



PROJECTION OF EXILIC EXPERIENCES IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S "IN OTHER WORDS"

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ABSTRACT

Over many centuries there has been whopping in migration and it reaches at its new apogee due to globalization, internationalization and the act of migration is a production of self imposed or forced emigration and it acutely underlines socially, politically place of refugees, exiled population. The exiled or dispersed communities are bound to the former homeland and they even feel a sense of isolation in alien land and Indian writers and poets portray this picture in their writing. Many Indian diasporic writers explore various themes such as, issues of migration, self-exploration, self identity, exilic experiences, and cultural differences in their writing. Jhumpa Lahiri has been writing for a few years on migration very effectively as a voice of Indian migrants. In other words displays the umbilical attachment of the protagonist with her homeland. Jhumpa lahiri shows a glimpse of diasporic consciousness throughout the novel In Other words. The prime aim of research paper is to exhibit the deep layer of diasporic consciousness from the perspectives of Jhumpa Lahiri in the novel In the Other Words and the research paper also attempts to analyze exilic experiences and linguistic identity.

Key words: *Exile; longing for homeland; past memories; boundary restoration; restoration of homeland.*

MEANING OF EXILE:

Exile is often taken to refer to various national, cultural, religious and political groups and people. It was originally used for the Jews, dispersed after the Babylonian captivity and then with the passage of the time for the Jews living outside Israel or the dispersed among Gentiles. Jewish experience with exile started in the late eight century. Etymologically the

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term 'Exile' is resonant with the ideas of forced emigration, displacement, social and political marginalization of an individual or a group of refugees. It aligns to experiences of loneliness, foreignness, homesickness and an enduring longing to remigrate to the place of origin. Generally Exile denotes mass deportation or banishment as a means of punishment. The term Exile is interchangeably called as Diaspora. So Exile refers to either self imposed emigration or forced displacement from origin country to another country.

INTRODUCTION

Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the towering figures in Indian diasporic writing. She has written well acclaimed books. Her writing mostly talks the untold stories of Indian migrants. As being a second generation diasporic writer she is keeping the flame of migrants issues. She heavily pays concentration to mapping the nostalgic state of migrants, their isolation, and their voices. She has penned two short story collections and two noted novels. She grew up at Rhode Island in America. Jhumpa Lahiri is known as a foremost diasporic writer despite dwelling in America. She presents Indian culture, homeland and language in her writings. In the novel, a bitter journey of narrator can be experienced and somewhat Lahiri doesn't embrace with unknown language as if refugees, migrants don't adopt the foreign culture. The novel has several features of exile ; isolation from native land, linguistically fragmentation, identity crisis and longing for homeland.

In the novel "*In Other words*" apparently protagonist feels a sense of loneliness, a sense exiled, and a feeling of nostalgia. The research paper attempts to focus a light on exilic condition of Jhumpa Lahiri and shows her fractured identity. In other words is a travel book and a book of memory. It recounts childhood memories. Jhumpa Lahiri was fond of learning Italian language since 1994. she had strong ambition to learn Italian language under any pretext and finally her willing power makes her a writer of "*In alter Parole*" The book is originally written in Italian language, and with the contribution of Ann Goldstein it has translated into English language .

Repercussion of exile in "In other words":

The novel begins with the diasporic feeling

I want to cross a small lake.

It really is small, and yet the other shore seems too far away, beyond my abilities.

I'm aware that the lake is very deep in the middle, and even though

I know how to swim

I'm afraid of being alone in the water, without any support. (Lahiri 3)



Lahiri is determined to cross the lake but at the same time she does feel the depth of the unknown lake which seems to be made a bridge between home land and host land. Lake is a strong metaphor of isolation and desperation. As she comes across the boundary she gets diasporic feeling in Italy.

The novel is set in Boston as well as in Rome. The prolonged journey of Jhumpa Lahiri starts in America and even ends in America. Through the voluntary migration Lahiri explores the temporary exilic condition of herself and her family too. She was raised in Rhode Island where she could get an essence of Bengali. As she goes to Italy, in the womb of alien land she comes to know the importance of English language. She becomes linguistically exiled as she reaches upon the unknown host land, Italy. It is significant to recall here the great lines from Sujata Bhatt's poem 'Search for Tongue' that also shows linguistically exiled

*'You ask me what I mean',
...by asking I have lost my tongue
I ask you, what you would do,
If you had two tongues in your mouth and lost
the first one, the mother tongue, and could not really know
the foreign tongue.
You couldn't use them both
together even if you thought that way. (Bhatt 86)*

Likely Bhatt Lahiri confronts the daunting host culture throughout her prolonged stay in Italy and where she paints her separation and isolation. In preparation,

*I decide, six months before our departure, not to read in English any more.
From now on, I pledge to read only in Italian. It seems right, to detach myself
from my principal language. I consider it an official renunciation. I am about
to become a linguistic pilgrim to Rome. I believe I have to leave behind
something familiar, essential. (Lahiri 37&38)*

As being a guest Lahiri doesn't make a communion with Italian language while staying with Italy as a foreigner. She perceives that if I were spoken and dreamt in Italian language, I would separate from her homeland language and simultaneously she confesses that I have left behind her native language and its vitality. Her isolation could be noticed in the light of her deportation to Italy. She further writes about her past memories and her country. Femke Stock argues about home, it can be connected to memory and identity, to origin as well as to hybridity. (Stock 27). Home employs the narrator's attachment, linguistic identity and past memory. In the light of her linguistic disorientation she writes My relationship with Italian



takes place in exile, I a state of separation. Every language belongs to a specific place. It can migrate .it can spread .But usually it's tied to a geographical territory ,a country .Italian belongs mainly to Italy ,and I live on another continent where one does not readily encounter .I think of Dante ,who waited nine years before speaking to Beatrice .I think of Ovid ,exiled from Rome to a remote place. To a linguistic outpost, surrounded by alien sounds.I think of my mother, who writes poems in Bengali, In America .Almost fifty years after moving there, she can't find a book written in her language.

In a sense I am used to a kind of linguistic exile. My mother tongue, Bengali, is foreign in America. When you live in a country where your own language is considered foreign. (Lahiri: 21 and 22)

Narrator thinks that she is being exiled linguistically from America as Great poets of world Dante and Ovid were exiled from Rome to remote place. However the emigration is done voluntarily, but in fact the land is still unknown in many ways. She does not find solace with the Italian language and people of Italy. She is hampered by unfamiliar sounds although she having strong desire to learn host language. The novelist recalls her mother who writes herself in Bengali language but when we settled in America she couldn't find a book written in Bengali language. Lahiri reminds that a bygone day that makes her isolated .Exile is a one of the features of the novel.

As Edward says Exile the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home; its essential sadness can never be surmounted. (Said 2001:173) In the novel "In other words" the protagonist and her family are victimized by the unknown language and culture.

The traumatic condition of Lahiri and her family really started when they arrive in Rome .First they take an apartment on Via Guilia on rent. On the next day they arrive very late at the apartment and as they try to open tirelessly the door it won't open and nobody was there to help them and even telephone is not in functioning and they were confused for a while. Simultaneously her children became very hungry and upset .They start crying with saying that they want to go back to America soon.

The unfamiliar country couldn't give the taste of the origin country to Lahiri and her family. Exile is resonant of a state of sojourn, estrangement and homesickness. (Martin Baumann 2011:23).

Lahiri and her family become restless and feel insecurity in Italy and it might have happened due to different culture, language and customs. Lahiri realizes that there is a distance between



the Italian language and mine. She takes guidance to learn Italian language from various teachers. For it she used to gather many words and phrases and was trying to add in her dictionary. But when she does this act she thinks that she is heavily struck down by the unknown phrases and words. The Italian words and phrases are daunted her because the host language is not in her blood and in her bones.

Host language and the country itself make a bridge between the protagonist and her home language. The long journey is beleaguered to narrator. In Italy protagonist receives unbearable experiences and at the same time she lingers her youth period when she was in America with her parents. They were separated by boundary and left their loved ones. They looked forward very eagerly to the mail of their brothers and sisters. They could read and re-read the mail and letters. It shows that they were connected through homeland language and culture. The letters in their mails might have been evoked their attachment and solidarity.

As the novel moves on Lahiri does realize that my humble intention is very noble but learning a foreign language is the fundamental way to fit in with new people in a new country. It makes a relationship possible. Without language you can't feel that you have a legitimate, respected presence. You are without a voice, without power. No chink, no point of entrance can be found in the wall. I know that if I stayed in Italy for the rest of my life, even if I were able to speak a polished, impeccable Italian, that wall, for me, would remain. I think of people who were born and grew up in Italy. (Lahiri 131)

Though narrator immerses herself in learning the foreign tongue in Italy she realizes that her solely intention couldn't be fulfilled. There is an invisible wall between the native speaker and the migrated people or group. It would remain until migration goes on.

Finally with all hardships Lahiri wrote *In Other Words* in a library in the ghetto in Rome. It exhibits the narrator's arrival and departure from Italy. It is a sort of linguistic autobiography and self-exiled portrait. Eventually Lahiri returns to America permanently.

CONCLUSION:

Migration leads troubles for migrants whether it is self-imposed or forced emigration. We can say that the narrator in the novel desperately struck down when she gets into the unknown country and tries to revive the past memories. In fact Exilic experiences are naturally jolted the lives of migrants. At the end of the day we can say that exilic experience is a simply production of crossing boundary.



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