

THE POST COLONIAL DIASPORA IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S "*INTERPRETER OF MALADIES*"

ANITHA N

Assistant Professor, Department of English, VELS University, Tamil Nadu, India

ABSTRACT

Literature is the reflection of human life. It commemorates their living, their pain and celebrates their humanity. One of the Genre of Jhumpa Lahiri's literary work is Post Colonial and Diasporic writing, this study examines the above perspective on her titled short story *Interpreter of Maladies*. The work engages in textual and discourse analysis and partially employs cultural materialism to picturize the identity crises in a capitalist society inhabited by the non-residents of other country. The immigrants suffer from identity crises, isolation, displacement, hybridity in culture and tradition, westernness, exmarital affairs, split in marriage and psychologically imbalanced in life. The Diaspora seeds up the elements of culture and remakes them entirely with hybridation of dual culture in a Post Colonial Diasporic perspective.

The title story, *Interpreter of Maladies* indicates interpreter of emotional pain and affliction. The story is an example of Indian immigrants suffering, sacrificing and struggling in America from identity crises, isolation and dual culture. *Interpreter of Maladies* gives the glimpse into India's culture and society. The story paints a sharp contrast between America and Indian society using India as a backdrop. It also showcases the reality of foreigners when they are traveling to a different country. Lahiri is a second generation immigrant, she feels that no country is her homeland, as she was born in India but residing at abroad (United states of America) gives her own experiences of life in her writing.

KEYWORDS: Literature, Interpreter of Maladies

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Post Colonial Diaspora which indicates an expansion of a nations rule over a territory beyond its borders and its population that is subjected to political domination of another population and nation. Diasporic writing, the term Diaspora comes from the Greek word diasperiein, meaning scattering or dispersal of people, the south Asian diasporic community suffers from identity loss and isolation in this story. Lahiri's history and backdrop resonate through her tales, she builds herself into the story. The sense of autobiography is experienced by the readers while examining her background and also her characters are the products of Post Colonialism and her tale is the outcome of Diaspora. Lahiri with a great responsibility and thrust as an diasporic women writer has the task of bringing to the light the realities and atrocities that exist in their dual cultures. Whether her tale takes place in India, the United States or England it is evident that her unique voice touches upon the issues that plague these civilizations, the fact that she paints a realistic portrayal of the contrast between industrial and developing countries. The most pertinent role that these authors share is that they give a voice to women who have long been silenced by both men and their colonial societies.

Interpreter of Maladies, the story deals with the Indian-American couple, Raj and Mina Das they visit India along with their three children. Mr. Kapasi an interpreter in Doctor's office is hired as a tour guide to Das family. Mina Das, the

wife alters his job of *Interpreter of Maladies* as 'romantic' (50). This kinders a feeling of romanticism in Mr. Kapasi who falls into imagination with Mina Das, he begins to show more interest and spend more time with her. As the time is progressing, Mina reveals a long kept secret to Mr. Kapasi trusting that he might provide a remedial solution for her problem. Mina experiences too much into Kapasi's profession. In order to overcome the maladies, one has to interpret them and seek refuge within one's own self. Here, Mina contributes much of her time thinking and spending with Mr. Kapasi. The character in Lahiri's short story are suffering with psychological imbalance.

Mr and Mrs Das both are born and raised in America, only their retired parents have now moved to India. Raj is very busy with his teaching assignments after marriage also, therefore life for Mina has become dull and drab, 'she was left at home all day with the baby, always cross and tired' [64]. Mina's psychological problem was further complicated when she conceived her younger son Bobby because of a sexual encounter with a friend of her husband who once happened to stay with them for a few days at Raj's home. Mina kept this secret for eight years long before revealing it to Kapasi, the interpreter of the maladies, hoping that he would support her emotionally to feel better by suggesting some kind of remedial solution for the problem. She informs Kapasi that she is troubled by a guilty feeling when she thinks about her past secret, though Raj, her husband doesn't even suspect her or has a false opinion that she is still in love with his friend (65). Kapasi is typically from an Indian back-ground and patriarchal ideology, he is unable to put off the complicated situation.

Mina till to the present day has passed her life as a young lonely housewife and mother. Mina does not accept that it is her guilt that is making her suffer, she seeks refuge at the end of the story through her parental duties and nursing injured Bobby who is her illegal son. Kapasi believes that like Raj and Mina, he and his wife were 'a bad match had little in common except the bickering, the indifferences, the protracted silences'(53). The progressing story deals with the matrimonial problems and cultural alienation of Indians settled in the United States. The female protagonist is the lonely individual struggling to come into the terms with her new environment, oppressive matrimonial or extra matrimonial relationships in an alien culture suffering from social and economic insecurity or her natural support to service with an identity of her own.

The portrayal of marriage in the story is neither stable nor valuable as a social and religious institution nor it is dependable or fulfilling the personal relationship based on mutual respect. The story has a definite feminist orientation, it explores the nature and usefulness of patriarchal institutions like marriage and family in the contemporary society, it also raises some disturbing questions about security in life. The extramarital affair of Mina Das is regarded as an act of unfaithfulness. The traces of her pain and suffering, also the feel of her guilt is expressed throughout the story. As the story advances Mina understands the inner sense of Mr Kapasi therefore she ignores him and his corrupted ideas completely, she seeks refuge, at the end of the story in her parental duties. In this case Lahari picturized Mina in a limited sphere of activity as a women who resembles that of Mrs. Kapasi's typical Indian lower middle class selfless housewife completely devoted to the service of the husband and the family.

In this story Lahari shows the difficulties that Indians have related to Americans and the ways in which Indians and Americans split but caught in the middle of the two different cultures. Mr Kapasi wishes for a close connection with Mrs. Mina, but when she finally does leak about her past secrets of her illegal affair and her true feelings about her husband, Mr. Kapasi is overwhelmed and disgusted. Mr. Kapasi thinks that he and Mrs. Das have a connection because he recognizes her situation as an isolated wife caught between the troubled marriage and sick family. Mrs. Mina Das has

shared the past secret of extramarital affairs with Mr. Kapasi in the hope that he being an interpreter of the maladies, he will be able to suggest a remedy for her in this story, Mr. Kapasi plays the character role as a cultural broker, tour guide and interpreter for a doctor. As a tour guide, he explains and shows English speaking Europeans and Americans the sights of India, and in this work as an interpreter, he helps the ailing of another region to communicate with their physician. The relationship of Mrs. Mina Das and Mr. Kapasi explore the idea of displacement through isolation and identity both cultural and personal, Kapasi's attitude towards his wife is similar to that of Raj towards Mina at a more distinct level, one of the other husband and wife both ignore each other. The emotional and physical needs of the wife are not satisfied by the husband. The wife is attached to the boring repetitive domestic back breaking responsibilities. All the problems, suffering by both the couples are caused by the nature of marital relationship dramatized in the story, which are unsatisfactory for the man as well as the women.

DESAI AND THAKKAR STATES

'The family is not a homogenous group where all the members occupy equal positions and derive equal benefits in terms of source, training opportunities and entitlements. The socialization of members and especially girls lead to women themselves accepting their secondary role in family..... gender difference that are culturally produced, are almost invariably, interpreted as being rooted in biology, as part of the natural order of things, the gender roles are conceived, enacted and learnt with in a complex of relationships' (Desai and Thakkar 80).

In the story the husband with his patriarchal ideology he almost ignores the individual needs of the wife. There are many themes in the story such as communication gap, broken marriages, the danger of romanticism and psychological suffering in individuals. In the story camera is symbolified by Mr. Das's camera which represents his inability to see the world clearly or connect with it because he views the world through his camera which is not a natural view therefore Mr. Das misses the reality of the world around him, both in his marriage and in the scene outside the cab advancing more forward. The common thread through out the story is the kind of malady that Das family suffers from, here Lahiri refers not only to the Das family but in fact many families around the world who undergo the similar maladies. All the characters are defined by isolation of some form or another, husbands are isolated from wives, immigrants are isolated from their families and their homes, children are isolated from their parents, and people are isolated from the communities in which they live. In their exile and isolation, these characters feel that they are missing something very important for an individual that is their self-identity.

Lahiri's Indian heritage forms the bases of her short story, the plight of isolation that often afflict the first and even second- generation immigrants. Although the immigrant experience is central in her work, it is not her exclusive concern in the story but she suggests through her characters that there are Maladies that trouble all of us. This contributes to our understanding of other people and of our selves.

INTERPRETER OF MALADIES reveals to the readers her admirable grasp of biculturalism and reliable style. Lahiri's subject is suffering from the loneliness of dislocation, cultural displacement, sense of identity and belonging with the fine details of both Indian and American cultures. Lahiri's story describes an universal sympathy, the breakup of identities, the alienation and sense of loneliness experienced by all immigrants, giving voice to their pain and interested into their complex mentality which leads up to psychological suffering. *Interpreter of Maladies* are more than beautiful pieces of literature which count the fact and truthful experiences of real human life common to all by nature in the world, as a reader I analyzed Lahiri's story as an outcome of Diasporic (scattering or dispersal of people) writing in a Post

Colonial era.

The Malady to be interpreted is the silent sickness of the neo-expatriates. Jhumpa Lahiri as one among many others narrated the symptoms as a victim of pain and survivor beyond all, in search of identity for life and its existence.

REFERENCES

1. Brah , Avta. *Thinking through the concept of Diaspora. The Post Colonial Studies Reader*. Second Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Griffiths, Gareth and Hellen Tiffin. London: Routledge. 2006 Print.
2. Childs, Peter and Fowler Roger. *The Routledge dictionary of Literary Terms*. 270 Madison Ave. New York Publication. 2006 Print.
3. Lahari, Jhumpa. *Interpreter of Maladies*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1999 Print.
4. Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981 – 1991*. London: Vintage Books. 2010 Print.
5. Bhatia, Sunil. *American Karma: Race, Culture and Identity in the Indian Diaspora*. New York UP: 2007 Print.
6. *MLA Hand Book for writers of Research Papers*. New Delhi. Affiliated to East West Press Pvt. Ltd, 2009. Seventh Ed Print.
7. Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia, *Interpreter of Maladies*, Article. 16th June 2010 Web 2nd July 2015
8. Monti, Alessandro. *Out framing the self in diaspora writing. Journal of postcolonial cultures and societies*. Jpcs, Vol.1,3 and 4.15th March 2014 Web 19 June 2015.
9. <<http://www.jpccs.in>>