

THE FEMINISTIC APPROACH IN THE FICTION OF JHUMPA LAHIRI

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ABSTRACT

The present paper aims at showing the aspect of feminism in the fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri apart from the themes of migration, assimilation, cross-culturalism, the pain of displacement of the First Generation immigrants. It is my endeavour to bring into light the Lahiri's approach to feminism in a subtle as well as direct way, as most of her characters are females. The stories "Interpreter of Maladies", "Mrs Sen", "Sexy", "Hell-Heaven", "The blessed house", "Unaccustomed earth", "The Real Durwan". There is much written on different themes of the diasporic writers (both male and female) and in this paper, it is my attempt to reveal the untouched part of the writing style of Jhumpa Lahiri. The present paper will definitely be helpful for future researchers who will be interested to write about female diaspora, feminism and neo-feminism. It will also be helpful for scholars who are undergoing their research on First and Second generation immigrants.

Keywords: feministic ,fiction, approach, migration

Feminism is a social movement that aims to achieve the common goal of political, Economical, personal and social equality of sexes. It aims to achieve equal professional opportunities for females. Feminism provides equal rights and equal access to opportunities. It's abundantly clear that the issues of feminism are rooted deeply in personal and direct experiences, rather than any data, research or science surrounding the issues. In other words, if we have faced discrimination on any ground than we are very sure that it exists. We will be in doubt to believe if we have not faced the discrimination.

The present paper aims at displaying the glimpses of feminism in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri. She is a Second Generation diasporic writer. She is well equipped in portraying the feelings of the immigrants. Her stories hover between Kolkata and the United States. She writes with an insight and she does full justice for her protagonists. Her protagonists belong to the different strata of society, but mainly to upper middle class and so the meaning of feminism changes according to the financial status of the females in the society. It is also a matter of concern whether the society is matriarchal or patriarchal. There are the variegated shades of love, displacement, agony, infidelity, aloofness and much more. This paper includes the Pulitzer Prize-winning "interpreter of maladies" (a short story collection), "The Namesake" (a novel that has also been turned into a movie, starring Tabu and Irfan), "unaccustomed earth" (a collection of eight short stories) and "The Lowland" (a novel). All of her work deals with the different approach (with always India in the background) but clearly depict the meaning of family, relationships, separation, moving to the new world and getting accustomed to the alien land. Lahiri is a writer with elegance and poise. She uses simple lucid language and understands the human feelings very well. With a remarkable insight, she delves deep into the psychological depths of her characters and reveals their inner world by a fascinating yet deceptively simple style. We come more reality than fancy in her fiction. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that her interpretation of the maladies itself acts as a potent medicine. Yet they are interesting and often make humorous studies.

The protagonist Mrs Das in the short story "interpreter of maladies" is always in a quarrel with Mr Das. They went to visit Konark Sun-temple of Odisha state. Their guide Mr Kapasi is much fascinated with the beauty of Mrs Das and when they are waiting for Mr Das in a taxi, Mrs Das reveals her secret to Mr Kapasi that one of her children is not of his husband but her husband's friend. This clearly shows the courage of Mrs. Das of bringing the child into the world and doing justice with the little one. In the short story collection "unaccustomed earth", the widowed father and retiree come to stay with her daughter (Ruma) in the suburbs of Seattle. In the earlier years, Ruma was not close to her father, he lives as one of her family members and insists her daughter employ herself. He doesn't want his daughter to get secluded in the four walls of the home. Reciprocally Ruma neglects the postcard that she finds in the luggage of her father. The postcard was sent from a woman, whom her father met on a trip. The story clearly shows no gender boundaries and the freedom of living off the widowed male as well as his rich sentiments with minor details. The book unaccustomed earth (published in 2008) won the 2008 Frank O' Connor International short story award and secured the first position in the New York Times book review list of "10 best books of 2008".

Finally Gogol Nikhil Ganguly, the protagonist of the novel "The Namesake" fights for the identity crisis throughout his life and understands the significance of his life after the death of his father Ashoke Ganguly, by a severe heat stroke. Three women come in Gogol's life – Maxine (girlfriend), Moushumi (his ex-wife) and his mother Ashima Ganguly. All the three left indelible impression on him in three different ways. Ashima and Moushumi are both Bengali women but entirely different from each other. Ashima is a traditional Bengali woman who has moved from India to Boston and her prime priority is her family, but contrary to this, Moushumi is an independent Bengali woman who is a strong supporter of women liberty and posing herself as an American woman and does not behold the customs, rituals and heritage of rich Bengali culture. Thus contrasting to the persona of Ashima Ganguly. Ashima's link with her parents and relatives is much stronger. She does not want to sever her relationship and even at the end of the novel decided to divide the time between US and India. In fact, as she has followed Ashoke to the US, with his death the ties to that country seem to weaken and she opts for her reforming of old links – a moving back to the land that is the only home all these years. In the story "The blessed house" we have an Indian couple, the newly married Sanjeev and Twinkle in Connecticut. Lahiri has presented a couple which tries to cope up with the new world in which they have just entered.

Their arranged marriage has not given them sufficient time to understand each other. Sanjeev does not like her behaviour and her excessive respect for the statues of Christ and Mother Mary. She wishes to adopt the new culture where she is living and Sanjeev thinks it to be a superfluous act. This was the basic difference between the two persons of the same origin, same homeland and same culture. This couple has a lot of quarrel and debate over the Virgin's statue. She wanted to put it in the study or in the garden but Sanjeev wished to move it to the garage, just because the people should not think them as Christians. NRI Twinkle is much westernized, she drinks whisky, she smokes, not a great cook and detests Indian dishes for the trouble they involve and on the other hand, Sanjeev is much more deeply rooted to the ancestral culture. Twinkle has adapted herself to the new home very easily in comparison to Sanjeev, who is looking for space for him to get adjusted. But at the end of the story, Sanjeev is seen taking the silver bust of Mother Mary from the attic to the study room as if holding the emotions of Twinkle very carefully. Here Lahiri shows the liberty given to Twinkle to follow the religion or tradition whatever she wants thus bringing the equal respect for the sentiments of a female thus giving a sense of feminism.

Reference

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