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Role of Effective Communication in Healthy Relationship: A Perspective of Marriages in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreters of Maladies*

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Abstract:

Communication is the overtone argument of Jhumpa Lahiri's all masterpieces and her debut work *Interpreter of Maladies*, which offered her around the world recognition, will be a standout amongst them. *Interpreter of Maladies* is a collection of nine flawless short stories, with an array of themes and sewed through admirable narrative styles and writing techniques. The ways Jhumpa Lahiri portrays relationships, in particular the institution of marriage has been emphasized by this paper and also discuss over the role of effective communication to conserve them sound furthermore concordant. Marriage as an institution bloom with love and understanding and fades with suspicion and non-communication. In all her stories cohabitants' maladies are the consequences of their ineffective communication or the communication breakdown and silence. As Lahiri says in an interview with Vibhuti Patel: "The characters I'm drawn to all face some barrier of communication. I like to write about people who think in a way they can't fully express"(Lahiri, —Maladies of Belonging). The repercussion of lack or absence of communication due to incapability or unwillingness on conjugal associations highlighted by her, but also suggested the remedy such as the communication, effort of both partners in the relationship and their mutual acceptance, at the same time. How communication influences matrimonial acquaintance ships of the accumulation of both natures either arranged or otherway, furthermore knotted under diverse circumstance and social atmosphere will be the basic topic of the paper.

Keywords: Communication, marriage, silence, incapability, unwillingness, remedy, sharing experience, relationships.

Jhumpa Lahiri is one of those gifted writers of contemporary Indian English Literature who provide expression on diverse aspects of personal and social existence of Indian people living in foreign lands and struggling to assimilate in a new culture and retaining their root values simultaneously. Successful transmission of these aspects of people, won her global appreciation with a series of awards and accolades. Lahiri entered into the literary world with her wonderful narrative style and writing techniques and reached millions of hearts. In her debut work named *Interpreter of Maladies*, Lahiri knitted nine lovely tales in a magical manner in addition to different reach for topics starting with those settler experiences, Indian tradition, identity crisis, absence of communication; issues in associations have been elucidated by the accumulation. Lahiri presents the romantic relationships, especially marriage —as the unifying theme for the collection and marriage is indeed a key element of most of the stories. (BradaWilliams 455). Exasperates marriages due to silence and communication gap are one of the highlighted aspect of the ingathering. The manifestation of communication and its absence has been utilized by Lahiri profoundly in all herworks and *Interpreter of Maladies* is not exclusion.

The theme of communication has been spiced up with structural techniques and ultramicroscopic subtle elements of the characters by the author. The interesting aspect of Lahiri's writing is mainly her dedication to the simplicity of her language, which at

the first sight can seem vague, but there is a precise choice of sentences, descriptions and even words as West points out: —*Lahiri's prose is both plain and yet simultaneously rich and evocative* (West 259). Lahiri speaks about her preference of plain prose to the interviewer Isaac Chotiner: “*I like it to be plain. It appeals to me more. There's form and there's function and I have never been a fan of just form*” (Lahiri, Jhumpa Lahiri). She experiments with various narrative voices in her work, what makes her works even more interesting, because of including a variety of genders, nationalities and ages. Lahiri compellingly exhibits that all marriages, arranged or not, are unique and relying on the exertions and the communication of the individuals. A marriage is the knot that two people tie with love and concern for each other however; one of the most mandatory ethics of this association is communication. The pair shares their hopes, aspirations, grief and experience of life, but the stories full about hitching euphoria could not be anticipated here by the reader. Lahiri crystallizes different attitudes and attributes of marriages in this collection of tales, but one thing which bore upon the married couple most is silence and miscommunication between them. A number of couples introduced in these narrations by the writer to whom in an initial gaze readers find normal, but as soon as the stories grow the tension and turmoil between them is rather noticeable. This paper purports to realize the outcome of communication on marital relationships with example of these four stories of the ingathering.

A TEMPORARY MATTER

The very beginning and most appropriate example area turbulent marriage of A TEMPORARY MATTER. This is the story of a young Indian couple Shobha and Shukumar and their unstable marriage, furthermore which is along the edge of the passing due to collapse of functional communication between pairs. In one case it might have been a solid association they impart as Shukumar retrospect, those blissful days of their marriage, when Shoba used to be really conscious of getting up just about food items beforehand so that it can help her to welcome the sudden passing landing of guests. He recalls his birthday party tossed by Shobha at seeking for candles:

“Shoba had thrown him a surprise birthday party last May. One hundred and twenty people had crammed into the house—all the friends and the friends of friends they now systematically avoided. Bottles of vinhoverde had nested in a bed of ice in the bathtub. Shoba was in her fifth month, drinking ginger ale from a martini glass. She had made a vanilla cream cake with custard and spun sugar. All night she kept Shukumar's long fingers linked with hers as they walked among the guests at the party”. (Lahiri 9)

Just after the demise of their newly born baby when Shukumar is on an academic conference the circumstances are completely converted. Here the sorrow of the lost child and their incompetence to discuss their trauma causes a communication breakdown in the relationship of Shukumar and Shoba. The trouble lies in Shoba's inability to share her burden of ire and frustration of losing the baby for whose arrival she had planned elaborately. Therefore her incompetency to the duly realization of punishing trio Shukumar, herself and their healthy relation resulted in other way around. Despite existing under the same deck both avoid each other as much as possible and this muteness results in the destruction of their delightful relationship. The communication gap stretches out to that degree the pair act as unaccustomed to one another. Somehow the distress of the passing of their newly born baby weighed over everything and just silence that continues between them in place of love and tenderness. Lahiri writes:

“he thought of how he and Shoba had become experts at avoiding each other in their three-bedroom house, spending as much time on separate floors as possible. He thought of how he no longer looked forward to weekends, when she sat for hours on the sofa with her colored pencils and her files, so that he feared that putting on a record in his own house might be

rude. He thought of how long it had been since she looked into his eyes and smiled, or whispered, his name on those rare occasions they still reached for each other's bodies before sleeping." (Lahiri 4-5)

Silence prevents them from sharing the grief of their baby which is equal for both. Shukumar mourned not just over the loss of the baby, anyhow over the dying relationship with them as well. Nevertheless, the repeated power interruption occurred as a beam of hope to give them an opportunity to lecture over their secrets and to fix up the issues they cause. However, right away both took it as an intense task, but there is no alternative except to confront each other and spend one hour in a blackout. Somehow this power outage gives them the freedom to speak and partly express their accurate feelings mainly because they cannot see each other properly. Shukumar initiated it with serving supper in the faint light of birthday candles he might come up starting with the kitchen, that remind him of a surprise party Shoba threw for him. However a conversation which was limited to appreciation of food in start turned into an exchange of confession and unburdening of their heart when Shobha suggested playing a game of secret revealing in the night-time. Shobha says:

"I remember during power failures at my grandmother's house, we all had to say something... A little poem. A joke. A fact about the world." (Lahiri-12) *"Let's do that... Say something to each other in the dark... How about telling each other something we've never told before."* (Lahiri-13)

As shortly as they divvy up the unknown things ice in the relations starting to get mellow. Eventually the Communication came as an ointment to heal their wounds and the game of confession gave them courage to face each other and they started to unfold their heart and unburden themselves from the longtime secrecy and pungency resulted due to lack of communication. Lahiri says:

"Something happened when the house was dark. They were able to talk to each other again. The third night after supper they'd sat together on the sofa, and once it was dark he began kissing her awkwardly on her forehead and her face, and though it was dark he closed his eyes, and knew that she did, too. The fourth night they walked carefully upstairs, to bed, feeling together for the final step with their feet before the landing, and making love with a desperation, they had forgotten".

After the final and shocking revelation of Shukumar about the gender of the child and that he had taken him close before cremation, the game hits its culmination. Somehow they both are affected by same grief and trauma realized by Shobha lastly and the wrath and frustration that retain with her after passing of baby flow out in a torrent of weeping. Lahiri points out the importance of communicating and its essential effects on the strengthening the relationship and presenting it as a remedy and cure to such ill unions: —*Lahiri seems to tell us how essential it is for individuals to communicate to reciprocate to each other. It is this which connects individuals, releases one from emotional exile and strengthens relationships (Chaudhury 17).* The remedy in the form of communicating and fully expressing each other feelings could heal the marriage of Shoba and Shukumar, only if there was an effort to start. With the help of power outage, the step has been taken and a temporary matter of blackout makes them realize that this is a temporary bad period of their relation which comes to an end after sharing the grief with each other. Coming out as bliss, an honest communication exculpated their hearts and got them in concert once again.

INTERPRETER OF MALADIES

Next two couples are from the namesake of Lahiri's dazzling collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* one of the most spacious story too who won Lahiri O. Henry Award for Best American Short Story. Primarily one is Mr. Das and Mrs. Das, an American destined Indian couple who is on vacation in India with their three children. The Das family is guided by Mr. Kapasi, a tour guide and also an interpreter at the doctor's office to their approach from hotel to Surya temple, Konark in Puri. The loveless marriage of Das couple explored by the readers with Mr. Kapasi's eyes. In the first instance of contending over taking little girl Tina to the bathroom for the last when Mrs. Das not joining her family for visiting temples, there is an amount of claiming episodes can be accrued which gave expression to complications of their marriage. Das couple, Mina and Raj knows each other from their early youth as well as share same school and college as their parents were also best friends. They liked passionately each other and share everything to that extent that they never felt the need of any other companion. This is the base of their presently cold marriage, but as soon Mina gave birth to their first child, Ronny quickly follows their marriage things entirely transformed. The reason was communication and its absence, as they both stuck in new responsibilities of parenthood overlook their relation. The lack of communication makes two kin, strangers who imparted all that and closer to one another. Lahiri says:

"After marrying so young she was overwhelmed by it all, having a child so quickly, and nursing, and warming up bottles of milk and testing their temperature against her wrist while Raj was at work, dressed in sweaters and corduroy pants, teaching his students about rocks and dinosaurs..... she was left at home all day with the baby, surrounded by toys that made her trip when she walked or wince when she sat, always cross and tired. Only occasionally did they go out after Ronny was born, and even more rarely did they entertain. Raj didn't mind; he looked forward to coming home from teaching and watching television and bouncing Ronny on his knee". (Interpreter of Maladies-64)

The frustration which came about of the breakdown of communication makes her revolting not only toward Mr. Das but also to their children and to the institution of marriage. Mr. Das is totally ignorant of it and not even notice Mrs. Das's signals of her desperation over their marriage furthermore left her emotionally alone with dissatisfied married life and burdened with three children at a very young age. As a result, a conjugal strife breaks in their lives, leading Mrs. Das to get involved in an illegitimate relationship that also gave her guilt and pain in place of satisfaction. Throughout the tour, the negligence of Mr. Das toward Mrs. Das and their marriage is more visible. However he is queasy regarding capturing each paramount minute around him with his camera, observing everything through the lens of the device, but stays completely disengaged to outer world especially, of the desperate affections of his wife. The omission of communication and ignoring each other leads to dissatisfaction and finally seclusion to their life. Mrs. Das find herself unable to confess the mystery of Bobby's origination and endured from guilt. The secret has been imparted absurdly to Mr. Kapasi by her with a thought that he could help her. She admits that:

"I feel terrible looking at my children, and at Raj, always terrible. I have terrible urges to throw things away. One day I had the urge to throw everything I own out the window, the television, the children, everything. Don't you think it's unhealthy?" (Interpreter of Maladies-65)

Marriage is a harmonious association which grows under love and affection, and with trust which maintain by sharing feeling with each other, but a lapse in communication steals the charm of their marital life and in spite of living with each other they led an isolated and loveless life. Somehow Mr. Das's unawareness of the disintegrating state of their marriage, is also initiated by Mrs. Das's unwillingness to share her feelings of dissatisfaction and desperation with her husband. She says to Mr. Kapasi:

“Don’t you see? For eight years I haven’t been able to express this to anybody, not to friends, certainly not to Raj. He doesn’t even suspect it. He thinks I’m still in love with him.”(Interpreter of Maladies-65)

The only remedy is confession and effort to recover the conjugal bliss, but till the story come to an end everything in their relationship remain unaltered similarly as Mrs. Das’s lack of capability serve likewise boundary in the middle of the two.

An alternate married couple of this presumed story is Mr. and Mrs. Kapasi, whose instance of married life can be received only through Mr. Kapasi as his better half is not actually present in the story. When Mr. Kapasi meets Das couple and noticed their cold relationship he reminded of his own_Mr.Kapasi observed:

“-The signs he recognized from his own marriage were there –the bickering, the indifference, and the protracted silences.”(Interpreter of Maladies-53)

How their association went under a trauma before long after the demise of their first child due to typhus,the period has been restocked by him. This time communication obstruction arises from wife’s side, she blames without words Mr. Kapasi for his inability to spare their son.His profession as an interpreter under a doctor has never been evaluated by his wife as it reminds her of the deplorable episode. To provide all facilities for his wife and children, Mr. Kapasi worked hard and gave up his dream career, but unsuccessful to recapture those appeals about their hitched existence. Silence, isolation, estrangement are the things which remain between the two in place of love, care and imparting. This silent and loveless marriage has been endured by both of them as a routine.Lahiri says:

“Ordinarily he sped back to Puri using a shortcut, eager to return home, scrub his feet and hands with sandalwood soap, and enjoy the evening newspaper and a cup of tea that his wife would serve him in silence. The thought of that silence, something to which he’d long been resigned, now oppressed him.”(Interpreter of Maladies -60)

Both Mr.Kapasi and Mrs.Das are dissatisfied with their life and longing for communication with one another however reason is diverse. —*While they both can be seen longing for communication with others, Mrs. Das is a woman with a life of relative comfort and ease who yearns to be freed of the responsibilities of marriage and children, and Mr. Kapasi is a man who has given up his dreams to support his family and who only yearns for some recognition and interest in his life* (Brada-Williams458). When Mrs. Das unravels her secret, all dreams of Mr.Kapasi about their future distance communication has broken.But there is one positive thing also after meeting with Das couple, Mr.Kapasi exited with more understanding about his marriage and with a hope to attempt to reconcile his relationship with his wife.

THIS BLESSED HOUSE

The following couple has been selected from *This Blessed House*, the seventh story of the prizewinning collection. The exhibit story highlights the role of effective communication in the married life of an Indian newlywed couple Sanjeev and Twinkle. They met each other just four months ago in California, through their parents and after a brief long-distance courtship they decided to live together for eternity. Furthermore the young couple moves into a new house shortly after being wedded and as they try around investigating and fixing up the house,Twinkle’s gleeful possession with the Christian iconolatry left by previous tenants irks Sanjeev.The issue starts from here the middle of the two, as Sanjeev wants to toss the relics away, but Twinkle collects them on the mantle and indicates them off toward every opportunity. These religious artifacts could not magnetize Sanjeev while Twinkle is passionate about them.Lahiri says:

“These objects meant something to Twinkle, but they meant nothing to him. They irritated him”. (Lahiri 138)

She further says:

“It was a quality he did not understand. It made him feel stupid, as if the world contained hidden wonders he could not anticipate, or see”.(Lahiri 142).

The crashing of their two exact different personalities and their powerlessness to comprehend each other, especially Sanjeev, is the root of the disagreement between the couple. Although, Sanjeev is precise and self-cognizant of nature, but at the same time Twinkle similarly as her name infers is free spirited and very much fastidious. Being unabated to express his disappointment with Twinkle’s actions, Sanjeev adjusts to the situation wordlessly. Even though Twinkle shows no enthusiasm toward domestic chores, Sanjeev find himself incapable to state his opinion or just communicate with her on these tiny matters. Sanjeev thinks:

“They didn’t bother her, these scattered unsettled matters. She seemed content with whatever cloths she found at the front of the closet. With whatever magazine was lying around, with whatever song was on the radio-content yet curious.”

Accepting her victory over himself silently, Sanjeev regret over not accepting one of those perfect Indian bride his mother suggested. Somehow he doubted over his love for Twinkle as not likewise she is quietly opposite of the girl Sanjeev wants to get married. This perception is quite common upon Indian husbands in different diaspora, whose majority expects the same from their wives. —Women are expected to be docile homemakers. But their girlish charm may not be a quality an Indian husband in the diaspora may admire, or tolerate in wives (Jain 2315). Her carelessness in the household and cooking mirrored her completely a spontaneous and lively girl personality. Twinkle was so self-obsessed and did never pay attention to his preferences and this cemented a wall between them. Twinkle’s lack of sense for putting everything in the order and being too chaotic for Sanjeev’s only highlight his disappointment with her.

“Now, in the second month of their marriage, certain things nettled him—the way she sometimes spat a little when she spoke, or left her undergarments after removing them at night at the foot of their bed rather than depositing them in the laundry hamper”.(Lahiri 142).

To get rid of arguments and disagreement he chose to remain mute and follow her. His lack of understanding and also his inability to even try to comprehend his spouse’s interest isolates him, because he is unfit to stand outside his comfort zone and try something new and strange to him. *“—While Twinkle appears to embrace difference, Sanjeev finds himself unsettled by it”.* (Williams 76). But due to inability to comprehend his feelings Sanjeev harbored so much negativity for his wife that despite being together, he felt dejected over house-warming party likewise twinkle seems totally unaware of his feelings. Nevertheless, claiming a love marriage these two conflicted personalities fails to live up each other’s expectations in lack of communication. In place of accepting everything silently, effective communication can only help him to come out of frustration and negativity toward their relation.

THE THIRD AND FINAL CONTINENT

After projecting these dysfunctional marriages, Lahiri also displays a couple who provide for another measurement of the part of correspondence over blissful hitched existence. The last story presents a remedy to all turmoil and tensions of married life. In the final story of the accumulation *The Third and Final Continent* Lahiri anticipated the positive example of a blissful outcome of marriage through the narrator and his wife Mala. Although the struggle

of the Indian narrator to assimilate in different countries is the undercurrent theme of this short tale, but the relationship of the couple has equal importance. The narrator settled down in America and his marriage is arranged by his elder brother, the only one who has the liberty to do that as his parents are dead. The narrator took it as a duty to be fulfilled. However, he regarded the arranged marriage not only as a moral duty, but also as a sign of heritage from India, which he is obliged to obey. *“He regarded the proposition as a duty expected of him, as it was expected of every Indian man”*— (Brada-Williams 99). When Mala, his wife came to Boston, afterward six weeks of their marriage, they were stranger to one another. It was Mala who took the initiative, responsibility to take care of their relation. The narrator was used to live an isolated life in America. He says:

“I waited to get used to her, to her presence at my side, at my table and in my bed, but a week later we were still strangers.”

The narrator also affected by his mother's insanity after the death of the narrator's father and the haunting images of the mother's madness expand his desire to live isolated and it serves as a barrier in his new and arranged marriage with Mala. It is Mala who puts efforts into the marriage with her willingness of trying to be part of the narrator's world and being a good wife is a remedy towards the isolation of the narrator. Although he is worried about her protection, but takes responsibility dutifully. *“—The city thus appears inimical to the Indian female other and it dawns on him that he will have to protect Mala from the unpredictable dangers of this unknown urban environment”*. (Brada- Williams 100). Mala wrote a letter to the narrator in English and knitted two sweaters for him to show her care and responsibility of a good wife. She tries to please him and shows him her intentions to be part of his new life by writing in English: *“—I write in English in preparation for the journey. Here I am very much lonely. Is it very cold there. Is there snow. Yours, Mala.”* (Lahiri 189). Mala's exert to be a proper wife narrows the gap between them and also brings back narrator's good memories of his culture. For narrator Mrs. Croft proved to be supportive to make him realize that it is the time to take the next step in their married life. Her praising of Mala, warm the narrator's attitude towards his wife:

“At last Mrs. Croft declared, with the equal measures of disbelief and delight, I knew well: She is a perfect lady! Now it was I who laughed. I did so quietly, and Mrs. Croft did not hear me. But Mala had heard, and, for the first time, we looked at each other and smiled.”

The moment in Mrs. Croft parlors lessens the distance between the narrator and Mala and they start to find a way to each other. The narrator starts not only to communicate her, but also share his experiences and spending time with each other unites two strangers in a foreign land. He shares:

“I told her about my voyage on the SS Roma and about Finsbury Park and the YMCA, and my evenings on the bench with Mrs. Croft. When I told her stories about my mother, she wept. It was Mala who consoled me when, reading the Globe one evening, I came across Mrs. Croft's obituary”.

The present story gives the message that if one partner show signs of isolation or remoteness as from the narrator's side another one should effort to lessen the distance between two as Mala did. The endless efforts of Mala help the narrator to crawl out the shell of isolation and finding regard for his wife, which unites the couple in a happy and healthy concord.

CONCLUSION:

Jhumpa Lahiri portrays a number from claiming couple in this award winning gathering yet all these five couples are primarily chosen for this paper, whose marriages influenced because of lack of communication or miscommunication or due to inability or unwillingness to communicate. Shoba and Shukumar in *A Temporary Matter* suffer from their breakdown of *communication* together, after the trauma of losing their child and their failure on examining their inclination through this misfortune. However, the communication breakdown in *Interpreter of Maladies* is unmistakable that's only the tip of the iceberg of Mrs. Das's side over her husband's. Also, it convolutes their ailment about marriage, mainly because it leaves her husband, unaware of Mrs. Das indifference and mere disgust towards him on the one hand, and on the other he is unaware of the infidelity and illegitimate son she keeps in secret. However in the marriage of Mr. Kapasi, the absence of communication and constant silence turned into routine and none of the partners are able to change it. The breaking down of communication also leads to inability to compromise, which is the case of Sanjev in *This Blessed House*, who cannot fully express his assessment and dissatisfaction with Twinkle's actions and her lack of care for the household. The communication barrier, which keeps the narrator in *The Third and Final Continent* in getting to know his wife properly, complicated and infected their marriage, until the time of application the remedy in the form of constant talk, in order to obtain a healthy union.

One more thing which presents the composing enchantment of Jhumpa Lahiri is that she portrays all stories in progression so while the first one starts with inability to fix the broken marriage, the last ends with a healthy union. "*Frequent denial of human communication can be found in all of Lahiri's short stories and indeed are the defining, structuring elements of her short story cycle*"..... "*By placing Shoba and Shukumar's story in her readers' minds first, Lahiri is able to inform readers of the final story of the ways Mala and her husband could have failed as a couple and as parents, thus emphasizing their experiences as achievements rather than mere norms*" (Brada-Williams 453). If the author has projected tensions, isolation, estrangement and turmoil in marriage due to absence of effective communication, she additionally offered a remedy of spending time together, sharing experience, communication and efforts of both partners in relationship to eradicate all these sick indications of broken or exasperated marriages.

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