

# Jumpha Lahari and the Craft of story Writing

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**Abstract**—Each one to his own and Jumpha Lahari has a following of her own into the homes of Bengali immigrants, portraying some of the experiences in her award-winning book *Interpreter of maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond*. Jumpha Lahari is an interpreter who interpreted the travails of first and second-generation immigrants in America and she crafts a suitable difference between migrant, exile, refugees and immigrants. ‘Migrants’ reside albeit on a temporary basis but an immigrant arrives with supporting papers to reside permanently in a particular country. Mlahari in the voice of what Helen Cixious calls the “New Woman” who all dare to create outside the theoretical and will bring about a mutation in human relations. The New Women has raised the essential that is – why are women and their concerns problematic?

**Key Words:** Jumpha Lahari, Immigrants, Short Story, Indian, Refugees, New Women.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In Jumpha Lahari’s stories, we find Indian immigrants, who are Professors, Librarians, research scholars and well-settled people in America. But there is other side of the coin where they suffer from problems like displacement, nostalgia, loneliness and adjustments in the adopted land. i.e. America.

Jumpha Lahari has portrayed immigrant’s difficulties in their adopted ‘Mrs. Sen’ is the story of first generation immigrants in America. Mrs. Sen who is uprooted from her mooring and destined to live her life in a land thousand miles away from her ‘home’ (India). The story is about displacement, alienation and loneliness of Mrs. Sen in America. As a first generation immigrant Mrs. Sen feels nostalgic and alienated in America and to feel at home in America constructs an imaginary home as Salman Rushdie Writes:

Exile or emigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to the look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we look back, we must also do so in the knowledge- which gives rise to profound uncertainties- that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost.’ that we will, in short create fiction not actual or villages but invisibles ones imaginary homeland, Indias of the Mind (Jasbir Jain, 214).

Mrs. Sen is seen to be lost in nostalgia and calls India ‘home’ not the place, where she lives along with her husband and is seen as the loneliest character in the short story collection. Jumpha Lahari in an artistic way presents her loneliness as she waits for Eliot to come from school as if eager to greet a person she hadn’t seen in years’ (119, IM). She lives along with her husband who is a contended man in America but women are different from men because of experiences and cannot be placed on par with men’s whose reasons for entering the alien society and culture may be different from that of women and some women emigrate for their own independent reasons, tho several mutely follow their life partners or parents especially those who are economically dependent on their husbands in America. Jumpha Lahari portrays women experiences of loneliness and alienation in their intial years of stay in America. For instance Mala in ‘The Third and Final Continent.’ Asima in *The Namesake* who are also dislocated from their homeland and brought to the ‘New world’. Mts. Sen shares her experience with the young American boy Eliot.

Jhumpa lahari understands and presents Indian women in America as lonely and nostalgic where they are not happy because of different environment. According to paramanand Jha. Mrs. Sen is the face of Indian wives in alien culture, sans friends or family in new surroundings which is not their home. She probes the mixed feelings of an American child- fear astonishment, fascination and awe towards a destination.

Jumpha Lahari explores through mrs. Sen the silence that can be heard by her and memory becomes part of her life. As Nandini Sahu writes, the characters ability to accommodate and absorb the other culture without losing the consciousness of being Indian marks the major concern of Jumpha Lahari. She (Jumpha Lahari) pictures how life aboard is exciting, a bit absorb and after lonely.

(kuortti, 171). We see her displaced from her home traditions, customs to which she was so attached. As she always refers India as 'home' even Eliot understood when Mrs. Sen talks about 'home' she means India not her apartment..

Jumpha Lahari explores the difficulties of post-marital Indian women who are exposed the cold and suspicious attitudes of natives towards immigrants and when Mrs. Sen carries fish and the driver in the bus interrogates her about the bag, 'what's in the bag?' Mrs. Sen looked up, 'Speak English' the bus began to noise again causing the driver to look at Mrs. Sen and Eliot in his enormous rearview mirror'(IM, 133). For instance only two things made her happy one was the arrival of a letter from her family. She used to read the letter again and again and the second thing that made her happy was fish from her frustration'. She felt frustrated in her apartment and her frustration can ve seen when she tells Eliot 'send picture' they write 'send picture' of your new life they think I live the of a queen to NRIS for better future but they don't know about the other side of coin which can bring unhappiness in the lives of women.

'When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine' is another story from the point of view of a young girl Lilia who is the second generation immigrant and this story also explores initial difficulties and adjustment of the first generation immigrant in America. The beginning lines set background of the story:

In the autumn of 1971 a man used to come to our house, bearing confections in his pocket and hopes of ascertaining the life of death or his family. His name was Mr. Pirzada and he came from Dacca, now the capatial of Bangladesh but then a part of Pakistan. That year pakisthan was engaged in civil war. The eastern frontier, where Dacca was located, was fighting for autonomy from the ruling regime in the west. In March, Dacca had been invaded torched by the Pakisthani army. Teachers, were dragged onto streets and shot, women dragged into Barracks and raped. (IM, 23).

Jhumpa lahiri has given detailed account of the situation in 1971which gave birth to a new nation Bangladesh.Rayaprol observes 'Indians abroad unlike immigrants of other nationalities have maintained negligible horizontal linkages with one another' (Surender S.Jodhka, 167). Indian Immigrants in America have constituted a community of their own. In the story when 'Mr.Pirzada came to Dine' Lilia's parents' In search of compatriots, they used to trail their fingers, at the start of each new semester, through the columns of the university directory, circling surnames familiar to their part of the world. It was in this manner that they discovered Mr. Pirzada and phoned him and invited him to our home' (IM, 24). The narrator's parents invited Mr. Pirzada because he belong their part of the world. He migrated to America on a scholarship for his research which after turning into dollars become meager and in America. He is used to visit narrator\s portents for dinner and to watch news on T.V. In the story, he was seen as worried about the wife and children and at a time when 'Hindus and Muslims had set fire to each other's home' (IM, 25). Jhumpa Lahiri ha s shown Mr. Pirzada from Bangladesh, narrator's parents who are from Indi understands his pain they become' a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, a single silence and a single fear' (IM41) the supports offer by them is commendable. As Madhoo Kumar puts it: 'when Mr. Pirzada come to dine' epitomizes universal oneness- Vishwabandhutva the elixir of peaceful and perfect living. Here moralistic orientation forms the basis of constructive living, along with secular rationality and social solidarity' (Suman Bala P, 126). In this story JhumpaLahiri has shown human values, beyond the nation.

This story 'Mr.Pirzada came to dine' reflects the theme of loneliness, nostalgia and adjustment. Though Lilia parents are first generation immigrants in America narrator's mother is happy for her. She felt proud of the fact that Lilia is assured of fine education and easy life unlike her life in India where she had witnessed curfews and seen her neighbour shot dead in riots. Though they were lonely in America but felt relieved because the political situation of India was not good at that time K. Ramesh K. Srivastava point out:

Most of the stories analyze the experiences, shocks and surprises which are encountered by the Diasporas, and are marked by an undercurrent of Pathos. For no expatriate, even if at the height of his professional success in the U.s. , has been shown to be perfectly happy. It is the relative happiness and satisfaction, which keep them tried to a foreign land by escaping from the difficulties on one's native country with its monumental problems. (Ramesh K.Srivastav, 31).

Even Lilia experiences alienation and differentiation of the natives towards her on the Halloween, when she goes along with Dora dressed as witches, some natives called her 'Indian witch' (IM, 39) which portrays their differentiation between Lilia and Dora though she (Lilia) is an American Citizen.

Jhumpa Lahiri's way of presenting love, understanding compassion between the people of two different worlds is admirable, Indian in America on the festival of Halloween praying for the safety of Mr, Pirzada's family in Dacca brings out the message of oneness by Jhumpa Lahiri which celebrates human values beyond the values of nations. The story ends with the Mr. Pirzada reuniting with his family members. Thus Jhumpa Lahiri as her subtitle suggests 'stories of Bengal Boston' and beyond takes immigrants beyond the boundaries of nation.

Both stories 'Mrs. Sen' and 'when Mr. Pirzada came to dine' explore the theme of loneliness and nostalgia of first generation immigrants. Another story 'The third and final continent' explores the other side of coin immigrants' experience of adjustment in America. The story is set up in 1969 when most of the people from India migrated either to London or to America for better opportunities. In the present story the narrator felt contented in America but the narrator of the story faced difficult situations in his initial years of his stay in America. 'Shared a single, icy toilet, and took turns cooking pots of curry'. (IM, 173) The narrator landed in London with a certificate in commerce like all either Bengalis who went to Calcutta and return with their wives. The narrator of the story also married Mala in Calcutta and at first his experience in America not so good when he says 'The noise was constantly distracting, at times suffocating I felt it deep in was constantly distracting at times suffocating I felt it deep in my ribs. Just as I had felt the furious drone of the engine on the SS Roma (IM, 175) but Jhumpa Lahiri has presented his (the narrator) experience 'beyond' the feeling of nostalgia and loneliness and found a new way to get adjusted in the New World. When narrators tells: 'In a week I had adjusted more or less' (IM, 175).

In the story 'The Third and Final Continent' we find the direct encounter between the natives and immigrants, the narrator meets a 103 old woman Mrs. Croft she belongs to old America, where the conversation between the unmarried man and women were considered. 'Improper' Mrs. Croft calls him 'gentlemen' and his 'A Perfect Lady' in the story. Jhumpa Lahiri portrayed better part of Immigration where the narrator assured his son that 'if I can survive on three continents, there is no obstacle he cannot conquer. While the astronauts, heroes new world for nearly thirty years' (IM, 198). This story unlike the immigrant beyond Bengal and Boston. These three stories portrays first generation immigrants experience of loneliness, nostalgia, displacement and culture shock though most of the characters are Bengali their experiences are universal.

The first generation immigrant's children, who are born in America suffer from the problem of not belonging to either America where they are born nor to India which is the birth place of their parents. Fortunately first generation immigrants can identify themselves with their country of birth, as Indians but their children born to ride on two horses at a time. Even Lahiri is second generation immigrant is confessed in an Interview to Radhika S. Shankar: "I went to Calcutta neither as a tourist nor as a former resident. I learnt to observe things as an out- sider and yet I also knew that as different as Calcutta is from Rhode Island. I belong there in fundamental was, in away. I don't seem to belong in the United States'. So "Interpreter of Maladies", 'A temporary Matter' and 'The Blessed House' and her novel *The Namesake* and the latest short story collection *Unaccustomed Earth* focus of the assimilation and acculturation of the second generation immigrants and their dilemmas in America.

The first story 'A Temporary Matter' is about generation immigrants in America. Shoba and Shukumar and bom to Indians in America. Jhumpa Lahiri explores the themes of loneliness, nostalgia, assimilation and alienation of the second generation immigrants. According to Oxford dictionary, Assimilation means to become a part of country and assimilates its culture, habits and values, in terms of dress, habits, values and way of living as view by Sudhir Dixit: 'Shukumar and Shoba exist on the adapting to the individuals as they are in the process of the adapting to the individualistic America society. The ancestral inheritance has been more or less severed or forgotten by them and this is why surname is neither necessary nor appropriate to express their personality traits. (Suman Bala, 66).

In the story 'A Temporary matter' the role of husband and wife is different from the Indian perspective; Shukumar is still a student at 36 while Shoba is working. Jhumpa Lahiri has portrayed marital discord and lack of love in their marital relationship. Marriage, which is considered as sacred in India, is seen as a temporary matter in America. Shoba is portrayed as the women who '..Looking, at thirty three, like the type of Lahiri has reflected the theme of lack of proper communication between the couple in America. 'Shoba was always gone by the time Shkumar woken up' (IM, 4). Lahiri has shown lack of emotion in the couple.

Both the characters are second generation immigrants who have assimilated the western culture. Shoba has been projected as a American women who is independent and was prepared to live on her own. 'She kept the bonus from her join a separate bank account in her name' (IM 6). On other hand Jhumpa Lahiri has portrayed Shukumar's mother who 'fallen to pieces when his father died...' (IM, 6). Though Shoba is financially independent is shown as unhappy and lonely. According to O.P. Mathur. 'The working wife of an Indian Couple, Shoba, apparently influenced by the western stance on the independence of women and the prevalence of separation and divorce decides to live separately from her husband and even hires an apartments for herself. (O.P.

Mathur, 125). Jhumpa Lahari has presented their absurd existence in America Shoba did not even remember dates. The story presents lack of interest in the institution of marriage.

Both Shoba and Shkumar felt relieved after their break up. Sunitha Patnayak writes ' marriage fail everywhere but in a country where one is accountable for one's action to family and society, one feels obliged to give it another chance the title 'A Temporary Matter; seems a comment on the nature of marriage in the west' (Suman bala, 162). Throughout the story, Shoba thinks that Shkumar was not present at the time of her delivery but the turning point in the story comes, when Shkumar reveals to her that their baby was a boy and he held him until nurse knocked and took him away and he promised himself that day that he would never tell Shoba, because he still loved her then, and it was the one thing in her life that she had wanted to be a surprise' (IM, 22). Both Shoba in Shkumar 'Wept together for the things they now knew' (IM, 22). Jhumpa Lahari has presented a glimpse of the life of second generation immigrant's children in America.

Jhumpa Lahari has portrayed the second generation immigrant and their three children on their visit to sun temple in India along Mr. Kapasi, driver cum guide. "Interpreter of Maladies" is from his point of view. The family looked Indians but dressed as foreigners did...' (IM, 43-44). They (Ms. Das and Mrs. Das) are quite different from the first generation immigrant. Mr. Das who is a second generation immigrant tells Mr. Kapasi that 'Mina and I were both born in America announced with an air of Confidence' (IM, 25). Both Mrs. Das and Mr. Das are born in America and they feel proud about it. Jhumpa Lahari presents the dilemmas of second generation immigrants reveals to Lavina Malwani, 'When I was putting the collection together I knew from the beginning that this had to be title story for because I think it best expresses thematically, the predicament at the heart of the book-the dilemma, the difficulties and often the impossibility of communicating emotional pain and affection to others as well as expressing it to ourselves.

As the second generation immigrants are born in America becomes the natural citizen they have assimilated the American way of living dressing values and habits. Mr. Kapasi found it strange when Mr. Das refers his wife by her first name, when he was speaking to his children gives glimpse of their manners. Their ways and manner and language presents the institution of marriage which is on the verge of collapse and the image of broken marriage can be seen in the starting lines. 'Mr. and Mrs. Das bickered about who should take Tina to the toilet' (IM, 43).

The central character Mrs. Das is seen as a woman 'who loved neither her husband nor her children, who had already fallen out of love with life' and there is lack of emotional feeling in Mr. Das he is very mechanical. When Mrs. Das says 'my legs are tired (IM, 61). Mr. Das answers 'you won't be in the pictures' (IM, 61). Without sympathy and love. Jhumpa Lahari has presented one view of second generation immigrants life which is becoming mechanical and robotic.

But the turning point in the story comes when Mr. Kapasi talks about his other job as an interpreter in the hospital between the Gujarati patients and the doctor Mrs. Das calls it 'romantic' takes interest in his job unlike his wife who 'had little regard for his career as in interpreter' (IM, 53). He began to imagine because he considers 'Mr and Mrs. Das were a bad match just as he and his wife were' (IM, 53). From then Mrs. Das takes interest in him, (Mr. Kapasi). Jhumpa Lahari has portrayed second generation immigrants as self centered individuals, in her first story "A Temporary matter" also Shoba and Shukumar were individuals who are self centered under western influence. Mrs. Das as a American woman causally shares her secret with the driver that one of her sons is not her husband son 'he is not Raj's son, (IM, 62). Which from the perspective of an Indian Mr. Kapasi gets a shock and 'felt a prickle on his skin' (IM, 62).

Jhumpa Lahari has presented the theme of loneliness and alienation from which second generation immigrants also suffer as in the case of Mrs. Das who was also lonely at home because 'As a result of spending all her time in college with Raj, she continued, she did not make close friends. There was no one of confide in about him at the end of a difficult day or to share a passing thought or a worry' (IM, 63).

Hence Jhumpa Lahari has given glimpses of second generation immigrant children and presented the institution of marriage in America.

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