

***UNACCUSTOMED EARTH : THE ACCULTURATION OF
INDIAN IMMIGRANT IN AMERICA***

PAPER

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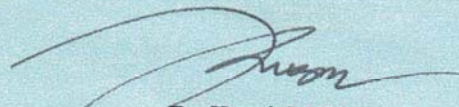
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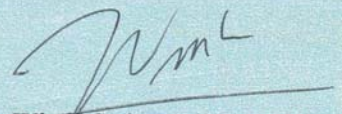
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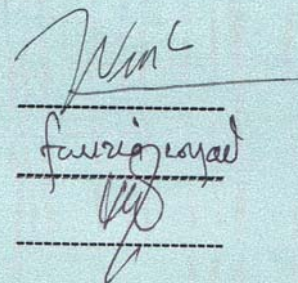
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ABSTRAK

BERNEVID NURDIN. 60127/2004. Unaccustome Earth : The Acculturation of Indian Immigrant in American. Padang State University.

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Makalah ini merupakan analisis Novel *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) yang ditulis oleh Jhumpa Lahiri. Penelitian ini menganalisis proses terjadinya akulturasi pada karakter utama Ruma dilihat dari pengaruh ayahnya yang lebih mengadopsi gaya hidup Amerika dengan tujuan agar lebih cepat berbaur dalam komunitas Amerika. Ia menginginkan anaknya juga mengikuti perilakunya yaitu mengadopsi budaya Amerika mulai dari bahasa, makanan, pakaian dan gaya hidup serta perilaku layaknya seperti orang Amerika yang mandiri (*self-reliance*) dan tidak hanya bergantung pada suami seperti budaya Bengali. Sementara itu pengaruh dari ibu adalah tetap mempertahankan budaya Bengali dalam keluarganya dan tetap mengajarkan bahasa Bengali pada Ruma, putrinya dan mengenalkan berbagai jenis makanan tradisional Bengali, pakaian sari Bengali dan lebih memilih pasangan suami anaknya dari Bengali dibanding laki-laki Amerika. Adanya dua budaya yang berperan dalam perkembangan karakter Ruma di rumah dan lingkungan sosialnya yang mempengaruhi perilakunya “mendua” (*Hybridity*). Disisi lain ia menyukai budaya Amerika yang dipengaruhi oleh faktor ayah dan lingkungan sosial dimana ia tinggal. Namun di lain sisi tetap mempertahankan identitas budaya asli orang tuanya, yaitu kampung asal mereka, Bengali. Proses terjadinya hybridity ini pada Ruma melalui tiga fase yaitu fase orientasi pada budaya Amerika, orientasi mempertahankan budaya Bengali dan berubahnya karakteristik Ruma dari Bengali ke Amerika.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of The Study

The United States, in the nineteenth century, remained a strong magnet to immigrants, with offers of jobs and land for farms. Asians and Italians came for work, Russians came to escape persecution, and Jews came for religious freedom. Immigrants from all over the world including Europe, Indian, China, and Japan wanted to experience the freedom of improving the life and being able to take care their family.

East Indians represented a big group that wanted to take part in American culture. The large majorities from India were Punjabis, from a region called the Punjab. The Indian Immigrant went to America by desire to get a better life. America becomes dream for some immigrant from this Asia. Since America become liberal country that give opportunity for immigrant from around the world to get same equalization of rights and individual freedom. For that reason, Indian Immigrant changes their identity with America nationality.

Most of these immigrants were young men, between 16 and 35 years old. They left their families in India, and came here in small groups of cousins and village neighbors. Thus, the family and community ties remained very strong. They had several reasons to come to America. They were repressed by the British rule and had no land to farm on. To make matters worse, famine devastated India from 1899 to 1902. Thus, large-scale immigration began in 1906, when six

hundred Asians applied to enter the United States. They came here in hopes of changing their lives around (Kimberly, 1998).

Unfortunately, they soon found out that life in America was very challenging. Many Indians were farmers back in India, but when they came to the United States they had to take jobs no one else would. They also encountered prejudice. Whites sometimes associated the Asian Indian immigrants with blacks, Chinese, or Japanese. Very often, Asian Indians were blamed for the violence directed towards them. Whites did not want or try to understand Indian culture and traditions (Kimberly, 1998).

Despite of everything they encountered, the immigrants still believed that the life they left behind was much worse than thy life they faced in America. Another major problem Asian Indians faced came from the white population. Many people felt threatened by the increasing multi-cultural population. Many Indians had limited opportunities to advance their careers due to prejudice. Frustrated because of their current situation, they opened their own businesses, which gave them a lot more freedom and control of their own lives. Furthermore, whites taunted the Indians because of the color of their skin and wearing of traditional turbans. They were called by insulting names such as “rag-heads” and treated as inferior beings. It was especially difficult for Indians because of their appearance (skin color, clothing, and distinctive speech). (Gary, 1981)

Other problem in Indian culture is the reorganization to the castes society. Every class of caste has a rule for their society. The system of castes classifies people in several stratums in India. According to Saine (2003)

In Indian social structure there are the castes which are board class categories in Indian society. The highest caste is Brahmins and untouchables are the bottom of the class system. Brahmins don't have contact with the lower castes since it preserves the concept of purity and hierarchy.

The quotation above show that social culture of India, there is a concept of hierarchy is still defended in India. The system of castes makes lower class doesn't get opportunity of rising their degree in society. This system influence that lower class never gets important occupation in their society, although they have quality and knowledge. It is one of the causal thing make youngest Indian man immigrates to America to get a better life.

The immigrants came to America has produced the mix of culture between their heredity with the new land that they come. The strength of Indian tradition is still prevailing among their attitude faced the problem of their children life style where some of Indian young women marry based on Western standards, and men have total control over their wives, which are considered to be property of their husbands. This idea of an arranged marriage helps Indian couples to stay within the Indian cast system, which means that you cannot marry someone below yourself. It also has to do with the wealth of the bride or groom's family. And now it is gradually lost because, most Indian kids raised in the United States understand that love is a very important determining factor in marriage. They do not learn this in their family homes, but they learn from the school and develop their ideas through their environment life style. In home they obey to family tradition and even speak in Indian with their mother or father, but outside their attitude and relationship adopted American life style. Here has happened the

acculturation between Indian tradition and American where minority adopted majority tradition as the strategy to continue their contact with dominant group. It is according to Child (1943) says that acculturation begin to be conceived as the strategic reaction of the minority to continuous contact with the dominant group.

The phenomenon of the acculturation Indian Immigrant in facing life in America does not only occur in real world. It also can be found in literary works. Novel as the example of literary works has effectively revealed this phenomenon. One of the novels that explores the acculturation Indian Immigrant in America is *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) written by Jhumpa Lahiri. It is interesting to be analyzed because is transformed their ethnicity, tradition and cultures with adopts American life style.

1.1.1. Acculturation of Indian Immigrant

One common definition of acculturation is “the process of learning a culture different from the one in which a person was originally raised” (Berelson & Steiner, 1964:646). The term is generally used to specify movement across different cultures, whereas learning in the original culture is usually called socialization. Here happened in he society has equal power.

Acculturation is common to inter group relations in America. It connotes the coming together of different cultures into a common culture. Hrabá writes that acculturation occurs when different racial and ethnic groups become similar in their thinking, feeling, and acting (1979:29).

There is mutuality, so that both groups learn from each other. Equal-status acculturation most often occurs when Societies are small, informal, and non

competitive. Equal-power acculturation also can be seen in border towns, where individuals from both cultures learn about each other and make appropriate adaptations.

Meanwhile, a more common model of acculturation is unequal power where people from a less powerful group interact with a more powerful one. This type of acculturation is mainly a one-way process: one group discards its culture in order to become more like the group in power.

Acculturation in this model does not necessarily lead to acceptance by the dominant group. Acculturation is only one of many kinds of assimilation. Gordon (1964) posited differences between cultural, behavioral, structural, and other types. Cultural assimilation (or acculturation) is likely to be the first to occur and consists of a change in the cultural patterns of the two interacting groups. It is not necessary for other types of assimilation to occur, and acculturation by itself can go on indefinitely. It also should be noted that a purely one-way flow of acculturation (one group completely overpowering the other) is rare, and that some mutual learning generally occurs. There also may be instances in which persistent contact may lead to hostility and a conscious rejection of the more “powerful” culture.

In this analysis, acculturation of Indian Immigrant in facing their life in America is revealed by *unequal power* through three process where minority of Indian immigrant interact with majority Native American forced them to diminish, to preserve and to be hybridity. In this narration the diminishment reprehensive of Ruma’s father, defensive of heredity culture represented by mother of Ruma and

the situation of hybridity was in Ruma who faced the two different situations in having interaction with her father and mother.

1.1.2. Brief of Jhumpa Lahiri

Jhumpa Lahiri was born on July 11, 1967 in London. She is a daughter of Bengali Indian immigrants in United States. Lahiri considers herself an American, stating, “I wasn’t born here, but I might as well have been.” Lahiri grew up in Kingston, Rhode Island, where her father worked as a librarian at the University of Rhode Island. He is the basis for the protagonist in “The Third and Final Continent,” the closing story from *Interpreter of Maladies*. Lahiri’s mother wanted her children to grow up knowing their Bengali heritage, and her family often visited relatives in Calcutta. When she began kindergarten in Kingston, Rhode Island Lahiri’s teacher decided to call her by her pet name, Jhumpa, because it was easier to pronounce than her “good names”. Lahiri recalled, “I always felt so embarrassed by my name.... You feel like you’re causing someone pain just by being who you are.” Lahiri’s ambivalence over her identity was the inspiration for the ambivalence of Gogol, the protagonist of her novel *The Namesake*, over his unusual name. Lahiri graduated from South Kingstown High School, and received her B.A. in English literature from Barnard College in 1989.

Lahiri then received multiple degrees from Boston University: an M.A. in English, M.F.A. in Creative Writing, M.A. in Comparative Literature, and a Ph.D. in Renaissance Studies. She took a fellowship at Provincetown’s Fine Arts Work Center, which lasted for the next two years (1997-1998). Lahiri has taught creative writing at Boston University and the Rhode Island School of Design.

In 2001, Lahiri married Alberto Vourvoulias-Bush, a journalist who was then Deputy Editor of TIME Latin America (and now Executive Editor of El Diario/La Prensa, New York's largest Spanish daily and America's fastest growing newspaper). Lahiri lives in Brooklyn, New York with her husband and their two children, Octavio (b. 2002) and Noor (b. 2005).

1.1.3. Unaccustomed Earth

Unaccustomed Earth Novel by Jhumpa Lahiri exposed the acculturation of Indian immigrant in America. These conditions are represented by Ruma, her father and mother who are living in America. It can be seen through their acculturation of characters Indian immigrant in America.

The first character is Father. His Indianness was diminished by adopting of ways American life style. It had shown through by idealizing her daughter with American values. Thus, his native language becomes meaningless to him while he talks with his family. He refused to use Indian language in his family and become individualist with his independent life. His personality becomes introvert toward his family and strengthened or acquainted American values towards her daughter.

The second character is mother. Her mother as housewife consistent with her original culture and preserved her traditions in domestic sphere. It had revealed through that her still strengthened her customs and attempts to maintain their children acquainted with Indian heritage and traditions in her family. It had shown through accustoming Indian languages, song, foods and clothing. She refused to use English language in her family and prevented of lifestyle Indian culture toward his generations.

The third character is Ruma. She was hybridized with two separate cultures that brought by both her parents. It had revealed through by adopts two life styles, which is Indian life style and American life style. This situation is shown through consuming two separate foods and using two languages. Unfortunately, her Indian food was disliked by her son rather than American food. She seldom makes Indian food towards her family, but only from suggesting from her mother. Ruma used English language when she speaks with her father and American person. She speaks Indian language only with her mother. In addition, her origins culture becomes inferior in her self.

1.2. Problem of Study

There are many cases that can be exposed in Jhumpa Lahiri Novel *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). However, acculturation Indian Immigrant in facing life in America appears to be the main focus in this novel. Thus, research questions to reveal the acculturation Indian Immigrant in America are

1. How far does Jumpha Lahiri Novel show the acculturation of Indian Immigrant in facing their life in America?
2. What's extension of fictional device such as character and setting produce the conflict in the narration in providing the contribution to expose the acculturation of Indian Immigrant in facing their life in America?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study is intended to find out how far Jhumpa Lahiri's novel of *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) evokes the acculturation Indian Immigrant in facing

their life in America. It also aimed to find out the extension of fictional device such as characters and getting give contribution in showing the acculturation Indian Immigrant in facing their life in America.

1.4. Previous of Study

The analysis about this novel that focus on the acculturation of Indian immigrant in America issue has not been found yet. However, there are some studies in journals that have given contribution and inspiration in analyzing this novel through acculturation of Indian immigrant in America issue.

One of studies is written by Gonul Pultar (1995) entitled *Jasmine: The Americanization of an Asian*. This study analyzes the identity crisis in the process of being Americans. By focusing on the characters, Pultar explores the portrait of Asian immigrants who come to America for life improvement. America appears as a land of opportunity for the immigrants, in its promise of technology and bright lights. In this study, the characters are depicted as the Asian in order to be accepted as the Americans. They change their names, refuse to talk their native languages, and adopt American's way of life. Consequently, in the process of being Americans, the characters loose their identity as the Asians. Moreover, this study reveals the effects of Americanization towards the characters.

Another study that give contribution to this study is written by Cyrus R. K. patell (1997) entitled *The Violence of Hybridity in Silko and Alexie*. This study uses two novels; *Ceremony* (a novel by Leslie Marmon Silko written in 1997) and *Indian Killer* (a novel by Sherman Alexie written in 1996). Both of these novels reveal the violence towards the American Indian hybridity. In this study, Patell focuses his analysis on the characters. All the characters in these two novels are cultural hybrids that find their intolerable and are not successfully integrated into

the major society in America. In this study, Patell explores the picture of American Indians who suffered the cultural damage as the result of the U.S. Government's attempts to assimilate Native Americans into mainstream American culture.

In addition, the study by Hudson (2003) entitled Character Analysis of acculturation Indian Immigrant. In this study the writer focuses to analyze the acculturation process of Indian immigrant adopted the culture of American in trough one-way process where Indian Immigrant groups discard their culture in order to become more like the culture of American.

Three analyses mentioned above have inspired this study to analyze the Acculturation of Indian Immigrant in America. It will contribute to previous study that is also focuses on three process of acculturation happened in a family. They are adopted new culture, defense their traditional culture and create new culture (hybridity).

1.5. Theoretical Framework

In analyzing the novel of *Unaccustomed Earth* by Jumpha Lahiri will be refer to the statement of Child (1943) and Lewin (1948) about the acculturation concept. According to them the acculturation began to be conceived as the strategic reaction of the minority to continuous contact with the dominant group. They stated that there are several options the minority can choose, each with different motivations and different consequences. These options include assimilation to the majority culture (absorbtion of majority culture), a defensive assertion of the minority culture (preservation), a bicultural blending of the two cultures (hybridity), a bicultural alternation between cultures depending on contexts, or a diminishment of both cultures.

The form of this analysis is text-based interpretation. Guerin (1999: 17) says that the text based interpretation is focused on the analysis on the work itself. The process of this analysis ignore the aspect outer the text. It means that the meaning is found from the text by showing the interrelationship of elements of the text. The elements of the text include theme, plot, characterization, setting and point of view.

The process of this analysis is done by examining its fictional devices. It focuses on character and setting. Character is one of the most important elements in fiction. The character is a medium that the readers need to examine the meaning in literary works. It is supported by Wheeler (1999) who stated that careful readers note each character's attitude and thought, action and reaction, as well as any language that reveals geographic, social, or cultural background. The characters in this novel are Jumpha Lahiri is Father, Mother and Ruma have positive things to recover the cross culture of their life.

Another important element that can help in the process of analyzing of this novel is setting. Setting does not only mean place ant time in the novel but also the atmosphere of the story. Madden (2002) says that setting is the location and the atmosphere of the story. Moreover, Kate Endriga (2003) stated that:

Settings have a way of drawing the reader into a piece of literature while facilitating understanding of the characters and their actions.

From the sentence above, it suggest that setting can give big effect on characters where the character constitutes as emotional center to express what the characters means. Therefore, the writer will portray all aspects what each character feels. In this research the writer will explain the analysis about the