



A STUDY ON JHUMPA LAHIRI'S LIFE AND HER INITIAL EXPERIENCES TO APPROACH DIASPORA LITERATURE

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Abstract: Diaspora Literature is the vast study of those who leave their own country and live in another country. They have their religion, culture, language, society and they live in an alien land making many efforts to indulge in a new environment. There are numerous authors who have studied and written a lot on diaspora literature. Indian diaspora writers have also successively contributed in international diaspora. Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the names among those of well-known Indian diaspora writers who through her works, has acclaimed global identity.

Here in this paper Jhumpa Lahiri's early life, her achievements and initial experiences as a diasporic individual are reflected.

Key Words: Early Life, Education, Career as a Writer, Achievements, Awards, Diaspora Phenomenon

Introduction

Many Indian and International authors have emerged their writings on diaspora literature and have become famous worldwide. Among them Jhumpa Lahiri has been a writer with unique perception on diaspora as she said,

Do yourself a favour. Before it's too late, without thinking too much about it first, pack a pillow and a blanket and see as much of the world as you can. You will not regret it.

Here she has reflected her perception while on migrating in other countries. She has also instilled various diasporic elements such as alienation, cultural integration, hybridity, generation gap, nostalgia and memory in her works through novels and short stories collections.

Early Life of Jhumpa Lahiri

Jhumpa Lahiri, by name of Nilanjana Sudeshna Lahiri, English-born American novelist and short-story writer whose works irradiate the immigrant experience, in particular that of East Indians.

Jhumpa Lahiri was born on July 11, 1967. She was born in London, England. Jhumpa Lahiri was born to Bengali parents from Calcutta (now Kolkata). Her father was a university librarian and her mother was a school teacher who moved to London, then to the United States and settled in South Kingstown, Rhode Island, when she was young. Since then, to a great extent and at present too, she has spent her life in the United States as a citizen of it. Her parents were not determined about their career or ambitions in life. Her parents nevertheless remained committed to their East Indian culture and determined to last their children with experience of and pride in their cultural heritage. Jhumpa Lahiri was motivated by her grade-school teachers to keep her family nickname, Jhumpa, at school.

In an interview in 2017, Jhumpa Lahiri discussed that her parents were not religious and they did not teach her even any religious education; however, her parents taught her to honour and read great authors including Rabindranath Tagore. She said,

My parents aren't religious people, so they didn't give us a religious education, but they certainly taught us to respect the great minds and the great visionaries, and Tagore is one of those, right? And the fact that he happens to be Bengali and won the Noble Prize, well, details.

Education

Jhumpa Lahiri got all her degrees in the USA which consist of a BA in English literature from Bernard College of Columbia University in the year 1989 and various other degrees including an MA in English literature and a PhD in Renaissance literature from Boston

University. Although she wrote frequently during her school years, she did not hold a writer's life until after she graduated with B.A. degree and obtained three master's degrees in English, creative writing, and comparative literature and arts and a doctorate degree in Renaissance studies in the 1990s.

Career as a Writer

Jhumpa Lahiri is a well-known novelist who is also known for her verifiable compositions. Her well-known debut in the field of writing occurred in 1999, with the publication of a short story collection titled *Interpreter of Maladies*. Her second novel, *The Namesake*, gained popularity shortly after its release in 2003. Jhumpa Lahiri is an Indian-born American writer. However, while she cannot be legally referred to be an Indian writer, she is an Indian author in the sense that her constant struggle to prove her characters' mental injury on the pages captures her Indianness more frequently.

While in graduate school and soon thereafter, Jhumpa Lahiri published numerous short stories in such magazines as *The New Yorker*, *Harvard Review*, and *Story Quarterly*. She mentioned some of those stories in her debut collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). The nine stories, some set in Calcutta and others on the United States East Coast, scrutinizing such subjects as the practice of arranged marriage, alienation, dislocation, loss of culture and deliver insightfulness into the experiences of Indian immigrants as well as the lives of people belong to Calcutta.

Jhumpa Lahiri later wrote, "When I first started writing I was not conscious that my subject was the Indian-American experience. What drew me to my craft was the desire to force the two worlds I occupied to mingle on the page as I was not brave enough, or mature enough, to allow in life." American critics even admired the collection, but gained mixed reviews in India, where reviewers were alternately enthusiastic and upset too. She had not narrated Indians in a more positive manner. *Interpreter of Maladies* sold 600,000 copies and achieved the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction which was only for the seventh time a story collection had won the award.

Jhumpa Lahiri published her first novel, *The Namesake* in 2003. The theme and plot of this novel was based upon a family story that she heard while growing up. Her father's cousin was involved in a train collision and was saved by the workers when they saw a shaft of light reflected off of a watch he was wearing. Equivalently, the protagonist's father in *The Namesake* was saved due to his peers identifying the books that he read by Russian author Nikolai Gogol. The father and his wife immigrated to the United States as young adults. After this life-changing experience, he named his son Gogol and his daughter Sonali. Together the two children grew up in a different culture with varied customs and rituals that banged with what their parents had imparted them. There was a film adaption as well of *The Namesake* which was released in March 2007, directed by Mira Nair and starring Kal Penn as Gogol and Bollywood stars Tabu and Irrfan Khan as his parents. Jhumpa Lahiri herself made a cameo as Aunt Jhumpa.

Her second collection of short stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*, was released on April 1, 2008. Upon its publication, *The New York Times* praised *Unaccustomed Earth* as it achieved the rare distinction of debuting at number one on its best seller list. *New York Times* Book Review editor, Dwight Garner stated, "It's hard to remember the last genuinely serious, well-written work of fiction—particularly a book of stories—that leapt straight to Number One; it's a powerful demonstration of Lahiri's newfound influence in venture."

Jhumpa Lahiri has also had an eminent relationship with *The New Yorker* magazine in which she has published a number of short stories, mostly fiction, and a few non-fictions including *The Long Way Home*; *Cooking Lessons*, a story about the importance of food in Jhumpa Lahiri's relationship with her mother.

In September 2013, her novel *The Lowland* was placed on the shortlist for the Prize, which ultimately went to *The Luminaries* by Eleanor Catton. The next month it was also long-listed for the National Book Award for Fiction, and revealed to be a finalist on October 16, 2013. However, it vanished out for that award to James McBride and his novel *The Good Lord Bird* on November 20, 2013.

Jhumpa Lahiri published a non-fiction essay called *Teach Yourself Italian* about her experience learning Italian in *The New Yorker* magazine in December 2015. In the essay she stated that she is now only writing in Italian, and the essay itself was translated from Italian to English. That same year, she published her first book in Italian, *In Altre Parole (In Other Words)*, in which she wrote her book about her experience learning the language; and an English translation by Ann Goldstein entitled *In Other Words* was published in 2016.

In 2018, Lahiri published the short story, *The Boundary* in *The New Yorker*. The story explores the life of two families and the contrasting features between them.

In 2018, Lahiri published her first novel in Italian, *Dove mi Trovo (Whereabouts)*. In 2019, she compiled, edited and translated the Penguin Book of Italian Short Stories which consists of forty Italian short stories written by forty different Italian writers.

She married to TIME Latin American journalist, Alberto Vourvoulias-Bush in 2001 and lived in Rome for a few years before she came back to America and joined Princeton University as a professor of creative writing. They have two sons named Octavio and Noor. She presently lives with her family in Rome, Italy.

Achievements and Awards

Since 2005, Jhumpa Lahiri has been Vice President of the PEN American Centre, an organization designed to help friendship and intellectual cooperation among writers.

In February 2010, she was appointed as a member of the Committee on the Arts and Humanities, along with five others.

Lahiri was announced as the winner of the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2015 for her book *The Lowland* (Vintage Books/Random House, India) at the Zee Jaipur Literature Festival for which she entered Limca Book of Records.

In 2017, Lahiri received the Pen/Malamud award for excellence in the short story. The award was established by the family of Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Bernard Malamud to honour excellence in the art of short fiction.

Lahiri was presented the National Humanities Medal by the President of United States of America, Barack Obama in 2015.

Lahiri worked on the third season of the HBO television program *In Treatment*. That season featured a character named Sunil, a widower who moves to the United States from India and struggles with grief and with culture shock. Although she is credited as a writer on these episodes, her role was more as a consultant on how a Bengali man might perceive Brooklyn.

Following is the list of awards won by Jhumpa Lahiri:

- 1993 – Transatlantic Award from the Henfield Foundation
- 1999 – O. Henry Award for short story "Interpreter of Maladies"
- 1999 – PEN/Hemingway Award (Best Fiction Debut of the Year) for "Interpreter of Maladies"
- 1999 – Interpreter of Maladies selected as one of Best American Short Stories
- 2000 – Addison Metcalf Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters
- 2000 – The Third and Final Continent selected as one of Best American Short Stories
- 2000 – The New Yorker's Best Debut of the Year for "Interpreter of Maladies"
- 2000 – Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her debut "Interpreter of Maladies"
- 2000 – James Beard Foundation's M.F.K. Fisher Distinguished Writing Award for *Indian Takeout* in Food & Wine Magazine
- 2002 – Guggenheim Fellowship
- 2002 – Nobody's Business selected as one of Best American Short Stories
- 2008 – Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award for *Unaccustomed Earth*
- 2009 – Asian American Literary Award for *Unaccustomed Earth*
- 2009 – Premio Gregor von Rezzori for foreign fiction translated into Italian for *Unaccustomed Earth* (*Una Nuova Terra*), translated by Federica Oddera (Guanda)
- 2014 – DSC Prize for South Asian Literature for *The Lowland*
- 2014 – National Humanities Medal
- 2017 – Pen/Malamud Award

Data taken from Wikipedia_ Jhumpa Lahiri

Jhumpa Lahiri as Diaspora Phenomenon

Though endowed with a distinct universal speech, her stories do bring out fairly successfully the predicament of the Indians who trapeze between and across two traditions, one inherited and left behind, and the other, encountered but not necessarily assimilated-remarks Aruti Nayar.

Lahiri explains this as an inheritance of her parents' ties to India, "It is hard to have parents who consider another place 'home'. Even after living abroad for thirty years, India is home for them. We were always looking back so I never felt fully at home here. There is nobody in this whole country that we are related to. India was different to our extended family offered real connections." Yet, her familial ties to India were not enough to make India her 'home'. "I didn't grow up there; I wasn't a part of things. We visited the place often but we didn't have a home. We were clutching at a world that was never fully with us". Lahiri described this absence of belonging, "No country is my motherland. I always find myself in exile in whichever country I travel to that is why I was tempted to write something about those living their lives in exile". This idea of exile runs consistently throughout Lahiri's Pulitzer Prize winning book *Interpreter of Maladies*. It is a complex portrayal of family life of Indian immigrants trying to saddle two cultures – their Indian heritage and the American dream. It won critical acclaim for "its grace, acuity, and compassion in detailing lives, transported from India to America."

According to Lahiri's point of view, it tends to be guaranteed that she doesn't see the workers basically as people who are conceived or who live in an outsider culture, yet she accepts their personality modifies and is reformed by underlining the way that she doesn't endorse being essentially considered to be Indian, similar to shed likewise reflects in her characters, she has a more mind-boggling character, in her article, *From Hybrids to Tourists*. Children of immigrants in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, Natalie Friedman talks about Jhumpa Lahiri's way of portraying the migrant experience: Instead of shedding the features of the home culture and hurling himself head-first into crafted by Americanizing, the hero of the contemporary outsider novel regardless of whether an immigrant or a kid brought into the world to alien is more worried about their double way of life as it shows itself in America and in the worldwide. Lahiri's portrayals of the exclusive class of Western-instructed Indians and their kids' relationship to the two India and America destroy the generalization of brown-cleaned foreigner families that are consistently pariahs to American culture and rework them as cosmopolites, individuals from a moving organization of worldwide explorers whose public loyalties are adaptable. As Friedman brings up, in the books, Lahiri's characters carry on with a government assistance life in the United States and yet again create their personalities and societies, adjust to its way of life as opposed to managing separation, prejudice and the monetary endurance the perused experiences in the standard American environment. Lahiri rather manages the issues of dual identity and self advancement under an adopted culture. Friedman

remarks on the advancement of Lahiri's characters: I guarantee that Lahiri, as a feature of this developing Asian American writers, is less inspired by the quest for the American Dream as it was customarily delivered in more established writers' stories than she is having no idea what happens once that fantasy (in its assortment of manifestations) is accomplished, by the age of foreigners as well as by its youngsters.

Jhumpa Lahiri is a second-generation migrant giving an ideal voice to depict the sensations of Indian immigrants. Her set of experiences and foundation reverberate in her accounts with a feeling of collection of memories verifying her characters' sentiments and encounters. She shows how the immigrants in their efforts to keep their social convictions and customs alive, progressively assimilate all social customs of the host country. In any case, they can't turn out to be essential for the host country as they are related to the transient history of their folks and grandparents.

Conclusion

Lahiri causes an amazing investigation of the human brain in shifted circumstances to curse in an alien country. In the setting of India, America, Boston and Decca, she makes her characters wake up making an all-inclusive story of affection and satisfaction showing the illustration of modesty, equity and inspiring to protect the benefit of the past to confront the current difficulties. The characters recommend a positive note of a general public where the conventional and the world meet declaring the value of human existence. Lahiri with her effortlessness and polish depicts a human race of diseases to which she gives a fix however she finishes with a promising future.

Lahiri is unique in relation to other Indian journalists writing in English. The greater part of the Indian fiction authors writing in English are conceived and raised in India, albeit the scholars like Anita Desai, kamala Markandaya, Jhabvala, Vikram Seth and Salman Rushdie are living either in England or America normally, her association with India might be through her folks and grandparents. So, her insight into India will undoubtedly be restricted to the narratives from her grandparents, guardians, books and papers.

Jhumpa Lahiri is addressed more like an Indian novelist by experts in India or confused with being an Indian writer or an Indian-American writer. This is by all accounts a confusion made by her normal endeavours into the existences of Indian characters.

Then again, Jhumpa Lahiri was brought into the world in England and she went through three years there with her folks prior to moving to the United States of America and turning into an American resident in this manner. One needs to remember that her folks didn't need to confront the battles and difficulties that different immigrants may have looked around then, either in the USA or in England. Anyway, could her encounters be synonymised with the encounters of those youngsters who had slaves, workers, destitute individuals taken to the nations outside India by powers as detainees and slaves, and others in penury as their folks? Would her sensations of being driven into the corner and constrained to feel 'otherness match the encounters of these slave kids living altogether in seclusion without seeing that they were brought into the world in England or Netherland or Scotland or Australia or the USA or in the Trinidad islands? There is, without a doubt, a great deal of uncertainty and even the ability to use both hands in the circumstances of such artists introduced into the world with advantage but then virtually stealing their privileges of being remembered for the difficult foreigner's local region. Who would speak for the people who were carried as captives from West Bengal to the United Kingdom to serve, directly or indirectly, Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth? Jhumpa Lahiri couldn't care less about 'those interactions' because they were exceedingly other in any case, for her. Strange, but not unexpected. It's similar to the first-generation feeling diaspora who accept visible citizenship of other countries but crave for their Indianness inside.

Jhumpa Lahiri's composing is portrayed by her simple language and her characters, frequently Indian migrants to America who should explore between the social upsides of their country and their host country. Lahiri's fiction is personal and regularly draws upon her own encounters just as those of her folks, companions, associates, and others in the Bengali people group with which she is identified. Lahiri examines her characters' conflicts, emotions, and aspirations to capture the intricacies and complexities of alien country's research and conduct.

In novels and fiction, the narrator is an archetype. The conflict between alienation and assimilation has long been a central issue. - Jhumpa Lahiri.

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