



Summer semester - 2022

Final Assessment

BA English

Course Code: ENG 205

Course Name: Survey of South - Asian  
Literature

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## Ans to the Q no 1

### About Author:

Jhumpa Lahiri, byname of Nilanjana Sudeshna Lahiri, American novelist and short-story writer whose works illuminate the immigrant experience, in particular that of East Indians.

Lahiri was born to Bengali parents from Calcutta, her father a university librarian and her mother a schoolteacher, who moved to London and then to the United States, settling in South Kingstown, Rhode Island, when she was young. Her parents nevertheless remained committed to their East Indian culture and determined to rear their children with experience of and pride in their cultural heritage. Lahiri was encouraged by her grade-school teachers to retain her family nickname, Jhumpa, at school. Although she wrote prolifically during her pre college school years, she did not embrace a writer's life until after she graduated (1989) with a B.A. in English Literature from Barnard College and obtained three master's degrees (in English, creative writing, and comparative literature and arts) and a doctorate (in Renaissance studies) from Boston University in the 1990s. While in graduate school and shortly thereafter, Lahiri published a number of short stories in such magazines as The New Yorker, Harvard Review, and Story Quarterly. She collected some of those stories in her debut collection, Interpreter of Maladies (1999). The nine stories, some set in Calcutta and others on the U.S. East Coast, examine such subjects as the practice of arranged marriage, alienation, dislocation, and loss of culture and provide insight into the experiences of Indian immigrants as well as the lives of Calcuttans.

# Human Relationship in Jhumpa Lahiri's Short Stories:

Jhumpa Lahiri's collection of nine short stories can be seen as a Short Story Cycle. These stories depict the lives of mainly Bengali Indian immigrants and their struggle to cope in an alien world. Every culture shines through the prism of its share of stories or narratives

as it highlights the present situation of western social life which “has almost become sex-centered, in which genuine love and friendship have been largely usurped by sex.” Lahiri gives a superb turn to the story, when she links again the life of Laxmi's cousin with Miranda. Rohin, the precious nephew of Laxmi, is offered to be looked after by Miranda. It is here that Miranda gets the reality of things to gape at her. Rohin asks Miranda puts on a silky cocktail dress, which she has brought keeping Dev in her mind. Rohin's remark on Miranda after wearing the dress “You're Sexy”, made Miranda shocked – “her heart skipped a beat.” For this word meant something special to her, she could very well remember Dev – “She remembered the day in the Mapparium, standing across the bridge from Dev,” standing on a transport bridge thirty feet apart, Dev whispered – “she watched his lips forming the words; at the same time she heard these clearly that she felt them under her skin, under her winter coat, so near and full of warmth that she felt herself go hot.” Dev said – “You're Sexy.” Coming out of her precious memories, Miranda questioned Rohin – “Tell me something,” “what does it mean?”. “That word. Sexy. What does it mean?”. After much of a struggle not to reveal the secret of the word, Rohin declares – “It means loving someone you don't know,” These words of Rohin reached deep into the heart of Miranda “Miranda felt Rohin's words under her skin, the same way she'd felt Dev's.” But these words made her 'numb'. For she could now remind herself of Madhuri Dixit's photo, whom Dev's wife resembled, which 'was beautiful'. Rohin's further declaration – “That's what my father did... He sat next to someone he didn't know, someone sexy, and now he loves her instead of my mother,” makes Miranda have her final close of reality, which bites her deep within. Moreover she encounters sentimental shock, by the realization of the fact that the word ‘Sexy’ was marginalized to her physical form only “The iterated articulation of the word “Sexy” confirms the reduced identity of the woman: she is just a body to be viewed and to be used.” Futility of affair strikes her notion, for she now realizes “Love does not mean to be sexy. It rather means being in each other's thoughts.” This gets confirmed further in the story, when Dev could not stand her test to remember, what she

thought must have been said with all of heart into it - Miranda "Do you remember what you said?, Dev", "Let's go back to your place", Miranda, decides to shed off this meaningless attire, which is not equally reciprocated, for even her supposed immediate emotional fulfillment had gone for a myth and nothing more. Lahiri's portrayal of Miranda and Dev's relationship, is identifiable with many more in process. In reality, she has reached to the core of the issue, being a true interpreter. Similar to the above discussed story is a creation by Jhumpa Lahiri, which is the title story of her collection 'Interpreter of Maladies'. Here Lahiri has tried to evaluate the man-woman relationship and its worthlessness in absence of affections and commitment, through the eyes of an interpreter viz. Mr. Kapasi, a tourist guide. It holds similar angle as does the above discussed story, introducing a third person who has his own vision and set of rules to understand the relationship. In the case of this story, it extends to evaluate and participate in such a relationship. Mr. and Mrs. Das is introduced as a migrant couple, who are now back home along with their kids, on a tour visit to the city of Puri. Mr. Kapasi is taken up by them as their tour guide. There is an important strange sort of intimacy, between Mr. Kapasi's and Mrs. Das' matrimonial lives. The author is seen to utilize this factor to elucidate the shades of the life which Mrs. Das is living and her relationship with Mr. Das. Mr. Kapasi's part-time job as an interpreter at the doctor's clinic - "I have another job during the week ... I am not a doctor. I work with one. As an interpreter," is taken up as a specialized tool by Lahiri to draw out the complexities of life which seem so simple and relaxed under the veil of pretense. The nearness and the very uncommon type of association between Mrs. Das and Mr. Kapasi is also helpful to bring out a color from the many ranges of man-woman relations. The first instance is most striking to observe "... It flattered Mr. Kapasi that Mrs. Das was so intrigued by his job. Unlike his wife, she had reminded him of its intellectual challenges." Lahiri has worked up nicely with the situation, she has carefully chosen out the weakest point of Mr. Kapasi viz. his part-time profession as an interpreter. Incidentally, it is the thing which separates Mr. & Mrs. Kapasi with a gap. While working upon Mrs. Das's side, she had made her utter the word "romantic" regarding the profession of Mr. Kapasi, which made him think - "She has also used the word 'romantic'. She did not behave in a romantic way towards her husband, and yet she had used the word to describe him. He wondered if Mr. and Mrs. Das were a bad match, just as he and his wife were." Thus the two characters are isolated from the rest of the people in the traveling group, making them at first to share an intellectual intimacy, preparing a ground for some further action. Also it is important to observe here that Mr. Kapasi has begun with his evaluation of things about Mr. and Mrs. Das "Perhaps they, too, had little in common apart from three children and a decade of their lives. The signs he recognised from his own marriage were there the flickering, the indifference, the protracted silences." Hence, Mr. Kapasi is not only expressing the relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Das at an unsatisfactory level of performance, but side by side, he admits his own relationship to be facing the

same helm of affairs. It is worth considering here the time that they have been together is no less, it is fair enough to owe a commitment and credibility for each other, especially when both the pairs were legally married and had kids. Thus in a man-woman relationship “Living together is not sufficient, the feeling of togetherness is as necessary.” While developing a new approach to the situation, Lahiri does not forget to bank upon the very basic theme of extramarital wishes. Mr. Kapasi is seen to interest himself with the idea of capturing the attention of Mrs. Das, as could not be gathered up by her husband and children – ‘her sudden interest in him, an interest she did not express in neither her husband nor her children were mildly intoxicating. When Mr. Kapasi thought once again about how she had said 'romantic', the feeling of intoxication grew.” All this is further enhanced by Mr. Kapasi's interest creeping to the body of Mrs. Das “From time to time he glanced through the mirror at Mrs. Das. In addition to glancing at her face he glanced at the strawberry between her breasts, and the golden brown hollow in her throat.” On reaching the Konark Sun Temple also Mr. Kapasi is seen to compare and admire Mrs. Das to his wife “He had never admired the backs of his wife's legs the way he now admired those of Mrs. Das, walking as if for his benefit alone,” and “... so much so that he had an overwhelming urge to wrap his arms around her, to freeze with her ...”

The story takes a U-turn, when Mrs. Das discloses to Mr. Kapasi, that Bobby is not Mr. Das' son – “He's not his. I beg your pardon?. Raj's. He's not Raj's Son.” Her casual attitude towards such a serious affair of things is reflected in disclosure of fact to Mr. Kapasi “The lady takes her adulterous relationship with another man so lightly that she casually reveals this fact for the first time to a stranger like Mr. Kapasi in a far-off land.” Mr. Kapasi could feel a trickle under his skin, as if he couldn't believe of what was said by Mrs. Das to him. His quizzed appearance could easily be gathered up by Mrs. Das “Are you surprised?”. The level of intimacy which was seen being developed between the two of them is now utilized to bring out the fact about Bobby and also to show how rapidly things can change in real life. Lahiri makes the story more real to life when we find Mrs. Das narrating the whole life story of hers with her husband to Mr. Kapasi. At the end of it when Mr. Kapasi raised a question “I beg your pardon, Mrs. Das, but why have you told me this information?”. Mrs. Das replied – “for God's sake, stop calling me Mrs. Das. I'm twenty eight. You probably have children of my age.” This comes out as a real shock to Kapasi, who has till now thought of this lady as the object of friendship or even to the extent of some more intimate relation. Her disclosure made him fall on back foot “It disturbed Mr. Kapasi to learn that she thought of him as a parent. The feeling he had towards her, that had made him check his reflection in the rear view mirror as they drove, evaporated a little.”

The clash of identification of relation between the man-woman is delineated superbly by Lahiri. While Mr. Kapasi looked at Mrs. Das as a woman in comparison to his wife, Mrs. Das had entirely different notion for him, comparing herself with the children of Mr. Kapasi. This episode is representation of some unnamed and unexplained intimacies between two people which might have entirely different perspectives for the two of them, to be into the relationship. For Mr. Kapasi intimacy to Mrs. Das was seeking what he could never have his wife, but always desired for. While for Mrs. Das, it was seeking something, which she could have only from an elderly person, like her parents. It was her pain which she wished to share with Mr. Kapasi as a child does to his parents. For Mr. Kapasi possessed expertise to interpret the pain of people "I told you because of your talents." She was in pain for eight years "Don't you see?. For eight years I haven't been able to express this to anybody, not to friends, certainly not to Raj. He doesn't even suspect it." Her questioning Mr. Kapasi in a demanding tone – " I would never have told you otherwise. Don't you realize what it means for me to tell you?". Is an expression of her earlier notion of taking Mr. Kapasi to be equivalent to her parents. Thus her demand for soothing is the same as a child does to his parents. Mr. Kapasi's reaction was normal, concerned, but accurate, for the interpreter was seen at the best of his job, asking Mrs. Das – "Is it really pain you feel, Mrs. Das, or is it guilt?". As an interpreter Mr. Kapasi's role has been perfect for "In answering the woman, the perplexed interpreter substitutes the full responsibility of the diagnostic for the uncommitting neutrality of the translator." The use of the word guilt pronounces the gravity of the mistake on oriental front, which was hardly visible in the word pain. Moreover, the betrayal of a wife is convicted by the use of the word guilt. The interpreter has done justice to his job, for maybe not in detail, but he has been able to strike right at the heart of the matter.

### **“A Temporary Matter” And Human Relationship:-**

“A Temporary Matter” shows the cold and harsh realities of humanity. Shukumar and his wife Shoba commit to spend their life together and find them unable to even utter a word with each other. Yet it seems to be a common sort of marital strife. The story reflects the alienation and loneliness that the emigrants face in a foreign land. The marriage bond which is still considered sacrosanct in India is slithering down under the pressure of new needs under a different background. A Temporary Matter is a delineation of marital alienation between Shoba and Shukumar. The story focuses upon the man-woman relationship in the context of bond of marriage, prime issue being the barrenness which has crept into the lives of the husband and wife.

“A Temporary Matter” is a story about grief and the secrets people keep from one another. Husband and wife Shukumar and Shoba are suffering from the loss of their child six months earlier. They avoid each other and their friends, Shoba filling her time with work and Shukumar finishing his dissertation. The power outages allow for intimacy between the couple not achieved since the death of their son. The base of family is communication. Here the sorrow of the lost child causes a communication breakdown in the relationship of Shukumar and Shoba. This silence between them eventually destroys them because, in their grief, Shukumar and Shoba grow to become different people. Since they no longer share experiences, the couple grows apart. Their final secrets are painful ones – Shoba intends to move out and Shukumar violates the wishes of his wife by revealing the gender of the child. Secrecy eventually leads to broken trust. As a matter of fact, in married life one has to know what to share and what not to. One must care for the partner’s feelings and emotions. Faith is one of those foundational principles of human life, which enables a person to live peacefully. Without faith, one cannot attain happiness even though he may have succeeded materialistically. In the absence of faith, man’s life would be dull and depressive. Faith is the basis of happiness. Faith is also the basis of love towards one’s family members, religion, culture, nation and humanity. Happiness does not lie in any outside object or substance; it is an attribute of a living faith. Faith has the power to make any object lovable and a source of joy. For example, we experience joy by looking at the photographs of our beloved ones residing far away. The story offers a broad and inclusive picture of human emotions. Several characters- Shukumar, Shoba, friends, the darkness and others- help us to understand not only the suffering, but the affliction that stands as the great enigma of this human life. It describes people and their lives, their problems, emotions, sentiments, actions, human affairs, day to day activities, family problems, their struggles, relations with inner and outer world.

There is no water of understanding and love between them to support the productivity of the soil of their relationship. This barrenness/stiffness is coincident with the "dead son", born to Shoba and Shukumar. The matrimonial love which prospered between the two is now lost. They are so close and yet so far. Power cuts enable the two to come close to each other. Candle lit dinner and the intimacy invented through sharing of incidents work as a gap filling solution for them. The careful preparations made by Shukumar for the dinner and the proposal set up by Shoba to say something are clear indications of the hope which is deep rooted in the two. Shoba’s offer of playing a game of revealing secrets in darkness shows a kind of the strong undercurrent of subconscious desire for

love. Sharing of things which have been secret till now, retained by the two to themselves, even when their relationship was flourishing, is also an utmost effort by the husband and wife to launch an all out effort to fill up any fissure which might hamper their marital status. Moreover by coming out with their innermost secrets, both are expressing an outward show of reconciliation in the hope of actual remedy. Lahiri has built up the study of husband –wife relations with remarkable deftness. She has, unlike other authors, relied upon even the small details which enhance to cramp the gyre of comfort which a relationship encompasses. Lahiri has earlier in the story narrated about how the two had started to avoid/neglect each other, now after the power cut sessions, the scenario has changed a lot. There is also a confirmation of their coming to terms with each other.

Healing process attains all the wings towards the end of the story. On the third and fourth night after supper Shoba and Shukumar are found sharing back the intimacies of the matrimonial alliance. But we are surprised when Shoba announces her departure with the weight of seriousness. The last scene explains the real truth between Shoba and Shukumar. Shoba's daring disclosure is made with sincerity but with unwillingness. For the last four days, Shoba has been trying to tell him the same truth, but she could not hold up now. This is followed by Shukumar's disclosure of another difficult fact, which he has also held up till now from Shoba. It was pertaining to their dead child and the sex of the child. All the talks ultimately come back to the cause of barrenness in their relationship - their dead born child. It was the pain which the couple was unable to relate with each other, due to the pressures of the modern day requirements and the ensuing lack of time, for once the two got to the root. The elements introduced here like the warm evening, Bradfords walking arm in arm, again denoting closeness and warmth are clue to the possibility and will to imbibe the same in their personal relations.

Through this story Lahiri has been able to depict the maladies of a modern day immigrant couple, crushed under the pressure of a tragedy and mounting crunch of time. The fissures of alienation and separation are carefully examined, lending the appropriate fill ups. The twist and human touch induced in the story adds the real life color to it. In a nutshell, Lahiri has very well constructed the matrimonial world of Shoba and Shukumar, providing details of the human life and of husband – wife relationship and how children- dead or alive affect couple's life.