



## ISSUES OF EXILE AND DIASPORA IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S LITERATURE

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### ABSTRACT

*Diaspora is applied to Jews dispersion, in human civilization the term diaspora is a generic term refers to migration, movement from the country of origin to another country or region. In the context, Indian diaspora is variety of types expedited during pre and post-independence era, driven by variety of reasons. In 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indians migrated as an Indenture labourer during colonial period, serving in European countries. Moreover, India stands second in diaspora after China from Asian countries. After 1965 Amendments in U. S. policy to unite families and dependents opened the opportunity to settle in American society. Indians migrated to seventy plus countries, but largest in America, forming thirty five million Indians. The educated Indians and opportunities opened to Indian scholars, IITians, Engineers, and professional opportunities served as an American Dream to tempt to American shores. With them they carried their family religion, ethnic culture and language; they have gone through series of socio-psychological transformation that inspired the issues and themes for literary writings. The literature of exile has become the heated topic for discussion in the last two decades, and subsequently areas of research to be studied and discussed in conferences in India and abroad. The detail paper, will discuss exile, diaspora literature of Jhumpa Lahiri in Indian English Literature to open for discussion at conference.*

**Key Words:** Exile literature, hybridization, acculturation , and ethos.

### INTRODUCTION

All the authors of elite, the constellation of Indian poets and novelists have left Indian shores for foreign and exiled themselves for good lifestyle and greater artistic opportunity. They are

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driven by creative powers from foreign and native country perspectives. The experiences of diaspora writers inspired the writings in the different socio-cultural and ethnic background, they penned down the lives and complexity of the ashore Indians. Bharati Mukharjee, Rohinton Mistry, V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Monika Ali, Vikram Seth are diaspora authors among many others.

Indian diaspora writers are hierarchical i.e. they belongs to linguistic background of states in the republic of India. It's variety within variety in cultural background in exiled writers.

Jhumpa Lahiri, projected through her art and literature the manifest lives of Indians in American society progressed through: Adjustment, Accommodation, Adoption and Acceptance later gradual process of absorption. Her works traces preserving language, cultural roots, faiths, beliefs in first generation and clashes with next generation due to acculturation in new society. The exiled parents and culturally absorbed next generation created confrontation, clashes and confusing wall within relations.

Indian diaspora encompasses the issues of migration, socioeconomic experiences, cultural experiences adaptation and assimilation in the host and exiled country. Multi ethnic transnational societies are forming in foreign countries with efforts. Marginalization, detachment, nostalgia, language, culture, rootlessness are literary themes of exiled authors. Diasporas come out niche like assimilation, challenges to cultural preservation, ethnic polarization.

The contemporary Indian diaspora literature has voiced lives of exiled, their concerns than becoming voice of Indian masses. The exiled literature is literature of migration and expatriates than common mass of Indian society and Indian reality.

Man is a gregarious animal. The human history is the history of migration for multiple reasons viz. food, protection, stability, belongingness, the sense of emotional attachment and security for earnings, better lives and career that the modern world are the driving forces for human beings to move from the native country to foreign shores. The human being has been migrating from aegis immemorial, also to and fro in Indian subcontinent: Asia.

The term Diaspora refer to Jewish context been used for the persecution, expulsion and migration for security to the human lives from motherland. The retention of cultural, social identity of the migrated society is another parameter with homeland cultural identity for diaspora studies. The human life reflected in considerable literature of the world and Indian expatriate literature too, the latter is tremendous output driven on the authors from migrated to target countries, their socio-economic experiences, struggle in socio-economic alien environment, exposure to foreign culture, hybridized the Indian familial, cultural genesis and

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values, morality and ethos. The adaptation, assimilation, in the host societies, identity, nostalgia, cultural differences, acculturation, ethics and Indian values are recurrent issues of diaspora literature. The exile may be forced or self-exile for the better career opportunities, living standards. The self-exiled or migrated community suspended between two worlds and rooted neither.

The modern opportunities, driven by US in the world become dream world for the professional development, education against the repelling poor opportunities in South Asia. Tinker said 'There is a combination of push and pull, the push of inadequate opportunity in south Asia and pull of the better prospects in the West. The awakening to the western world, better prospects in education and career development, took place further incentives by liberal Visa rules, drove the professional training, and increased awareness; educational opportunities opened the family migration to the US. In 1980's two thirds migrated were Indians, IT professionals, researchers, programmers, pooled huge resource of Indian scholars, scientists, technicians, were supported by scholarships, created exodus to the foreign shores, and has grown three fold.

The Indian culture, upbringing, values of family & society are brought in the contrast of American society. The migrated generations are nostalgia, preserving Indian cultural, social values, family values with them. The acculturation of next generation inundated from earlier generation gave up what the earlier generation preserved and practiced. The generation gap, cultural clashes in a parents and children resulted with catalectic foreign cultures. The alienation and the loss of identity are contemporary diaspora literary features.

### Objectives of the Study:

Diaspora and exile literature are perennial source of study to explore the changing socio-cultural dimensions of literary study. The struggle for settlement in foreign countries, the ambition to have real estate and possess to the secular world of opportunities, ambitious for success in the next generation is recurrent themes of the novel. The displaced few are marginalized sections of American society, cross-cultural conflicts, voices of women, the dispossessed soul of the exile create romantic world of dreams of homeland. The cultural patterns, social norms and behavior were idiosyncratic beings of exiled generations. The ways to survive for women were distinctive features of rebellion of women in exiled world. The research continues especially in India, with Indian diaspora with following objectives.

1. To explore the tragic consequences of migration into alien land.
2. To study the multiple dimensions and causes of migration and hybridity and loss of Indian values.
3. Diaspora, marginalized sections of the society in target country.

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## Scope of the Research:

The exile literature and diaspora literature isn't just implied expatriates problems, in foreign contexts, experiences for university students, researchers to study, moreover literary forms of art are upholding the life values, denouncing the wrong ethics of society, the life experiences are toast of critique of foreign culture, emphasizing Indian, domestic, familial, values. The exile literature drives the researchers, readers to accept and readies to embark by dismantling foreign culture.

The host society and their level of response to migrants, readiness to assimilate the diaspora, are dimensions in the ethnic study. The US citizens and ethnic differences, acculturation of Indian diaspora tend to make multicultural and study paradigms of multiculturalism. The social, cultural, demographic dimensions of the problems widened the scope of the topic between the target countries from the host country. The thematic analysis, of the lives of the Indian exiled migrated people; moreover the second generation in the novel and short stories has been dexterously portrayed. The attempt has been made to present issues and concerns of the Indian diaspora.

## Research Methods:

The diaspora of Indian especially the Indian cultural ethos, are cross examined in the third world countries, in Indian Universities. The research in literary studies prevalent in Indian Universities encompassing the Indian authors and migrated Indians are the topics for the research scholars to undertake. The topic has been relevant in the backdrop of the migrating Indians, in the wake of American dream to the Indians. To analyze the problem, the primary and secondary sources have been studied. The researcher used his literary analysis of various aspects of literary appreciation, experiences to draw the conclusion.

## Relevance and Novelty of the Topic:

Jhumpa Lahiri is the contemporary author of international repute in English and researcher, she has evidently brought the issues and concerns of diaspora and the lives of Indian diaspora through her work of art. The high middle class families born and brought up in India to avail professional development, and opportunities, have migrated to US. Her sensibility, living in Indian origin family and placed in alien land, is behind creative imagination and real experience is Bengali, represents Bengali diaspora experience and cultural intrusion in the host country. The topic of the paper has been topic of doctoral studies in Indian universities adopted for the seminars and conferences like Europe in India.



## Issues and Concerns of Diaspora in the Novel 'The Namesake'

Her concern is essentially Bengali and Indian at large to voice the tragic suffering in rootless past. The fellow Indian's experience, in the foreign and alien land, and her identity crisis behind her autobiographical experience too shape of the story in the novel 'The Namesake'. The Bengali response to American socio-cultural environment manifested through her literature. The first generation of diaspora Ashoke Ganguli after Engineering at St. Xavier moved to Boston has Indian upbringing in mind. Ashima and Ashoke Ganguly had early lived romantic and beautiful experiences in India, nostalgia memories of their engagement and domestic cozy relations to paternal grandfather and maternal grandfather. Both find solace in the fond recall of Bengali environment. Ashoke although suffered tragic train accident, he had good old memories of the rural fields of Bengal.

The novel 'The namesake' underpins continuous underlying themes, crave for name as loss of identity, preserving and making name in the foreign environment, as a crisis for the children of next generation. Identity has been the crisis when Gogol tried to run away from his childhood name, Gogol named after Russian author Nikolai Gogol, the increasing awareness and fun by fellow students and biographical details of the author known for disastrous career and suicide caused disgust to the name and subsequent name change. Ashoke named Nikhil temporarily while registering for nursery education, as in the custom that grandmother names the newborn, the letter hovering over, it never arrived. The school governor asked his name he would be called. Ashoke worried as Indian custom penname is family name, for family and friends, formal name for school, but in America even Prime Minister is called by nick name Jimmy. Gogol can't be truncated.

The English teacher Mr. Lawson reading short story by Nikolai Gogol 'Overcoat' allotted to Gogol, reading biography and life of author served humiliation, confusion and distrust towards the name. The uncertainty of name and feeling of confused identity, worsened in Gogol, he is neither Indian nor fully American, nor Russian. The isolation, alienation and socio-cultural environment around him evoke emotional isolation, displacement of psyche in the foreign culture, he spends his time in his room listening to music and songs, taste to hybrid American livings. He met Amit his mother's acquaintances in International conference, listened to something called like marginality. He listened unknown to him, an ABCD- American Born Confused Desi, critically, described to himself.

The distance between mother land and foreign land distanced them but the couple created a parallel Bengali culture with fellow Indians and Bengalis. The informal talk nostalgia took their discussion to Indian films and Hindi Music. The nostalgia feeling won't let escape Ashoke from India who sophomore his son to India's tour to link his second generation to Indian soil and heritage. The family attachments were paramount for Ashoke and Ashima

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but Gogol and Sonia were craving for pizzas, wines, missing every time his room and friends and she hers.

The acculturation in the second generation of migrated diaspora cultured the minds of Gogol and Sonia who liked Americanized living and interest, values, opinions and emotions turned hostile. He had mates in Jason, Colin, and more. He was going for dates. He had the first kiss experience and physical relations with Kim, whereas Indian family ethos are preserved in the Indian values. The drinking adopted with fellow American mates, his parents want him to be successful and engineer, doctor, researcher as professional success drove them to US. Gogol and Sonia, prone to foreign culture, adopted foreign culture, dressings, even independent thinking in every respect, love relations and furthermore drastic and distressing to the parents the discard of mother and father when they need most. To the Indian mother of family ethos, the behavior of her kids is extremely hostile, frustrating and tragic. The ignorance of father's departure and when he need most, Gogol was enjoying holidays with Maine's family.

The cultural hybridity, manifested in the girl Maushumi Muzoomdar introduced to Gogol after short lived relation with Maine Ruth and Maxine. The girls and love, engagement of Ashima and Ashoke brought to compare and contrast with Gogol and other girls. Not only he discarded parents in the company of Maxine, but lied to his mother about his assignment utter frustration and tragic to Indian minds.

Born and brought up in foreign land, Gogol, the second generation adopts to American livings, disowning and independent living when they are grown with separate family.

Ashima alienated within her relations, and find solace in her creative instincts, she had given up, and she took to writing. Ashima blamed that she had given birth to two vagabonds. The loss of family attachment, degrading Indian values, ethos of Indian livings, and rituals are casualties percolated in the second generation at the expense of cultural influences. The first generation is mentally suffering from nostalgia, Ashoke and Ashima tried to maintain their Indian values and ethos, while Gogol and Sonia moreover prone to sociocultural ambience, became hybridized American-Indians. Ashoke want Ashima to be alone, start earning, and live by her oneself, to cater for the needs in the context of the Americanized living. He sensed the foreign invasion of culture and learning in the alien which is not his, in his family. The reasoning of Ashoke substantiated by his son Gogol and Sonia. Ashima realized after the death of Ashoke of cardiac arrest. The death was mourned by Bengali friends from New Jersey, for ten days mourning in white dress. Weaving and pursuing her interest Ashima decided to return to her loving abode, mother land where her lineage is and preserved ethos. The thanksgiving parties were thrown when Ashima decided to leave foreign shore and to spend six months in America and six months in India. Ben, Sonia's husband were invited to



return the help rendered in the foreign country. Gogol and Ashima cleared things carried that are close to her, Pemberton Road house sold to Walkers and for other to pick up.

The American society the ethnic values ethos, bonds are parts and parcel of the second generation driven away from the country of their parents origin are the constant underlying features of the exiled authors. The first generation or migrating moreover attached to the India, the country of their childhood and parents. Nostalgically, the exiled keep their customs, rites and rituals as a way of Indian.

### **Catastrophic Impact of Exile and Diaspora in Short Stories:**

Jhumpa Lahiri delineated various aspects with minute observation of Indian diaspora in her compendium of short story in 'Unaccustomed Earth'. Ruma's father struggled in abroad world in pursuing career in Pharma Company from a small apartment to big apartment. Ruma daughter pursued law and was in love with Adam adopted hybridized foreign prone culture against the parents will. Ruma and Adam had their own abode away from New York, her father's apartment and living by himself, preparing food and cleaning house, with his short stay at Ruma's house since Roni their son forsaken them for New Zealand on a documentary crew Ruma's father was alone in old age after retirement. Akash, the bond between Ruma and American husband, fetch her father after retirement from New York to stay with them. Adam's hesitation and constant reminding to Ruma, her responsibility after the death of her mother to care for father unfounded in American life Ruma wish him to depart. The heavy heart she bids adieu and finds the letter under bed to Mrs. Bagchi as mid age companion. Paradoxically, Ruma can't understand Bengali, but isolation of her father, and obliging duties towards American husband and Indian father rends readers towards tragic irony.

The acculturation, hybridization of second generation are underlying difficulty in acquiring Bengali and practicing English, adopting love marriage against will of parents. The emotional attachment love instinct in the backdrop of husband's professional career is features of the live in relationships. Pranab Chakravorty introduced to Usha's family, by Shymal Da. An IT graduates Shymal and Pranab belong to same city, Shyamal was busy in research couldn't afford time with Aparna. Pranab cozied with Deborah, the relations grown complicated in family. The daughter of the professor, Deborah adopted and loved Bengali family, open culture and freedom of choice contrasted to reveal the conflicting relations with his parents in India. His father blamed once, praised Shyamal and Aparna for support.

The fragility of Western social, domestic and family values are posing complex human and family relations, frustrations, Deborah, after disowning by Pranab, maintain relations, while Indian couples are living fidelity, and preserving their marriage bond faithfully. Usha adopts the host country culture lived blatant life of physical relations, in American surroundings,

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posed serious problems to Indian kids. The love inspired in Aparna by Pranab when she was crestfallen tried to commit suicide, she narrated this to Usha. Aparna being married in alien culture and find attachment with Pranab she felt heartbroken, alienated over his marriage.

The acculturation of Indians exiled ashore of target country the literature expounded in 'The Only Goodness'. It mirrors acculturation manifested in excessive drinking, love relations, by Rahul and utter ignorance by the family, in the pursuit of profession and disregard for family cares are the first casualty in the family. Sudha the sister instigated his drinking more, in his room, Rahul miserably failed in his career, against expectation of his parents. Sudha made a career in London School of Economics. Rahul's growing negligence towards studies, disregard for family relations, resulted in anger in his father. The angst against father and his expectation from Rahul in the foreign land failed, alienated him further to run from the family values. Rahul's drinking habit, his interpenetration in Sudha's lives with Roger Featherstone and accidental fuss he risked the life of kid, Sudha was forced to remove him from home. Rahul removed himself from the stigma of unsuccessful to South America and Elena who tried rehabilitate him. Jhumpa Lahiri traces the transnational influences on the lives of the second migrating generation.

The short lived love relations, frustrations alienation from family bonds are perennial features of stories. Like 'Nobody's Business'. Sangita Biswas Paul, and Heather lived together. Sangita, the beautiful Bengali girl was in demand, to be bride. She was doctorate student at Harvard, Paul awaited PhD degree after failed oral defense. Paul, the witness to Sang's eventualities, Sang was the most sought after girl brought Farouk in his BMW car. The growing intimacy and frequent visits signaled the dangers forthcoming. Heather and Kevin was in love, Paul as a silent observer and reports the disastrous life of Sangita. But Farouk prevented Sang to meet his girlfriends, as an ambience of the existing foreign culture, Farouk was a cheater had many girl-friends, Deidre was a beloved, she called Paul once to inquire relations between Sang and Farouk. Sang was unknown to the cheating, love relations among the girls neigh they become part of lives of next generation. The Indians come in the touch foreigners to suffer for the blatant and excessive freedom of the native men. Paul pulled out phone cable from distressing call by Deidre, but Paul arranged Sang to listen all by herself to the phone call. Sang was frustrated, decided to leave for London. She blamed Farouk of cheating that is rare in the Indian sociocultural ethics. Sang demand answers from him, Paul was strong to break his bone and pin him and handover to police. The frustrating love relations, loss of family values, acculturation of host country, misplaced love relations in in the host culture run deep in the lives of this part of country. The expectations of Indians to preserve attachment and fidelity in love are no longer in host cultural values, raised frustration among the girls, consequent shift to London from memories.





There has been persistent attempt in Jhumpa Lahiri's thematic approach to trace the drives for displacement and migration, her meticulous delineation of her first-hand experience of Indians abroad, professional development, patients for medical treatment, attraction for better career opportunities. In 'Once in a Lifetime' the author brings out the cooperation among the Indians abroad, the target country. Kaushik's family had helped to settle in Massachusetts, it's a payback time for Hema's father for help in Bombay once. Kaushik's mother, Parul was ailing from breast cancer, carried all responsibility of the newly arrived family by Hema's Mother

Kaushik was alienated, marginalized within his family, condition of his ailing mother worsened, He spent time walking with Hema, developed love relations that remained unfulfilled even to the foreign ashore when he was placed in Hong Kong. The emotional embarrassment in the second generation after his father's subsequent visits to Calcutta and subsequent marriage created complex lives of the Indians in abroad. After Parul Mashie died, the jewelries were sent to Ayahs, women in Calcutta. Kaushik paid more attention and care by his father, bought him Audi as an incentive to his marriage and frustration, what Kaushik felt his mother's rights. The newly wed spouse of his father Chitra from India is loving, careful and blossomed with Indian family cares and responsibility. The concerns of his life are in sequel stories.

The exile, whether self-exile or forced for professional development, research in subsequent generation of diaspora, reflects complex emotional issues, interpersonal relations, love relations, that are fragile, in the western countries. It's third world country from host country of first generation.

Even Hema's love and unavoidable marriage forced them to separate him from Hema to Thai shores, scuttled him to slip into drinking and waiting in alienation and marginalized in the loveless world around him. The telegram is only reminder of happy past, when Kaushik Chaudhari got the message from Hema of baby born to her could be his. The emotional displacement, physical encumbrances by professional careers, cultural patterns, intrude into diaspora lives of next host generation. The interpersonal family relations are prone to disaster, love and blatant relations, physical relations and frustrations have alienated exiled diaspora.

### Conclusion:

Jhumpa Lahiri reflects the issues of diaspora and lives of Indian diaspora through novels and short stories. The families born and brought up in India to avail professional development, and opportunities migrated to US. Her sensibility behind creative imagination and real experience is Bengali, represents Bengali diaspora experience and cultural intrusion in the



host country. The Bengali response to American socio-cultural environment manifested through her literature. The literature by Jhumpa Lahiri is multi-dimensional, hybridized, and multicultural in the western world.

Moreover, identity formation shaped by religion race, socio economic conditions, culture find the expatiated features of diaspora writers. The alienation, nostalgia, rootlessness gave rise to detachment and double consciousness. The secular space adapted by the Indian Americans. Jhumpa Lahiri's manifest literary creation springs from her novel Namesake and short stories. Ashoke and Ashima inherent Indianness of living contrasted with next generation Gogol, giving up their cultural ethos, expectation, enjoyed freestyle of living, drinking habit, fall in love with Maxine are crux of conflict and creating wall. The novel Namesake by Lahiri dramatizes the sense of exile, loneliness and desire to belong to nation and culture of their upbringing and acculturation of new nation in the second generation are recurrent human experiences in the novel.

Jhumpa Lahiri traces the hybridization, Gogol, instead suffers cultural alienation and identity crisis. The second generation manifest efforts to discover their past which is part of their life and origin though they cannot become part of alien culture or exiled culture. Jhumpa Lahiri's 'Unaccustomed Earth' revealed diaspora and exiled themes in short stories. Ruma and her father are separated by the second generation's hybridization. Ruma married American boy Adam against her parent's will, he born and brought up in American domestic contexts. Her father feels nostalgic and at loss after his wife's death, he recalls his brother and home in Calcutta, Bengali livings, his relations and parental care sons need to care. The story brings out identity crisis, assimilation, cultural clashes themes are recurrent themes and drives behind diaspora and exiled authors. The first migrants are nostalgic in discussion of Indian Bollywood film songs, actors and heroes like Devanand musical tracks and singers. Lahiri brought diaspora features in her stories like Hell-Heaven, Only Goodness, Nobody's Business and other stories from her collection.

The professional development, success, opportunities, acculturation, wealth are American dream that observed in the Indian context and technological development, globalization and liberalization era. The Americanized life for first generation has been frustrating and distancing from their own world and subsequently their kids, and expediting their return to India. Jhumpa Lahir's Novel 'The Namesake' traces the agony, pains, frustration, marginality, alienation, and nostalgia of the diaspora literature.

Indian diaspora encompasses the issues of migration, socioeconomic experiences, cultural experiences adaptation and assimilation in the host and exiled country. Multi-ethnic, transnational societies are forming in foreign countries with efforts. Marginalization, detachment, nostalgia, language, culture, rootlessness are literary themes of exiled authors.

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Diasporas come out niche like assimilation, challenges to cultural preservation, ethnic polarization.

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