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Jhumpa Lahiri: A Social and Emotional maladjustment in 'Interpreter of Maladies'

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In the realm of feminist study, the woman story writers deal with the themes of love, marriage, loneliness and quest for identity. Self is related to individual where as the Identity is concerned with position in society. Cultural identity of feeling makes connection to the part of the self conception and self awareness. It concerns with nationality, customs, religious and religious convictions, age group, community and any other social group type. The present paper reveals the discussion on the key findings with regard to the 'self' and cultural identity of protagonist in the short stories of Jhumpa Lahiri in special reference to *The Interpreter of Maladies*. She is a superb interpreter of a cultural multiplicity. Lahiri's stories are insightful critique of human relationships, bonds as well as promise that one has to make with native soil along with the migrated land

Keywords: Realms, identity, convictions, protagonist etc.

Introduction: Jhumpa Lahiri was born in 1967 at London to the Bengali immigrant family which is clearly visible in her writings. She is an immigrant feminist writer who emerged among a galaxy of writers in the realms of Indian English literature. She writes about the prominent aspects of an individual and social life from a Diasporas perspective which helped to attain recognition and importance through various reputed awards and honours. Her themes and techniques like victimization to self-protest make her fiction quite interesting. Her first literary work *Interpreter of Maladies* is a collection of short stories. Each story contains the self and cultural quest of the character. Jhumpa Lahiri propagates the self and cultural quest of each protagonist in the present collection. The protagonist like *Mr. Pirzada, Boori Ma*, and *Mrs. Sen* crave for their self identity. While the characters like Sanjeev and Twinkle are culturally alienated. They strive to establish a bond between foreign and native culture. The story vividly describes the plight of every protagonist through the lenses of identity and culture. Her second novel, *The Namesake* [2004] became much popular. It is the story of a boy name, Gogol, who hates his name. Actually, he hates his native culture which his parents followed throughout their lives. He has been always called confused Deshi. He gets suffocation in this situation. He never finds his own identity among the foreign crowd. He is confused about the culture. He is not able to decide about a particular culture. He is culturally confused. Besides this, Jhumpa Lahiri never forgets to reveal the troubles of woman on the foreign land.

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her first short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* beautifully portrays her Indian characters in a far off foreign land, dealing the prevalent issues of adaptation and struggle for cultural identity like communication barrier. She brings this element of alienation in her writings by overcoming this challenge through her Indianism which is intrinsically built in her fiction. She has a magic in all the nine stories in *The Interpreter of Maladies*. It is her style of writing that every story of her, presents sublimely the subtle detail and eloquently speaks about the yearnings of exile and emotional confusion of the outsider.

Lahiri was born to Bengali parents in London, grew up in Rhode Island, frequently travelled to Kolkata, and lived in Boston, residing in New York. Her writings are the important highlights of individuality and social life from a feminist point of view which paved the way to achieve prominence and recognition through various prestigious awards and honours. Very beautifully she expresses the day to day life's adversity by communicating the failures and achievements of humanity which is seen throughout the world and thus summarizes the human life. Since she herself is the second immigrant child, who suffered from multiculturalism, could portray the characters both in the direction of native and foreign culture. She is deeply connected to the importance of family relationships and attachment with the relatives in the native land, but failing to find her identity in the foreign country where she could have developed a sense of connection and belonging. Where there is a struggle there is an opportunity aptly proves in Jhumpa Lahiri's case to excel in fiction writing, because of the displaced reality and self imposed exilement which acted as a stimulus in her life.

Her father was a University librarian, whereas her mother worked as a school teacher. From her parents she inherited Bengali culture, at a very early age by travelling regularly to Kolkata, spending a considerable amount of time with her extended family. Her childhood name was Nilanjana Sudeshna Lahiri but her teacher renamed her as 'Jhumpa Lahiri'. She was excellent in school and was graduated from Bernard College in 1989, where she was graduated with BA English literature and at Boston University she was post graduated in English and M F A in creative writing. Married to Alberto Vourvolious-Bush journalist who was the deputy editor of 'Time' and 'American weekly' news magazine. She later shifted to Italy where she has the intention to explore about human characteristics in the new land. She is the proud mother of Octavio born in 2002 and Noor in 2005. While working on her thesis she was connected to Boston magazine as an intern in 1997 and was given a little trust as an interesting author for short stories, developed while staying at Boston University where her story began to publish in places like *The New Yorker, The Harvard Review*, *The Lewisville a review et cetera.*

Interpreter of Maladies (1999) by Jhumpa Lahiri, regardless of the clear badge of Indianness is relevant across the world. She represents that the folks of diverse countries and cultures who for a variety of reasons are strained to live away from

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their own native land, go through difficult phases. Whether she suggested a treatment or not, Mrs. Lahiri's endeavor to interpret the maladies of the mind that an individual undergoes and the exclusive manner in which she makes them understand their own flaws, certainly worth the prize and the esteem she won with her maiden piece of writing. As a post colonial writer, Lahiri has brought the nuances of complexities faced by the immigrants in an elaborate way through her works. The post colonial problems of identity and cross cultural crisis remain the themes in her major works. The gender related issues in the postcolonial pretext adds to the agonizing situation of the immigrant women. Lahiri is a typical postcolonial writer comparable with Bharathi Mukherjee or any other Asiatic author. Lahiri explicitly throws fresh light on the term and the concept 'Diaspora' to the intellectual public. She also has shown varied interest as a social activist.

Women's Liberation

She is from the school of postmodern women's liberation which depicts the job of a woman in the social setting and her battle for the upliftment of women in general, which is actually woven in her stories with tremendous demeanours as the spices utilized in any Indian Kitchen. Nityanadam (2005) in *Jhumpa Lahiri: The Tale of the Diaspora* says:

> Lahiri portrayed her women characters both the ways, sometime ordinary and sometime extra ordinary, both simple and complex, while strong and weak as well. Her women bring every colour of life in her fiction.

She essentially expounds on Indian migrant ladies and their struggles in connecting themselves to American culture. While couple of stories show the condition of female this is same everywhere throughout the globe. It might be experiential that while belittling from the west profoundly praises the abstract Excellencies of Lahiri, those from the east offer blended reactions after the careful and basic investigation of the stories in her short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies.* The cognizance of female against male supremacy leads them towards their appearance of a new woman. We see her female characters, as extremely strong to ascend against any current traditions and, give the message that woman refuses to be subjugated by man; they can be an equivalent accomplice as they are called, Ardhangini in India. We see Lahiri's characters attempt to cross all the shallow restrictions of conventions. In her stories, we realize that Lahiri is a rebellious one, who condemns the rotten customs with the projection of her female heroines. There is a hope for settlement and rehash. Her characters are dreadful yet at the same time they are hopeful towards the life. Few forms of conduct have allocated women where values of behaviour, taste and etiquette has been sternly set for them. A woman cannot go in opposition to these set rules and regulations. If she tries to go against these set traditions of patriarchal system, society can banish her. However, she is a free and independent

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being, but forced by man to suppose the rank of an inferior to what man imagines her to be.

Interpreter of Maladies consists of stories that are not confined to the diasporic experience, as Lahiri also writes about the experience of Indians at home. The two stories that are set in India, “The Real Durwan” and “The Treatment of Bibi Halder” tell of people in transition, who are searching for a home both literally and figuratively. The former tells the story of a homeless durwan who is thrown out of the building she resides in because of a deed she has no part in, while the latter consists of a mentally ill woman who is ostracized by her family because of her condition. The two women have never set foot outside the city, let alone the country. Yet, the themes of alienation, loss and search for identity still run rampant across these two stories.

In the attempt at situating women in Jhumpa Lahiri’s narrative, the first necessity lies in examining the ideals of Indian womanhood. Since the immigrant women’s comprehension of identity is firmly connected to the values and ideals that they imbibe in the home country, understanding the intricate dynamics of social, religious and historical process that construct the position and images of women in India would felicitate a more nuanced understanding of the reasons why Lahiri’s women insists on rejecting the influence of their country of exile. In rooting their identity in the traditions and values of the homeland, the immigrant women distort the process of identity formation in a new country. Thus, the problem of identity for migrant Bengali women is intricately connected with the homeland and the women’s perspective of the new country.

Conclusion

Indian soil and culture is deeply rooted in the mental map of Jhumpa Lahiri. Therefore, her approach to life and its problems is tethered to in her Indian upbringing. She also gives some solutions to the general problems that women face in a patriarchal society. She demonstrates the practicability of the solutions that she suggests by making her protagonists achieve the survival of self in the end. Survival becomes something more than a mere physical one. It becomes something of an 'inner awakening’, the phenomenal realization that one is not a sufferer and perhaps has never really been one. These become necessary and enough for breaking the prey cycle and coming out victoriously as a non-victim.

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