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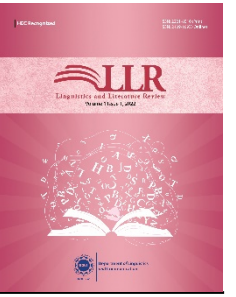

Title:	**(Re)constructing the Notion of Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's Interpreter of Maladies: A Diasporic Study of Selected Stories**
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(Re)constructing the Notion of Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies:* A Diasporic Study of Selected Stories

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Abstract

The current study poses its focus on the complexities of diasporic tensions, especially concentrating on the reductive methods, contributing towards the homogenization of the formed and consolidated cultural and national identities. The concept of nationalism has often been utilized by third-world countries to express their views of cultural hegemony. However, the current research aims to provide an alternate perspective concerning globalization and cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, this study presents a diasporic picture of Lahiri's characters celebrating multiculturalism and transnationalism. This study draws its foundation from Postcolonialism as a theoretical framework along with other concepts of leading theorists to conduct a close textual analysis of the selected works. Moreover, this study aims to analyze the representations of cultural and national identities in the characters of the selected text whom Lahiri puts in the in-between space of nation and identity, where they represent multiple cultures and histories. By so doing, Lahiri rejects the appeal to original accounts, which unfold cultural identities, while attempting to break and reconstruct the foremost chronicle of the nation. In the selected text, the *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) nation and home are re-imagined not as a monolithic or stagnant space but rather as a precisely created structure, transformed and confronted, and resultantly shaping identities in a struggle. Consequently, the re-constructed diasporic approach unveils a deep crack in the consolidated unity and arises, instead, with multiple identities, which in Lahiri's terms must be accepted, while coming out of the rhetoric of nationalism.

Keywords: cultural identity, diaspora, nation, national identity, multiculturalism

Introduction

Since cultural hegemony and indigenousness are the commonly used stances in the third world; however, this research aims to present Lahiri's

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stance toward cosmopolitanism and globalization. In her works, she uses cosmopolitanism and globalization as two major concepts to contend the rhetoric of the cultural and national identities of her diasporic characters. In the wake of this context, this study puts Lahiri's characters in the in-between space of nation and identity, where they epitomize multiple records of history and culture. By doing so, Lahiri rejects the plea toward roots, rather she attempts to disrupt and reconstruct the fundamental history of the nation by opening up cultural identities. Fundamentally, this study has a substantial scope, by discussing Lahiri from an innovative perspective where postcolonial theoretical angles about diaspora identities are tested, deconstructed, and reconstructed to obtain results for which Anderson and Bhabha's concepts aptly work to encounter the rhetoric of home as a monolithic and single space. Evidently, these theorists identified the in-between-space, which serves the purpose of identity in motion, by representing multiculturalism in Western society. Furthermore, this study aims to scrutinize the concept of identity in terms of globalization and cosmopolitanism, which has not been discussed in the earlier research.

The current study aims to answer the following questions.

1. How do Lahiri's diasporic characters act intelligibly to contend with the monolithic rhetoric of home and nation?
2. Why do the diasporic characters in Lahiri's prose choose to retort to the collective impressions of globalization and cosmopolitanism?

In this way, this research contends with the meaning of nation and identity and home and belonging, from the perspective of the diaspora narrative. Identity viewpoint has been articulated as a continuous dialogue between one's birthplace and one's espoused home, which has been presented by different theoretical approaches while informing about cultural and intellectual production. This variation has brought an epistemological shift in the styles of analyzing Lahiri's works. Home or one's roots (acts as a referent) are curious parts of diaspora communities. The idea of diaspora communities originated in the 70s when major theories of assimilation concerning socio-economic mobility models were substantiated to designate the migrants and maintain their cultural collectiveness (Bruneau, 1995; Baumann, 2000; Audebert & Doraï, 2010). However, the concept got much popularity in the 80s, entitled as the period of expansion, which needed to theorize this concept further. Armstrong (1976) like Gabriel

Sheffer delineated the appearance of the first diasporic theory. In his paper, Armstrong stated:

The beginning of diaspora cannot be associated with Jewish people, because many other groups like the Greek and Chinese diaspora also appeared in the same period. He further proposed three criteria to define the term diaspora, which included the development and maintenance of collective identity in diasporic people, the existence of an internal organization different from those of the country of origin or host country; and significant contact with the homeland (Armstrong, 1976).

With further development in the 90s, Bruneau (1995) defined three major types of diasporas, in second was based on religion with the addition of Jewish and Greek diaspora, and the third was political diasporas with the inclusion of Tibetan and Palestinian people. Sheffer (1993) anticipated a division between state-based diaspora and stateless diaspora. Likewise, Cohen (1997), in "retort" to this regional point of view, proposed five typologies based on pragmatic notes; firstly, labour diasporas in the case of Indians; Imperial diasporas as British, whereas Chinese and Lebanese created a trade diaspora along with the cultural diasporas in case of Caribbean. Cultural diaspora became one of the most productive types among all the diasporas. It is a fact that this group was dominant with leaders, intellectuals, and writers, who were very active in the public sphere. This dimension introduced 'hybridity' which was later used by second-generation diaspora authors to designate and mirror the growth of new communal suggestions as mixed cultures. In his work, Cohen (1997) summarized the term as "positioned between nation-states and traveling cultures in such a sense that they dwell, in the physical sense, in a nation-state, but travel in a spiritual sense that falls outside the nation-state's space/time and zone" (p. 79).

Interpreter of Maladies (1999) is a collection of nine short stories by an American writer which manifests people's experiences struggling with assimilation, hybridity, and being caught between roots and routes. In the very first story, the characters Shoba and Shukumar are depicted as having a troublesome relationship, which only gets normal during the power shutdown. Through Shukumar's point of view, readers come to know that these are bitter memories, which have brought a gap in this married couple. It is soon indicated that both characters' run-down external appearance is because of their emotional contention, which eventually brings a deep

distance between them. The traumatic loss of their stillborn child casts a melancholic tone for the rest of their story. Things never uttered are discussed in the nighttime, in darkness. Away from their own country, the couple is away from each other as well. The diasporic couple is serving others/friends with hearty feasts, and all the times are busy with their jobs to meet the living situation in America. The fourth night of darkness brings them a desperate love that they have forgotten and they come to know the misunderstandings between them (Lahiri, 1999).

However, in another story, *Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine*, a professor of science from Dhaka, after getting a grant from the higher education commission in Pakistan is living in New England. At home, he has six daughters and his wife. He cannot get food with his meager amount of grant, so he visits an Indian family daily for dinner and often brings confectionery for the little girl of that family. He is Pakistani for some people in New England and Bengali for others, and his feelings of homelessness make him alone. A little girl from that Indian family wants to read books on the history of Pakistan, however, she is not allowed to read these books to get assimilated into American culture only, an act, which Lahiri does not appreciate.

In another account, in The *Interpreter of Maladies*, all the diasporic characters like Mr. Kapasi and Mrs. Das go back to their home country. Mrs. Das reveals the secret of her adultery to Mr. Kapasi hoping that he can interpret her feelings and only then, she can feel better. While she is thinking of suggestions, he, on the other hand, is thinking about an affair; however, he fails due to hierarchical differences. Later on, with her son, Mrs. Das gets back to America interpreting Lahiri's impression of migration as the eventual part of contemporary cultural undercurrents, thereby, not showing any conundrum of home.

Literature Review

Home brings an incontrovertible issue to the Indian diasporic discourse. For Avtar Brah (1996), the home has qualitative implications, which is a rooted and floating signifier simultaneously. It is an evocation, an entreaty of a nation's narratives. In the nationalist discourse, a settled community is not taken as a part of that nation. In doing so, Brah puts forward both angles with their inferences. Furthermore, for Brah, a diasporic person is a translated person as well, which makes his concept of nationalist discourse

— that the member of a settled community cannot be part of that nation, stronger. The translated self of an individual engages them to write with the notion of home as a necessity of diasporic literature and as an intellectual pursuit; they engage in resolving identity and existential issues and expedite tracing roots to inheritance. Moreover, it paves the way for the historical and cultural experiences of the Indian diaspora, where numerous threads intertwine, where home remained a consistent and persistent idea. However, in another interpretation of translation, it means multiplicity, where a translated text goes under multiple transformations due to inter-lingual and intercultural contact. Therefore, a translated individual will be having multiple identities, and likewise, he carries a sense of a home. In doing so, the idea of the translated individual also reconstructs the idea of identity. Similarly, Lahiri deconstructs the notion of home and nationalism for the re-imagination and re-construction of a new perspective where home may be any place, any region, and any community, very much similar to the idea of identity, which is always in process and hence, multiple.

Similarly, Bhabha's notion of interstitial space — "that occupies a space 'between' competing cultural traditions, historical periods, and critical methodologies. Bhabha examined the "ambivalence of colonial rule" and suggested that it enables a capacity for resistance" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 121) also stretches in Lahiri's work when she says, "the populace residing in this space creates narratives that expunge the borders and the essential boundaries". Lahiri tries to transport her characters in America and India voluntarily, instead of engaging them with the nostalgia of the past to embrace modern cultural suggestions. This interstitial space is not a grey area for diasporic people whom they call home, rather, in Lahiri's approach it acts as a free space for these diaspora communities to live freely. Hence, it is up to these communities how they engage, live, and work autonomously. Lahiri's writing acts as an epitome to reject nationalistic discourse and as a substitute to accept cultural modernity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity. India, for Lahiri, is just a country like other countries on the globe.

Similarly, Lahiri holds the perspective that the Indian diaspora should not confine themselves to Indian food, dress patterns, habits, and social customs. Instead, they should embrace the idea of considering America as their nation and its people as their people which Anderson calls 'imagined homes' and 'imagined communities'. Correspondingly, every diasporic

writing also reflects the metamorphosis of an Indian into a diasporic person. As these characters speak of the feelings of temporariness, and physical as well as socio-psychological displacement.

Furthermore, Lahiri's stories expose the imperceptible boundaries of fractured identities that refugee characters cross, these borders are geopolitical and visible between the US and India. The bonding between Lahiri's characters is the result of trans-cultural chance meetings, which are beyond race, religion, and demographic details. Lahiri's work, *"Stories from Bengal, Boston, and beyond*", also advocates the writer's devotion towards the twofold blocks of East and West, which in actuality is an indicator of in-between space that distorts the temporal and spatial binaries offering and opening new information for the ethnic and global concerns. The boundary or the limit becomes blurred, an indistinct marker, an intangible line, whether it is discernable or unclear, whether it is metaphorical or physical, whether known or unknown, and similarly, it is indistinguishable whether it is moral or amoral (Saha, 2009). In this sense, it becomes a journey of lamentation and grief for a possible home, which gives a sense of impossibility to diaspora people, however, live with hope and potential for their future families.

About Lahiri's prose, Shankar writes, "all the stories are subtle, away from stereotypical construction of America and India: they are a sharp rebuttal to the established truisms of Indian exoticness because of their non-spicy tones" (Saha, 2009). Lahiri's themes of assimilation and alienation, marriage and love, exile, home, nostalgia, and self-identity are quite interesting and reflect the interest and experience of the writer and the realistic experience of the reader to visit the new world. The pain of exile and displacement is evident in her writings and she is also considered the most commanding literary figure in English.

Appadurai gives the old version of diaspora, while explaining Lahiri's work where he identifies that her prose exposes the lives of first-generation immigrants--Americans from India, where they are struggling, sacrificing, and alienated in an alien world. Lahiri challenges an ethno-scape of "immigrants, tourists, refugees, guests, exile workers, and other wretched people [who] create an indispensable feature of the globe as they give the impression to touch the nation's politics to a yet unusual degree" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33).

Theoretical Framework

The current study deploys diverse approaches under the theoretical framework of Postcolonialism with the implementation of several concepts of renowned theorists. Several, including Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton Blanc's concept of diaspora, transnational space, and nations unbound, George Steiner's notion of expatriate, Frantz Fanon's construction of nation and nationalism, Benedict Anderson, and Homi K. Bhabha's concept of trans/cultural and in-between- space and identity are all interrelated concepts, which are used to analyze the selected short stories.

Basch et al. (1993) gave the notion of transnational space, transnational communities, scattered nations, or nations unbound. Nations Unbound further delivered the idea of reinscribing space in a new way and the concept of transnationalism, which embraces diaspora and diaspora communities (Basch et al., 1993). This new onset of nation-states comprises citizens "living substantially disconnected within the margins of several other nations but who keep on living communally, diplomatically, ethnically and often economically as a part of their ancestral nation" (Basch et al., 1993). Therefore, the proposed level of defining diaspora includes their permanent existence abroad, even though exile may not be everlasting; however, includes a more radical move between the land of origin what is known as the birthplace, and newly adopted host nations, and some sort of a shift which may be societal, political, or for some economic purpose. There also comes a cultural shift among the inhabitants encompassing the concept of diaspora. Hence, diaspora "refers specifically to the movement -forced or voluntary- of people from one or more nation-states to another and that transnationalism expresses larger, more objective forces – explicitly those of global capitalism and globalization" (Braziel, 2013).

Another concept along with diaspora is expatriates. George Steiner delineates that 'Expatriate' itself has acquired much importance in contemporary times. According to Steiner, this type of person's focus is on his own country, his native country, which he has left behind. He lives on the past status, often called X status. While immigrant differs from him in celebrating their presence in the new country. There is an obsession with a home for several reasons and it is also well known that every society has its cultural representation, though with some flaws, like the presence of inequality, inappropriate budgeting for ghettos, and keeping intact the presence of a dynamic culture of origin without dichotomizing the

minorities by depriving them of belongings and accepting them both by emotionally and politically (Steiner, 2013). Additionally, Frantz Fanon, a prominent name among the philosophers of decolonization foregrounds the hegemonic positioning of the decolonized state in his essay, *On National Culture,* in which he asserts the apprehension to resuscitate spotless and pristine values inspired by native literati in the venture of nationalism against once practiced colonial policies. In this regard, the imaginary notion of the nation in post-colonial and post-independence creation of identity and culture created a tousled history of nationalism (Fanon, 2014). The historic shift in the form of resistant and different anti-colonial trajectories like optimism, radical rethinking, and the moment of solidarity strengthened nationalism and sought ways to create a national culture among the diaspora communities. In this sense, theorists usually middle-class intellectuals, as Sudesh Mishra also muses, reproduce the once-exercised colonial superiority, while keenly observing the distinctions among the colonized communities (Mishra, 2006).

The concept of nation and nationalism has been directly linked with the formation of identity and national identity. In these terms, cultural identity, apart from taking as a form of radical identity, represent social stratagem, ideas for which it is better to use hyphenated terms like national, and cultural identity to express ideological contexts and tensions involved in the formation of national identity. National/local identity whether social or political is rooted or embedded in national culture and identity, where culture is represented as norms, traditions, or ongoing practices by a large group of people of that nation (Fanon, 2014).

Consequently, all cultural identities can be taken as fluid, multiple, heterogeneous, or cultural. Bhabha intricated a syncretic potential for encompassing diaspora communities while postulating to look at the dynamic view of culture with the development of transnational culture presenting displacement and blurring boundaries. For him, culture is always and already diasporic. As Bhabha stated,

Culture as a policy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial narratives/discourses are entrenched in particular histories of cultural displacement, whether they are the 'middle passage' of servitude and indenture, the 'voyage out' of the civilizing mission, the fraught lodging of Third World migration to the West after the Second World War, or the circulation of political and economic

refugees within and outside the Third World. "The transnational dimension of cultural transformation --migration, displacement, diaspora, and replacement/relocation - makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 129).

Culture, in Bhabha's view, has its roots in transnationalism, since, it carries the burden of displacement, by continually keeping in contact with diverse cultures and between the times and history. This transnational development of culture has shaped an identity which is with the potential to subvert the natural(ized), merging ideas of national traditions and culture. In this sense, diaspora surrounds rich discursive and historical trajectories, which is always in need of delimitation for the appropriate working of an idea and the current approach toward Lahiri's work is one dimension. However, Benedict Anderson (1983) elaborates, "nation as a community that can be considered a social construction, an imaginary artifact depends wholly on people's perception to which community they connect themselves and then give rise to that imagined community" (p. 103).

Furthermore, William Safran's six characteristics to distinguish the diaspora community from migrants, linked two major variables – exile and homeland, which have been taken to understand the modernized role of the diaspora to stabilize cultural identity. The given features are a diffusion of people or their forefathers from a rooted center to several marginal spaces; which however give a collective memory or a myth about the central, original, or rooted home, and meanwhile, a sense of alienation, isolation, or filling in the host culture. Safran, however, reminds the diaspora in Brah's terms, where the ideal home is the homeland, a place of ultimate return. Similarly, Safran also indicates the responsibility, as a collective duty to maintain a home, and a self-conscious understanding of ethnicity so that the ideal home stays in existence (Safran, 1991). However, the construction of diaspora as a hybrid but transnational space offers an outline of the cultural identity, where it becomes a processed phenomenon — multiple, always remaining in process and never coming to an end; but in roots and routes, that needs to be believed and accepted.

Results and Discussion

Interpreter of Maladies (1999) manifests the writer's efforts to comprehend the human and social conditions in the context of migration. Therefore, this analysis focuses on the thematic understanding of Lahiri's prose, linking its

core facts with diasporic concerns. Through her works, she addresses sensitive details of the lives of Indian migrants with the dominant themes of marital difficulties, miscarriages, and disconnection from the homeland, which diasporic theorists think is an unavoidable phenomenon and a transcultural practice in the globalized world. Lahiri assumes the perspective of second-generation diasporic people in her contemplative prose. Her fiction reflects insignificant events and confined settings to maintain a surrounding on the unobtrusive, normal, and transitory events in daily life (Koshy, 2011).

In *A Temporary Matter* set in North America, the prime characters, Shukumar and Shoba, now American residents of Bengali origin, apart from struggling for their cultural identity are facing the shock of a stillborn baby. They are here for work and education as Shukumar is a Ph.D. scholar, dealing with his thesis at the time, while Shoba does work for the whole day. Once again, Lahiri's focus is not on the inability of the couple to acclimate to an unreceptive cultural environment, but rather, on the abating affairs between the couple after the heartbreaking incident. This traumatic incident instead of binding them together breaks them far apart. The silent angst over the child's demise fluctuates the feelings of both characters. Shoba converts slothful and sojourns serving her husband by doing housework. Despite their common ethnic origin, similar language, and customs, the couple finds it impossible to communicate, rather than reclaiming their fractured identities, as Lahiri reflects through her narrative that they have gotten experts at ignoring one another despite having a house with three bedrooms (Lahiri,1999). Shukumar confines himself to his doctoral work, whereas Shoba sits in the living room busy in her editing work. Shukumar's memories act as replicating time, where his past is juxtaposed with the assessment of his present relationship. A fine difference between then and now conveys the idea of a radical shift in their identities which affects the collective identity of this couple by prevailing nostalgic and traumatic memories of the past.

However, the story spans the time of five days, yet it accomplishes the task of bringing out past doubts of the couple by unsettling the utmost supreme values including the connection of marriage that holds within the characters' culture. Lahiri through the marriage complications unfolds the tensions and uncertainties of the family union. In doing so, she exposes that not only the historic events become the bone of contention, but rather prime

human connection, while living alone across borders carries misconceptions and fails to identify each other, further bringing harsh dialogue and hostile connection between them. While working on the idea of identity and home as a fluid construction, it is found that the changing idea of identity and home that the couple feels in the whole story reproduces anxiety and instability of the immigrants of the postcolonial world but not toward 'home'. It is due to the anxiety, loneliness, work pressure, and insufficient time that brought misconceptions, confusion, and hostility toward them until they managed to converse and have an elated reintegration. Moreover, characters like Shoba after suffering the gynecological issue along with work pressure and stress develop feelings of mistrust and neglect as she did for Shukumar.

Shukumar's intellectual space, being a second-generation immigrant enables him to search for a home. His longing for national identity and to connect with his Indian roots is not the cause of any private experience, nonetheless, he grew up in America and visited India once in his infanthood. His home is located in "the geography of Concord, but after his father's death, his interest in his country grew" (Lahiri, 1999, p. 11). However, as indicated by Lahiri this interest in the home has always ended in loss and displacement. He conceptualizes this idea of his father's home as his home through his intellectual gift of understanding and his memory of his father which is connected with the Indian nation. Shukumar being *divided at home*- as he uses the word abandon to reflect the trauma of his family scattering apart after his father's death, which ultimately reflects Shukumar's memory of beholding his mother in lasting grief after his father's death. This abandonment and sense of division of Shukumar's nostalgic and displaced feelings, which are similar to the diasporic refugee, while his mother reestablishes home by coming back to Calcutta- a corporal space. His mother's grief- as a first-generation migrant recommends that his father held her composed and her retreat to India can be taken as her effort to resettle her identity by putting her torn pieces back into the home and family, which she lost with the loss of Shukumar's father. However, Lahiri deliberately manages this character in accepting America as his only home, which is predicted through his exchange of ideas with his wife.

It is through this elated conversation that Shoba's past doubts get clear and she comes to know that the pain of the dead child has a deep scar on Shukumar's heart as well. Similarly, the word temporary conveys the idea

related to time. This time brings in them the process of shift in their identities, while longing for the past where they recall their homes, but Shukumar also establishes a developing connection with the community and nation as a part of his struggles. Furthermore, Shukumar adds that "Shoba considered the house as a hotel" (Lahiri, 1999, p. 7). The acknowledgment that she was changed significantly marks a shift in the character's understanding of the static notion of home into a fluid and modern understanding of home. For her, it is not a home with three rooms but a hotel- a temporary requirement to live for a temporary time. Shukumar's longings are moreover to be successful in his studies, have children, and attention of Shoba that he received once in the early days of his marriage. Shoba, on the other hand, wants to be an independent and modern wife. Additionally, the concluding image of the story where the couple is crying together "for the things they now knew" (p. 22) muddles the concluding ideas, however, it makes it easy to interpret the idea of home in Bhabha's terms that "the transnational identity potentially sabotages the natural, national tradition, and culture", thus, making clear that Lahiri's characters also understand and accept the global identities.

Lahiri's work, *Interpreter of Maladies* is nevertheless, an uncommon collection of short stories as Lahiri encounters traditional features and incorporates modern characteristics. Her characters travel from India to North America, on a latitudinal and emblematic level to display the comparisons and variances on a linguistic and cultural level, yet happily accepting diversity, and therefore, (re)constructing the notion of a diaspora identity. Her story, *Interpreter of Maladies* conveys the idea of closely connected concepts of home and identity, apparently, for diasporic people. Similarly, the story offers an inimitable set of trials that Das and Mr. Kapasi, the main characters of the narrative confront. On one side, Das struggles to find and connect to her rooted home, whereas she also tries to rediscover the lost Indian identity at the same time, which ultimately highlights her sense of having its place in racial and cultural identity. Set in India, *Interpreter of Maladies* structures an Indian immigrated family, the Dases, along with a tour guide, Mr. Kapasi, an Indian, once a student of foreign languages to serve his long last wish to be an interpreter between diverse nations (Lahiri, 1999). He works as an interpreter between nations and part-time he interprets patients of Gujrati origin who come to visit a doctor's office. Mrs. Das comes to know about this interpreter and is stirred. She makes stirs the readers as well when she accounts her arrogant grievances

regarding the tour, journey, and residence. She admires the job responsibility of Mr. Kapasi, by praising it as a 'romantic' job (Lahiri, 1999). Later on, she reveals the secret-sharing rather than confessing to him that she has three children and one of those children is born of her adultery, as she conceived while having an extra-marital affair. On one hand, Mina Das, the woman is looking for a suggestion, but on the other hand, Kapasi is in search of finding a friend in her, and the narrator is omniscient. Both, the tour guide and the woman, of American-Indian origin speak the same language- English, and are from the same country- India Mr. Kapasi comments that the Dases family looked like Indians, but 'outfitted as foreigners did" (pp. 44-45). Moreover, he identifies himself with Mrs. Das during their visit, since he notices very similar indicators of misery and sadness, which he has felt about his marriage: "the bickering, the indifference, and the protracted silences" (p. 53). Whereas, Das wishes to visit India, yet, has accepted America as her country and people as her community.

In this way, the *Interpreter of Maladies* disrupts the notion of home and identity on a more advanced level as it does in *The Temporary Matter.* Lahiri's prose refuses to accept the conventions in writing and the subject of immigrants on its fixity. When the family comes to visit India- their motherland, they do not have any proximity to history and culture so, they need a tour guide. On a broader canvas, it can be interpreted that people face troubles in communicating on a global level; in a culture with which they do not have a direct connection. Maladies are the forgery in the marital relationship, which is evident in Mr. Kapasi's case, as having an unloving arranged marriage only to honour the parents; else, he does not even talk to his wife. On the other hand, Mrs. Das has trouble communicating with her husband due to her adulterous relationship elsewhere. Many second-generation individuals with a multiethnic background often exhibit a divergence between their sense of national identity and national heritage. First-generation people represent wholeness when they discuss their problems with each other, while second-generation individuals, unable to negotiate their issues feel un-whole. As Benedict informs about the idea of imagined nations, similarly, second-generation Indians are no more stuck with one identity; similarly, the home has a fluid concept for both, hence, they do not hesitate to imagine America as their home; therefore, they can reside anywhere.

Mr. Das's family exhibits the influence of culture (which acts as the shaper of identity) through their clothes; however, their looks are purely Indian, very much similar to the people of Orissa- the setting of the story. There is a vivid divide in national culture and heritage that the family represents- a challenge for not having the propensity to blend both categories into one homogenous feature. Though this tendency exists in narratives on migration and global fiction, however, identity construction with diversity has been a failure in multicultural people. Das's family wants to see the tourist as a foreign man and Mr. Kapasi narrates the family as foreign in their ethics and their views but their skin colour was similar to the natives. Having American citizenship, their identity is American, which is entrenched in the customs, cultures, and behaviours of the United States: like the way of the Dases family's shaking hands with Mr. Kapasi, but there is a desire for the homeland because they come to see their parents. When asked about their age to travel to America, they confidently say that they were "born and raised" (Lahiri, 1999, p.42) in America, which depicts pride in the Dases family. Thus, American national identity and cultural heritage are a matter of pride for them.

While going towards the place of a visit, "The Sun Temple", Mrs. Das hails Kapasi's job as an interpreter as romantic. Her long silence is a metaphor for not communicating her emotions. Her idea of romanticizing the job indicates the connection that Mr. Kapasi builds between people of Gujarati language and the doctor, which is only possible through the interpreter, which she thinks is a big responsibility. Her empathy becomes ironical when she has it towards physical maladies but makes her hefty with the emotional maladies. On the other hand, the irony for Mr. Kapasi is not to understand the intention of using the word romantic.

In this way, Mr. Kapasi's linguistic and remedial aids wash out, since socio-cultural walls hamper communication; he is misconstrued and misunderstood by the foreign-returned Indians; Mrs Das insults him after apprehending the narcissism of his anticipations. The story exemplifies the significance of communicating emotions and infirmities. All this communication is grounded in the intercultural pattern- having a divisible line between high and low culture, where Mr. Kapasi fails to embrace the sensual caprices of the Indian tour guide concerning Mrs. Das, who reminds the reader about the gap or pyramid dividing them, especially in class privilege. Nevertheless, this idea to consider one land as an exotic and

stereotypical place was not supported when imagining diaspora from a new angle. Lahiri through her prose supports the multiplicity of the West rather than insulting a particular culture living away from their lands. In this way, they depict themselves as travelers of globalizing modernity; ardently non-adherent to them, without any attachment. In this picture of diasporic tourism, where consumerism sanctions the idea of the corporal world as a commodity- and object of trade, Lahiri shows how transnational bonds with a common pedigree produce dispersal, distance, and estrangement, instead of acceptance and respect for all cultures. Hence, their coming back to America suggests that they, truly, have accepted it as their home.

Her story again in a North American setting describes Lahiri's standpoint of progenies. *Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine*, provides the perspective of an Indian-American family's young girl, Lilia, having a Bengal parentage, who challenges her ethnicity by witnessing Mr. Pirzada, who visits the house regularly though it happens for a short period. The story's setting is in 1971, the period of the Indo-Pakistan War, or the Indo-Pak partition. Mr. Pirzada, a Pakistani Muslim has come to America on a government-paid grant. Every evening he visits this family of the same ethnicity, Hindus of Indian origin. While listening to the news on TV and making dinner, Mr. Pirzada is worried about his family back in Dhaka, which is shattered by a conflict. Food acts as a catalyst for unity and bonding in this diasporic household and they share transnational belongings. Here Lilia considers Pirzada as a member of her own family. "He eats like us and speaks like us" (Lahiri, 1999, p. 25). She gathers several similarities shared by all though their birthplaces are different. She also notices the commonality between her father and Mr. Pirzada, 'their language is the same; they laughed at the same jokes and looked more or less the same. She further illustrates, "They ate pickled mangoes with their meals, ate rice every night for supper with their hands" (Lahiri, 1999, p. 25).

Lahiri shows the concept of multiplicity and acceptance of diversity well inundated in her character Lilia, for whom, the lines drawn between Hindus and Muslims make no difference, but are blurred. The colour difference on the geographical map also does not bother this little character, rather she marks it to illustrate the national difference. Similarly, she notices that Mr. Pirzada and her parents,

"Where a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, single silence, and a single fear" (Lahiri, 1999, p. 41): The anxieties about the fate

of Mr. Pirzada's family strengthen fellow feelings and collective identity" (p.42).

For this child, one's geopolitical space is at war with one's cultural identity, and her perception gets strong when she observes utter silence and disinterest in the ongoing war in Bangladesh. "Her American tutor exhibits displeasure when she discovers Lilia reading a book about Dhaka, seeing "no reason to access it" (p. 33). Lahiri has not only critiqued this American attitude, but she has also critiqued the modern concepts regarding the nation and home. The war on TV coverage spurs guilt in Lilia since she is enjoying a privileged life in America. She manages rituals to exorcise her fears about Mr. Pirzada's daughters residing in Dhaka. Her compliance with this character can be further observed when she eats his given candy every evening to consolidate the hunger of his daughters as refugees in East Pakistan, though, she stops doing so after the war ends and Mr. Pirzada lives with his family. Lahiri manages her political burden through the representation of this child's perspective and metaphorically (re)constructs the Indian diaspora in America where they live unburdened like a nation and feel at home in that atmosphere.

Through Lilia's age group, Lahiri puts the heirloom of momentous South Asian disruptions, making it clear that for immigrants like Lilia "America becomes an ambivalent charged nation space […] which also enables her to dream a transnational, non-nationalist South Asian American politics" (Daiya, 2008).

Furthermore, Jhumpa Lahiri underhandedly appraises the syllabus taught at American schools, a question denoted by the niggle of Lilia's dad with her daughter's misinformed understanding of the history and lack of knowledge. Since her stories resist categorization, she criticizes American teachers' indifference to South Asian history. All the stories depict that identity and home are not rooted or fixed in any particular nation, race, or culture, but rather they are in uninterrupted conversation with one's adopted home and homeland. Similarly, the idea of miscommunication is also a challenge for discussing the idea of home across cultures.

Conclusion

The current study has concluded that Lahiri's collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*, oscillates between the two poles of East and the West. Within these categories, her diasporic characters struggle to be

recognized in a new place, a new home in America, while assimilating multiculturalism. In doing so, Lahiri has shown her characters filled with the strains of the immigrant's enigmatic and silly outbursts from inter-generational clashes and ordinary circumstances; therefore, through her fiction, she has exposed the concerns of globalization and cosmopolitanism. She has maintained a mediation between local and global and enhanced a composed voice within the Indian and diasporic literature. This research has shown that her characters are intelligent to alter their national and cultural identities to homogenize in any culture, even if they are placed in an in-between space of nation and identity. The article has further informed that home is no more a monolithic space, but rather it should be re-imagined as a constructed topography, where identities are in struggle and hence multiple. In this way, the current study has contributed to understand the concept of multiple identities in diaspora communities or characters within the prevalent concepts of cosmopolitanism and globalization. Thus, the concept of (re)construction of diasporic identities ultimately rejects the fixed and singular identities, while bringing people out of the rhetoric of nationalism.

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