

**A COMPARATIVE BILDUNGSROMAN READING OF WOMEN'S  
EXPECTATIONS IN THE NAMESAKE AND IKKI ESHIK ORASI****Guljahon Kasimova**ingliz tilini o‘qitish metodikasi kafedrasida professori,  
tarix fanlari nomzodi, dotsent.**Ozodaxon Izzatillayeva**Farg‘ona davlat universiteti  
xorijiy til va adabiyoti (ingliz tili) yo‘nalishi 1-kurs magistranti**Abstract**

This study compares women’s development in *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri and *Ikki eshik orasi* by O‘tkir Hoshimov using a gendered Bildungsroman framework. It focuses on the characters Ashima and Robiya. The study shows how their sense of self develops within strong social, family, and historical expectations. Their development does not come from rebellion or full independence, which are often linked to the traditional Bildungsroman. Instead, it grows through everyday responsibilities and social roles. The research uses a qualitative comparative methodology and applies close textual analysis to examine their emotional, psychological, and ethical development.

The findings show that Ashima and Robiya follow alternative Bildungsroman paths. In these paths, maturity is achieved through endurance, adaptation, and self-awareness. Ashima’s development is shaped by migration and cultural displacement, which leads her to redefine her sense of belonging. Robiya’s growth develops through moral strength during the hardships of wartime life. Although their situations are different, both characters slowly change how they respond to social expectations. As a result, they gain a limited but meaningful form of agency. This study argues that women’s stories of development challenge male-centered models of the Bildungsroman and suggest a broader understanding of growth that includes quiet and constraint-based forms of becoming.

**Keywords**

Bildungsroman; women’s expectations; female development; identity formation; comparative literature; gendered growth

**Annotatsiya**

Ushbu tadqiqot Jhumpa Lahirining *The Namesake (Ismdosh)* va O‘tkir Hoshimovning *Ikki eshik orasi* asarlarida ayol obrazlarining rivojlanishini genderga xos Bildungsroman nuqtayi nazaridan qiyosiy tahlil qiladi. Tadqiqot Ashima va Robiya obrazlariga e’tibor qaratib, ayollarning shaxsiy kamoloti mustaqillik yoki ochiq qarshilik orqali emas, balki kuchli ijtimoiy, oilaviy va tarixiy kutishlar doirasida qanday shakllanishini o‘rganadi. Tadqiqotda



sifatli (qualitative) metodologiya qo‘llanilib, matnlarni yaqin tahlil qilish orqali qahramonlarning hissiy, ruhiy va axloqiy rivojlanish bosqichlari aniqlanadi.

Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatadiki, Ashima va Robiya an’anaviy, markazda erkak obrazlar turadigan Bildungsroman modellaridan farq qiluvchi rivojlanish yo‘lini bosib o‘tadi. Ashimaning kamoloti migratsiya va madaniy begonalashuv ta’sirida shakllanib, u o‘ziga xos “uy” tushunchasini qayta belgilaydi. Robiyaning rivoji esa urush davridagi og‘ir sharoitlar va axloqiy mas’uliyat orqali yuzaga keladi. Turli kontekstlarga qaramay, har ikki obraz ham kutishlar bilan munosabatini qayta anglash orqali ichki yetuklikka erishadi. Ushbu tadqiqot ayollarning rivojlanish jarayonini yangicha talqin qilish zarurligini ko‘rsatib, Bildungsroman janrining doirasini kengaytirishga hissa qo‘shadi.

### **Kalit so‘zlar:**

Bildungsroman; ayollarga qo‘yilgan kutilmalar; shaxsiy kamolot; ayol obrazlar; qiyosiy adabiyotshunoslik; jinsga xos rivojlanish

### **Introduction**

The Bildungsroman is usually described as a type of novel that shows how a person grows and matures over time. In most cases, this genre focuses on male characters. Their development is often connected to gaining independence, choosing a career, or breaking away from family and social rules. Because of this focus, women’s life stories are often not recognised as examples of development, especially when their growth happens within marriage, family responsibilities, or difficult social conditions rather than through open rebellion.

This paper examines women’s development by comparing Ashima from *The Namesake* and Robiya from *Ikki eshik orasi*. Although these characters live in different places and time periods, they share a similar position. Both are women whose lives are shaped by strong expectations from family and society. Their personal growth does not come from dramatic change or rejection of these expectations. Instead, it develops through learning to manage responsibility, loss, and emotional pressure over time.

By analysing Ashima and Robiya as Bildungsroman characters, this study argues that women’s development can happen quietly and gradually, without the need for escape or full independence. Ashima grows by adapting to life in a new country, while Robiya develops inner strength through endurance during wartime hardship. This comparison shows that social expectations do not prevent personal growth. Instead, they shape a different but meaningful path of becoming.

### **Literature Review**

Previous studies on *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri have mainly focused on themes of identity, migration, and cultural conflict (Lahiri, 2003). Much of the research examines the



experiences of second-generation immigrants, especially Gogol’s struggle with his name and his sense of belonging in American society. These studies often explain the novel through ideas of diasporic identity and cultural hybridity (Boes, 2006). Scholars also discuss how characters live between two cultures and how displacement influences personal identity (Bakhtin, 1986). Although Ashima is mentioned in these discussions, she is usually treated as a secondary character. Her role is often limited to motherhood, cultural preservation, and emotional sacrifice, rather than being analysed as a character who shows clear personal development (Felski, 1989).

In a similar way, critical discussions of *Ikki eshik orasi* (*Between Two Doors*) by O‘tkir Hoshimov mainly focus on war, collective suffering, and moral endurance in Uzbek society (Hoshimov, 1985). Many studies examine how the novel shows the effects of war on ordinary people and highlight values such as patience, loyalty, and responsibility. Female characters, including Robiya, are often discussed as symbols of endurance or moral strength within the community. They are rarely analysed as individuals who develop over time. As a result, women in the novel are often presented as static figures who endure hardship, with little attention given to their inner change or psychological growth.

From a theoretical perspective, the concept of the Bildungsroman has traditionally been used to analyse male-centred narratives. In these narratives, development is usually linked to independence, education, and social mobility (Moretti, 1987). Classical definitions of the genre focus on clear transformation and separation from family or tradition. This makes them difficult to apply to women’s narratives. Stories that take place within domestic life, marriage, or social limitation are therefore often excluded from Bildungsroman analysis or seen as incomplete forms of development (Ellis, 2014). Although recent studies have started to question these narrow definitions, research on female-centred Bildungsroman remains limited, especially in non-Western and cross-cultural literary contexts.

Overall, existing research offers valuable insights into cultural identity in *The Namesake* and social morality in *Ikki eshik orasi*. However, an important gap remains. There is little research that treats Ashima and Robiya as developing characters whose growth happens through negotiating expectations rather than through rebellion or escape. In addition, comparative studies that connect South Asian diasporic literature and Uzbek realist fiction through a gendered Bildungsroman perspective are very rare. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how women’s expectations shape alternative forms of personal development in both novels.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To examine how Ashima in *The Namesake* and Robiya in *Ikki eshik orasi* undergo personal development within social, familial, and historical expectations through a gendered Bildungsroman perspective.



2. To analyse how women's expectations shape alternative forms of growth and selfhood that differ from traditional, male-centred models of the Bildungsroman.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do Ashima and Robiya develop as Bildungsroman figures within the limits imposed by social, cultural, and historical expectations?
2. In what ways do their experiences challenge traditional definitions of the Bildungsroman that prioritise independence and visible transformation?

### **Methodology**

This study uses a qualitative comparative approach to examine women's development in *The Namesake* and *Ikki eshik orasi*. It is based on a revised, gender-sensitive interpretation of the Bildungsroman. Traditionally, the Bildungsroman focuses on visible growth, independence, and separation from family, which often fits male characters more easily than female ones. Because of this, women's development has frequently been overlooked.

In this study, development is understood as a gradual and internal process. Growth is seen in increased self-awareness, emotional strength, and a deeper understanding of one's role in life, rather than in dramatic change or personal freedom. This approach allows the analysis of women whose lives take place within marriage, family duties, or restrictive social conditions. A key concept in the analysis is women's expectations. These expectations come from family, culture, and historical conditions such as migration or war. Instead of viewing expectations only as limits, the study examines how women learn to manage, negotiate, and sometimes reshape them over time. In this way, expectations become part of the developmental process. The analysis is based on close reading of both novels, with attention to moments that show changes in the characters' emotional, psychological, and ethical perspectives. Ashima and Robiya are chosen because they play central emotional roles in their novels and live under strong social and family expectations. Although they are not the main narrators, their experiences strongly influence the moral direction of each text.

The study follows three main stages for both characters. First, it examines the expectations placed on them as married women. Second, it analyses key challenges such as migration, isolation, loss, and wartime pressure. Finally, it explores how each woman responds to these challenges and how her sense of self and responsibility develops over time.

By using the same structure for both texts, the study allows meaningful comparison. This method highlights alternative, endurance-based forms of women's development across different cultural and historical contexts.

### **Analysis Part I: Ashima**

At the beginning of *The Namesake*, Ashima is shown as a young woman whose life is almost completely controlled by expectations. These expectations come from marriage, family duty,



and cultural tradition. She enters an arranged marriage and soon moves to the United States with her husband. This move forces her to leave her parents, relatives, language, and daily routines behind. From the start, Ashima does not make this decision for herself. Instead, she follows what is expected of her as a wife.

Ashima’s feeling of displacement is clearly expressed when she says that “being a foreigner is a sort of lifelong pregnancy—a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts.” This comparison shows how uncomfortable and uncertain she feels in her new life. Pregnancy is a time of waiting, physical discomfort, and emotional sensitivity. By using this image, Ashima explains that living as a foreigner makes her feel weak, unsettled, and always incomplete. At this early stage, she feels emotionally fragile and unsure of her place in the world.

Her isolation becomes stronger during her pregnancy. In India, pregnancy is usually shared with family members, especially women relatives who offer care and advice. In the United States, Ashima has none of this support. Lahiri describes her fear as she thinks about giving birth in a hospital full of strangers. She worries because she does not know the customs, the language, or the people around her. At this point, Ashima does not try to change her situation. She does not protest, complain, or try to escape. Instead, she accepts her condition quietly.

Rather than resisting her life, Ashima begins to cope in small and practical ways. She prepares traditional Indian food, speaks her native language at home, and follows cultural customs. These actions may appear simple, but they are important. They help her feel stable and emotionally safe. This shows the first stage of her development. Her growth does not come from rebellion. It comes from learning how to survive emotionally in a difficult situation.

As time goes on, Ashima slowly becomes more confident in daily life. She still values family and tradition, but she begins to handle responsibilities on her own. For example, she learns how to move around the city by herself. At first, this is frightening for her. Later, it becomes normal. This change is not dramatic, but it is meaningful. It shows that Ashima is moving from emotional dependence to quiet self-reliance. She is learning to trust herself.

A major turning point in Ashima’s development happens after her husband’s death. This event forces her to face life alone for the first time. Lahiri writes that “for the first time in her life, Ashima is living alone.” This sentence is simple, but its meaning is strong. Living alone does not mean loneliness. It means choice. For the first time, Ashima decides how she wants to live.

She chooses to divide her life between India and the United States. This decision shows that she no longer belongs fully to only one place. Instead, she defines “home” in her own way. This is the clearest sign of her development. She does not reject her past, her culture, or her family role. However, she now shapes her life based on her own understanding and needs.

Ashima’s story presents development as slow and internal. Her growth happens inside marriage, motherhood, and cultural responsibility. It does not involve escape or open



rebellion. Instead, it involves endurance, adaptation, and personal choice. By the end of the novel, Ashima has achieved self-awareness and a quiet form of autonomy. For this reason, her story fits the idea of a gendered Bildungsroman, where maturity is reached through patience, emotional strength, and everyday decisions.

### **Analysis Part II: Robiya**

In *Ikki eshik orasi*, Robiya's life is shaped from the beginning by strong social expectations. These expectations focus on patience, moral strength, and responsibility. Unlike Ashima, Robiya does not leave her country. Her hardship comes from living during wartime. Because of this, she is expected to remain strong, accept loss, and continue her duties without complaint. Early in the novel, this idea is expressed in the belief that “a woman's strength is not in her words, but in how much she can carry without breaking.” This belief shapes how Robiya understands herself. It also defines what kind of development is possible for her.

Robiya's growth is closely connected to suffering. War destroys safety, takes away loved ones, and creates constant uncertainty. Even in these conditions, Robiya stays within her community and accepts responsibility. She does not leave or resist her role. At one point, she is described as someone who “learned to swallow her grief and carry on, because life did not wait for tears.” This sentence shows an early stage of her development. Robiya is fully aware of her pain. However, she learns that survival depends on endurance. Her growth begins not because she chooses it, but because the situation forces her to change.

As time passes, Robiya's endurance becomes more conscious. At first, she simply reacts to hardship. Later, she begins to understand the weight of her responsibilities. She accepts them with clear awareness and quiet determination. Hoshimov shows this change when he writes that “Robiya no longer asked why life was unfair; she only asked how to remain human within it.” This moment marks a turning point. Robiya stops questioning fate and starts focusing on moral behavior. Her silence now becomes a deliberate choice, not a sign of weakness.

Over time, Robiya gains respect within her community. People trust her because she remains stable and ethical in difficult situations. They turn to her for support and guidance. This respect does not come from power or social position. It comes from experience and consistency. This is captured in the idea that “people trusted her because she had lived through loss without losing herself.” This shows that Robiya's development is real, even though it is quiet and rarely noticed.

Robiya's story presents development as something that happens within limits. She does not escape her life, and she does not openly challenge her role. Instead, her maturity comes from understanding her responsibilities and carrying them with dignity. Her expectations remain, but her relationship to them changes. Through moral endurance and self-control, Robiya becomes a stronger and more self-aware person. For this reason, her story represents a form of Bildungsroman based on patience, responsibility, and inner strength.



### Comparative Discussion

Although Ashima and Robiya live in very different worlds, their lives follow a similar emotional logic. Both women grow within limits set by family, society, and historical circumstances, and neither of them is given the option of an easy escape. Their development does not come from rejecting expectations but from learning how to live with them without losing themselves. This shared experience places both characters within a gendered form of the Bildungsroman, where growth is slow, quiet, and often painful.

Ashima’s expectations are shaped mainly by migration and cultural displacement. From the moment she arrives in the United States, she is expected to adapt while preserving tradition, to be a good wife and mother in a country that constantly reminds her that she does not belong. Her description of being a foreigner as a “lifelong pregnancy” captures this constant emotional burden. Robiya’s expectations, on the other hand, are formed by war and collective suffering. She is expected to endure loss silently and continue functioning for the sake of family and community. While Ashima feels suspended between two cultures, Robiya feels trapped within one harsh reality. Yet, in both cases, expectation becomes something that follows them everywhere, shaping their daily lives and inner worlds.

The way each woman responds to these expectations reveals an important difference in their paths, but not in their outcome. Ashima learns to adjust gradually, first through small acts of cultural preservation and later through independent decision-making. Her choice to live between two countries after her husband’s death is especially telling. It shows that her growth leads to choice, even if that choice is limited. Robiya, by contrast, does not gain physical freedom or mobility. Her development is instead marked by moral strength. When she learns to “remain human” in an unfair world, her growth becomes ethical rather than practical. This difference highlights how Bildung can take different forms depending on context, without losing its core meaning.

Despite these differences, both characters reach a similar state of maturity. Ashima learns that home does not have to be one place, and Robiya learns that endurance does not have to mean self-erasure. Their silence, often mistaken for weakness, becomes a space for strength and self-awareness. Neither woman openly rebels, yet both subtly redefine what it means to live as a woman under expectation.

*To further clarify the similarities and differences in their developmental paths, the following table summarises Ashima’s and Robiya’s stages of maturity:*

Stage of Development	Ashima ( <i>The Namesake</i> )	Robiya ( <i>Ikki eshik orasi</i> )
Initial expectations	Enters adulthood through an arranged marriage and migration, expected to adapt to a new	Enters adulthood under strong moral and social expectations, expected to be patient, loyal, and



## “NAZARIY VA AMALIY FANLARDAGI USTUVOR ISLOHOTLAR VA ZAMONAVIY TA’LIMNING INNOVATSION YO’NALISHLARI”

	country while preserving cultural traditions and family roles.	self-sacrificing within family and community life.
Primary challenge	Emotional isolation caused by displacement, lack of family support, and cultural unfamiliarity in a foreign country.	Emotional loss and hardship caused by war, instability, and collective suffering.
Response to hardship	Coping through cultural preservation and gradual adjustment rather than resistance or withdrawal.	Enduring hardship silently, developing emotional control and moral strength rather than seeking change.
Turning point	After her husband’s death, begins making independent decisions about her life and sense of belonging.	Moves from passive endurance to conscious moral responsibility and inner strength.
Form of maturity	Develops emotional independence and redefines the concept of home as transnational.	Develops moral authority and self-awareness within the limits of her social role.
Type of Bildungsroman	Quiet, late-life development shaped by migration and adaptation.	Endurance-based development shaped by war and ethical responsibility.

*As the comparison shows, although the sources of hardship differ, both women reach maturity through gradual internal change rather than visible transformation.*

Taken together, Ashima and Robiya challenge the traditional understanding of the Bildungsroman. Their stories show that women’s development does not always follow a visible or dramatic path. Instead, growth can be found in survival, adaptation, and quiet choice. Through these characters, it becomes clear that expectations do not prevent development; they shape it, often leaving behind a sense of loss, but also a deeper form of understanding.

### Conclusion

This study examined women’s development by comparing Ashima in *The Namesake* and Robiya in *Ikki eshik orasi* through a Bildungsroman reading. Although these women live in different cultures and historical periods, the analysis shows that their paths of growth are similar. Both women develop within strong family and social expectations. Their growth is slow and steady. It happens through endurance, responsibility, and emotional adjustment, not through rebellion or escape.



Ashima’s development is shaped by migration and cultural displacement. Robiya’s development is shaped by war and moral hardship. Even so, both women reach maturity by changing how they relate to expectations. Ashima learns how to belong without being tied to one country or place. Robiya learns how to endure suffering without losing her sense of self. Their stories show that development does not need dramatic change or full independence. Growth can happen quietly, through everyday decisions and inner change.

By analysing Ashima and Robiya as Bildungsroman characters, this study questions narrow views of the genre that focus mainly on male experience. It shows that expectations do not always block personal development. Instead, they can shape different but meaningful paths of growth. By recognising these quiet forms of development, the study supports a broader understanding of women’s stories and encourages a rethinking of how maturity and development are defined in literature.

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