

'interpreter of maladies' by jhumpa lahiri essay sample

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The life in exile inevitably evokes a lot of problems an individual should face. However, often people are unprepared for numerous difficulties they may face, while being in exile that makes their life absolutely unbearable. In this respect, it is important to underline that people are forced to live in exile and if they are exiled they are forced to abandon their native country against their will. The cause of exile is due to political or punitive reasons. Jhumpa Lahiri, through the book, "Interpreter of Maladies" has illustrated the theme of exile quite well. Exile Various writers have explored the theme of being exiled. The exile experience, the question of identity, and the expatriate experience have furnished remarkable material in the world of fiction. Expatriation has increasingly become one of the crucial events of the contemporary world. In the "Interpreter of Maladies," the characters are faced with a common problem, referred to as maladies. All of them seem to be suffering from the difficulty of adapting to a new place and trying to forget the memories of the previous home country.

The book entails a collection of few stories regarding different communities from South Asia. The novel interprets the emotional affection and affliction that was experienced by exiled people. When people are required to move from their original place of dwelling to a new place, various consequences accrue to their lives. There are various reasons that forced people into moving from their native land, most of which affect their families in a great manner. The writing of the novel was inspired and motivated through experience. Currently, millions of people live away from their native lands because of one reason or the other. Expatriation accounts for a notable percentage of populations in many countries across the modern world.

Population dispersal is a factor that results into numerous economic implications on the society. The effects of exile are felt both locally and internationally.

In most places around the world, factors that lead to immigration among most people include gender, religion, race, economic situation, political reason among others. In the "Interpreter of Maladies," most characters seem to have experienced life in at least two countries that is, their mother country and their host country. The people in exile are often in an unsettled state of the mind. This is because their minds are mostly in their home country while they are physically in a new country. Some stories in the book illustrate how people are exiled or expatriated from South Asia to USA. The theme of exile or expatriation elaborates on the loneliness of dislocation they faced, sense of identity and belonging, and cultural displacement. For example, Sanjeev is not amused when Twinkle refers to their new residence as 'blessed' because he is not a Christian (Lahiri 137). The exiled people faced with the question of identity because of being culturally displaced.

According Lahiri, all those who grew in a new country were called the immigrants. They faced the sense of alienations and distressing for their children. The families experienced difficult lifestyle in the new country. The explanation of the context of exile can be evaluated in relation to Marxist theory. Particular communities were exiled from the rest of the society because of their social class. Boori Ma loses her economic and financial power when she is exiled from Pakistan into India (Lahiri 72). Later on in the story, she is expelled from her area of residence because of a stolen basin.

This illustrates the demeaning and embarrassing incidences that people in exile experience. According to Marxist theory, social conflict often arises since the natives of a country often feel threatened by the presence of expatriates. Communities from South Asia encountered social conflict in America since they were not wealthy enough to cope with the lifestyle in the country. Because of exile, communities felt alienated in their new place of residence, and this situation affected their psychological growth.

The emotional effects were extended to those children who were born in the new country. The immigrants faced cultural dilemmas in the foreign country. The pocket watch of Lilia's father remains set in the standard time of Pakistan in spite of living in a foreign country (Lahiri 30). In an attempt to stick to their culture, the situation gradually imbibes the cultural ways of the new country. The most affected people were those children who were born in the new country since they were groomed to be bicultural and bilingual. These children faced cultural dilemma and displacement. Lahiri felt just as much at home in her homeland. When she was young, she was psychologically affected by the state of their parents. It was because she felt belonging to nowhere. This psychological dislocation caused her to feel a similar sense of alienation. It was hard for the author to adapt to the new life in America. Despite taking long to adapt, she later managed to be conversant with the new lifestyle.

Under the exile context, Lahiri describes that even the expatriates discriminate against each other. Lilia's father is keen on reminding his daughter that although he shares a lot of similarities with Mr. Pirzada, the

map showed that he was still an Indian (Lahiri 25). This indicates the deep-seated divisions that expatriates reveal towards each other even way away from their native land. Although the first generation was affected by the immigration, their children were most affected. It was difficult for the children to grow up in a new place knowing they have a motherland. The emotional concern affected their growth and exploration of the new aspect of life in a new country. This is because since they felt undermined and inferior. It was difficult for Lahiri to practise or explore fully her passion because of the feeling of fear. This feeling of alienation faded as she grew up. The novel was written through her experiences combined with her acute observation and creativity that was cultivated through her life. It was easy for Lahiri to explain the consequences of immigration such as isolation and loneliness since she was a victim.

She explains that nothing is as difficult as attempting to adjust to a new environment. The concept of writing the book grew when she was still living as an immigrant in America. She dreamt of a paradise she wanted to live. In the *Interpreter of Maladies*, there are other stories that illustrate how children suffered. Stories explain how exiled people do not feel appreciated or accepted in whatever they do. Children were the most affected people in the new land. The struggle went up to their old age where it was still hard to accept the reality of their new lives. In the context of exile, there are various illustrations of racialization impacts of the identity. It concerned the formation of the South Asian American in this book. The race functioned as a maker of group homogeneity.

The story presents the ambiguous status that resulted in the contradiction of racial definition of South Asians in the America. The issue of a conflict identity has been common in the ethnic American literature. The context portrays a race problem of determining the identity. Lahiri concentrated much on South Asian America characters in the racial identity form. However, each story explained in the novel brings the issue relating to racialization. In the "Interpreter of Maladies," the dissimilarities between two traditions proves that the race cannot be the only factor that connects among human beings (Lahiri 4). It is evident because even in the absence of racial discrimination, differences in nationality, culture, and religion there will always be misunderstanding among people. The term "sex" as explained based on the western world shows that race functions as a way of homogenizing people based on the race (Lahiri 107). The issue of identity affected those who grew in America while still knowing they had another home country.

Lahiri explained the race as a social construct that brought certain community to participate in a common duty. Race was used when Lahiri was growing up in America to inform perceptions of identity and foreignness. When one is in exile, he or she will always face the consequences of being alienated. Despite the parents having stayed in the country for many years, their children still felt as aliens. This has never changed in the United States despite the fact that during World War II, it fought against the racism of Nazism. In that time, people from South Asian American were perceived as

foreigners. The situation of alienation was aggravated by the fact that South Asian Americans were not fully recognised as part of United States occupiers.

Confusion led to labelling of groups in order to differentiate them from others. In summation, ethnic American writers such as Lahiri endeavour to apply the experiences they got through their lives. Nationality, ethnicity, and race are considered when identifying certain people. However, Lahiri elucidates the problems related to race as the identity marker just on appearance. It was evident that the racial identity had no intrinsic relation with national identity. However, Lahiri explains that racialization affects modern assumptions regarding ethnicity. The functions of race in identifying a particular community is an indicative of the way Lahiri constructed a conversation among her pieces. In these narratives of Lahiri, the reality about racialization in the U. S embedded as a determining factor of identification.

Works cited

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Interpreter Of Maladies*. 1st ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999. Print.