

**CHANGING PERSPECTIVES OF IMMIGRANTS ON LOVE, MARRIAGE AND SEX IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *UNACCUSTOMED EARTH***

Chaturvedi. Divi  
c.divi29@gmail.com

**Abstract**

*Jhumpa Lahiri's treatment of human relationships portrays the inner lives of immigrants and manifests various facets of human nature. The characters navigate between the spirit of India and the pulls of western lifestyle. Lahiri's stories address several pertinent factors that affect human relationships. The short stories of Jhumpa Lahiri set in the diasporic space, explore the complications in relationships between individuals in simple, direct and clear prose.*

**Key words:** diasporic space, changing perspectives, human relationships

In the collection of short stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*, Jhumpa Lahiri portrays the intersections of cultures, attitudes of second generation immigrants, varied perceptions of situations and their impact on relationships.

Hawthorne's epigraph in *Unaccustomed Earth* leads to interpretations that Lahiri is in favour of migration. However, Lahiri clears this assumption. "I'm not for or against it. There is no for or against in birthplaces, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth," that's what is happening in these stories. (An Interview with Jhumpa Lahiri 79)

The title story, "Unaccustomed Earth" is set in Seattle. Other stories in the first part of this collection, "Hell-Heaven", "A Choice of Accommodations", "Only Goodness" and "Nobody's Business" are set in the region of New England. The stories in the second part, "Once in a Lifetime", "Year's End" and "Going Ashore" are set in Cambridge, Rome and India.

In the title story "Unaccustomed Earth," during her widower father's brief stay with her, Ruma compares his way of thinking and his preferences with those of her mother at every stage leaving the impression that she loves her mother more than her father. On several issues, the opinions of Ruma and her father differ. Their assumptions, expectations and recollections further reveal the different facets of human nature.

Should a daughter care for her aged widower father? Ruma is in two minds when her father suggests that he will visit her home in Seattle. She has moved to Seattle from Brooklyn along with her American husband Adam and their three year old son Akash. Her mind tosses between the Indian cultural traditions where caring for the aged is not only a responsibility but also a virtue, a mark of affection and feeling of belonging, and the western norms where they turn to old age homes. However, her dilemma is based on the assumption that her father will move into her house. Her husband Adam is neutral about inviting her father to stay with

them permanently.

As Adam is always away from Seattle on a business trip, there is no direct interaction between Ruma's father and her husband. Ruma makes it a routine to call her father after her mother's sudden death while undergoing surgery for gallstones, but she is not prepared to spend a week alone with him. Ruma, more attached to her mother does not have a similar feeling towards her father. Her belief that her father never loved her mother intensely often disturbs her. "Though it upset her to admit it, if anything, he seemed happier now; her mother's death had lightened him, the opposite of what it had done to her" ( Lahiri 33).

Her father's presence makes her think of her mother frequently. She compares him often with her mother. At her mother's strict instructions, Ruma always spoke to her in Bengali and not in English where as her father had no preference. Ruma considers her mother a custodian of culture, a symbol for affection and warmth and she thinks that her father's approach is business like in every activity.

By making the readers look into the minds of Ruma and her father who often drift into the memories of the days all the members of the family spent together, Lahiri explores the contradictory views Ruma and her father hold about relationships. When Ruma's father insists that she should take up a job, she feels that her mother would have been far more understanding. Interestingly, he feels like telling Ruma about Ms. Meenakshi Bagchi, his new companion, but hesitates as he feels that his son would have been more understanding. He is sure that Romi will respond positively with encouraging words where as Ruma might condemn him as she has done earlier on several occasions.

Ruma's mother objects her decision to marry Adam, but once the marriage takes place she changes her mind and starts loving him as a son. Her father refuses to participate in the discussion when she announces her engagement with Adam. He never makes any attempt for developing intimacy with his son-in-law, and sink the differences between him and his daughter. The frail bond creates barriers in communication and prevents them from coming closer. Ruma feels that she is condemned by her arguing father throughout her life whether it is choosing her major in college or choosing the venue for her wedding ceremony. The differences that cropped up in childhood remain to continue into adult life and beyond.

Some feelings and thoughts are never expressed in words; never shared. "Ruma suddenly wanted to ask her father, as she'd wanted to ask so many times if he missed her mother, if he'd ever wept for her death. But she'd never asked, and he'd never admitted whether he'd felt or done those things" (46). Surprisingly, Ruma's father too has no doubts about his not so intense relationship with his wife. He compares himself with Mrs. Bagchi. "She had loved her husband of two years more than he had loved his wife of nearly forty, of this he was certain" (30).

In spite of these not so intense feelings towards his wife, Ruma's father plants hydrangea in the garden and tells his daughter to take care of it reminding her that they are her mother's favourite. He takes up gardening to reconnect himself to his wife and to his grandson Akash.

Ruma is shocked when she finds out accidentally that her father has fallen in love with Mrs. Bagchi. She is drawn to the poignant memories of her mother's departure and the

way her father honoured her by planting her favourite plant before starting a relationship with another woman. Her father's action might have softened her stance towards him. She sticks a postal stamp on the post card written by him to Mrs. Bagchi.

The introspection of Ruma's father reveals the fundamental nature of human beings. For children, there is no world beyond their parents. However, with the passage of time they turn their backs to their parents for one reason or the other. The children feel the pain of separation only when they become old and their children forsake them. "He and his wife were their whole world. But eventually that need dissipated, dwindled to something amorphous, tenuous, something that threatened at times to snap. That loss was in store for Ruma, too; her children would become strangers, avoiding her" (54).

There is a metaphor in the expression, "The flowers will be pink or blue depending on the acidity of your soil" (51). The sapling of love too may grow into a beautiful plant or wither away depending on the nature of the heart where it is planted. The saplings of love may find some hearts "unaccustomed" and refuse to bloom.

The oxymoron title "Hell-Heaven" points out the kind of experiences some immigrants undergo. In this story which spans over two decades, Lahiri brings out the loneliness immigrant housewives feel while their husbands are fully involved in their studies or work, and the impact of isolation on relationships, and the conflict between first generation immigrant parents and their children. The peer pressure on the children and the freedom American children enjoy, make them revolt against their parents in matters like dating and premarital sex. There is a conflict between family construct and social construct in the diasporic space. The differences in their perception of traditional Indian cultural practices and the liberal social norms of USA create diasporic tensions. Commenting on the fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri, Judith Caesar says, "Even though her characters are not usually Americans, they embody the American impulse to reinvent one self, to escape, to ignore conventions and rules, to create one's own morality, the American spirit of place that D.H. Lawrence identified" (67-68).

The story "Hell-Heaven" has some similarities and contrasts with the other story of Lahiri, "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine." Both the stories are the view points of the younger members of the Indian immigrant families, Lilia and Usha respectively. Just like Pirzada who visits Lilia's house regularly Pranab Chakrabarty too visits Usha's house. Longing for cultural companionship makes these strangers family friends. Crisis cements relationships in the story, "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" where as the story "Hell-Heaven" explores the darker side of the human lives with unfulfilled desires and heart breaks.

The Indian immigrant Aparna finds it distressing to stay alone all day in her apartment in Boston as her husband Shyamal goes to work and their daughter Usha goes to school. Isolation and cultural disorientation disturb her. She regains her spirits once Pranab Chakrabarty of West Bengal, pursuing engineering course in MIT starts visiting her family. She enjoys his company as they have many common interests. "They had all the things she and father did not: a love of music, film, leftist politics, poetry" (Lahiri 64).

Shyamal is wedded to his research work and does not spend much time with Aparna. As their interests differ, Aparna starts craving for the company of Pranab Chakrabarty and

she becomes rather possessive, and nobody is aware of it. Shyamal who does not bother about his wife's nostalgia, and lives in his own world of research work is partly responsible for her emotional attachment to Pranab. He fails to save her from isolation and socio-cultural alienation. "When my mother complained to him about how much she hated life in the suburbs and how lonely she felt, he said nothing to placate her." "If you are so unhappy, go back to Calcutta," he would offer, making it clear that their separation would not affect him one way or the other" (76).

Her roots in Indian culture are challenged when she has a crush on Pranab Chakrabarty. After Chakrabarty's marriage to Debora, an American, Aparna tries to commit suicide. She is torn by internal conflict. Through her character, Lahiri portrays the plight of the immigrant housewives deprived of emotional bonding in the diasporic space. Physical intimacy alone does not bridge the differences between couple. Despite all the focus on individual goals, meaningful interactions may lead to intimacy at psychological levels. However, overtime Shyamal and Aparna start respecting each other's interests and become more intimate when compared to their earlier times.

The relationship between Aparna and her daughter Usha reveals the varied perception of value system between first generation immigrants and their children. Conflict between children and their parents is a recurring motif in Lahiri's second collection of stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*. In the story "Hell-Heaven" Aparna, despite the fact that she nurtures love secretly towards Pranab, which is not a virtue, expects her daughter to be virtuous and gives a speech to her on how to be careful with boys and about parties. Like most of her friends Usha does not pay attention to the cultural traditions of India and she even hates her mother for all the control she tries to exercise over her. "As we drove home from the wedding I told my mother, for the first but not the last time in my life, that I hated her" (74).

Raising teenagers in the diasporic space is a tough task. They become vulnerable and rebellious as they involve in activities forbidden by their cultural traditions to the horror of their parents. Usha's behaviour in the story "Hell-Heaven" underscores this challenge often immigrant parents face in USA. "I began keeping other secrets from her, evading her with the aid of my friends. I told her I was sleeping over at a friend's when really I went to parties, drinking beer and allowing boys to kiss me and fondle my breasts and press their erections against my hip as we lay groping on a sofa or the backseat of a car." (76)

The conflict is dreadful during the transition period. With the passage of time, some of the parents who get assimilated into the culture of the host country strike a compromise with their children. "Slowly, she accepted that I dated one American man, and then another, and then yet another, that I slept with them, and even that I lived with one though we were not married" (82).

When Usha fails to marry a man she loves, her heart breaks and her mother stands by her side consoling her and helps her to pass over that turbulent period, telling her own tragic love story. The parent-child relationship stays intact despite dissidence and conflict. Pranab, the wrecker of families gives divorce to Deborah after 23 years of marriage for the sake of a married Bengali woman. Lahiri's story highlights the complex emotional challenges the immigrants face and their impact on relationships.

Insecurity, suspicion and lack of commitment haunt the couple Amit and Megan in the story "A Choice of Accommodations." Indian immigrant Amit constantly doubts the survival of his marriage with the white American Megan. He feels that the relationship in its true sense does not exist between them any longer.

Amit is also bothered by the fact that his daughters inherit Megan's skin colour. Neither he nor his parents have transferred anything physically to his daughters. He worries that he will be the last in his family to carry the roots both from the physical appearance point of view, and also from the cultural point of view. His daughters born and brought up in USA most unlikely follow the traditional Indian values even though one of their parents is of Indian origin.

Lahiri delineates the contradictory attitudes of the two characters Amit and Megan and their impact on their relationship in the hybrid space. Amit is indecisive of his choices whether it is as uncomplicated as an accommodation in a hotel or as serious as a career or marriage. He studies medicine for two years and drops out, finds interest in journalism and then instead of opting for a serious journalism career he prefers to settle down as the managing editor of a medical journal which is less taxing. He is often disturbed by the assumption of possible mishaps, safety of his daughters, Monika and Maya, his own safety and survival of not so cordial relationship with his wife. He lacks confidence in himself and is disturbed by pessimistic imaginations.

When he read articles in the newspaper about taxis suddenly swerving onto sidewalks and killing half a dozen pedestrians, it was always himself he pictured holding Monika and Maya by the hand". Or he imagined a wave at Jones Beach, where he had been taking them once a week during the summer, dragging one of them down, or a pile of sand suffocating them as he was flipping, a few feet away, through a magazine. (90-91)

Megan is free from such worries and assumptions. She is not worried when the children skip dinner or hurt themselves while playing. She is confident enough to believe that these minor incidents are part of life, and her children can survive anything. She is steady with her relationship with Amit. When he drops out of the medical school, contrary to his expectations, Megan does not break with him. However, the relationship is strained to some extent by the extended working hours of Megan as a doctor in the hospital. On such occasions, he feels isolated and even hates her though he is aware of her motivation. He knows that she works hard for the sake of the family and not just for her. Those occasions of isolation trigger the memories of his school days. He felt lonely and frustrated when his parents left him in Langford Academy and returned to India. Gradually he learns to adjust to the new surroundings and survive in USA without his parents' help, but forgiving is the last thing he can do for them. His parents' decision has a serious impact on him, and he decides not to leave his daughters in a boarding school.

He holds back from sharing with Megan some of his feelings and experiences. While speaking about his school days in Langford Academy he purposefully does not share information with his wife about his friendship with Pam Borden, the daughter of the headmaster of the school. He justifies his decision thinking that though he had a crush on



Pam like all the other boys in the school, and despite the fact that he continues to love her during their college days in Columbia University, she is not his girl friend.

When Megan comes to know of his friendship with Pam she suspects him and feels jealous of Pam. She feels disturbed when he insists on attending the wedding of Pam. On the wedding night in the Langford Academy under the influence of alcohol he tells a stranger, Jared that after the birth of his second daughter the marriage has disappeared. He breaks his promise that he will be by the side of Megan throughout the party, leaves her in the campus and goes to Chadwick Inn and passes out in the room. His irresponsibility and lack of concern for her disturb her. Still she calls the hotel officials to make sure that he has returned safely. The next morning Amit and Megan go to campus to have brunch. When they enter a dormitory Megan confronts him questioning his relationship with Pam. "It was nothing, Meg. We were friends and for a while I had a crush on her. But nothing happened. Is that so terrible? (125).

Amit trying to convince her desperately kneels before her, kisses her legs and then they have sex indicating a new bonding in their relationship. This is not just a physical union. It is a union at the psychological level. Once they share their secrets carefully guarded till then, differences fall away, and they unite emotionally too. The story showcases the human interaction in the hybrid space where social, cultural and ethnic identities intermingle.

In addition to these dominant motifs, Lahiri ingeniously draws the attention of the reader to certain oddities in human nature, which influence relationships. Some girls who develop a relationship with Amit admit that they are attracted by his grey hair which is abnormal at his age. Amit falls in love with Pam because of her peculiar behaviour like hugging her books against her chest instead of keeping them in a bag or backpack like other students, and when others cover them fully to suit the changes in the climate she wears less and last two letters in her name are the first two in his. People do not always behave rationally, and this trait may bind them together or develop fissures in their relationships depending on their perception of life.

The story "Only Goodness" draws the readers into the world of relationships between second generation immigrant siblings. These children of America distance themselves from their roots in India; from the socio-cultural values of the country of their origin. The concepts of individualism and liberalism of the American social system have a tremendous influence and the children build a world of their own unknown by the elders. Immigrant parents are often not aware of the life of their wards outside the home.

Sudha, six years older than Rahul, involves in his upbringing enthusiastically more than their parents. When he is still in school, she introduces him to alcohol. As he is not old enough to buy alcohol on his own, she procures it for him and hides beer cans from the sight of their parents. She believes that she is just trying to be good and friendly towards her little brother. Later she regrets as those apparently simple acts of disobedience result in consequences of unimaginable magnitude. Those seemingly inconsequential acts of innocence not only ruin the life of her brother but also cause immense harm to her family life.

Sudha's attempts to reform him are of no avail. His parents struggle to project a positive picture of him while speaking to friends with the hope that one day he will pull

himself out of the vice. Sudha too tastes the forbidden fruit, but she is aware of the ill effects of extremes and she remains competent and successful from the American standards.

Eventually, he drops out from college, steals family jewellery, and disappears with Elena who is several years older than him to explore life. A year later, he writes to Sudha that he is now a changed man and likes to visit her. She immediately invites him to her London home where she is staying with her husband Roger and their 10 month old baby boy, Neel. Despite his spectacular failure in all fronts, as son, brother and student, and as a responsible citizen, she has been thinking of Rahul all these days. The memories of their childhood often invade her thoughts. This newly found warmth in their relationship does not last long. One day during the absence of Sudha and her husband, Rahul leaves Neel in the bath tub, drinks too much of alcohol and passes out almost killing the kid. He has to walk out of his sister's house unceremoniously putting a full stop to the relationship.

The story "Only Goodness" asserts the concept once again that the affection, the unsullied love and the sweetness of relationship between children and elders may not remain exactly, and sometimes may turn terrifying too as the children grow up and venture to explore new worlds.

Human beings who are sensitive enough for introspection often look back into their lives and sometimes feel like getting back into time and space so that they can relive those moments in a far better way taking wiser decisions. Can people undo things they have done? Can they erase their past and relive it in a different way? Can they undo the unwanted and unwelcoming relationships that have a negative impact on their lives? No, certainly not. People learn things the hard way. Suffering helps people to distinguish between good and bad, and right and wrong.

Though the focus of the story is on relationships between siblings, Lahiri does not ignore the latent racism prevalent in USA. "Her parents had always been blind to the things that plagued their children: being teased at school for the color of their skin or for the funny things their mother occasionally put into their lunch boxes, potato curry sandwiches that tinted Wonder bread green" (143).

R. Radhakrishnan in his work *Diasporic Mediations* speaks about his experience with the Indian origin children who are natural Americans. "Most of them felt they could not escape being *marked* as different by virtue of their skin color, their family background, and other ethnic and unassimilated traits" (206).

Lahiri points out in the short story "Only Goodness" that the relationship between Indian immigrants and the British too was not cordial in sixties. "Her parents told her that half the rentals in London in the sixties said WHITES ONLY, and the combination of being Indian and pregnant limited her parents to the point where her father considered sending her mother back to India to give birth, until they met Mr. Pal" (135).

Lahiri gets back to the concept of oddities in relationships between young men and women in the story "Nobody's Business." The choices young people make regarding their partners defy all rational analyses and remain a mystery to an objective onlooker.

Theresa breaks with Paul just because she does not like the way he kisses her. Deidre prefers to live with Freddy Farouk though it is clear that he is a philanderer and exploits

women.

Sang (Sangeeta Biswas) keeps all her suitors away for the sake of Farouk who postpones their marriage repeatedly year after year under one pretext or the other. She simply believes when Farouk says that she is his only friend, and she even does not find it odd when he ignores the presence of her housemates, and never bothers to greet them. When everyone including her friend Charles suspects his peculiar behaviour and advises her to leave him, she fails to see reason in their advice. She thinks that he is different from other young men, and his seemingly odd behaviour is his strength. It is true that human relationships are not always backed by rational thinking. Picking the right partner is a challenge faced by all young men and women and in the case of Sang the diasporic condition contributes to her plight. She lives alone in the liberal social system of USA. She is deprived of the constant loving support of her family members. Now, it is nobody's business to warn her against the wrong decisions she makes.

Paul, her housemate develops a fascination towards her and plays the protective role against all odds. He faces a moral dilemma. Should he tell her what he knew? Is it his business to peep into her inner world, her emotional life? Is it not an intrusion in other's spaces?

Judith Caesar points out:

Lonely isolated people both seek connection and deliberately avoid it. But in this story, the exterior walls do not shutout what is threatening in the outside world, nor do interior walls protect the independence and integrity of the self. No magical rearrangement of interiors leads to understanding, intimacy, or growth. (58)

However, he is compelled to prove his innocence when Sang accuses him of making up a story about the affair between Deidre and Farouk as he has a crush on her. Paul feels insulted and frustrated and proves that Sang has all the wrong information about Farouk. As Sang breaks with Farouk, Deidre is successful in continuing relationship with him.

Sangeeta Biswas portrays the trauma of jilted love and the changing perspectives of immigrant Indian youth on sex and marriage amidst cultural multiplicity. Judith Caesar in her critical analysis observes, "Without a larger society of unspoken rules, anyone can do whatever he wants, a space of possibility that is both liberating and corrupting" (60).

In the three interconnected stories, "Once in a Lifetime," "Years End" and "Going Ashore", Lahiri explores the duplicity in relationships between families despite their friendship that spans over a decade. Isolation, nostalgia and trauma of family tragedy haunt these stories. The changing values in the diasporic space and their impact on relationships are other pertinent motifs in this trilogy. In this trilogy, Lahiri employs multiple focalization and the focalization shifts between the narrator and the character.

Their Bengali origin brings the parents of Hema and the parents of Kaushik together in USA. Kaushik's parents belong to a wealthy family, and Hema's parents have a modest background. But the cultural bonding closes these gaps in the diasporic space in the initial stages of their emigration. Kaushik's parents move to India and after their re emigration they stay with Hema's family for a few weeks while searching for a suitable house. After their resettlement in USA, Kaushik's parents start spending extravagantly. They are proud of their



extravagance, and that irks the parents of Hema. The extravagance is just to keep his mother in good spirits who is down with cancer which is a family secret. "Bombay had made them more American than Cambridge had, my mother said, something she hadn't anticipated and didn't understand" ((Lahiri 235).

Hema's parents, despite their long stay in USA, retain the cultural traditions of India, and the highly acculturated behaviour of Kaushik's parents further widen the differences between them. The more complex is the relationship between Hema and Kaushik. Hema, the 13 year old school girl, feels attracted to Kaushik, who is three years older than her. Here, Lahiri captures the emotional space of teenagers looking for a connection. "I was the only one who didn't mind your staying with us. In my quiet, complicated way I continued to like you, was happy simply to observe you day after day" (246).

His disinterest hurts her. Once Kaushik's parents move to a house of their own, Hema and Kaushik pursue their separate ways as their parents become mere acquaintances by then.

The memories of his mother's tortuous preparation for death haunt Kaushik. He is torn by the dialectical struggle between memory and forgetting. His father tries to escape from that emotional space by marrying a widow from West Bengal, a mother of two daughters. Kaushik feels isolated in their company. He finds it extremely difficult to accept another woman in his mother's place. This creates barriers between him and his father. He is uncomfortable in the forced company of his step sisters Piu and Rupa, seven and ten years old. When he finds them watching the photographs of his mother hidden after her death, he gets infuriated, grabs them and insults them. "Well, you've seen it for yourselves, how beautiful my mother was. How much prettier and more sophisticated than yours. Your mother is nothing in comparison. Just a servant to wash my father's clothes and cook his meals. That's the only reason she's here, the only reason both of you are here" (286-287).

He picks those photographs, moves out of the house and starts driving aimlessly for several days. When he calls his father he finds fault with Kaushik for leaving the frightened children at home alone during their absence, but he does not bother to know where he is. Kaushik is further distanced from his closest living family member, his father. While wandering alone in the coast of Maine he thinks of Hema, and his stay in her house five years earlier. He recollects that he felt more at home in her house than in the new house his father bought later as the new house is associated with the horrifying memories of his mother struggling from cancer and her death.

One day closer to the Canadian border in the eastern most part of the country, he buries the photos of his mother. He cannot tolerate their physical presence. However, the painful images of his mother are firmly imprinted in his mind and haunt him. Despite his determination, he finds it impossible to let go the memories of his mother. He still remembers her swimming in the pool, moving in the kitchen. He can still see her image with a wig as strands of hair fall out due to the side effects to the cancer treatment. He can still hear her "voice calling his name as he ran across the Common<sup>1</sup>" in Cambridge as a child (309).

In Lahiri's other story, "Unaccustomed Earth," Ruma faces similar challenges after the death of her mother on a surgical table. Though Ruma too like Kaushik is disturbed by the painful memories of her mother's demise, she is able to gather herself and lead a normal life

as she has strong family ties. With no such ties to rely on in times of emotional crisis, Kaushik feels void in his life.

The children Piu and Rupa show far greater restraint when compared to Kaushik. They do not reveal the insults he has showered on them to their parents. Later, when they attend his graduation day they make it clear through their silence that they have not forgotten the ill treatment they received from him. Silence is power, and by maintaining silence, and by refusing to interact with him, they register their protest in the most graceful way.

Without family ties and cultural and geographical roots, Kaushik feels alienated. Isolation without detachment is painful. Here, Lahiri's description evokes the fundamental principles of ephemeral and transcendental worlds. "And he knew that in his own way, with his camera, he was dependent on the material world, stealing from it, hoarding it, unwilling to let it go" (309).

The other motif that recurs in the trilogy is changing attitudes towards values. Hema maintains a relationship for nearly a decade with Julian, a married man with children and insists him to give divorce to his wife and marry her. When she fails in her attempts repeatedly, she agrees to marry Navin as suggested by her parents who are now in Calcutta to spend their remaining life. She is not loyal to Navin either. She goes to Rome to study the ancient civilization of Etruscans and meets Kaushik by chance and spends several nights with him. She lies to her future husband and to her parents about her stay in Rome. The cultural traditions of India which her parents practised with commitment have no impact on her. When Kaushik proposes she declines thinking that he must have been with several women and the new connection with her too will remain casual without any commitment just like the earlier relationships. Kaushik's relationships with Jessica and Franka too are noncommittal.

On his way to Hong Kong, to start working for an international news magazine as photo editor Kaushik stops in Thailand. There on the beach he thinks of his mother and Hema, and anger and sadness engulf him. Contrary to his preference to swim in a pool as he had a near death experience while swimming in sea earlier, he has a strong urge this time to swim in the sea and then he is carried away by the dreadful currents of tsunami.

Hema mourns his death, and when she becomes pregnant she is sure that the father of the child is Navin and not Kaushik. They are careful during those nights they have spent together in Rome. At least there is no ambiguity about the father of the child. Lahiri draws the attention of the reader to moral ambiguities diasporic space creates, and ambiguities may lead to conflicts affecting human relationships.

Lahiri's stories bring out the immense difference that exists between first generation and second generation immigrants regarding their socio-cultural practices. The immigrants children of America distance themselves from their roots and the homeland of their parents as they grow up, and the gap becomes wider and wider with the passage of time.

During her talks with Bookforum Lahiri says, "Some of the culture goes by the wayside, or the link is never made. I was aware of that myself when I had my kids. I really felt a sense that I was the end of a line, and that it was a very short line [*laughs*]" (Interview by Bookforum).

This is a sad observation of facts from the point of view of those who adore Indian

culture, which places spiritual goals above material achievements on the foundation of human values where every human being is expected to cultivate individual character, social character and national character. The cultural traditions of India can most probably survive for two generations in the diasporic space.

#### Note

Cambridge Common is a public park located in Harvard Square in Cambridge. It borders the Harvard University and has a large playground.

#### Works Cited

Caesar Judith. "American Spaces in the Fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri."

Foxhonoursenglish 10.wikispaces.com. 13 Apr.2007. Web.09 Jan 2012.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Unaccustomed Earth*. Noida: Random House India, 2009.Print.

——— ——— Interview by *Bookforum*. "Migration, Assimilation, and Inebriation."

*Bookforum*, Apr/May 2008. Web. 25 June 2012.

Radhakrishnan, R. *Diasporic Mediations*.Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.Print.