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## REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-56190

Title: Home, Exile, and Negotiated Belonging: Reconstructing Diasporic Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction

### Recommendation:

- Accept as it is .....
- Accept after minor revision.....
- Accept after major revision .....
- Do not accept (*Reasons below*) .....

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality	....			
Techn. Quality		....		
Clarity	....			
Significance	....			

Reviewer Name: Dr. Ishrat Fatima

### Detailed Reviewer's Report

The paper titled Home, Exile, and Negotiated Belonging: Reconstructing Diasporic Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction offers a comprehensive and theoretically grounded exploration of diasporic identity in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri. Focusing on Interpreter of Maladies, The Namesake, and Unaccustomed Earth, the study advances a central argument that Lahiri reconceptualizes diaspora not as a static condition of exile but as an evolving, negotiated process of belonging. The paper's strongest contribution lies in its formulation of "negotiated belonging" as a conceptual lens through which diasporic identity can be understood beyond the binary of assimilation versus nostalgia. This argument is clearly stated in the introduction and consistently developed throughout the analysis.

The theoretical framework is thoughtfully constructed. Drawing on Stuart Hall's notion of identity as a "production" in process, Avtar Brah's concept of "diaspora space," and Bill Ashcroft's emphasis on transformation within postcolonial discourse, the paper integrates these perspectives cohesively rather than mechanically. Hall's idea of identity as becoming, Brah's relational spatiality, and Ashcroft's transformative displacement are not merely cited; they are applied interpretively to Lahiri's fictional worlds. This synthesis strengthens the study's originality, as it moves beyond fragmented applications of hybridity or nostalgia and instead proposes a unified interpretive structure.

The literature review is balanced and informative. It traces the evolution of Lahiri criticism from early readings focused on immigrant loneliness and nostalgia to later discussions of naming politics, gender, and hybridity. The review effectively identifies a research gap: while scholars have examined themes such as gender, food, memory, and hybridity, these are often treated separately. The paper responds to this gap by offering a comparative reading across the three major works. This cross-textual analysis allows the author to demonstrate the progression from first-generation exile to second-generation negotiation, thereby situating Lahiri's oeuvre within a broader diasporic trajectory. The critical analysis section is the most compelling part of the paper. The discussion of first-generation exile, particularly through Ashima in The Namesake, effectively illustrates emotional displacement without overt political rupture. The reading of Mrs. Sen in Interpreter of Maladies is particularly insightful, as her inability to drive is interpreted symbolically as restricted mobility and autonomy. These analyses reveal the author's sensitivity to domestic detail and psychological nuance. The argument that exile in Lahiri unfolds within kitchens, hospital rooms, and suburban interiors reinforces the claim that diaspora is lived intimately rather than dramatically.

The section on naming and identity is especially strong. The interpretation of Gogol's name as an "archive of migration, memory, and survival" demonstrates close textual engagement. By linking naming practices to inheritance and retrospective recognition, the paper successfully shows how identity is layered rather than linear. This analysis is theoretically aligned with Hall's concept of identity as process, while remaining grounded in textual evidence. The exploration of gendered experience adds further depth. The paper argues convincingly that women in Lahiri's fiction

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perform emotional labor in sustaining cultural continuity. Characters such as Ashima and Ruma are examined not as passive victims but as negotiators balancing autonomy and obligation. This nuanced treatment avoids reductive feminist readings and instead situates gender within the larger diasporic framework. The discussion of food as embodied memory is also thoughtfully articulated, particularly in the symbolic reading of Ashima's Rice Krispies adaptation as creative transformation rather than cultural dilution.

The concept of domestic space as diaspora space is another significant contribution. By applying Brah's framework to Lahiri's interiors, the paper demonstrates how homes function as intersections of memory, migration, and generational exchange. The interpretation of Ruma's garden in *Unaccustomed Earth* as a metaphor for transplantation and growth is subtle yet effective. These readings highlight the paper's strength in connecting spatial imagery with identity formation. Stylistically, the paper mirrors Lahiri's minimalism in its own prose. The language is clear, measured, and academically appropriate. Arguments unfold logically, and transitions between sections are smooth. However, while the analysis is rich conceptually, the paper could be strengthened by incorporating more direct textual quotations for closer evidence-based reading. At times, the discussion remains interpretive rather than demonstrative. Additionally, further engagement with counterarguments particularly critiques that view Lahiri's fiction as politically quiet could deepen the scholarly debate.

The conclusion successfully synthesizes the argument by foregrounding "negotiated belonging" as the study's key theoretical contribution. Rather than presenting diaspora as either loss or assimilation, the paper emphasizes relational continuity, emotional recalibration, and temporal evolution. The sections on contribution to diasporic studies and implications for postcolonial theory extend the discussion beyond Lahiri, situating the work within broader academic conversations. The suggestion of future research trajectories especially comparative work with other transnational writers and attention to Lahiri's linguistic shift to Italian demonstrates forward-looking scholarly awareness.

Overall, this paper makes a meaningful contribution to diasporic literary studies. Its integrated theoretical framework, comparative scope, and attention to domestic interiors as sites of identity negotiation distinguish it from more theme-based studies. While the analysis could benefit from denser textual citation and slightly sharper critical counter-positioning, it remains a thoughtful, coherent, and academically valuable exploration of diasporic identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction. The articulation of "negotiated belonging" stands out as its most original and enduring insight.