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Representations Of Separation And Dislocation In Selected Works By Jhumpa Lahiri

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Abstract:

This study analyzes Jhumpa Lahiri's Interpreter of Maladies in light of the diasporas it raises and the themes of diasporic space and the immigrant experience it explores. Her book, Interpreter of Maladies, exposes the alienation and loneliness felt by all immigrants and showcases her impressive grasp of bilingualism and dependability. Furthermore, she gives those suffering and caught up in their complex psychoses a voice. All of her stories delicately broach the subject of the gulf that can form between immigrants and their American-born children.

Keywords: Diasporic Space, Immigrant Experience, Bilingualism, Dependability, Psychoses.

Introduction

A diaspora is not simply the movement of people from one area to another; rather, it is an event shaped by the people involved and the circumstances of their journey, which in turn influences their connections to the past, the present, and the fantastical. Migration of peoples has always been a part of human history, but in the age of globalization it has taken on new significance. Mainstream diasporic critique examines a scattered ethnic group that has a known place of origin and has dispersed either voluntarily or involuntarily. The writer of the diaspora, as Narula describes it, occupies a "complex place" between two countries and two cultures, unable to fully assimilate into and be acculturated by either. (35)

The major characteristics of diasporic writing are uprooting and rerouting on the hunt for identity, insider and outsider syndrome, nostalgia, guilt, assimilation, and acculturation. Thinking about "home" brings up issues related to identity and belonging, migration and exclusion, closeness and separation, and the politics of home. The way we envision our homes has a lot to do with how we feel about ourselves and how close we feel to other people. As authors living in a diaspora, expatriate authors frequently focus

on contemporary issues such as social isolation, personal history, and the distance between home and adopted country. The idea of exile literature is central to all diasporic discourses. Every expatriate author has felt the sting of loneliness, isolation, and the loss of a sense of belonging, as well as the stress of juggling two cultures. When you make the decision to start a new life in a country that is not your own, you risk losing your connection to your heritage and culture. It's a common predicament for expatriates to feel torn between conforming to cultural norms and breaking with tradition. Both their lives and their writings depict the diversity and particularity of real-world experience. This is borne up by the canon, yet the way in which the literature deals with the plight of expat wits sets it apart.

All of Jhumpa Lahiri's short stories center on topics including miscarriages, marital strife, and alienation among Indian immigrants. Jhumpa Lahiri, like many immigrants stuck between two cultures, is a writer who has lived in two countries at once. She became emotionally fragile as a result of the strain of developing her identity and finding a stable place to call home during her formative years in Rhode Island. She is experiencing a profound yearning for the Indian heritage that permeates every single Indian's being. She was born in London to Indian parents in 1967 and later moved to Rhode Island. Her stories reflect this transnational upbringing.

The collection of short stories by Jhumpa Lahiri, which includes the titles *Mrs. Sen*, *A Temporary Matter*, *Sexy*, *Interpreter of Maladies*, and *The Third and Final Continent*, exemplifies her diasporic drift. Each narrative provides a sketch of the problem of recognition, the problem of ethnic identity, the problem of dynamic dispersion, the problem of the image of accommodation, and the problem of negotiating the complex situations that the most marginalized people face in the so-called alien environment.

Each of her characters struggles with the inability to define or accept their own identity in her works. Culture, age, gender, technology, and self-awareness are common sources of tension when it comes to dialogism and polyphony. The novellas "A Temporary Matter," "The Interpreter of Maladies," and "The Third and Final Continent" brilliantly depict a world where different people speak their minds without being drowned out by one another. In *Sexy*, *The Blessed House*, we see the instability of cultural authority on full display. A firm sense of self is negotiated between the characters through miscommunication and silence.

Those of Lahiri's characters who are overly attached to memories of home or who focus solely on advancement in the diaspora struggle to find a place for themselves in the author's fictional universe. Characters in Lahiri's work struggle to find a consistent identity due to competing cultural, individual, and societal norms. The shifting viewpoints inside and across Lahiri's stories do not always highlight a conflict between voices discussing homeland and exile. This emphasis on the individual's role in constructing their identity within a densely populated diasporic setting is emphasized by the plethora of voices present, even within a single character.

Situation Only Temporary Possible interpretation is an effort to forget the past and disappear from history. Shoba and Shukumar, an Indian diasporic couple, suffer the tragedy of a stillborn child. They stop talking to anyone they know, and ultimately they even stop talking to each other. It is debatable whether or not being alone can help one find a definition that can lead to peace. Although being alone has its drawbacks, the detached perspective it affords is useful for reevaluating any issue from a fresh angle. Shoba and Shukumar's disclosures to each other hurt, infuriate, and ultimately heal. Shoba is planning on

keeping the gender of her pregnant kid a surprise, so she declined an ultrasound. After giving birth to her stillborn kid, Shoba takes comfort in not knowing whether she had a boy or a girl. However, Shukumar tells her that the stillbirth of their kid is an act of revenge after she tells him she wants to live apart from him. They suffer from the loss of their child who was stillborn, and they can't seem to get over it since they blame themselves for what happened. Through confessions, they solidify their new identities: the anguish of their past selves' hardship and shame is undeniable because it is a constant reminder of their tragic birth, but this suffering is, oddly enough, acceptable because it is their own doing. A victory of will over difficulty, with the satisfaction of success easing the suffering.

The wealthy Mr. and Mrs. Das of Interpreter of Maladies are American citizens of Indian ancestry who are visiting India with their three children. Mr. Kapasi, our protagonist, is an interpreter and guide who brings the group to the Sun Temple in Konark. Mrs. Das and her American-raised family, on the other hand, are bored and lack a sense of wonder: "... Mrs. Das uttered an irritated sigh as if she had been travelling her whole life without a pause" (IOM 47). But Mrs. Das has a chronic ailment: the shame of knowing that her second kid, Bobby, is not biologically related to her husband. It is via Mr. Kapasi that she is able to express her ailment: "Eight years Mr. Kapasi, I've been in pain. I was hoping you could give me some sound advice. Advise a solution, please (IOM65). Since helping Mrs. Das was something Kapasi felt obligated to do, he inquired, "Is it pain you feel, Mrs. Das, or is it guilt?" (IOM 66).

When compared to other works of fiction, this one stands out for its compelling storytelling and the way it humanizes the European way of life for those in the developing world. The story depicts the gradual assimilation of an ordinary Indian's vernacular into the English language. Each person, despite sharing many characteristics, is a tangible demonstration of the complexities of individuality.

Mrs. Sen is a fictional account of an Indian immigrant's experiences in Europe. The story shows the struggles that genuine Indian ladies endure when they are transplanted to a foreign country where they have no support system and must learn to make a new place feel like home. In one sense, it is a classic tale of cultural misfits, and in another, it is a parable about the need of acceptance. Mrs. Sen struggles with the issue of how to best express herself while balancing her many identities. Mrs. Sen, an Indian woman living in the United States, finds the universality of loneliness through a comparison to that of Eliot, a little American boy she babysits. She is an exile because of her bodily relocation as well as cultural and geographical considerations. Mrs. Sen adheres to that definition because her ties to her family and friends are too significant to disregard. However, she needs to be a naturalized US-American in order to feel fully at home in her adopted country. Her fear of driving is the biggest barrier she must overcome before she can fully embrace her American identity. Her dignity is being eroded by her anxiety. Her attempt to drive a car to the store to buy a whole fish to cook is emblematic of her efforts to reconcile her Indian heritage with her new life in the United States. Mrs. Sen's habits and the food she prepares for Eliot's mother. Mrs. Sen is anxious and restless, yet she is aware that her relatives in India "believe I live the life of a queen.." (IOM125). Mrs. Sen's incessant daydreaming about her native India demonstrates how diasporas create fictional homelands out of scraps of memory. "When Mr. Sen said the home, she meant India, not the apartment where she sat chopping vegetables," Eliot is astounded to learn (IOM116). While the fish didn't have an Indian flavor, she found the overall experience to be quite positive (IOM 123). While driving, Mrs. Sen contemplates and tries to resist Eliot's mother's continued agency of power, but "she was so started by the horn that she control of the wheel and smacked a telephone pole on the opposite corner," leaving her in tears and quiet (IOM 134)

In *The Third and Final Continent*, we see how Europeans still wield their power over their counterparts in the rest of the world. In her work, Lahiri vividly depicts the struggles of first-generation immigrants as they try to plant new roots in a foreign country while still grappling with their own identities. The narrator of this piece describes how, in 1964, he left India with a commerce certificate and the money equivalent to ten dollars. To get to England, he takes a cargo ship across the Arabian, Red, and Mediterranean seas, a journey that takes three weeks. He and a dozen or more other Bengali bachelors share a London apartment. They often share quarters with three or four others and eat together every night. There, he studies economics and works in the LSE library. They are primarily responsible for their jobs and little else. On the weekends, they relax at home and host dinner parties for other Bengalis to attend. On occasion, one of them will leave home to be with the woman his family in Calcutta has arranged for him to marry. At the age of 36, the narrator's family arranges a wedding for him in Calcutta, and he eventually makes his way to the United States to make a new life there. The relationship between the narrator and Mrs. Croft, the landlady, is inexplicable. His wife Mala was described by Mrs. Croft as "a perfect lady." I was stricken to read Mrs. Croft's obituary, he recalls. Mrs. Croft's passing was the first American death I had grief over since hers was the first American life I truly appreciated (IOM 196). They settle down with their growing boy and find joy on this, the third and last continent. He tells his kid it's hard to find a place to call your own in the United States, but he offers these words of encouragement:

When he starts to feel down, I remind him that I've made it through three continents alive and well, so he can too. I know that I am not the first nor the last man to leave his homeland in search of financial success. In spite of this, there are moments when I find myself completely baffled by the sum total of all the places I've been, all the people I've met, and all the beds in which I've rested. In spite of how commonplace everything seems, there are occasions when I find myself completely at a loss for words. (IOM 198)

Young Indians on the emigration trail are depicted in a narrative that depicts a downward spiral in marriage relationships. The story centers on the extramarital affair of an Indian man and a white woman, as well as the western woman's sentiments about the affair. An American named Dev has an affair with Miranda, an Indian woman who is already married. She feels an affinity for Dev because of his youth and ethnicity. He is unique in many ways that Miranda has never experienced before: he is interesting, mature, wealthy, and a good match for her. But there are many factors that contribute to the breakup of the couple's relationship. This occurs not only because Miranda knows she must settle for physical gratification from Dev, but also because of how Rohin, the child of her Indian friend Laxmi's cousin, defines the word "sexy." His interpretation is that he has fallen in love with an unknown, attractive woman rather than my own mother (IOM 108). Miranda has come to realize that her attraction to Dev is superficial and that Dev does not love her for who she is. She wasn't a woman, even without the clothes, just a mistress. She starts to cry as she contemplates her predicament. After that, Miranda and Dev aren't seen together anymore. Consequently, Lahiri depicts the diasporic spirit that is embodied by all of her characters in *Interpreter of Maladies* through her depiction of the lives of migrants. This dissertation uses Jhumpa Lahiri's short stories to explore contemporary ideas of ethical awareness, exile, self-realization, an idealized country, and a yearning for the past.

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