Preface

The present study aims at identifying the aspects of Indian diasporic womanism in the selected works of Jhumpa Lahiri, a Bengali-American woman writer. It borrows the term “womanism” from Alice Walker and focuses on the three key aspects of womanism: feminism, womanhood and motherhood. The study analyses the three major works of Jhumpa Lahiri, The Interpreter of Maladies, a collection of nine short stories, which got her the Pulitzer Prize, The Namesake, a novel, which was made into a film, and the Unaccustomed Earth, a collection of eight short stories, which won her the Frank O’ Conner Prize, and identifies an impressive number of contexts to illustrate each aspect of Indian diasporic womanism.

The study defines Indian diasporic womanism as a composite of feminism, womanhood and motherhood of the immigrant Indian women. It highlights the shades of each key aspect such as double marginalization, patriarchal dominance, ideological pressures, gender inequality, gender discrimination, power relations, sexism, stereotyping, emancipation, sexuality, sacrifice, tolerance, acceptance, social and psychic pressures, forgiveness, courage, protection, possessiveness, love and care, understanding and tension, passive sufferings,
displacement, discontinuity, migration, adaptation, transformation, reinvention, cultural resilience, and diasporic consumption, with reference to the selected works of Jhumpa Lahiri.

The first chapter presents the meaning of the term “diaspora” and explains its different aspects such as displacement, discontinuity, migration, adaptation, transformation, reinvention, cultural resilience, and diasporic consumption. It also defines the term “womanism” and describes its three key aspects: feminism, womanhood and motherhood. It lists and explains the shades of each key aspect and thereby creates a background to the present study.

The second chapter is devoted to the presentation of Indian diasporic womanism with the reference to the contemporary writers such as Bharathi Mukerjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. It reviews the major works of these writers to illustrate and differentiate their brands of Indian diasporic womanism. This attempt is made consciously to identify the brand of Indian diasporic womanism promoted in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri, and to measure the degree of authenticity. This chapter ends with the presentation of the biography and the literary profile of Jhumpa Lahiri, and deals elaborately on her literary influences.
The third chapter deals with the Indian diasporic womanism - feminism, womanhood and motherhood of the immigrant Indian women - identified in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies*, which has nine short stories: “A Temporary Matter,” “When Mr Pirzada Came to Dine,” “Interpreter of Maladies,” “A Real Durwan,” “Sexy,” “Mrs.Sen’s,” “Blessed House,” “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar” and “The Third and the Final Continent.”

The pattern of analysis followed is that the stories of *The Interpreter of Maladies* are presented first, and then the shades of the three key aspects which include double marginalization, patriarchal dominance, ideological pressures, gender inequality, gender discrimination, power relations, sexism, stereotyping, emancipation, sexuality, sacrifice, tolerance, acceptance, social and psychic pressures, forgiveness, courage, protection, possessiveness, love and care, understanding and tension, or passive sufferings, if any, are identified and explained.

The same pattern is continued for the analysis of the other two works: *The Namesake* and *The Unaccustomed Earth*. The fourth chapter concentrates on Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Namesake* and the fifth chapter on *The Unaccustomed Earth*. The same shades of the key aspects of Indian diasporic womanism are identified and explained,
after presenting the summary of each work. The story of

_The Namesake_ is about a Bengali couple who immigrates to the
United States to live a life they are not accustomed to. The story
begins as Ashoke and Ashima leave Calcutta, India and settle in
Central Square, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Through a series of
errors, their son’s nickname, Gogol, becomes his official birth name.
This is an important event in the novel, and it shapes many aspects of
his life in years to come. It first centres around Ashima, then turns to
Gogol and his wife, Moushumi, and returns to Ashima. It is a hard
reality of the Indian immigrant women.

The fifth chapter presents the stories of the two parts. The first
part has five short stories whereas the second part “Hema and
Kaushik” comprises three short stories. The first five short stories are:
“The Unaccustomed Earth,” “Hell Heaven,” “A Choice of Accommodation,”
“Only Goodness” and “Nobody's Business. The second part has the
following three stories: “Once in Lifetime,” “Year's End” and “Going
Ashore.” The first five stories form the first part the book and the rest
the second part. The stories of the first part are thematically related.
They are about the immigrant experiences of a Bengali family.
The central characters appear in the first part also appear in the
second part. The title story “The Unaccustomed Earth” is about the
central character, Ruma, living a hectic life and turning to taking care
of her son after the impact of her mother’s death on her. “Hell Heaven” is a story narrated by a daughter about her mother’s love and marriage. “A choice of Accommodation” is a frank presentation of the relationship between a husband and a wife. “Only Goodness” is a poignant story centring around a sister, Sudha, and a brother, Rahul. Sudha introduces her brother the habit of drinking, and it takes him to alcoholism, which finally makes Sudha lose her little son. “Nobody’s Business” is about the love of an American, Paul, for an Indian girl, Sang. “Hema and Kaushik” is the title of the second part of the stories: “Once in Lifetime,” “Year’s End” and “Going Ashore” This second part is about a triangular love affair of Hema, Kaushik and Navin, ending in the death of Kaushik.

The sixth chapter presents the conclusion of the study. It presents the common, recurring shades found in all the three major works of Jhumpa Lahiri. It consolidates the pattern of stories and aspects of the Indian diasporic womanism, and proves how these three works bring out the gamut of immigrant experience, especially of Indian women.
## List of Abbreviations

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<th>IM</th>
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