

Revisiting Home in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*: Diaspora Criticism

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines the concept of home in Jhumpa Lahiri's selected short stories in Interpreter of Maladies. Interpreter of Maladies indicates interpreting of emotional pain and affliction. Each story interprets the character's sufferings and struggles. Lahiri mostly narrates the story of Indian immigrants set in the United States and England. This collection encompasses nine stories out of which three are opted: "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine", "Mrs. Sen", and "The Third and Last Continent". These stories are set in the United States or England where all the migrant characters deal with homesickness and therefore a desire to return back to where they belong. Moreover, the characters are navigating between inherited traditions and baffling and alienating new world; they suffer a loss of homeland and the anguish of return.

Key Words: alienation, belonging, diaspora, home, homesickness

1. INTRODUCTION

It seems that Lahiri's major short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, deals with the concept of home, homelessness, and homesickness. This stems from Lahiri's biographical diasporic experience of homelessness. Though Lahiri has lived all her life as an English and American citizen, she has always felt attached to India and thought of it as the true home. In fact, Lahiri feels the strong bond and ties to her parent's homeland while she can fit in England and United States as well. Moreover, Lahiri's connection to her parent's homeland makes her grow with a sense of homelessness which in Bahbah's term is called "uncanny", or "un-homely". The uncanny, Bhabha suggests, is also the unhomely (1998, 144).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The common issue discussed by diaspora critics is diasporic social formations by new identities that oscillate between homeland and the hostland. The major concern of diaspora subjects is the concept of home and belonging. Safran as a diaspora critic, in his major essay, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" defines six characteristics for diaspora subjects. According to Safran, the term diaspora is a proper term for expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities tout court. In his major work, Safran cites Walker Connor's definition of diaspora as "that segment of a people living outside the homeland" and adds that these members share following characteristics:

...they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'center' to two or more 'peripheral', or foreign, regions...they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland... they believe that they... cannot be fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it... they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would return when conditions are appropriate...they believe that they should be