



FEMINIST CRITICISM OF THE WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE FICTION OF JHUMPA LAHIRI

Om B. Chaudhari, Assistant professor, Saraswati Mahavidyalaya, Bokhara, Koradi, Maharashtra

Dr V.N.C.H. Ranganath, Associate Professor of English, Mahaveer Institute of Science and Technology, Bandlaguda, Hyderabad-5.

Dr.K.Dasaradhi, Professor, V.K.R, V.N.B & A.G.K College of Engineering, Gudivada, Krishna Dt.
A.P : Kommuru.Dasaradhi@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines Jhumpa Lahiri's women's situation and empowerment attitudes. Because Lahiri writes about Indian immigrants abroad, this article shows that her Feminism differs from other Indian post-modern feminist writers. This piece eloquently describes the daily challenges of Indian women to survive in their adopted nations. These women struggle for identity and gender equality. Since they are ethnocentric, educated, employed, and accustomed to challenges, they can adjust to cross-cultural life and wish to be independent. Thus, Lahiri's women are global, liberal, radical, and archetypal. This paper distinguishes Lahiri's first- and second-generation immigrant women's alienation.

Keywords: Empowerment, Feminism, Ethnocentric, Archetypal and Alienation.

Introduction

Indian-American writers, especially in North America, are internationally recognized. Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Divakaruni, Rohinton Mistry, and Anita Rau Badami have written great literature and won significant accolades. After the 1965 immigration legislation, many Indians—especially students and professionals—came to the US and became part of society. Thus, American settlers are Indian immigrants. Jhumpa Lahiri, like Nandini Bhadra, incorporates cross-cultural, transnational, and post-colonial inquiries into her diasporic work. She is one of the leading woman novelists in narrative realism. These diaspora women writers who specialize in feminist literature are writing more stories. Diaspora literature has long depicted women in hardship. These Diaspora writers portray their ladies honestly and include the plight of women in their writings.

Jhumpa Lahiri clearly describes the suffering of Indian immigrant women in different countries. Her women lose their identities more in their husbands' countries. Immigrant women struggle. Thus, families and traditions are remembered. Most female characters are homemakers who always give birth, sweep, cook, and serve their husbands and children. Due to their secret suffering, they remain subjugated, dependent, and abandoned women. "Immigrants' isolation, loneliness, alienation, and longing for the lost world are more explicit and awful than for their kids," adds Lahiri. (Arun Aguiar Interviews Jhumpa Lahiri)

Global or Transnational Feminism focuses on how globalization impacts people of different races, ethnicities, genders, classes, and sexualities. Third-world Feminism in the professional workforce hinders migrants' child-rearing abilities. Due to worldwide demand, women are outsourced. However, they can work across boundaries. Liberal Feminism seeks to end the patriarchal tyranny of conventional roles, educate and empower women, and make them ethnocentric to overcome obstacles.

Jhumpa Lahiri examines two generations of Bengali expatriates who must adapt to new cultures. She skillfully isolates first-generation immigrants. Her female protagonists are stranded. She writes on



Indian female immigrants' miscarriages, marital problems, extramarital relationships, and generation gaps. Lahiri shows that women migrate out of devotion to their husbands, not curiosity. When husbands work abroad, their wives must follow. Lahiri's literature shows Indian Bengali women's struggles. Lahiri successfully portrays her exiled female characters' loneliness and suffocation in their adopted country. She describes Diaspora women as perfect wives who follow the national culture in their new households. These women secretly endure melancholy and isolation and strive for family happiness.

Feminist perspectives complicate Lahiri's analytical reading. Some scholars consider Lahiri's short stories completely womanish, but further examination demonstrates that the line between men and women is becoming more problematic. Culture and the Indian-Bengali diaspora complicate Lahiri's text. Her challenging and feminist short stories are hard to read. Lahiri's feminist views include sexism, stereotyping, emancipation, sexuality, sacrifice, tolerance, acceptance, social and psychic pressures, forgiveness, courage, protection, possessiveness, love and care, understanding and tension, passive sufferings, displacement, migration, adaptation, transformation, reinvention, cultural resilience, and diasporic consumption. English-language Indian writers are unlike Lahiri. Indian English-language novelists include Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Jhabvala, Vikram Seth, and Salman Rushdie. Lahiri's parents and grandparents may be Indian. She only knows India from her grandparents, parents, books, and newspapers.

Feminist Perspective on Lahiri's Writing

Second-generation immigrant Lahiri perfectly captures the experiences of Indian women immigrants. Her autobiography gives her characters authenticity in "feelings and events. Her Interpreter of Maladies translates mental disorders. These articles focus on the intercultural misunderstandings and struggles of second-generation Indian Americans.

Lahiri examines love, communication, incompatibility, East-West cultural differences, solitude, displacement, and identity loss. She eliminates social, sexual, and gender distinctions. A homeless Indian or American woman illustrates the repercussions of diaspora. Lahiri interprets emotional suffering. Her characters have been uprooted from traditional life and are fighting to adapt. Most Bengalis become isolated and lost in the wilderness. Lahiri interprets Indian immigrants in America's cultural disorientation, loneliness, and estrangement. Her struggle to find her place in cultural alienation lends realism to her depiction of immigrants' tragic lives.

Radical Feminism seeks to make women housekeepers and child caretakers. Feminism addresses men's economic dominance over women. Jhumpa's Feminism "'s Interpreter of Maladies addresses modern women's issues. Like Boori Ma, one battle for food and hides in six-by-six shelters. "Real Durwan Boori "'s Ma's loss can be taken as how others view her. Readers feel her loss of family. The ladies in the building justify her exaggerations by calling her a homeless migrant in pain. The reader sympathizes with Boori Ma, an older woman living in an apartment. She had a prosperous youth. She went from brilliance to abyss. Most homemakers thought Bechareh made up stories to lament her family's death (Lahiri, Interpreter of Maladies: 72). She lives under stairs as a durwan, or sentry, collecting money. This older woman fell from kingly glory. Apartment dwellers believe they need a real durwan.

Interpreter of Maladies' female characters suffers from estrangement, guilt, self-insufficiency, and overambition. Lahiri's work represents women "When Mr Pirzada Came to Dine" depicts social inequality. Jhumpa Lahiri obsesses on women and feminism "realist fiction. It is a unique narrative about the women who endure wartime horrors. The Pakistani army raped and slaughtered young



women during the partition of East Bengal as Bangladesh, and women teachers were dragged out and shot. "The professors were hauled onto streets and shot ruthlessly while the young women were raped in barracks" (Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies*: 23).

Jhumpa's collection can be understood as a feminist study when the reader examines Mrs Das's existence as a bird imprisoned by family. She is married but romantic. However, her life becomes unromantic and dull. MrsDas confides in MrKapasi about her pain relief, which doesn't make sense "The interpreter doesn't identify her anguish and denies its authenticity and importance. I'm sick of feeling bad. Mr Kapasi, eight years! "eight years. I wanted you to make me feel better. Offer a fix " (Lahiri, *Interpreter of Madies*:65).

In the first storey of *Interpreter of Maladies*, Lahiri explores Miranda's honesty and sensitivity, emphasizing her feminist concerns. Laxmi's self-respect and happiness depend on her husband. Laxmi's physical and mental isolation from Dev and her knowledge of the immense sorrow of a woman and a kid change her course. Without a future, she leaves Dev. Realizing others "Her grief helps her feel others'. She imagines Laxmi's anguish "Miranda feels an unsaid sympathy for her cousin and undergoes a change that makes her aware of the grief and distress of the other and a family betrayed by the husband and father. "Miranda cried imagining the scene. Miranda cried harder. Rohin slept. He was probably used to it now, hearing a woman cry." (Lahiri: 109).

The ninth storey, *The Treatment of BibiHaldar*, concerns a troubled woman. This narrative shows women's skills in a culture where men are escapists and women are bold. Bibi becomes despondent and regrets her physical and emotional shortcomings as a woman. This storey follows a disabled woman's struggle in society.

"Bibi didn't get paid for her work, but she was given food and enough metres of cotton every October holiday to get a new wardrobe at a cheap tailor. At night, she slept on a camp cot in the downstairs room of a cousin. (*Interpreter of Maladies*, page 159, Lahiri)

BibiHaldar is unique. Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction addresses post-modern feminist problems related to women's inner liberation and awakening. She is raped and has a son. She raises the youngster and runs a storage room company for his future. Motherhood heals her long illness. She learns to cook, embroider, light fires, and dress appropriately. All these stories teach humility and equality for women who face life with dignity and self-respect.

Lahiri's *Namesake* explores diasporic generational differences. She also discusses the issues, tensions, and confusions of second-generation diaspora following their absorption into the host culture.

Ashima's mother symbolizes Global Feminism. Ashima maintains her personality, wishes, and joy despite her dependence on her husband and children. As a housewife librarian, she loves it. "Loneliness" doesn't stop her. Desires independence. However, Ashima symbolizes patriarchal dominance, gender equality, and double marginalization. She's feminine. Ashima's postpartum worry is maternal. For her children, she can overcome her challenges and adapt to the new culture.

Ashima realizes that being a foreigner is like a permanent pregnancy—a constant wait, hardship, and feeling out of place. It is an ongoing obligation, a parenthesis in what was once regular life, only to learn that the prior existence has departed, replaced by something more intricate and demanding." (*The Namesake*:50)



Moushumi, Sonia, and Maxine represent liberal Feminism. Moushumi performs an atypical role and portrays powerful women without caring about patriarchal, ideological, societal, or psychic pressures. She chooses her path to freedom from family, friendship, identity, and culture. The Namesake's Moushumi is a transnational feminist. Moushumi exhibits her girlpower as a gorgeous, sensual, and intelligent girl who firmly resists any constraint on her desires and inclinations. Moushumi is a typical post-modern rootless female who challenges alien cultures globally better than a guy. She is an example of a second-generation female immigrant's American mentality. She can choose a career and profession she enjoys. French is Moushumi's double major.

Her Brown rebellion was academic. Her parents wanted her to be like her father, so she majored in chemistry. She double-majored in French without telling them. Without expectations, immersing herself in a third language and culture. Name: 214

Para-lawyer Sonia learns a third language and culture. Ashima and these women cannot comprehend double standards. They are defiant as children and hide their social relationships to avoid conflict. Lahiri skillfully depicts these female immigrants' attempts to assimilate and change the host culture. The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri shows how immigrants battle to keep their identities. Sonia, who doesn't have her parents' doubts, has fewer problems. She fits her culture. At the novel's end, Ashima's exile and longing for her native land make her an émigré, never an immigrant. Lahiri's female protagonists struggle with identity, shame, and relationships after leaving their homeland. In this novel, battle transcends continents. In this novel, second-generation immigrants are more conflicted and have cultural eruptions in false awareness than first-generation immigrants like Ashima.

Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* chronicles an Indian's foreign adaptation. This book shows Lahiri's writing, community, and ability to build a world as joyful and tragic as life. She shows how these generations of a Bengali families settled in America, an unfamiliar land. These stories are about Bengali families in England or America remaking their lives after significant upheavals. *Unaccustomed to Earth's* second-generation immigrants—Ruma is an archetypal female immigrant.

She ignored her father. Her mother would have supported and admired her decision. Ruma had worked fifty-hour weeks for years and made six figures while Rom still lived hand-to-mouth (Lahiri: *Unaccustomed Earth*:36).

Sudha's happy family established healthy hybrid cultural and familial identities in *Only Goodness*. Ruma favours freedom more than fatherhood. Lahiri's women grow freely. They're about humans. Thus, *Unaccustomed Earth* beautifully depicts the challenges of Indian female immigrants, especially those trying to settle in a foreign nation. Immigrant parents of these girls choose diverse paths. Sangita, Hema, Ruma, and Mrs. Bagchi leave their parents. They'd cause migration and mental suffering. In the title story, Ruma, pregnant with her second child and has just relocated, expresses the theme of failure in her vision of gain and loss. Mother's death haunts her.

Liberal Feminism is an unusual form of Feminism that focuses on women "s capability to show and maintain equal opportunity through their actions and choices. This kind of woman can assert her ability to achieve equality just like Gauri in Jhumpa" s fiction. At the heart of the novel, *The Lowland*, Gauri, a female protagonist, lay social transformation and her subsequent exile as an academic. Her non-conformity becomes a fight for herself and her rights as a woman. Gauri" s struggle for gender equality is her challenge for which she sacrifices her motherhood.



She rejected Subhash's steadiness while he learned to accept her and welcome her turn. "He was amazed that she had found significance in her life (Lowland: 225).

In love with Udayan, she becomes a victim and abandons the mother-daughter tie to discover her place. In this work, Lahiri draws strong women like Gauri and Bela. While Bela "while Gauri is incomprehensible. Thus, this narrative follows a widow bound by convention and psychologically disempowered by trust loss. Lahiri leaves the reader to decide if Gauri is more sinned upon than sinning. Lowland certainly raises feminist problems, demonstrating its author on these issues. How Gauri's character is handled, her leaning towards extreme leftist ideology, her first marriage against the will of her maternal uncles and second marriage against the will of her in-laws, her zeal for studies in unfamiliar conditions and her interest in world affairs, her choice to live alone without worrying about her baby daughter, her leaning towards lesbian romance, and such other issues one by one can assess her Feminism.

Girl power in multiculturalism, women securing space for themselves, the bad girls who can counter men by their feminine wiles and their assertive-aggressive sexuality, the third world woman challenging ethnicity and facing the problems of identity, mutual- understanding of men and women irrespective of the differences, their struggle for the achievement of their equality, dignity and freedom of choice, controlling their lives within and outside their homes etc. are found in Lahiri's fiction.

Lahiri's research "Like many English-language Indian women writers, her fiction is extraordinary. Like her male colleagues, she chooses various themes and emphasizes women. Lahiri recognizes women's obstacles. Time also matters because first- and second-generation female immigrants may have different gender difficulties. First-generation immigrants may have fantastic links and recollections of their native country than second-generation immigrants.

Conclusion:

Lahiri's feminine perspective captures clashing civilizations and their integration. Feminism in literature intrigues me. Western Feminism differs from African and Asian because of women's strength. Jhumpa Lahiri exemplifies transnational Feminism. Her female protagonists typically feel alone in unfamiliar countries or relationships. The Namesake has many of these quietly empowered and independent women. JhumpaLahiri's style is spontaneous and fluid, flowing effortlessly and wonderfully. Her female heroes struggle between adhering to their new Western lifestyles and their Bengali heritage. Her human depiction shows power. These tales show human complexity. The Lowland by Jhumpa Lahiri explores many female independence streams. This novel represents Feminism through Gauri's main character and her primary traits. Gauri has more sides than those. Lahiri" s literature illustrates the numerous identities of women, and her yearning for the Indian sensibility has the stamp of a wanderer searching for her lost home. Thus, Jhumpa Lahiri's short stories focus on the struggles of Indian women immigrants and American men. Lahiri's female heroes seek identity through empathy. Her work makes human quirks thought-provoking and soul-searching. Jhumpa Lahiri does not offer a solution. She has presented all women characters as they are in real life, but these characters teach the lesson of humility and equality and motivate readers to retain the good of the past in the face of life's challenges with a head held high. Her stories end on a positive note with the hope of a tomorrow. Thus, Lahiri's works show current women's feelings, feminist perspectives, and fully awakened feminine sensitivity. Lahiri is brave, candid, and realistic about love, sex, and man-woman interactions, unlike other women writers. She is a post-modern Indo-English writer. She talks about the oppression of women, alienation, class, and the human psyche as a form of identity. She agrees with both feminist and post-colonial readings.



References

1. ----- . *The Namesake*. New Delhi: Harper Collins India Pvt. Ltd., 2004
2. ----- . *Unaccustomed Earth*. New Delhi: Random House, 2008.
3. -----, Interview to Bookforum.com (November 2008)
4. ----- . *The Lowland*, Random House India, 2013
5. An Interview with JhumpaLahiri by ArunAguiar: <http://www.pifmagazine.com/SID/598>
6. Das, Sanjukta. "JhumpaLahiri and the Maladies of Interpretation". *Journal of the Department of English*(Calcutta University). XXIX. 1&2 (2001-2002):70-77.
7. Field, Robin E. "Writing the Second-generation: Negotiating Cultural Borderlands in Lahiri s *Interpreter of Maladies* and *TheNamesake*." *South Asian Review* XXV.2 (2004).165-188.
8. Gaur, Reshmi. "Nine Sketches Interpreting Human Maladies: An Assessment of JhumpaLahiri's*Master Storyteller*. Ed. SumanBala. New Delhi: Khosla Publishing House, 2002. 100-107.
9. Hannam, June. "Making History: Women's History, feminist History."
[http://www.history.ac.uk/making history/resources/articles/womens_history.html](http://www.history.ac.uk/making%20history/resources/articles/womens_history.html)
10. LahiriHimadri, "Family as Space in JhumpaLahiri"s Short Stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*", Ed. Nigamananda Das, 2012, Pencraft International, p.38-45
11. Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Interpreter of Maladies*. New Delhi: Harper Collins India Pvt. Ltd., 1999.
12. Manju Devi, "Portrayal of Woman in Diaspora: A Study of JhumpaLahiri" s Fiction"
AsianJournal of Multidisciplinary Studies ISSN: 2321-8819 (Online) 2348-7186 (Print) Impact Factor: 0.92 Volume 3, Issue 8, August 2015
13. Pandey, Upendrajee. "A Study of JhumpaLahiri s "The Treatment of BibiHaldar" in *New Lights on Indian Women Novelists in English*. Vol.1.ed. Amarnath Prasad. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2003. (212-215)
14. RoychoudhuryBuddhadeb, "The Metaphor of Pain: Reflections on *Interpreter of Maladies*", Ed. Nigamananda Das, 2012, Pencraft International, p.82-94
15. Vanita Reddy. "JhumpaLahiri's Feminist Cosmopolitics and the Transnational Beauty Assemblage" *Journal Article* Vol.11, No.2(2011), pp.29-59 Published by:Duke UniversityPressDOI:10.2979/meridians.11.2.29<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/meridians.11.2.29>Page Count: 31