CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
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1.1. GENERAL

Caesar dead was more powerful than Caesar alive. The same is applicable to the English language in India today, since it has spread its tentacles to all areas encompassing literature, science, technology, diplomacy and management. Indian writing in English has carved a niche for itself in world literature. We have moved from English literature to Literature in English.

During the past few decades Indian literature in English has made such vast strides that it has attracted the attention of readers and critics all over India as well as abroad. It has been called "a Janus faced literature", born of "a cross fertilization of two faithful cultures", Indian and European (K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, 1959, 35). The British colonization coupled with the imparting of English education has transformed the variegated Indian socio-cultural matrix. Nirad Chaudri (1996, 355) opined that "a dominant minority began to create a new literature, which in due course was to earn fresh laurels for India". Today the genre of fiction and short stories seems to dominate. In the words of M.E. Derrett (1966, 148) "Indian fiction in English has been found to be a meritorious outlet". According to H.M. Williams (1976, 109), it is undoubtedly the "most popular vehicle for the
transmission of Indian ideas to the wider English speaking world”. In his introduction to ‘Mirror work: 50 years of Indian Writing’ published in 1997, Salman Rushdie argued that “Indo Anglican writing is stronger and more important than the literature being written in India’s 16 official languages”

The path traveled by Indian writers in English has been undulating and not on a bed of roses. It was ridiculed, criticized and neglected on various occasions. Indian writers themselves were pessimistic regarding their success abroad. Uma Parameswaran (1998, 74) opined that Indian literature in English, when compared to classical and vernacular literatures would seem “immature and insignificant” and “its future speaks bleak, offering little but the prospect of extinction”. A renowned novelist Anita Desai told an interviewer “There is so little of it. There isn’t enough in the name of variety, value, interest and significance” (Atma Ram, Interview with Indo-English writers, Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1983). However, Indian writing has crossed several milestones in its journey since the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s novel ‘Rajmohan’s wife’ in 1864.

Indian writing in English has matured in its variety arousing considerable interest both in India and abroad. Several writers of late have
revealed their talents and produced significant works, making a mark in the literary world. Short stories have also been instrumental in contributing to this development. Jhumpa Lahiri's has made a most valuable addition to this list. Through her collection of short stories, Lahiri has extolled the expatriate sentiments, the Indian cultural milieu, metaphoric elements to mention a few. In any history of Indo-American literature, her name will be written in golden letters.

1.2. SHORT STORIES

A short story is a work of prose fiction that organizes the action, thought and interactions of its characters into the artful pattern of a plot that has a beginning and develops through the middle to some sort of denouement at the end. The story is presented from one of the many available points of view. It is written in the mode of fantasy, realism or naturalism.

The short story, as the name implies, is a story that is short. Edgar Allen Poe, (M.H.Abrams, 1970, 157) the pioneer of the short story as a specific genre, called the 'prose tale' as a narrative that can be read at one sitting and is limited to "a certain unique or single effect". It is however, one of the oldest and widespread of the literary forms.
The short story is a fictional work which depicts a character's inner conflict or conflict with others, usually with one thematic focus. It produces a single focused, emotional and intellectual response in the reader. The modern short story dramatizes character, mood, style and language. The literary short story employs complex techniques to depict the often irresolvable dilemmas of the human predicament. Some of the common subjects nowadays are race, ethnic status, gender, and class, social issues such as poverty, drugs, violence and divorce. The latest developments include human isolation, alienation, personal trauma such as anxiety, love and hate; male-female relationships, family and the conflict of generations, friendship and brotherhood, illusion and reality, self delusion and self discovery and the individual in conflict with society's institutions; morality; spiritual struggles and the relationship between life and art.

1.3. THE ART OF THE SHORT STORY

The art of the short story employs the techniques of point of view, style, plot and structure. The author includes a wide range of devices that stimulate emotional, imaginative and intellectual responses of the reader. The reader experiences these through the writer's control of these techniques.
Jhumpa Lahiri's debut book, "Interpreter of Maladies", a collection of nine short stories, has swept through the U.S. continent winning several admirers and awards, finally arriving at the shores of the prestigious 2000 Pulitzer award. Her stories have been featured in the New Yorker and reviewed by most renowned book critics.

1.4. INTRODUCTION TO JHUMPA LAHIRI

Jhumpa Lahiri was born in London in 1967, grew up in Rhode Island and lives in New York City. She is a graduate of Barnard College and Boston University, where she received her M.A. in English, and an M.A. in Creative Writing, and an M.A. in Comparative Literature and the Arts, and a Ph.D. in Renaissance Studies. She has taught Creative writing in Boston University and the Rhode Island School of Design. She has been a fellow at the Fine Arts Work Centre in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

Lahiri’s fiction has appeared in ‘The New Yorker’, ‘Agni’, ‘Epoch’, ‘The Louisville Review’, ‘Harvard Review’, ‘Story Quarterly’ etc. In addition to the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, she has received the PEN/Hemingway Award, the O.Henry Award, a ‘Transatlantic Review award’ from the Henfield Foundation in 1993, and a fiction prize for the ‘Los Angeles Times Book Award’ and was named one of the “20 best young fiction writers in America” in the New Yorker's summer 1999
fiction issue. Jhumpa Lahiri lives in New York City, where she is working on a novel.

1.5. CRITICS ON JHUMPA LAHIRI AND 'THE INTERPRETER OF MALADIES'

Jhumpa Lahiri's themes and characterization have their base both in India and the United States. This multi-cultural lifestyle plays a central theme in many of her short stories, which depict the alienation and loneliness of immigrants immersing themselves in two drastically different worlds.

Following the publication of three of her short stories in 'The New Yorker' in 1998, Lahiri's reputation was established among both critics and readers alike. When 'Interpreter of Maladies' was released in 1999, it received a flurry of glowing reviews. Literature is a reflection of life and 'The Interpreter of Maladies' reflects the panorama of life unfolding the cross cultural currents in the Indian and American scenario. In the story, 'The Third and Final Conflict', the narrator comments: "There are times I am bewildered by each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept" (198). According to Alix Wilber, (Publishers Weekly, 1999, 2) "In that single line Jhumpa Lahiri sums up a universal experience, one that applies to all who have grown up,
left home, fallen in or out of love, and, above all, experienced what it means to be a foreigner, even within one’s own family”.

‘The New York Times’ announced Lahiri to be a wonderfully distinctive new voice. In 1999, she was named by the New Yorker as “one of the 20 best writers under the age of 40”. Reviewing this collection in the New York Times, 6th Aug. 1999, 48), Pulitzer prize winner Michiko Kakutani wrote “Ms.Lahiri chronicles her characters lives with both objectivity and compassion while charting the emotional temperature of their lives with tactile precision. She is a writer of uncommon elegance and poise, and with ‘Interpreter of Maladies’, she has made a precocious debut”. San Francisco chronicle in June 1999 opined her method as “story telling of surpassing kindness and skill” (20th June, 1999). The official citation of the Pulitzer Prize reads:

“For distinguished fiction by an American author, preferably dealing with American life, $5,000 awarded to ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ by Jhumpa Lahiri”.

Following the success of her first book, Lahiri began work on a novel at her home in New York. Regarding the subject of this book, she stated, “It is hard for me to talk about anything I am doing at the moment.
It is only after I finish something that I can actually describe it in words". (Pifmagazine.com)

1.6. JHUMPA LAHIRI'S VIEW ON 'THE INTERPRETER OF MALADIES'

Commenting on the title, Lahiri says that it came to her long before the book did, or, for that matter, the story to which it refers. In 1991 she happened to meet an acquaintance who had helped her to move to a one-bedroom apartment. On enquiry, he revealed that he was working at a doctor's office, interpreting for a doctor who had a number of Russian patients who had difficulty explaining their ailments in English. She wondered about the unique position he was in, and pondering over it, the phrase "interpreter of maladies" was "planted" in her head. This was the inspiration for her to use it as the title of her book. After five years, she jotted down a paragraph containing the "bare bones" of the book in her notebook. While she was putting the collection together, she knew that it would express thematically, the predicament at the heart of the book - the dilemma, the difficulty and often the impossibility of communicating emotional pain and affliction to others, as well as expressing it to "ourselves". In some senses "I view my position as a writer, in so far as I attempt to articulate these emotions, as a sort of interpreter as well",
(Interview with Aran Aguiar in 1999 for Pif Magazine) was her substantial view of the title.

She set her first attempts, for some reason, in Calcutta, which is a city she had known quite well from repeated visits with her family. These trips to a vast, unruly, fascinating city so different from the American where she was raised, shaped her perceptions of the world and of people from a very early age. She learned that there was another side, a vastly different version to everything. She observed things as an outsider and identified herself to belong to Calcutta and India in some fundamental way. As she gained confidence, she began to set stories in the United States and wrote about situations closer to her own experiences. She found that linking her western life with that of the Indian backdrop to be a greater challenge.

1.7. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The need for a background study of such relevant research done earlier need not be over emphasized at this stage. Hence certain other works in this area are reviewed in the following pages. Sheila Jayaraj (1993) has done extensive work on Jawaharlal Nehru's writings, especially on stylistic features. She has analysed the present features of Indianess in Nehru's works. Native usages have been classified. Frequent use of nouns, adjectives, varied tense forms etc. have been listed. Extensive study of
terms related to caste, customs, occupation, costumes, mode of address etc. has been made. The different kinds of sentence patterns that have been used have also been illustrated. In conclusion, she has appreciated Nehru's rich verbosity. R. Suganthi (1995) has analyzed four chosen novels of Mulk Raj Anand. The study focuses on the commonness in the theme, difference in style, use of native terms and use of language. Radha's study (1997) of Anita Desai's 'Cry the Peacock' aims at the elements of language such as metaphors, similes, collocations, non-verbal communication, etc. A.R. Bhavana's (2000) stylistic study of 'The God of Small things' has analyzed the prize winning novel in the areas of language use, characterization, semiotics etc. She has also analyzed thoroughly the use of the native language and how it helps to bring out the theme of the novel.

A comprehensive view of the methods adopted by the above researchers in their works has enabled the conduct of the present study. Certain aspects, which were not taken up by them in their study, such as expatriate sentiments have been included in the present study.

1.8. DATA FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

The source of data for the present study is from the original writing of Jhumpa Lahiri's collection of short stories 'Interpreter of Maladies' published in 2002 by Harper Collins Publishers India Pvt. Ltd.
1.9. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Literature is a transaction between the author and a reader. Both believe that language does and can convey meaning. In order to understand the nature of language, one must be sensitive to the patterns of meaning at all levels: the arrangement of phonic or graphic symbols, the organization of the text, the use of different structures, discourse markers and the special vocabulary used. The entire stretch of Jhumpa Lahiri’s canvas which includes the “emotional struggles of love; to immigrants battling a new world, drawn upon her Indian culture and heritage” (The Hindu Editorial: The Bright New Breed, 14th April 2000) is attempted in the present study. By the analysis of the literary text as a verbal artifact, its status as literature is assessed. A thoughtful and close linguistic and literary analysis turns out to enhance one’s awareness and enjoyment while reading these short stories.

1.10. METHODOLOGY

Jhumpa Lahiri’s literary piece, ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ containing nine short stories was read several times in order to understand her description, peculiar usages, narrative techniques and so on, which distinguish her from other writers. These have been taken up for analysis and interpretation. The interpretations are made in relation to the expatriate experience, theme of assimilation, Indian sensitivity, etc. The peculiar style
of the author, length of sentences, expatriate sentiments expressed, linguistic and figurative use of language in her stories have been studied. The portrayal of characters has been studied in order to understand how she has used her adept talent for depicting people and landscapes through her multiple character voices.

1.11. AIM AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Indians have long been competing with native English writers. This is not a new phenomenon. The Indians have also won acclaim all over the world. Jhumpa Lahiri is one such writer who has won international reputation in recent times through her contribution. In view of her recognition as a Pulitzer Prize winner, her collection of short stories was decided to be analyzed from several points of view. The aims, objectives and scope of the present study are presented below:

1. To study the themes chosen by the author in the construction of the short stories.

2. To identify the characters portrayed by the author in the collection of short stories. With their fragile emotional states, hesitant gestures and tight rope wanderings on the brink of psychological rupture, characters are coaxed into exploring assorted facets of morality, alienation, lust and dysfunction.
3. The study of the specific use of language devices and the mingling of cultural elements (both east and west) is also made.

4. The scope of this study is restricted to the exposure of expatriate sentiments, and the struggles for assimilation into another culture as exhibited in the collection.

1.12. PLAN OF THE STUDY

The analysis of the short stories in the present study is reported in this dissertation, under six chapters:

1. Introduction.

2. Thematization

3. Characterization

4. Language use

5. Expatriate sentiments.

6. Conclusion.

1.12.1. Introduction

The introductory chapter contains an evaluation of Jhumpa Lahiri’s advent into the literary arena along with the aim, scope and significance of the present study in relation to her collection of short stories. A review of ‘The Interpreter of Maladies’ both at the national and international level is included in this section. A discussion on the growing trends in Indian
writing in English is also exposed. It also contains the plan of study for the present report.

1.12.2. Thematization

Literature is the exposure of the realities of life. The literary writer uses this essence of reality to recreate it in one's own fashion. Any writer is definitely inspired by the theme. Therefore, based on the nature of the theme and its mode of expression, the depth and dimension in which the writer has dealt with the motifs attracts the reader and the critics. The writer's canvas is usually vast and accommodates a multiplicity of themes and motifs. The themes may be emotional, sentimental or based on fantasy. The writer decides on its factors at the production stage itself - should it be accepted, be argued over, criticized, to be socially instrumental in some way. The writer's presentation reflects his/her world views or ideologies. The meanings that a text would project would, therefore, always have an ideological orientation, depending upon the social, cultural and historical framework within which the text is produced.

1.12.3. Characterization

Characterization is the backbone of any narrative. In this chapter, the importance of each character in relation to the plot of the stories is explained. Lahiri charts the emotional voyages of characters seeking love
beyond the barriers of nations, cultures, religions and generations. One will be able to appreciate characterization more fully, if one examines in detail some passages from the stories related to the emotional turmoil, actions, their dreams etc. Certain passages, therefore, describing the actions of characters is quoted 'verbatim' in this dissertation. The chief characters of each story like Boori Ma, Kapasi, Mrs. Das, Mr. Pirzada, have been subjected to analysis. Their role in the construction of the plot and their idiosyncrasies has been considered in this study.

1.12.4. Language Use

Language has two sides, like that of a coin. On the one side it is language use, while on the other it is language structure. By an author's diction, we mean his/her choice of words or more specifically the kinds of words he/she selects from the repertoire of words which are theoretically available. The writer uses the words to bring clarity to his thoughts and thus effectively communicate his ideas to the reader. If the critic is able to make some general remarks about the kinds of words, and the sentence construction employed, then it can be said an attempt has been made to understand the components of the style of the writer. This chapter attempts to analyze the language use of the writer in her collection, 'The Interpreter of Maladies'. Various literary devices like metaphors, similes, personification, to mention a few, have been identified. Peculiar cultural
defining words, American usages etc. which are found in the stories have also been taken for analysis.

1.12.5. Expatriate Sentiments

Lahiri's stories are ripe and filled with expatriate sentiments. They weave the reader into the lives of second generation Indians, and their struggles with regard to the establishment of relationships, their interpersonal communication and the challenges experienced by immigrants living in a world away from the familiar warmth and constant company of family, friends and neighbours in the homes they left behind. They are confronted with the challenges of Indian Americans building their lives and careers in another country. Thus she honours the vastness and various ness of the world.

1.12.6. Conclusion

This chapter is a consolidation of the observations and inferences drawn on the basis of the analysis of Jhumpa Lahiri's 'Interpreter of Maladies' carried out in this study. It exposes the fact that Lahiri has created a firm foundation upon which to build her skills and techniques which will hopefully add color and give a stronger voice to her creative insight.
CHAPTER – II

THEMATIZATION