

**Jhumpa Lahiri Emphasizes on Communication Within Relationships in  
“Interpreter of Maladies”**

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JhumpaLahiri was born in London, England in 1967. She is the daughter of parents who emigrated from India . She was then raised in Rhode Island where her father worked as a librarian and her mother as a teacher. Lahiri received a B.A in English Literature at Barnard College , and later received her M.A in English, Creative writing, and Comparative Studies in Literature and the Arts, as well as a Ph.D in Renaissance Studies from Boston University. Her debut work, *Interpreter of Maladies*, won several awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2000. Her second publication, *The Namesake* , was her first novel and spent several weeks on the New York Times bestseller list. In addition to receiving the 2000 Pulitzer Prize, she has also received a PEN/Hemingway Award, an O. Henry Award, The New Yorker's best debut of the year award, and an Addison Metcalf award from the American academy of arts and letters. Her books have also been recognized as the New York Times Notable Book, Publishers Weekly Best Books of the Year, a New England book show selection, Los Angeles Times best book, and Los Angeles Times book prize Finalist.

JhumpaLahiri, like many Americans and Australians, is a second-generationimmigrant who feels just as much at home in her parents' homeland as shedoes in her own - yet she felt she belonged nowhere when she was young.The psychological dislocation that immigrants often suffer can cause theirchildren to feel a similar sense of alienation. Although Lahiri's parentsultimately adjusted to living in America, they must have frequently longed fortheir mother country, giving Lahiri the opportunity to observe, at first hand, the often painful adjustment of immigrants to life in an adopted country. Hernarratives weave together not only the stories of immigrants, but also those oftheir children, who feel that they belong neither in one place nor another. Being an immigrant herself Lahiri deeply felt the importance of family bonds which tie people to their homelands. She has undergone the trauma of failing to find her identity in a world where she could

never have a sense of belongingness and so tries to fall back upon the treasured memories of homeland.

Lahiri uses her acute powers of observation, together with her personal experiences, to create stories that transport readers to an imaginary landscape, exploring and exposing the frailties common to all of humanity.

As the short story genre uses a wide variety of plot types, several strategies must be employed to gain an overall picture of how different stories are connected. Although each of Lahiri's stories has its own self-contained plot and characters, they are linked in ways that bind the collection together as a company entity. Lahiri's stories revolve around people who are either Indian in India, Indian in the United States or Americans of Indian decent. Further, the stories can be separated into distinct groupings and associations, based on their relation to Indian culture. Lahiri is profusely praised for her nine well-knit stories in which she portrays the characters drawn from all over the world.

Jhumpa Lahiri's "Interpreter of Maladies" focuses on communication as one of the universal themes throughout the book. The stories demonstrate how communication is the key to the success or failure of relationships. While there are instances when communication is effectively employed and therefore enabled the characters to build strong and intimate connections, there are examples of where communication was superficial or ineffectual, leading to unstable, limited relationships. Jhumpa Lahiri illustrates the importance of communication within relationships by allowing readers to experience the consequences and advantages that have developed as a result throughout the short stories. We recognise the necessity to communicate with our loved ones vicariously through the lives of several of the characters. Lahiri threads the need to talk to and to connect with people into her story by showing that no matter where people are from they need that human contact. Humanity needs to communicate its messages in order to feel whole.

Lahiri builds her characters around the immigrant experience and the cultural divide between America and India. At the same time she paints, with sympathy and understanding, indelible characters who experience the pain and suffering of ordinary people.

JhumpaLahiri possesses an aptitude for communicating the failures and achievements of humanity; more specifically, she writes about the daily, omnipresent adversity that exemplifies human life. Lahiri's choice in type of narration, her constant reminders of commonality within the human race, and her subtle symbolism all intertwine to form a theme about the general hardships and misinterpretations that people face in connecting to one another.

The story "A Temporary Matter", the first in the collection entitled *Interpreter of Maladies*, revolves around the veritable worlds of the two protagonists Shoba and Shukumar. Although they have been living as a married couple for three years, they seem to be ripped apart like islands drifting in a stream under the influence of complex psychological forces rife in them. Through her consummate artistry of portrayal, JhumpaLahiri has juxtaposed situations that conjure to the intelligent reader how the characters are involved in a pitted internal strife to confront their fast changing worlds. All these battles in various aspects are skilfully threaded together with the lace like delicacy of an heirloom until they snowball into a cascading force that affects the lives of the characters and ushers in the denouement in the story. Thus the bigger world of conjugal relationship is constantly acted upon by a world of small incidents that involve both partners acting with the knowledge of their relationship falling apart. This interaction ultimately builds up the climax in the story where Shoba speaks out her decision to separate from Shukumar.

In "When Mr.Pirzada Came to Dine", she explores the theme of being a stranger in a foreign land, even showing that those who call a land home can feel disconnected at times as well. The first-person speaker of "When Mr Pirzada Came to Dine" is a ten-year-old girl, Lilia, who finally comes to understand the pain caused by separation from one's family. Her parents feel lonely in America, they often look through a university directory, call people with Indian names, and invite them to their home. Mr Pirzada is a Muslim Bangladeshi who is studying botany in the United States He became a regular dinner guest at Lilia's house after her parents invited him over the phone having been fed up with the monotonous American style of living. Lilia learns that Mr.Pirzada has seven daughters and a big house back in Dacca, East Pakistan, in the midst of a civil war. She is also very keenly aware of the fact that Mr.Pirzada missed his children and home. Soon he becomes a close friend of the family despite the fact that he is a Muslim. Lilia was

aware of the history of Partition when Hindus and Muslims set fire to each other houses. Lilia's parents entertain Mr.Pirzada almost every night, sharing dinner and news of what is happening on the subcontinent, so that he temporarily becomes part of their family.

'Your guest is your God' is reinforced in 'When Mr Pirzada came to Dine'. Even though Lilia is at a young age, her father tells her to take Mr Pirzada's coat from him every night and she also aids her mother in serving them food. All this promotes Indian values and traditions, signifying that parents pass the same values they grew up with to their own children, irrespective of their country of residence. Communication breaks down repeatedly in "Interpreter of Maladies," often with hurtful consequences. An Indian tourist guide, Mr.Kapasi begins to see himself differently when a female passenger, after hearing of his other job at a doctor's office, describes him as an "Interpreter of Maladies." Mr.Kapasi, who is the interpreter of maladies, as Mrs. Das names him, has lost his ability to communicate with his wife, forcing him to drink his tea in silence at night and leading to a loveless marriage. He has also lost his ability to communicate in some of the languages he learned as a younger man, leaving him with only English, which he fears he does not speak as well as his children. Mr. and Mrs. Das do not communicate, not because of a language barrier but because Mrs. Das hides behind her sunglasses most of the time and Mr. Das has his nose buried in a guidebook. The children do not listen to their parents, nor do they listen to Mr.Kapasi about the monkeys. All these frustrated attempts at communicating with one another lead to hurt feelings. The Kapasis are trapped in a failing marriage. The Dases are openly hostile to each other. Her characters diverge greatly from similar cultural backgrounds (both the guide and the tourists are Bengali); however, both groups have identical difficulties in their lives: loveless marriages.

Jhumpa turns to social malady- the selfishness, meanness and callousness of the people in general. The eternal disparity existing between the haves and the have-nots is sharply emphasized "Real Durwan". Though the story focuses on the plight of an old woman Boori Ma, a refugee from East Bengal, who worked as an unauthorized gatekeeper of a flat building at hours of need, and was mercilessly driven out when the raised social status of the residents required a "real durwan", it is the callousness of the people in general that comes in the forefront. Although she is welcome at first, the kindness of the apartment dwellers in her building

evaporates when their new sink is stolen, and they blame her for not being “a real durwan,” even though she has suffered a theft of her own far more disastrous, considering her poverty.

JhumpaLahiri’s fifth story “**Sexy**” dabs into the lives and culture of Bengali people and their journey to America. Lahiri portrays that four locations in two hemispheres, an ocean and a continent apart, indicate the world that people with family backgrounds in India share when they become Americans. These people, like millions of other immigrants, feel an immediate disconnection from their old lives and cultures. This story revolves around the modern Boston society, where the influence of a foreign culture and the disintegration of a family, is a common feature. The protagonist Miranda consistently creates comparisons between herself and people of the Indian culture who she meets and builds relationships with while living in Boston. Many grown-up immigrants encounter the alienation from their close family and friends and automatically become an outsider to the people around them. Lahiri has contrasted the real life with the world of fantasy; While Americans are considered to be less family oriented in comparison to Indians, Dev proves this to be wrong when he allows himself to have an affair with Miranda, an American girl. And ultimately, Miranda’s interaction with Rohin, a seven years old boy is a connection that brings her back to reality. Love does not mean to be sexy; it rather means being in each other’s thought that is why at last Miranda came to realize that despite of her beauty and smartness she is not the one for Dev.

Lahiri’s “**Mrs.Sen**” presents a heart-tugging story of an immigrant who works like a babysitter. Mrs.Sen is an Indian but Lahiri describes her American position, facing a lot of problems in adjustment. Mrs.Sen is the wife of Mr.Sen who teaches Mathematics at an American university. Mrs.Sen, who is never named, is a helpless, obedient, Bengali wife brought to America by her husband. Being isolated from her family and friends and displaced from her home. She finds the North American life harassing and hostile .

JhumpaLahiri has shown the desolation in the hearts of those who are in Boston and miss their home--India. Mrs.Sen represents the life of all those Indians who feel nostalgic by thinking of their motherland. Mrs.Sen misses the feeling of empathy which she experienced in her childhood in India, and recollects the occasions when women used to gossip and work together sharing their joys and sorrows.

“**This Blessed House**” by JhumpaLahiri is a short story that follows a small period of time in the two characters’ lives. The couple had met ‘only four months before’ (142), and were brought together by the wishes of their parents. This is the situation at the heart of their story, for their obvious differences soon become apparent: Sanjeev is the son of parents who live in Calcutta, while Twinkle is a second-generation American. This basic cultural difference is a further obstacle to their establishment of a successful relationship. Having known one another for only four months, newlyweds Sanjeev and Tanima, called Twinkle, are finding it difficult to adjust to married life. Both have very different personalities, a theme that Lahiri continuously points to throughout the story. Their conflict comes to a head when Twinkle begins finding Christian relics all over the house. Sanjeev wants to throw the relics away, but Twinkle collects them on the mantle and shows them off at every opportunity.

Lahiri sees tolerance as essential both to cultural harmony and within relationships. Through ‘This Blessed House’, she explores both the complications of an arranged marriage and the adjustments that must be made to accommodate a couple’s disparate personalities within any relationship.

JhumpaLahiri’s next story, “**The Treatment of BibiHaldar**”, deals with the theme of exile and alienation in native milieu. It shows how BibiHaldar like Boori Ma has become a victim of alienation in her own home and society. This pathetic story sets in Calcutta. It also shows clash between simplicity and craftiness. BibiHaldar was an orphan since childhood and suffered from a hysterical disease of epilepsy. She was staying with her relative in Calcutta.

Her only obsession in life was to get married. Every day she expected a man to come and offer his hand to her. She loved to hear from the other women the details of their marriage. Many times she was frustrated about the unfulfillment of her desire.

The pathetic story touches the hearts of readers as it is full of pathos. It shows emotional exile of simple and naive woman who becomes an immigrant in her own house. While dealing with immigrant experiences, Lahiri has convincingly shown that a person can become ‘Immigrant’ in his or her own home and society by facing alienation and victimization inflicted by his or her own people. JhumpaLahiri in this story highlights the disease—loneliness in modern society, for which marriage is the only cure.

“The Third and Final Continent”, is the final story in JhumpaLahiri’s collection of stories-*Interpreter of Maladies*. JhumpaLahiri’s “The Third and Final Continent,” is a touching story of an immigrant of an Indian immigrant who lived in west Bengal in India, and who later went to London without any money and then later managed to find a job in America. The only thing that led this man this far was his determined attitude towards travelling abroad. It was purely his hard work and dedication that led him to Boston, this is where he finds a cheap hotel, and soon finds a house where an old woman lives, both the narrator and the old woman by the name of Mrs. Croft find it difficult to adapt in the modern society of America. The characters in this story do not know each other, however they do share a relationship that has no name, and they are all going through the same phase of evolving from an old life that was completely different to a new life that is difficult to adapt.

Lahiri explores the idea that identity, especially for immigrants, is something that must be sought. We gain a sense of identity through family, society and culture. For the culturally displaced, this is a difficult endeavour. The narrator in ‘The Third and Final Continent’ searches for his identity across continents. He is born in Asia, travels to Europe to study, and finally immigrates to North America. The speaker’s ability to adjust is Lahiri points out, a human adaptation. He has discovered that the ability to feel at home no matter what country he lives in comes only from having a strong sense of self.

The stories in JhumpaLahiri’s collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, differ in approach and perspective while remaining tied to the same themes and ideas. Each of the stories involves people of Indian descent, albeit in a variety of roles and circumstances. Some of the characters are living in India and some are Indian immigrants living in the United States. Most, however, are, like Lahiri herself, foreign-born children of Indian immigrants, torn between being Indian and being American, and it is this conflict which shapes most of the stories. Throughout the tales in *Interpreter of Maladies*, Lahiri shows us characters that are in conflict, with themselves and with each other.

Lahiri is also able to draw her readers into the story not only through her detail but also by making them feel the emotional, physical, and mental needs of the characters. All nine of the stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* focus on the characters’ inability to communicate with people who are important in their lives.

She continues her story by plotting her motif of exclusion, loneliness, and search for fulfilment as the central issue. Another impressive aspect of Lahiri's writing is her ability to write in the voices of both genders. The stories all draw upon different aspects of Lahiri's Indian background. Each of the stories is affected in some way or another by India. Some of the stories take place in India ; others involve the lives of Indian immigrants in the United States . The bulk of the stories, though, are about second generation Indian-Americans, like Lahiri herself.