

The collection of stories deals with the everyday lives of indians abroad

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Interpreter of Maladies Good Evening, My name is Trisha Hariramani. A student of The Cathedral Vidya School Lonavala Batch IBDP1 doing my English SL in the A1 course shall be presenting my individual oral presentation on the Character of Mrs. Das in the short story of The Interpreter of Maladies. The collection of stories deals with the everyday lives of Indians abroad (mostly Bengali immigrants), as they go out into the New World with their Indian Diasporas at hand. Jhumpa Lahiri tells us tales of complicated marital relationship, infidelity and the powers of survival.

Her short stories, Interpreter of maladies, the blessed house, Mrs. sen, and the treatment of Bibi haldar, are exclusively about women perceived through the eyes of a third person. Each of these female characters has the common motif of exclusion and to a certain extent the pursuit for fulfilment. I am going to be solely focusing on Mrs Das's character, her traits and personality. In this story of cultural shock, the opening sentences which describes a bitter quarrel between Mrs.

Das and her husband over who would take their daughter, Tina, to the bathroom, convey to the reader that not only does she have constrained marriage but also that her children are an obligation to her. Jhumpa Lahiri expands on this initial impression of disgust and depicts Mrs. Das to be self engrossed. She is portrayed to be indifferent to her surroundings. For instance when the men at the tea stall try and tease or entice her by singing Hindi love songs she doesn't pay any mind at all. Her lack of understanding of the language reveals her cultural obliviousness. To add to this prevalent obliviousness the author describes Mrs.

Das's physical appearance and sense of clothing intently. By doing so she evokes Mrs. Das's American background and upbringing. " Her hair was shorn a little longer than her husband's" as opposed to the long black hair of a stereotypical Indian woman, this indicates that she is modern and doesn't have a traditional Indian mindset. Lahiri explicitly portrays the ignorance of Indians abroad towards their homeland as well as the negligence of their cultural values. Jhumpa Lahiri could probably relate or has observed this because she was born and raised outside of India.

Instances such as the little boys' amusement towards the picture of " the elephant god" commonly known as Ganpati, who is one of the deities best-known and widely worshipped in India depicts how unaccustomed the Das's were to their Hindu faith. Another example is when Mr. Das inquires about his wife to Tina and refers to Mrs. Das by her first name , this is a confined to be disrespectful in India. The Das's were evidently tourists in their own country and hadn't maintained their Indian Diasporas; these close observations are made through the eyes of Mr.

Kapasi, their tour guide. Mr. Kapasi empathises with Mrs. Das and easily identifies symptoms of the couples strained marriage. Every relationship goes through hardships but theirs was prolonged, and this played like a broken record in Minas' mind. She was convinced that she had fallen out of love with her childhood sweetheart and it dawned on her that she may have missed out on what life had to offer. She reflected her life day in a day out eventually falling out of love with life as well. Mrs. Das was gravely depressed. We could relate her eating habit with this). She believed that her

husband didn't suspect or sense their strained marriage but I reckon he did, he just refused to acknowledge or accept the fact.

Their marital problems are revealed through their constant bickering, frustrated tones, the indifference towards one another as well as the protracted silences. More than that is their total disregard for each other's opinion. For instance, Mrs. Das had thought Mr. Kapasi second job to be romantic. " Mr. das craned to look at her. " What's so romantic about it? His tone was vexing. The essence of her maternity is alas implicit. There are several instances where she displays an unruly temperament as a mother. For example; Not holding Tina's hand as they walked to the restroom, nor did she call on the carpet when Tina fiddled with the lock of the car door. While applying nail polish her daughter's immaterial demand to have some put on her as well was turned down. " Leave me alone," she said turning her body slightly. " You're making me mess up. " Once again expressing her selfish demeanour.

Indirectly implying to the reader to the reader that a bottle of nail paint was more important to this woman than the one she so lovingly conceived her daughter Tina , how the value of love is lost to the realms of a materialistic object which in reality is unimportant, valueless and temporary. In strong comparison, Mr. Das was more of a father figure. He made an effort to mind the children and answer their dewy-eyed queries. " What's Dallas? " Tina asked. " It went off the air," Mr. Das explained. " It's a television show. " This shows us that Mr. Das doesn't ignore his children and that he disciplines them when needed. Don't touch it" Mr. Das warned Ronny. He could see that

the little boy was fascinated by the goat and was tempted to go play with it. Unfortunately, when the child rushed over to play with the goat he just frowned and didn't intervene. Mr. Kapasi finds it hard to believe that the Das's were regularly responsible for anything other than themselves. This is subjective because this may be strange to someone who has been brought up in India but to an American it could be completely normal. In the story, Lahiri distinctly puts it across to the reader that they weren't ready to take on the role of parents, and that they were too young.

Mrs. Das sounds more like a teenager being dragged for a family vacation by her parents. Rather than a mature parent aware of her responsibilities. She came out of hiding behind her dark brown sunglasses only when Mr. Kapasi revealed his second job as an interpreter. The attention that Mr. Kapasi received intoxicated him and made him delirious. Little did he know that her sudden interest in him wasn't genuine and that she had an ulterior motive. Her intentions, which were to relieve herself of her burdensome secret, were blatantly put across when the two were left alone in the car. Mr.

Kapasi reads Mrs. Das like an open book at this point. She confesses to him her adultery, and justifies her doings. Her overwhelmed youth being taken from her, having no one to confide in after a bad day, loneliness, this gives me a sense of why she behaved the way she did and had her unconventional feelings to throw everything away. She was expecting a remedy for the way she had felt, unfortunately Mr. Kapasi had failed to meet her expectations, she also felt insulted by what he had to say to her. This is depicted by the

glare that she gives him. She then turns her back to him and gets out of the car. Is it really pain you feel, Mrs Das, or is it guilt? ”

Mr. Kapasi certainly hadn't provided her with a remedy for her ail, but he got to the heart of the matter. After all he was only an Interpreter of Maladies. I found Mrs. Das's character particularly appealing because of how the story manifested her selfish and egotistical behaviour. Until the very end of the story the reasons for her bad behaviour is a mystery to the reader. As one reads on you are able to empathize with her as she justifies her behaviour and expresses her agony and frustration that she has been suppressing for over a decade. I'd like to end with a quote;