

Interpreter of Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri: A Psychoanalytical Study

K.Vijayalaxmi
Lecturer in English,
SR & BGNR College, Khammam

Abstract:

It is unavoidable that Lahiri develop concerns and worry subjects such as the diaspora community's dilemma of immigration, marginalisation, identity crisis, internal and external conflict, ambiguity of 'home,' and other comparable predicaments in her creative production. It's worth noting that the above-mentioned issues are mostly psychological in origin. In her critically regarded writing, Jhumpa Lahiri has established a habit of inventing unusually empathetic people. Because of the emotional depth and intricacies of her characters, Lahiri is a great psychological writer. This author attributes her ability to portray the compassion in her fictional characters to her own experiences, notably her youth. Stories from Bengal, Boston, and Beyond is the subtitle of her first book *Interpreter of Maladies*, which is a compilation of nine short independent stories. It's worth noting that, like their creator, the majority of the characters are diaspora. Even more striking is the insight that each character struggles with inner alienation and conflict. Seven of the nine tales deal with the interaction between Indians and Americans, while the other two focus on Indian characters set against the background of traditional beliefs and superstitions.

Keywords: Immigration, Psychoanalysis, marginalization, identity and Cultural Crisis

Introduction:

To give you an idea of what she's writing about, the title of the book is a short story of hers. Such an interpretation adds a profoundly psychological dimension to the proposition that maladies may be understood. Throughout her career, Lahiri has always been a writer who expresses herself in a very intimate manner via her work. She states in an interview, "What drew me to my craft was the desire to force the two worlds I occupied to mingle on the page as I was not brave enough or mature enough to allow in life" (Lahiri. www.chipublib.org). Lahiri, who was born in London but raised in Rhode Island, has confessed that she has never felt like she belonged in any of her three home nations. Whether on purpose or not, she conveys these similar feelings via the characters she creates. Her tales often touch on the subject of Diaspora and the immigrant experience, and these subjects are of a psychological character.

"A Temporary Matter," a tale about a young Indian couple who are emotionally alienated in Boston, is the first piece in this exquisite anthology. Their marriage had begun to fall apart ever since Shukumar delivered a stillborn, who would normally be Shoba and Shukumar's first child. When Shukumar's miscarriage occurred, he was in Baltimore attending an academic conference. Shoba had persuaded him to go. Even though she doesn't hold him responsible for his absence, she has some ill will against him. Because of their steadfast reluctance to face the source of their grief, their marriage is failing rapidly. Shoba and Shukumar, a young couple, instead find excuses to ignore each other by focusing on their different careers "He had Shoba had become experts at avoiding each other in their three bedroom house, spending as much time on separate floors as possible" (IM 4). After a while, their relationship breaks down since they've been unable to express their emotions, which drives them to act as if they're strangers.

They weren't like this before. Now

had to struggle to say something that interested her, something that made her look up from her plate, or from her proofreading files. Eventually, he gave up trying to amuse her. He learned not to mind the silences (12).

When the colony's electricity goes out for an hour every evening for a few days, the pair opens up to one another. During these hours, they would sit around a candle-lit dinner table and confess their feelings to one other. "Something happened when the house was dark. They were able to talk to each other again" (19). This couple's problem of only being able to talk openly to one another in the dark has a lot to do with their acute nervousness. The rejection of traumatic events and the suppressing of powerful emotions, according to psychoanalysis, may lead to anxiety. A common theory holds that anxiety and other neurotic symptoms may be exacerbated by repression. "In Freud's theory, repression is the fundamental technique people use to allay anxiety caused by conflicts" (Morgan 588).

Shoba expresses her intention to leave their residence on the last night of the blackout and adds that she has already sought other housing. "He felt both relieved and horrified at the same time. For the previous four nights, she'd been attempting to convey this message to him. This was the climax of her strategy" (IM 21). By gently informing her that their stillborn baby was a boy, Shukumar wants to harm her in return rather than vent his feelings of rage and sadness. In her grief, he knew she took consolation in the mystery of their baby's sex. Shoba and Shukumar may be considered as tragic victims of worry and neurosis produced by the suppression of a terrible and extremely intimate memory that they may encounter in the actual world.

The accurate portrayal of Shoba and Shukumar in this novel is another remarkable and deeply psychological aspect. Shoba is the most confident and self-assured of the two. The

fact that she is a successful business lady while her husband is still in school reveals a lot about their relationship. Shukumar is acutely aware of his own insecurities in this regard. "Once these images of parenthood had troubled Shukumar, adding to his anxiety that he was still a student at thirty five" (3). When Shoba made the daring choice to leave her marriage and establish her own alternative living arrangement without consulting her husband, it showed her fiery, un-Indian independence. Shoba's self sustainability is mirrored in how "She keeps the bonuses from her job in a separate bank account in her name" (6). Shukumar, on the other hand, is a man kid. Endearingly helpless and equally impressed by his wife's trust, he is a heartwarming vulnerable character. "It astonished him, her capacity to think ahead" (6). His tentativeness in his own house around his own fiancée is hauntingly demonstrated in how "he feared that putting on a record in his own house might be rude" (5).

When attempting to figure out a person's personality features, psychoanalysis looks to the person's past experiences. The insecurities that Shukumar is experiencing may be attributed to this. The fact that Shukumar's father died young and that the narrative makes no mention of any other siblings suggests that he is an only child is significant. His insecurities may be related to the fact that he was raised without a father figure. Shoba disclosed to him how she checked his contact book when his mother phoned him on the phone during their nightly confessional talks. This shows his devotion to his mother. As a two-week acquaintance, she was already aware that a phone call from his mother would be a lengthy one (13). One of Shoba's other confessions involves a time when she lied to her mother's visit about working late and instead went out for drinks with a male coworker called Gillian. "He (Shukumar) imagined her complaining and Gillian sympathising about visits from in laws" (17). Two of the three admissions from Shoba concern another lady; Shukumar's mother.

This appears to be an interesting coincidence.

According to Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, marital partner choice, as well as marital relationships, are defined much before marriage was concluded. Relationship with marital partner is determined by relationships with parents and important persons in one's childhood (Markovic. www.facta.junis.ni.ac).

Shukumar's mother may be a target of a paternal preoccupation, which makes sense. It is probable that Shukumar's mother's extreme mothering harmed his self-confidence and hence, his marriage, according to the standard psychoanalytic theory.

"Sexy", is the only narrative in which the protagonist is not an Indian character, but rather a twenty-two-year old American named Miranda. As a first impression, "Sexy" seems like a tale about an extramarital affair from the point of view of the "other" lady. An Indian guy called Dev, who is married and has a young daughter, is Miranda's lover. The story's psychoanalytic elements are clearly evident on a closer examination. One of Miranda's coworkers, an indiscreet Indian, is always telling her about how her cousin's husband has abandoned her because he is in love with another woman. She's a young English girl, too. There are striking similarities between Miranda's own extramarital affair with Dev and this multiracial, adulterous romance between two individuals she doesn't know. Miranda first just listens to Laxmi out of politeness and refuses to reveal her involvement with Miranda. Her cousin's deceived wife's anguish makes Laxmi feel bad about the affair she had with her cousin. When her husband announced that he was divorcing her, she was to take their kid to live with her parents in California while she sought counselling. Laxmi then persuades her distraught cousin to make a pit stop in Boston while they're on their way back to Delhi. Miranda was asked to babysit Rohin at the last minute so that his mother and Laxmi

could spend some time together as a family.

It's Rohin's seventh year, and he's already pretty intelligent. He informs Miranda in a calm and collected manner that his father is having an affair and that his mother is distraught. It's fascinating to hear how they spend their time together. Neither Rohin nor Miranda act or treat each other as if they were children. For his memory, he wants her to depict things they did together in the flat. He informs her "Because we're never going to see each other ever again" (104). When Rohin begs Miranda to sketch him, she happily obliges. In a bizarre twist, Rohin learns that Miranda had bought some slinky underwear just for her boyfriend Dev, and hangs it in her wardrobe. Miranda is then asked to wear the lingerie by Rohin. Rohin's request for Miranda to put it on for him is much more intriguing than the fact that Miranda actually does so. Rohin, a seven-year-old boy, says "But my mother usually takes off her clothes in front of me" when she instructs him to wait outside while she undresses (106). "I'm not your mother," responds Miranda (106). It is quite personal to read about Miranda escorting him out of the room. "She scooped him up when he wouldn't stand when she picked him up. He was heavier than she expected, and he clung to her his legs wrapped firmly around her hips, his head resting against her chest" (106). Following her transformation, she requests that Rohin zip her up, and he simply exclaims, "You're sexy" (107). This statement brings back memories for Miranda of Dev calling her attractive in the past. If this little guy doesn't know what the term means, she asks him to explain it to her. "It implies loving someone you don't know," Rohin says (107). It's clear that the child has been listening in on adult conversations about his parents' recent marital woes.

Psychological in nature, the idea of a young kid instinctively identifying with his father is intriguing. His father's affair with an unnamed English lady is well-known to Rohin, as

he sees Miranda as an equivalence to the "sexy" woman, while he sees his own father in the other. When it comes to Miranda, she's an emotionally distraught and lonely young lady. Dev, her lover, feels he is being ignored by the presence of his wife, thus he seldom has time to spend with her. Adulteration of sexual interest in children crosses the line. When Rohin tells her that she is attractive, she bursts into tears after putting him to bed and is unable to stop crying. "However, Rohin remained fast asleep. She guessed that he was used to it now, to the sound of a woman crying" (109). Her relationship with Dev comes to an end soon after.

Conclusion

Lahiri has shown her mastery of both the book and the short story, respectively. The distinctive beautiful and succinct wording may be seen across both types of writing. It is quite evident that the majority of this expatriate's writing focuses on the complexity of the human psyche and how a person's state of mind influences the connections with other people. Although it is possible that Lahiri does not intend for her stories to have a moral when she is writing them, the empathy that she has for the main characters in her stories ultimately results in the author eliciting the most admirable quality of the human spirit: the compassion that is a gift from God and that is present in all of us.

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