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## 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, pain of displacement of the First Generation immigrants. It is my endeavor 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 the future researchers who will be interested to write about female diaspora, feminism and neo feminism. It will also be helpful for the scholars who are undergoing their research on First and Second generation immigrants.*



**KEY WORDS:** *Diasporic, Feministic, Immigrants, Jhumpa, Lahiri.*

### INTRODUCTION

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.

In the past the work of Indian women writers has always been undervalued because of some patriarchal assumptions. Indian societies gave priorities to the worth of male experiences. In those days women used to write about woman's perception and experiences in the enclosed domestic arena. On the other hand, male authors used to deal with heavy themes. Thus it was assumed that, their work would get more priority and acceptance in society, during the eighteenth century, these factors led towards the decline of Indian women writing. In 19<sup>th</sup> century more and more women actively participated in the feminist activities and over the years the world of feminist ideologies began to influence the English literature of India.

### FEMINISTIC APPROACH

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 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 like a potent medicine. Yet they are interesting and often make humorous studies.

The protagonist Mrs. Das in short story "interpreter of maladies" is always in 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 comes to stay with her daughter (Ruma) in the suburbs of Seattle. In the earlier years, Ruma was not closer to her father, he lives as one of her family members and insists her daughter to employ herself. He doesn't want his daughter to get secluded in the four walls of home. Reciprocally Ruma neglects the post card that she finds in the luggage of her father. The post card was sent from a woman, whom her father met in a trip. The story clearly shows no gender boundaries and the freedom of living of 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 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 heart 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 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 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 behavior 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 in 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.

### CONCLUSION

Most of the stories of Jhumpa Lahiri create an ambience for motherhood, womanhood and feminism displaying the glimpses of gender discrimination, gender inequality, patriarchal dominance, sacrifice, possessiveness, tolerance, social and psychological pressure of the women immigrants. She has portrayed the world of initial rejection, dejection, familial bonds, domesticity and whatnot. Her female protagonists have adapted themselves to the new world in a slow and painful way. In the recent century women's writing is considered as a powerful medium of modernist feminist statement. The last two decades have witnessed a feminist writing of Indian English literature. We see Jhumpa Lahiri bursting out in her full bloom spreading her own individual fragrance. She is recognised for her originality, versatility and indigenous flavor of her soil that she brings into her work. She does spice up her work by adding different flavours.

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