer, at Yonphula Centenary College, Royal University of Bhutan. Tshewang Lhamo is a school teacher at Gedu HSS, Bongo, Chukha, Bhutan.

Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri's two novels *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth* deal with the themes of exile, alienation, separation, home and family, assimilation and reintegration in the lives of immigrants. This research paper explores a comparative study of the diaspora of the first and second Indo-American generations in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth*. This paper also studies the shift from the first-generation diasporic feelings to the second-generation diasporic feelings due to the advent of sophisticated means of communication and technology. The present paper, through the close textual analysis studies the change in the outlook and insight towards the host culture and the native culture from the

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perspective of the first and second-generation diasporic characters from these two novels. The themes of dislocation in the lives of immigrants have also been explored.

Keywords

Diasporic psychology, cultural alienation, identity crises, exile literature, *The Namesake*, *Unaccustomed Earth*, Jhumpa Lahiri.



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Safran defines diaspora as a “dispersal from homeland to more than two foreign regions; the people dispersed from their homeland possessing a shared memory about their native land with the belief that they will be always contemptible in their host countries; they romanticize their reputed ancestral land with a belief that all members of that dispersed society should commit to the conservation or reestablishment of the native land and a strong ethnic group cognizance with a conviction in a common fate.” (Tan) Until relatively recently, the term was most closely associated with

the dispersion of the Jewish people, although there are also extensive historiographies of the Armenian, Greek, and African diasporas. Since the 1980s, usage of the word has become so widespread that it deserves a reassessment of its meaning. At the launch of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Khachig Totolyan spoke of a further 'decisive shift' in focus for diaspora studies as it also began to encompass those groups hitherto identified as immigrants, ethnic minorities, exiles, expatriates, refugees, guest workers and so on (Knott & McLoughlin p. 9).

Now, in the contemporary context, the term diaspora is used in reference to the communities living away from the native places they consider to be their homelands. This condition of living away from one's homeland gives birth to a negatively connotative sense of being in exile. Thus, the sense of being in exile arouses amongst the diasporic population a sense of nostalgia and longing for the lost homeland.

Saha, A.S. (2009) in his article *Exile Literature and the Diasporic Indian Writer* writes that the dichotomy of world politics confronted by the writers is that if not by the political apartheid then there are discriminations on the ground of racial segregation, religious discernment, and war that has forced writers to leave their countries. The World War First experienced a large departure of writers who felt insecure to write in the era of war in Europe as they could do earlier. The era of the Second World War witnessed the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis. Thomas Mann, from his refuge in Chicago, wrote to Hermann Hesse, Germany, of the relocation remarking that Europe no more would be the same place after the war (Simpson. p. 227).

These writers immensely benefited from their exile, primarily the freedom of speech. But they were not able to overcome the shock of their actual exclusion. They always were of the belief that they had their right to be back home. Typically, those who could come back

home were more than not dissatisfied with the alterations. Once back, they again miss those friends who they left in the foreign lands. They long for the society of compatible intellectuals. Once an exile always an exile and the works of such writers hold the dynamism of their restlessness (Saha p. 188-189).

Terry Eagleton (2000) presents in, *The Idea of Culture* that the very word “culture” constitutes a strain of making and being made, the diaspora writers usually concentrate on generational differences in examining how second and first-generation diasporas associate to their native land and the culture of the host land (Macwan, 2014).

The sense of homelessness every diaspora suffers is genuine and intense. However, of late, it has been observed that this concept of homelessness has been minimized to a great extent through their access to the social media. Earlier diasporas suffered intense homelessness as their primary means of communication and connecting with the family back in the homeland was through sending letters, which took a long time. Landline telephones were a luxury in the diaspora’s native homeland, especially India until the 1980s.

An advertisement for Amazon Prime membership. It features a blue background with a white starburst on the left containing the text 'PRIME AT ₹ 999 PER YEAR*'. In the center, the 'amazonprime' logo is displayed in white on a dark blue rectangular background. Below the logo, three benefits are listed in a stylized, bubbly font: 'Original Shows', '1-day delivery*', and 'Ad-free Music'. At the bottom center, there is a yellow button with the text 'Join now'. In the bottom right corner, the text '*T&C Apply' is visible.

English-born American novelist and short-story writer whose works highlight the immigrant experiences of the American-Bengali

Indians, Jhumpa Lahiri was born on July 11, 1967, in London, England to a Bengali parents from Kolkata. Chattopadhyay (2017) presents that the history of migration and exile in which she locates herself, along with the diasporic identity, created a unique position in the apertures of various cultures for Jhumpa Lahiri. Lahiri recognizes her position of marginality from where she sets to write in an interstitial space of different cultural convergence and divergence which leaves thought-provoking crevices in which one could inspect a variety of cultures and combine innumerable components and set to write about them. It is also understood that this marginality and interstitial space is the embodiment of a gap, such as a sense of lack, a feeling of loss which is evident from her writings and interviews in which she acknowledges her partial knowledge of the Bengali language despite born to the Bengali parentage.



Her novel *The Namesake*, such as any diaspora fiction, deals with the theme of identity crisis and the issues of assimilations and adaptation in the foreign country. It is the story of two diasporic generations, Ashoke, and Ashima on one side and the children Gogol and Sonia on the other, and the generational differences in diasporic culture. The novel depicts the story of different attitudes, outlooks, and directionality of the two generations in the process of

dealing with the problems in life in a foreign country. The first generation is directly related to the homeland and re-live the native culture in the host country in the best possibility by means of the construction of what Salman Rushdie terms “imaginary homelands”. The second generation, on the other hand, forms an image of native culture based on the transmission of information by the first generation, thereby possessing a weak affinity towards native land than the first generation. The second generation is more into the effort of assimilation into the host culture and society as Ibarrola-Armendariz, Aitor (2011) states (as cited in Gordon, 1964), “It is a widely-assumed fact among social scientists and Migration Studies scholars that second-generation immigrants develop a number of ties with the host society that make their experience of their ethnic identity utterly different from that of their parents” (p. 162).

Memory and sense of longing are acute in the first generation, thus their failure to belong to the host culture and the retention of the nativity. Therefore, the novel opens with Ashima, in advance stage of pregnancy, eating puffed rice with lots of spices and lemon, an effort to recreate but not quite successfully as Lahiri (2003) narrates “Ashima has been consuming this concoction throughout her pregnancy, a humble approximation of the snack sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and railway platforms throughout India, spilling from newspaper cones” (p. 1), thus the memory of the native Indian concoction sold in Calcutta’s sidewalk for pennies bring her the memory of her homeland. Ashima particularly undergoes a strong sense of longing and alienation, making her homesick. In chapter 2 Lahiri (2003) presents Ashima spending hours sulking in the apartment and reading her parents’ letters and the same five Bengali novels time and again. Therefore, Ashima’s diaspora is of circumstance. On the other hand, Ashoke, an MIT engineer, has migrated to Boston, as Lahiri (2003) puts “...Ashoke began to envision another sort of future. He imagined not only walking but walking away, as far as he could from the place in which he was

born and in which he had nearly died” (p. 20), to forget the memory of a train accident in which he nearly lost his life. So, on his part, it is a self-imposed migration as is defined by Edward Said as an ascetic mode of ‘Willed Homelessness’. Despite this, he is not free from the clutches of the diasporic dilemmas. His return to India and marrying a Bengali girl indeed asserts his desire to retain his separate identity and solidarity to his homeland. Thus reasserting an acute sense of home memory and longing for the homeland.



So Ashoke and Ashima invite all Bengali friends and neighbours to celebrate *Annaprasan*, a rice ceremony of their six-month-old son Gogol, narrated as such by Lahiri (2003), “There is no baptism for Bengali babies, no ritualistic naming in the eyes of God. Instead, the first formal ceremony of their lives centres around the consumption of solid food.” (p. 38), Ashoke wearing white Punjabi top and Ashima wearing a silvery saree, the first-generation diaspora’s adjustment in recreation of their homeland and culture associated in the host culture and society as narrated by Lahiri (2003)

They ask Dilip Nandi to play the part of Ashima’s brother, to hold the child and feed him rice, the Bengali staff of life, for the very first time...A headpiece that Ashima cut out of paper, decorated with pieces of aluminum foil, is tied around Gogol’s head with strings...Ashima regrets that the plate on

which the rice is heaped is melamine, not silver or brass or at the very least stainless-steel. (p. 38-39)

This is Lahiri's effort in reclaiming her root through her characters as a diasporic writer in line with what Salman Rushdie (1991) in his collection of essays titled *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981 – 1991* posits "we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind" (p.428). Rushdie asserts that the so-called "imaginary homelands" are essentially the illusory constructions of the migrants, who want to acquire an understanding of the spaces they live currently and the spaces they have come from. They recreate these spaces in order to assuage their loss in their actual, physical lives, the loss of their place they have left behind physically but not culturally and psychologically.

Ibarrola-Armendariz, Aitor (2011) states:

The first-generation immigrants try to stick to the mannerisms, values, and beliefs of their own culture and any clash between their concept of "home" and their beliefs baffle them. In most of the second-generation people, these emotional links and ties with the past in most of the matters are loosened. They mainly go by American styles in food and habits, and their marital relations too are crumbling. (p. 77)

The first generation's instinctive desire to remain rooted to their native culture, beliefs, and values is seen when Ashima and Ashoke are still waiting for the letter from her grandmother from India bearing their child's name. In the Bengali tradition, the entire process of female pregnancy, from pre-natal period to post-natal period to giving birth to a child to early care of mother and child is taken care by elderly women in the family. Even the child's name is chosen by the grandparents. So when on the fourth day, Ashima and her child are discharged from the hospital and are required to give

the child's name for the birth certificate without which they cannot be released, Lahiri (2003) presents the immigrants' dilemma, through her characters especially Ashima, "But sir, we can't possibly name him ourselves" (p. 27). The first generations, stick faithfully to their cultural beliefs and values as Lahiri (2003) presents, "Now I know why he went to Cleveland," she tells people, refusing, even in death, to utter her husband's name" (183). The second-generation immigrants, on the other hand, are not shackled with the native culture of the past and are more into assimilation as Lahiri (2003) narrates:

"He learns to love the food she and her parents eat, the polenta and risotto, the bouillabaisse and asso buco, the meat baked in parchment paper. He comes to expect the weight of their flatware in his hands, and to keep the cloth napkin, still folded, on his lap. He learns that one does not grate Parmesan cheese over pasta dishes containing seafood." (p. 137)

Gogol easily assimilates into Maxine's family. He feels more homely in the place they have settled than at the native place where he is suffocated by cultural obligations and parental expectations as Lahiri (2003) narrates, "He didn't want to go home on the weekends, to go with them to pujos and Bengali parties, to remain unquestionably in their world" (p. 126). Therefore, Gogol finds himself being able to relate more with Maxine and her parents and their relaxed way of life than to his own which is conservative and domineering. Thus Lahiri (2003) narrates, "There is none of the exasperation he feels with his own parents. No sense of obligation. Unlike his parents, they pressure her to do nothing, and yet she lives faithfully, happily, at their side" (p. 138).

The second generation personifies in their daily life the malleability and fusion of cultures as is demonstrated by Maxine's disbelief over Gogol's upbringing under such different circumstances when actually he adjusts so easily to her lifestyle (Field, 2004. p. 168) as Lahiri (2003) narrates, "She is surprised to hear certain things about

his life: that all his parents' friends are Bengali, that they had had an arranged marriage...But you are so different. I would never have thought that" (138). Gogol, as he lives in the cultural borderland, speaks Bengali to his parents and with Maxine's parents in English while talking about Antonioni films.



On the other hand indeed, the second-generation immigrant family occupies particularly a vexed position in regard to identity. Probably they observe the “roots” and “routes”, the fundamental bases of their migrant parents’ identities as cited by Friedman, (1998) in her work titled *Mappings: feminism and the cultural geographies of encounter*, “roots, signifying identity based on stable cores and continuities; routes, suggesting identity based on travel, change, and disruption” (p. 153), these tenets providing only partial support to this generation (Field, 2004, p. 165-66).

Indeed, Field (2004) asserts:

The second generation exists in a liminal space of cultural borderlands...their cultural roots and their American lifestyles. Yet as often as this group may celebrate having "two homelands"-the purported ideal of the immigrant family-it also experiences a dual alienation. The physical and psychological distance from cultural forms that the second generation experiences preclude a complete

identification with their "roots." Concomitantly, the second generation often is not accepted as "real" Americans, because of racial or ethnic differences from the white majority. (p. 166)

Lahiri (2003) narrates, “He doesn’t feel insulted, but he is aware that a thin line has been drawn all the same. To him, the terms of his parents’ marriage are something at once unthinkable and unremarkable;” (p. 138). So Gogol is not completely disassociated from his parents’ culture which he refuses to be the part of nor completely accepted into Maxine’s culture as he is being ‘othered’ when Maxine confesses her disbelief and this borderland position underscores his dual alienation, from both his native and host culture.

Gogol, like many other second-generation immigrants, fails to find his place in the world despite his success as an architect. He has a great affinity towards American culture as a result of which he indulges in numerous relationships ignoring his roots. Indeed, in this free life of his romance, he becomes rootless and displaced. [edited by Prasanna, Sathupati. 2005. p. 178]

Thus, the second-generation immigrants are more displaced than their parents. Acutely aware of their ‘minority’ status, they identify themselves as South Asian Americans who struggle to assimilate into the mainstream culture of their resident country where they are not actually accepted as actual Americans. Therefore, repeatedly subjected to a ‘double minority’ status, thus earning yet another status of being American Desi, ‘brown’ and ‘Asian’ in the resident location and ‘out of place’ culturally, geographically and linguistically in their homeland (edited by Shankar & Cheung, 2012. p. 159) as Lahiri states, “It is the air, the rice, the wind, their relatives casually remark; they were not made to survive in a poor country, they say” (p. 86). While the first generations are given the “Desi” status both in the residential country and the home country, second generations are considered so only in America and

‘foreigners’ in their parents’ homeland. So the first generations’ rootedness is the backbone of their ‘Desiness’ as Lahiri (2003) narrates, “Ashima, now Monu, weeps with relief, and Ashoke, now Mithu, kisses his brothers on both cheeks, holds their heads in his hands. Gogol..., revealing a confidence Gogol and Sonia never see on Pemberton Road” (p. 81-82).

Lahiri’s *Unaccustomed Earth*, published in 2008, a collection of eight short stories, unlike her earlier works, is focused, as Aitor (2011) states, on the exploration of the global themes like death, marital issues, parenthood, guilt, and the subjugation of women. Indeed, the stories do not delve into the issues embroiled in the transition from one culture to another in the lives of generations of immigrants but, rather are about the stresses that inevitably sprout from family responsibilities, understanding one’s kith and kin or the necessity of grief over the loss of loved ones. The story revolves around the common themes that most Americans, regardless of their origin, ethnicity or gender deal with in their everyday lives.

The characters, well-to-do second-generation Bengali American immigrants, struggle with the issues of doubt and uncertainties, waves of emotional turmoil in individual lives and the feelings of insecurity in the midst of cultural and social shifts. Characters deal with disconcerting and unexpected events and feelings. Ruma, in the first story of the collection titled, too, *Unaccustomed Earth*, is traumatic after the death of her mother. Moreover, she feels very worried when her father offers to visit her because she is anxious that her father will move in to live with her as Lahiri (2003) states, “Ruma feared that her father would become a responsibility, an added demand, continuously present in a way she was no longer used to” (p. 7). After her mother’s death, she doubts she has any way to return to her traditional culture. Ruma is, more or less, assimilated into the American mainstream culture of nucleated and independent family life like any other second-generation immigrant Bengali-Americans although she is still trying to cope with being

displaced once more from Brooklyn to Seattle as Lahiri (2008) narrates, “Like his wife, Ruma was now alone in this new place, over-whelmed, without friends, caring for a young child...” (p. 40).

Indeed, Ruma feels alienated in her own marriage to Adam after her mother’s death. She felt helpless and estranged from her husband as Williamson and Cullingford (1997) in the journal titled *The Uses and Misuses of ‘Alienation’ in Social Sciences and Education* cite, “In the *Manuscript* Marx sees alienation as both the sociological process and the psychological state that this process produces with its inherent feelings of estrangement and powerlessness.” (p. 266). Thus Lahiri (2008) narrates, “...she felt a wall between them, simply because he had not experienced what she had ... an awareness had set in, that she and Adam were separate people leading separate lives” (p. 26).

On the other hand, her father didn’t want to stay with her. Hemlata (2013), in the article titled *Dichotomy and Dilemma: A Study of Father-Daughter Relationship in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Unaccustomed Earth* states that her father as a representative of his homeland’s patriarchal culture desires to possess the pivotal position for himself, not at the margins. Moreover, it is also the reflection of his struggle to assimilate in the resident country and his aspiration to consider himself not living on the borderlines as Lahiri (2008) narrates:

He did not want to be the part of another family, part of the mess, the feuds, the demands, the energy of it. He did not want to live in the margins of his daughter’s life, in the shadow of her marriage. (p. 53)

Moreover, the father inspires his daughter to stand independently and believes that individual liberty is something necessary for him as well as for others. At the same time, he clings to his past, to the Bengali language, food habits, people from Bengal (Mrs. Bagchi) and at the same time he seeks for a private space for himself (p. 221).

The second-generation immigrants are too involved in cultural assimilation and hybridization and in the construction of their ‘self’, that they neglect their native cultural values associated with their parents and this develops resentments as Lahiri (2008) states, “He remembered his children coming home from college, impatient with him and his wife, enamoured of their newfound independence, always wanting to leave. It has tormented his wife, though he never admitted it, had pained him as well” (p. 54). They assert their hybridized values upon their parents, thus creating generational rift which becomes ever bigger as Lahiri (2008) presents, “It was Ruma to whom he would give a new reminder that now his wife was gone, even though he was still alive, there was no longer anyone to care for her” (54). Such resentment deteriorates the relations between these two generations as Lahiri (2008) writes, “He knew that it was not for his sake that his daughter was asking him to live here. It was for hers...” (p. 53).

Hell Heaven too treats, like *Unaccustomed Earth*, with the theme of familial conflicts. Rogobete, Daniela, (2016) writes about *Hell Heaven* as desperate attempts to ‘strike root’ in foreign soil. Aparna’s rootedness, rigidity, and inability to adjust to her host country (from India to Berlin and then to US) and her acute desire to uphold her past makes her desperately want to recreate her homeland at all costs and thrusts her into the trap of a love triangle. Pranab, is the student whom she befriends and receives into her home like a brother, estranges Aparna and her husband as if they come from two different worlds. Pranab recreates for Aparna her lost world through music, films, poetry, and cooking. Loss comes in this short story under the guise of mother-daughter alienation and failure of the marriage. Lahiri (2008) narrates:

I began to pity my mother; the older I got, the more I saw what a desolate life she led. She had never worked, and during the day she watched soap operas to pass the time. Her only job, every day, was to cook for my father and me

...I began to take my cues from my father in dealing with her, isolating her doubly. (p. 76)

Aparna is alienated not only in her uprootedness and displacement but also in being isolated by her daughter and her husband as narrated by Lahiri (2008), “I began keeping secrets from her. I told her I was sleeping over at a friend’s...fondle my breasts and press their erections against my hips as we lay groping for sofa or backseat of a car” (p. 77). Moreover, in her inability to accept and assimilate into host culture she is indeed experiencing multiple isolations, as a result, alienation as Rosenstock and Kutner (1967) in their journal titled *Alienation and Family Crisis* presents, “Seeman has identified five possible attitudinal components of alienation: powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement” (p. 398).



Aparna’s roles in her domestic front as a wife and a mother are questioned as Lahiri (2008) states, “...I learned to scream back, telling her that she was pathetic, that she knew nothing about me, and it was clear to us both that I had stopped needing her, definitively and abruptly, just as Pranab Kaku had” (p. 76-77). Therefore, a sense of alienation stares at Aparna as Rosenstock and Kutner (1967) presents:

F.B. Waisenen indicates that alienation in these terms can also be viewed from the standpoint of dissonance theory. He quotes Festinger's comment that cognitive dissonance refers to a situation in which "a person knows two things-for examples, something about himself and something about the world in which he lives- which somehow do not fit together. (p. 399)

Indeed Aparna realizes that her roles as a wife and a mother in the world of her family no more fit together. She, in the garb of these roles, is not needed anymore and thus alienated from her daughter who has, in the process of assimilation into American culture has overlooked her filial responsibility which forms the very core of her parents' homeland culture, indeed the basis of all cultures. Filial irresponsibility, therefore, can be perceived as a defective hybridity mutation which further widens the generational gaps amongst immigrant communities.

Like any of Lahiri's stories so far *Only Goodness* also deals with the generational gap and conflict between the two generations of Indian immigrant Americans. Each generation's view and opinion of the other conflicts. Rogobete (2016) states all stories hold the perception of the Indian child born in America and their judgment of their parents from the American standards perspectives, especially for their failure to assimilate and integrate and for their transforming existence into a "life sentence of being foreign" (Lahiri 2008. P. 138). The first-generation immigrants' enthrallment with the Promised Land and its promises for their children, lure them, unaware of the suffering of the second generation as Lahiri (2008) writes:

Her parents had always been blind to the things that plagued their children: being teased at school for the colour of their skin or for the funny things their mother occasionally put into their lunch boxes, potato curry sandwiches that tinted Wonderbread green. (p. 143)

Rogobete (2016) writes that one of the most distinguished painful absences in this collection of stories, *Unaccustomed Earth* is that of a well-defined home/homeland. The house attains metonymic scopes in most of these short stories as it arouses an image of a world gone by and becomes a physical substitute for somebody absent in the family. In the last part of the collection of the stories, *Hema and Kaushik*, the “house” acquires complex distinctions, from identification with particular persons to represent different aspects of the experience of exile. The process of immigration and the immigration itself is seen as a sequence of home building in the attempt to find a lost home or settle into another one, and this implies moving around a set of items that epitomises the idea of the homeland. Different ways of approaching and envisioning houses become representative of different approaches of the diasporic condition. (p. 50)

The first generation endeavours to set up households, to strike roots and thus make up for the absence of the home they left. In contrast, the second generation, as illustrated by Hema and Kaushik, tries hard not to build homes and get stuck to one place for fear of being displaced and obliged to live once again their parents’ trauma. Despite this, there is a hidden and persistent longing for a home or origin that no longer exists as Lahiri writes, “Your parents have decided to leave Cambridge, not for Atlanta or Arizona, as some other Bengalis had, but to move all the way back to India, abandoning the struggle that my parents and their friends had embarked upon” (p. 223). However, this longing, the lack of fixity that Hema and Kaushik endure in their endeavour to discover anchorage, to reunite to their origins leads to their obliteration of these origins and fleeing from home, self and others, forever being alienated from home, self and others as Lahiri (2008) narrates, “And yet without his even realizing it, firmly but without force, Navin pulled me away from you, as the final gust of autumn wind pulls the last leaves from the trees” (p. 332). Thus, Hema sees the looming

shadow of irrevocable alienation from herself and her world as Lahiri (2008) writes, “It might have been your child but this was not the case. We had been careful, and you had left nothing behind” (p. 333).

Thus, in both the texts of Jhumpa Lhari, the shift in the diasporic feelings of the first generation to the second-generation diasporic feelings due to various factors are seen. Ashima’s decision, in *The Namesake*, to spend the rest of her life dividing her time between America, her home and India, her native land, is possible due to, besides other factors, the advent of the sophisticated means of communication and technology. It has provided Ashima with the opportunity of options to reach to this decision of transcultural lifestyle as Lahiri (2008) states, “She will call him, once a week, on the phone. She will learn to send e-mail, she says. Once or twice a week, he will hear “Gogol” over the wires, see it typed on a screen” (p. 289). Therefore, as Assadnassab (2012) states (as cited in Alfonso-Forero), “the uncertain young woman we encounter in the novel’s opening pages attempting unsuccessfully to recreate a favorite Indian snack in her Massachusetts kitchen is transformed through her role as an immigrant mother and wife into a transnational figure” (p. 852).



Likewise Ruma's father, in *Unaccustomed Earth* though rooted in the cultures and ideals of his homeland as opposed to his daughter, also transcends a transnational lifestyle made possible by science and technology though there are other personal and social factors as well. The shift in the diasporic feelings is not only experienced in the first generation only. The second generation too is the part of this shift. This shift is convergent. Like in case of Ruma who later on invites her father to spend his time genuinely keeping in line with the Bengali tradition in *Unaccustomed Earth* and Gogol's consent to a marriage with Moushumi, a Bengali immigrant, as desired by his mother, all manifests the change in the outlook and insight towards the native culture while Ashima's transnational status, Ruma's father's respect for his daughter's and his personal space and Usha's mother's acceptance of her daughter not only as hers but also the daughter of America all represent the change in the outlook and insight towards the host culture. In both the texts the first-generation Bengali immigrants are perceived as strongly rooted to their homeland though towards the end of the stories there are the signs of some assimilation. Likewise, with regard to the second-generation immigrants, both the texts deal with the common theme of the diasporic dilemmas of the second generations though the second text, *Unaccustomed Earth*, concerns more with the universal themes like family, relationships and issues not confined to diaspora but are characteristics of American society in general.

Jhumpa Lahiri as a diaspora writer of the two texts *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth* justifies her authorial position by bringing out the issues like identity crisis, displacement, alienation, cultural assimilations, and reintegration in the first text and additional universal issues like death, marital difficulties, parenthood, guilt, and the subjection of women. Lahiri has presented the second generation as more conflicted than the first generation. Her own experiences as a member of the diaspora are vividly presented. Her characters are financially secured and occupy a well-to-do middle

class strata of the American society. They are doctors, engineers, academicians, etc... The stories are set in institutional hubs like Cambridge, Boston, and Harvard. They are usually intelligent and prominent in academic arenas like Askoke pursuing a Ph.D. in fibre optics, Gogol, an architect, Ruma, a law student, and Rahul, excelling in high school to mention few from the select texts. They are all immigrants and the children of the immigrants who have come looking for economic gains, not indentured labours or political exiles.

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Dr Rajesh Verma

Dr Verma (Ph.D) is a Colombo Plan Lecturer, at Yonphula Centenary College, Royal University of Bhutan.

Tshewang Lhamo

Tshewang is a school teacher at Gedu HSS, Bongo, Chukha, Bhutan.



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