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**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL PEREGRINATION OF THE IMMIGRANTS
IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *INTERPRETER OF MALADIES***

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Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri born in London, England is an American author known for her short stories, novels and essays in English. Like the other Indian writers, like V.S. Naipaul, Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Salman Rushdie, Lahiri has also distinguished herself in the sphere of Indian Diaspora. Sharing and experiencing the culture of India and other countries Lahiri provide a big scope to study the psychological and cultural influence on the lives of the immigrants. Of the nine short stories in Interpreter of Maladies six are set in Boston, and three in India – two in Calcutta are “A Real Durwan” and “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar” and the third one “Interpreter of Maladies” somewhere on the way to the Sun Temple, Konarak. These Stories are the predicaments and journey of immigrant lives, their displeasures, identity crisis, cultural dilemma, Crestfallenness, struggles and pain on the foreign soil. The native culture in them stands diluted and they are, to a great extent, colored in the host culture. But these diaspora aren't happy either. They suffer the maladies of the Americans in addition to the trauma of cultural clash.

Keywords: Culture, Diaspora, Dilemma, Identity, Immigrants, pain, Peregrination, Psyche

I Introduction

Interpreter of Maladies contains themes of conflict between self and society, relationships between couples, families and friends. Through these relationships Lahiri explores ideas of isolation, pain, displacement and identity both personal and cultural. It interprets the maladies of dislocated people with double consciousness, double identity, double vision and cultural clash and brings to light many of the issue with identity faced by the Diaspora community. The stories revolve around the difficulties of relationship, communication and a loss of identity for those in Diaspora. The characters struggle with the same feelings of exile. Whether the character is a homeless woman from India or an Indian male student in the United States, all the characters displays the effects of displacement in a diaspora. Lahiri's works are enriched with sensitive dilemmas in life. Characters in her books experience the cultural as well as the generation gaps. The stories have autobiographical bearing also as Jhumpa Lahiri born in India but brought up in a foreign land. Jhumpa Lahiri says in an interview in *India Today*, “America is home to me but I feel I am an outsider too” (73). She therefore comments on the effects of western colonialism on Indians and Indian Diaspora. One of the themes Lahiri deals in most prolifically is the search for identity, as defined by the self, by others, by location and by circumstance. In Lahiri's stories, everything including gender, homeland, geography, occupation, and role within the community can act in determining and qualifying identity. Lahiri brings up interesting questions as to what can and cannot act as agents in the determination of identity, and many of her characters struggle against or conform to outside influences that have effects on self-definition and outside definition.

II An Analysis of Jhumpa Lahiri's Stories

The most pathetic figure in the whole collection is Mrs. Sen who is unable to shake off the past and still carries on the Bengali household routine in an American apartment. Through Mrs. Sen Lahiri has tried to give a touching and honest commentary on the inability of the women of Indian diaspora to adapt to the new life. When Mrs. Sen, an Indian woman, relocates with her husband to a coastal, Eastern American city, she has sort of crisis of identity.

“She flung open the drawers of the bureau and the doors of the closet, filled with saris of every imaginable texture and shade, brocaded with gold and silver threads. Some were transparent, tissue thin, others as thick as drapes, with tassels knotted along the edges. In the closet, they were on