



Feeling of Diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri's the Interpreter of Maladies

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Jhumpa Lahiri came to literary scene in 1999 with the publication of *Interpreter of Maladies*. This short-story collection has earned popularity with the readers a lot. It has won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2000. As it was the first effort by Lahiri, it gained a lot of name to her in literary world. There are nine interesting stories in the collection which create different impacts on the readers. These stories talk about the Indians living in America who are navigating between the tradition they have inherited from their native land and the kind of life they are encountering in US. The aim of this research endeavor is to focus on the stories which deal with the theme of migration and its impact. First story "the Temporary Matter" talks about the broken married life of a second-generation migrants. They resist everything from Indian culture but still they can't stop themselves in having relationship with their native culture through their kitchen. The loss of their unborn kid set them apart. They start going away from each other but the temporary thing like power cut brings them together. Shukmar even after being in his 30s works as a student and his wife Shobha who is practical, works as proof-reader. Till the last of the story, we don't know the attitude of the writer for the cultures but the relationship of husband and wife in spite of their lack of vulnerability in each-others presence come back to normalcy. They share things with each other but when Shukumar realizes the purpose of Shobha to start the game of telling each other things which they didn't tell earlier is to talk about her staying away in home from Shukumar, then he feels shocked. He feels that now it is all futile to keep away the secrets from each other out of love. He tells her that though they have promised each other not to reveal the gender of their kid before its birth, but now when love is not there between them, then it is waste to keep things a surprise. He tells her that kid was a boy who was like Shobha. Their shared grief brings them closer to each other.

“When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” is a story told from the perspective of a small girl. She is not able to understand the difference between Mr. Pirzada being a Bangladeshi and not Indian in spite of his looks similar to his parents. Though she knows that her parents keep sympathy for Mr. Pirzada and invite him on dinner, still their countries are different. She looks into the globe to understand the difference between the two countries and what was the issue which was bothering Mr. Pirzada. “Interpreter of Maladies” is a short story which talks about Mr. Kapasi who is shown as the facilitator between two cultures due to his love for languages. But he feels that he is not fit in any of the two cultures. He doesn’t feel at home with the family of Mr. and Mrs. Das and his own family as he is not able to understand Das family and can’t feed his own family. He lives in a space which he created for himself. He feels attraction for Mrs. Das. When Mrs. Das praises his job as interpreter in a doctor’s clinic for Gujrati patients, he takes it as symbol and an indication of love from Mrs. Das. In the end of the story, we see that Mr. Kapasi interprets the disease of Mrs. Das’s guilt of cheating from her husband. She tells him that she has kept “a secret for eight whole years” (IM 62) from her husband that Bobby is not her husband’s son and she had an affair with her husband’s friend. Another short story “Sexy” deals with the interpretation of words in different cultures. Miranda, who is in love with a Bengali married man Dev, takes the words sexy as compliment. She shows no sympathy with her Indian colleague’s cousin whose husband has fallen for an English girl. She tells Miranda that her cousin’s husband is getting separated from her for his love for The English girl. Miranda thinks that people who fall in love after marriage have to deal with difficult choices. But all her illusions come crashing down when Rohin, son of cousin of Miranda’s colleague came to her place. He tells him that how the words sexy stand not for beautiful but the sexual pleasures married men seek outside their marriage. This brings a complete breakdown in the relationship of Dev and Miranda. This story brings that how languages can bring difference in cultures. Another short story by the name “This Blessed House” talks about the relationship of husband and wife. This story shows that how people living outside one’s native nation can have different attitudes and perspective for the religion of the countries where they reside. In this story, we see that how Twinkle is fascinated by the prospect of collecting “Christian paraphernalia” (IM 137). Sanjeev has graduated from MIT and works for a firm now. He marries Twinkle after a period of courtship. But soon after his marriage with her he feels that they are not compatible with each other. Twinkle and Sanjeev both are second generation born immigrants but for Sanjeev Christianity is not his religion. He is not open for the other religions as he thinks that he is from India and he is a Hindu. He feels irritated on the excitement of Twinkle for the effigies she finds at their newly bought home. Twinkle is doing her mater’s work on Irish poet. They plan a party for their friends of their marriage. At the time of preparation, she gets a plaster Virgin Mary in a bush and wants to keep it in their house. This creates a kind of irritation in Sanjeev. He feels that they will be judges by their friends for showing their interest in Christianity openly. He wants to put all these symbols in the garage but the assertive nature of twinkle stops him. Twinkle in the party takes all the guests to attic where they dance and cry aloud. She comes down from attic holding, “a solid silver bust of Christ” (IM 156) which again irks Sanjeev. But then he decides to take this as his fate and goes on living life with all his wife’s different tastes from him.

Last story “Third and Final Continent” talks about the departure of a Bengali young man. After staying sometimes there, he leaves for America. He does job in library in MIT. He earns a good amount from his job. He takes a rented accommodation for eight-dollar room per week in Mrs. Croft’s house. In the beginning, he feels irritated but later on he feels sympathy with Mrs. Croft when he comes to know from Helen, Mrs. Croft’s daughter that Mrs. Croft is aged 103 and she used to work as violin teacher for whole of her life. After the arrival of Mala, Mukesh gets a furnished apartment at university campus. But one day, he takes her to Mrs. Croft. Mrs. Croft calls Mala a perfect lady. Later on, Mrs. Croft dies alone and this creates sadness in the heart of narrator, Mukesh. He remembers that how the interpretation of an American old lady brought him and his wife together. Through the analysis of these short-stories, we come to the conclusion that people living outside one’s native nation do face the problems and their reactions are solely based on their experience in life at host country. They migrate with the aim of progress in life in all aspects but for that they have to submit many things and perspectives of their lives. They have to adjust with the kind of life they encounter in the host nation. Writer in these stories that how the characters who came in the pursuit of success also feel alienation and a sense of belongingness.

Work cited:

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Interpreter of Maladies*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. (1999).

