

## Desire and Domestic Disquiet:

Exploring Emotional Instability and Familial Fragmentation in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the tension between emotional desire and familial responsibility in *Unaccustomed Earth* by Jhumpa Lahiri through the framework of Family Systems Theory. The stories in *Unaccustomed Earth* depict family life as emotionally interconnected, where individual longing and suppressed desires gradually disturb domestic harmony. Rather than presenting dramatic conflict, Lahiri portrays quiet emotional instability that emerges through silence, withdrawal, and unspoken dissatisfaction. Using Murray Bowen's concept of the family as an emotional unit, this study argues that unwanted or unfulfilled desire affects not only the individual but also the entire family structure. When personal aspirations or emotional needs conflict with moral duty and cultural expectations, characters experience inner conflict that leads to emotional distance and fragmentation. The absence of open communication intensifies generational misunderstanding and weakens familial bonds. The paper contends that Lahiri presents domestic disquiet as a subtle yet powerful force shaped by emotional restraint and unresolved longing. Ultimately, *Unaccustomed Earth* reveals how the imbalance between desire and responsibility

disturbs the well-being of family members and reshapes the emotional structure of the modern diasporic family.

Keywords: Desire, Fragmentation, Disquiet, Emotional instability, Moral responsibility.

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