



Maharashtra Education Society's
ABASAHEB GARWARE COLLEGE

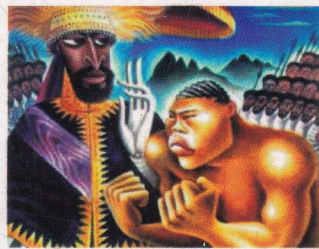


NAAC Re-Accredited 'A' Grade
Best College Award By UoP

&

SAVITRIBAI PHULE PUNE UNIVERSITY
Board of College and University
Development (BCUP)
Sponsored

ISBN : 978-93-84916-92-3



National Conference On 'Re-thinking Diaspora'

20th & 21st Jan. 2015

Organised By
Department of English

Two Days National Conference On
“RE-THINKING DIASPORA”

(20th and 21th Jan. 2015)

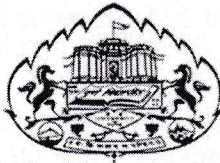


Maharashtra Education Society's
Abasaheb Garware College

NAAC Re-Accredited 'A' Grade

Best College Award By UoP

And



Savitribai Phule Pune University

Board of College and University

Development (BCUD)

Organised by

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in the seminar book are those of author's and not the publishers or the Editorial Board. The readers are informed; ~~errors~~ the publishers do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person for the result of any action taken on the basis of the work. The articles/papers published in the seminar book are subject to copyright of the publisher. No part of the publication can be copied or reproduced without the permission of the publishers.

ISBN: 978-93-84916-92-3

Printing & Published by:



Success Publications

Radha Krishna Apartment, 535, Shaniwar Peth,

Opp.Prabhat Theatre, Pune - 411030.

Contact - 9422025610, 8806664858, 020-24433374, 24434662

Email- marketing@sharpmultinational.com

Website- www.sharpmultinational.com

For

Maharashtra Education Society's

Abasaheb Garware College

Karve Road, Pune - 411004.

Index

Sr. No.	Paper of Tital & Author Names	Page No.
1	Multiculturalism and Use of Language on Social Network Media - a new outlook Shakuntala Vibhute	1
2	Globalization and Knowledge Industry and Management Dr. Roopa Shah, Dr. Ameya Ghanekar	7
3	The Impact of Data Warehousing on knowledge management and communication in educational institute at college level Ms. Snehal Godse, Dr.Manik Kadam	11
4.	Moushumi's Identity crisis in Jhumpa Lahiri's 'The Namesake' Ms. Prajakta V. Chavan	12
5.	Identity in Funny Boy: a journey towards authentic existence Vikki M. Gaikwad	13
6.	Hybridism and Identity Politics in the selected short stories of Jhumpa Lahir Dipali Lodh	19
7.	"Multiple Voices of Diasporic Consciousness in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss and C.B. Divakaruni's The Arranged Marriage" Mr. Banasode Ramadas Shamarao	25

Hybridism and Identity Politics in the selected short stories of Jhumpa Lahir

Dipali Lodh

Asst. Prof., Dept. of English.

Modern College of Arts, Science and Commerce. Pune 411005.

The present paper attempts to analyze three stories from Jhumpa Lahiri's 'Unaccustomed Earth' from the perspectives of hybridity and identity issues. The chosen stories have a common thread running through them. The protagonists are all migrants, trying to achieve a delicate balance between their changed environment and their native ideologies and beliefs.

'Unaccustomed Earth' deals with the changing relationship between Ruma and her widowed father who has found love, again. 'Hell-Heaven' explores the tenuous territory that encompasses the sister-in-law and brother-in-law relationship. 'Only Goodness' is a story that considers the brother-sister equation between Sudha and Rahul and the issues of responsibility and guilt.

The stories are all set in the United States within the Indian migrant community and the central characters are constantly preoccupied with their unique predicaments. Ruma's father has met a widow whom he seems interested in, but he is unwilling to confide in his daughter, who later finds a letter addressed by her father to Mrs. Bagchi, the widow. She posts the letter, indicating her acceptance of the relationship. In 'Hell-Heaven', the unnamed protagonist, known only as Boudi, (sister-in-law) battles her growing attraction for Pranab, her brother-in-law, almost driven to suicide when he finds love with an American girl. The last story has siblings as the central characters. The daughter, bright, intelligent, successful and the brother a failure with a drinking problem. Sudha feels responsible for Rahul's plight, blaming herself

for introducing him to alcohol and then ignoring his drinking habits.

The paper tries to analyze these complex characters in an unfamiliar environment trying to deal with relationships and issues which are very Indian at the core. How Lahiri manages to flesh out the characters and their lives makes for an interesting study of the psyche of the migrant Indian population.

Hybridism and Identity Politics in the selected short stories of Jhumpa Lahiri.

"Human nature will not flourish, anymore than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn out soil. My children have had other birthplaces, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth."

Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Thus states the epigraph of Jhumpa Lahiri's collection of short stories, 'Unaccustomed Earth'. Hawthorne's quote from "The Custom House" probably echoes the sentiments of all the migrant families, who travelled abroad, away from their native land, looking for fame fortune and a better future. India has seen a long history of young men and women, who have travelled abroad for education and employment, often returning to marry and then settling there with their new families. The children of these couples, born on foreign shores, brought up and educated there, often seem to be caught up between two contrastive cultures; on the one hand, the atmosphere at home, which is by and large Indian and on the other hand, the society that they live and function in. This second generation faces an identity crisis and has to deal with hybridism, where they are at odds with home and society at the same time.

Jhumpa Lahiri chooses to highlight the plight of this generation through her short stories in this collection. 'Unaccustomed Earth' is a

collection of eight short stories: five are individual narratives, while three are linked together by common characters and storylines. For this paper, three stories have been chosen based on similarity of theme. They are 'Unaccustomed Earth', 'Hell-Heaven' and 'Only Goodness'.

The first story, after which the collection is named, has as its protagonist, Ruma, a young woman, married to Adam, with a son, Akash. She is pregnant with her second child and has lost her mother recently. The story opens with a visit from her father who is a reticent introverted man. Ruma wonders if she can deal with his visit on her own, Adam, being out of town. The story explores the changing father-daughter relationship as Ruma struggles to communicate with her father, without the familiar buffer that her mother provided. As she tries to cook dishes like her mother did, living up to the expectations of a 'good' daughter, her father reconnects with her son, Akash, teaching him Bengali, reviving the dying garden and the duo of father and daughter move towards a better understanding of each other. The pivot point of this story is the mention of a Mrs. Bagchi, a widow that Ruma's father has met while travelling and with whom he seems to be forming a bond. Like a typical middle aged Indian man, he is not comfortable sharing this piece of news with his daughter. It is assumed that Ruma, will not understand his need for companionship and might even grudge the replacement of her mother in her father's life. This assumption fractures communication between the father and daughter. Before leaving, Ruma's father writes a letter to Mrs. Bagchi and misplaces it. At the end of the story, Ruma finds the letter and fixes a stamp on it intending to post it, perhaps symbolic of a stamp of approval to her father's relationship. It is a coming of age story where Ruma accepts the fact that her father is a lonely man who deserves a second chance at happiness.

The second story is narrated from the perspective of a young girl, who observes her mother and her uncle, Pranab Kaku, and gradually

'RE - THINKING DIASPORA'

realizes that her mother is in love with him. Unhappy in her marriage with a husband who is more than a decade older, the unnamed protagonist is far more comfortable with Pranab. They are closer in age, have similar interests and enjoy each other's company. When Pranab brings a girlfriend, Deborah, into the picture, the despair of the protagonist almost drives her to suicide. In the years that follow, she makes peace with the situation, even comforting Deborah, as Pranab leaves her for a married Bengali woman. The irony is unmistakable and one can't help wondering if things would have been different if Pranab had married his 'boudi' all those years ago. This story explores the delicate sister-in-law and brother-in-law relationship which is a tenuous one. While the two are unrelated, the relationship allows them to be familiar with one another and spend time together without being questioned by society. Pranab is the attractive 'other' man, who fills in the emptiness in the life of his 'boudi'. She flirts with him, spends time with him and secretly desires him. But again, being a good Indian wife, she cannot bring herself to even consider leaving her husband and looking for her own happiness.

The third story has Sudha and Rahul as protagonists. Siblings, they have always shared a cordial relationship since childhood. When visiting home from college, Sudha requests Rahul to buy her some beer, even offering him a drink, which is his introduction to alcohol. This innocent incident is the start of Rahul's gradual descent into alcoholism, for which Sudha holds herself responsible. Years later, after remaining away from his family, Rahul turns up at Sudha's door in a sober and rehabilitated state. The siblings bond again and one evening Sudha decides to leave her son Neal with Rahul and enjoy a night out with her husband. The couple returns to find the baby in cold bathwater and Rahul passed out drunk in the study. The incident brings to fore, all the doubts and insecurities Sudha has harbored against her brother and the guilt that she feels. This story focuses on the brother-

sister relationship, in which the older sister feels responsible for the younger brother and his actions. Traditionally it is the responsibility of the older sibling to care for the younger one and these lessons stay with Sudha even though she and Rahul are adults with independent lives of their own.

These three stories look at relationships as they change and evolve. The point to ponder is whether being away from their native land has changed these characters and their capacity to make decisions. Ruma, a typical daughter is perhaps the most malleable of the three women. Although she initially seems a bit reluctant if curious about her father's love life, she does accept Mrs. Bagchi's role in her father's life. She does not confront her father or try to establish a conversation with him about his new found love interest. This would be inappropriate in the Indian context and Ruma, is an Indian daughter at heart. In India, while a second marriage for a man is not frowned upon, it is usually a marriage of convenience. The man is 'allowed' to marry if he is young or has young children that need a mother. But the evolution in thought is evident as Ruma feels it important that her father have companionship and love even at his age and subtly encourages the relationship. But there is no overt communication between them.

Sudha, cannot seem to break the mould of the 'elder sister' figure. Indian values run deep and even though she knows that Rahul is an adult, responsible for his own life, her sisterly guilt continues to haunt her. Being an older sister, she feels responsible for his failings and sees her own happy successful life as a contrast to his miserable existence. But despite her worries and misgivings, the siblings do not discuss these issues and part on a sad note. We feel that Rahul and Sudha will never meet again.

Boudi, does not have the confidence to break out of her identity as a wife and mother. Her core Indian values make her feel guilty for the feelings that she has for Pranab and she never acts on them. Her

'RE - THINKING DIASPORA'

attempt at suicide makes clear the passion she has for Pranab. But she inevitably cows down to pressure and assumes the role of an onlooker, lurking in the sidelines of Pranab's life.

All the women are traditional to a large extent. They are passive observers, not doers. This is something that is inculcated in them since childhood and they live their lives according to these indoctrinations. Their identities are pre-formed and they slip into them as is expected of them. Although the Indian community, settled abroad has thrived in the changed environment, the people and their values stay unchanged and rigid. Roles of men and women are cut and dried. Women are the nurturers, taking care of home and hearth, but the men are the pro-active ones. These women do not try and change the old value system or even challenge it. It is amazing to note that despite their exposure to a foreign land, culture and values, all three protagonists remain very 'Indian' as far as their life choices and behavior goes.

Although a life in the United States has resulted in making these women 'hybrids', as far as their lifestyles are concerned, one can't help thinking that these women are all caught in no-man's land, negotiating identities and trying to carve out a niche for themselves on this new, unaccustomed earth.

Bibliography:

1. Lahiri Jhumpa, *Unaccustomed Earth*. New Delhi: Random House India Pvt. Ltd. 2008.
2. Venugopal C. V., *The Indian Short Story in English*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1983.
3. Naik M. K., *A History of Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Akademi Publications, 2006.
4. Iyengar, K. R. S., *Indian Writing in English*. Bombay: Sterling Publication, 1985.
