

Tribhuvan University

Decoding The Code in The Selected Stories Of Jhumpa Lahiri

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by

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled

"Decoding the Code in the Selected Stories of Jhumpa Lahiri"

is my own original work carried out as a Master's student at the Department of

English at Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus except to the extent that assistance

from other's in the thesis design and conception or in presentation

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All sources used for the thesis have been fully and properly cited. It contains no

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institution, except where due acknowledgement

is made in the thesis.

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August 2018

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "**Decoding the Code in the Selected Stories of Jhumpa Lahiri**" submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus Tribhuvan University Kathmandu, by Nabina Khanal has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

The study in the selected stories “A Temporary Matter,” “Sexy,” “Interpreter of Maladies” of Jhumpa Lahiri has tried to unveil modern women breaking the patriarchal code for their happiness and freedom. Women are still controlled by certain moral codes imposed on them and labeled as good women, bad women, home maker, mistress. Patriarchy imposes these labels on women based on their actions and choices. So despite achieving equality, modern women are not as free as their counterparts are. All these stories' female protagonists have violated sexual or moral codes to achieve freedom, happiness or satisfaction which makes them a decoder.

In the stories, the prominent characters Shoba of “A Temporary Matter,” Miranda of “Sexy,” Mrs. Das of “Interpreter of Maladies” are indulged in breaking of societal codes knowingly or unknowingly. They are all suffering from certain kinds of lack in their relationships. The only way to fill their lack of happiness was to decode the code of societal norms. When they broke long followed social codes it made them more happy, relieved and pleased. All of the three stories have a protagonist woman who has broken the social code by her choice and is happy about it. Hence, any code good or bad if it cages women from pursuing what they want or desire, they will be decoded sooner or later is what the research has shown.

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Decoding the Code in the Stories of Jhumpa Lahiri

Coding, Decoding and Lahiri's Short Stories

This Thesis explores how Jhumpa Lahiri's selected stories "A Temporary Matter," "Interpreter of Maladies" and "Sexy" present female characters who are against the established gender role expectation to be followed by women. Lead female characters of these stories decode the established social codes of patriarchal society for their freedom.

Random House Webster's College Dictionary defines code as "Any system of rules and regulation" (257). Society has set certain rules and regulations for a woman to become women. All economic, political, religious, social and cultural institutions are by and large controlled by men. All these things are taken as pillars of patriarchy. This is well knitted and deep-rooted in its system which makes it indestructible. Patriarchy has forbidden women to enjoy some of basic human right and desires by setting up set of codes saying it is wrong, sin or disgraceful for a women. Sex, romance, flirting, outing and parties, drinking, smoking, having an affair outside marriage, earning more than their spouse or partner, living away from ones family/husband are few rules woman are not expected to break they are expected to have grace, beauty, nurturing attitude, stay domesticated and maintain a conjugal family life forever.

Breaking the system of rules and regulation is 'decoding'. The decoding is the system breaking the established codes, rules and regulation. The lead female characters of the story have either violated or completely shattered expected societal code. Shoba , female protagonist of the story " The Temporary Matter" , Mrs Das in "Interpreter Of Maladies" and Miranda in "sexy". Miranda and Shoba are independent working ladies who do not seek man's help to sustain their living. In fact, Shoba in

“The Temporary matter” is the one who earns for the family of two. Miranda is single, lives alone and earns for herself. She is open to experience sexual satisfaction with a married Indian man Dev. Unlike Miranda who knowingly breaks the societal code from the beginning Shoba does follow the patriarchal code of living with her own husband Shukumar. Though Shukumar and Shoba are emotionally detached from each other, they have common interest. He was not there for her when she lost her baby in a miscarriage past that there is no romance, sex, genuine conversation between them. At the end of the story in the series of confession Shoba tells him that she is planning to live alone and has already bought an apartment for herself here Shoba chooses her personal freedom , exploring life away from a toxic relationship and might probably eve want to get involved romantically with another man in the future. In this way a woman born in strong patriarchal Indian society decodes the code.

In the third story “Sexy’ protagonist Mrs. Das is a beautiful woman married young, mother of three children is seen bored and unhappy with her marriage. In a trip to India she openly shows her interest in Mr. Kapasi their tour guide a married and aged man. She admires his job as medical interpreter rather than looking after of kids or listening to her husband talk or asking him to click he photos with kids and family like most of the married. Mrs. Das is bored from a regular domestic life with husband and three kids apart from whom she has no friends and no one to talk to, she is lonely and is not appreciated the way she wants to be. She confesses having sex with her husband friend while he was staying at their place during one of his job interview. Her son Bobby was not from her husband, he was a result of her lust for physical intimacy with Mr. Das Punjabi friend. Having physical relationship with another man, conceiving his children and raising it as Mr. Das son, opening her family secret with

Mr. Kapasi and not feeling guilty about what she has done as that's what made her happy and free makes Mrs. Das different from typical Indian mom/housewife and a decoder.

An Indian woman decoding patriarchy, earning for herself, taking her life decision herself and leaving her husband for her personal freedom is a slap to traditional concept of woman role in society and home. This thesis attempts to explore why these women broke the established code? What was the expected code they were supposed to follow?

There lacks true love and affection in characters of these stories. It happens to be there in the beginning of their relationship but gradually partners get used to one another and the love vanishes. Lack of communication, emotional detachment leads the characters the story to become more selfish ultimately they go against codes of society for own freedom. In the absence of one they are involved with another person because these women have desire which is more than just food, clothes, work and money. Though, they are still hiding secrets and pretends to care for their partner but they are suppressed under the code of rules and regulation set by Patriarchy which they breaks in their own way at different instances.

Miranda, Shobha and Mrs. Das are all living a secret life which is not visible to their partner and certain events, happening or realization in their life has compelled them to break the societal code. All these characters are fighting inner battle of what is wrong and right, if they do what is perceived right by the society they will not be happy nor free and when they broke the social code to experience freedom equal to their male counterparts they had to keep it secret in the fear of being morally judged. Their life takes a different turn when these women go ahead and make decision which they think is best for them and takes control of their own life. Woman struggles a lot

from her paternal home to society for equal rights and liberty challenging the male domination. The stereotypes of both Indian Women and American women are at the heart of conflict in these three stories.

Jhumpa Lahiri has attained Master's Degree in English, Creative Writing, and Comparative studies in Literature and the Arts as well as a PhD in Renaissance studies. The story, "Interpreter of Maladies", was chosen for the O Henry Award for best American short stories. Lahiri is a recipient of the Transatlantic Review award from Henfield foundation and the fiction prize from Louisville review. *The New Yorker* has published three of her stories and has named her as "one of the best writers under the age of 40". The greatest award to her talent is the award of the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

After publishing, many critics and commenters commented about her debut book collection of stories "Interpreter of Maladies – Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond". Different critics have put their views from the beginning to the present time. In the process of developing each story in this book critics have found distinct things about their journey of the characters' lives and their changing behavior differently. Donald Ray Pollock states:

Miranda met her lover in a Filene's. Dev spends every day and night with Miranda while his wife is away on a trip. He buys her flowers, they go to movies and to dinner each night. At one point, as they visit the Mapparium, Dev whispers to Miranda, "You're sexy." (32)

In the above extract, Pollock sees theory supporting women's rights on the grounds of equality and sexes. Miranda does not share with Laxmi the new developments and her own life. A week earlier at Filene's a Boston department store, she met a handsome middle-aged man named Dev, shopping at the cosmetics counter for his wife. Miranda

and Dev, whose wife is on a brief trip to India, have also started an affair. Dev and Miranda spend nearly every night together. Miranda also wants to follow equally with man because her husband also has affair. She claims that woman has rights on the ground of equality and sexes.

At work, Laxmi and Miranda continue to chat about the affair carried on by the husband of Laxmi's cousin. One day, Miranda recalls that Dev's wife is due to arrive at the airport on her journey home. While Dev is at the airport to pick up his wife, Miranda goes shopping to buy clothing and accessories she thinks which are appropriate for a mistress. In addition to this, Minima Lunuma describes about feministic perspective in Lahiri's "Sexy". Lunuma says:

Though articulated before that Asians are feminine and western is the masculine, it seems to be negative again in this story. For the first reason, the Asian manifestation of Dev proves his masculinity in his dominance over Miranda. Dev dominates Miranda over the many aspect of life and Miranda continues to be the weaker sex: the feminine Western. Miranda manifests a lot of feminine aspect that renders the notion of the masculine western useless. (n. p)

In Western perspective Miranda has role the feministic that shows Dev proves his masculinity in his dominance over Miranda. Miranda recalls the only Indians she had ever encountered before Dev: A family named the Dixits in the Michigan neighborhood where she group. Miranda's memories are troubling: the neighbors subjected the family to considerable social domination, finding their habits and customs exotic. By contrast, Miranda now finds herself enthralled by Indian culture, and she explores Indian cuisine and books in nearby shops. And then she seems weaker than before life in the feminine Western. Beth Coon says, "Interpret Maladies"

explains emotional feeling of human. He adds:

Men and women who strive for balance in arranged marriage, resisting the strain of prolonged homesickness, isolation and guilt; feelings deeply rooted in the complex wave of human relationship that after the way time, place and expectations are perceived. (98)

In the above lines, it shows feminism as a doctrine advocating social, political and economic rights for women equal to those of men. During the ride to the temple, the Das family engages in middle activity: Tina plays with the door lock, the two boys snap their chewing gum, Mrs. Das paints her fingernails in boredom and Mr. Das tinkers with his camera. Kapasi observes them. Mrs. Das converses with Kapasi and learns he has another job as a translator for a physician and his Gujarati patients. Intrigued with Kapasi's description of this job as a translator for a physician and his Gujarati patients, intrigued with Kapasi's description of this job, Mrs. Das questions him further. Mrs. Das's interest sparks in Kapasi a sexual infatuation toward her. Kapasi notices Mrs. Das's sensuous appearance.

C. J. Singh says, "Interpret Maladies" describes sexual relationship. He claims:

Her sudden interest in him, an interest she did not express in either her husband or her children, was mildly intoxicating. When Mr. Kapasi thought once again about how she had said 'romantic' the feeling of intoxication grew. He begins to fantasize a romantic relationship with her. (n. p)

Here, Mr. Kapasi tells the Dases about his other job as an interpreter in a doctor's office. Mrs. Das remarks that his job is romantic and asks him to tell her about some of his patients. However, Mr. Kapasi views his job as a failure. At one time, he had been a scholar of many languages, and now he remains fluent only in English. He

took the interpreting job as a way to pay the medical bills when his eldest son contracted typhoid and died at the age of seven. He kept job because the pay was better than his previous teaching job but it reminds his wife of their son's death. Mr. Kapasi marriage was arranged by his parents, and he and his wife have nothing in common. Mr. Kapasi is seduced when someone so young and beautiful like Mrs. Das described his job as "romantic" he begins fantasizing about Mrs. Das

Similarly, Mike Galke says, "A Temporary Matter" illustrates "not digress, Lahiri then used several instances of clearly painting the word-picture of how Shukumar noticed as overt difference in Shoba's contributions in their apartment and her seemingly loss of physical passion or even subtle nurturing" (n. p). Here in this line, instead of addressing the pain Shoba is going through and is handling herself despite his failure Shukumar discusses the changes he feels about her 'little things in life' such as his wife's habit and his feeling about his work. For instance, even though it is clear that the couple is not feeling the same way they used to as though things have changed, this is the only truly visible through the little observation Shukumar makes. He finally realizing that there is something terrible and sad that is happening in their love life and even the various Hindu patriarchal codes might not stop Shoba from leaving him

Although, all these critics and reviewers have examined these stories from different point of view and then arrived at several findings and conclusion. Since this topic is about "Decoding Of The Patriarchal Code" the selected three stories of Jhumpa Lahiri it explore love, life, sex, passion, emotion, freedom and life choices theses woman has mad exploring this facet this research tries to present how they have broke the long established societal code without being extremely radical and violent. Protagonist woman of the stories are modern woman and approach of modern

feministic thought is visible in the story.

Feminist criticism is a politically powerful tool whose main task is to make the patriarchal society realize that their rigid rules and regulation and to make women conscious of the age. The role of women in the society is cultural constructs because it is the society which shapes them as females. *Oxford American Dictionary And Thesaurus* defines feminism as “A movement or theory supporting women’s rights on the grounds of equality and sexes” (479). Feminism does have achieved to provide women all over the world with equal rights and freedom but still societal code has restricted women to be as free as men. Women still do not have power to control their life and decision as society constantly judges them and puts women back into the narrow closet of limited rights and freedom. Power is an essential weapon in human society. A power relation varies according to circumstances. The power of men no longer holds constancy. They visualize a crumbling of male power which will pave way to several alternatives. By this cultural process, the masculine in our culture has come to be widely identified as active, rational, creative where as the feminine, by systematic opposition to such traits. They have come to be identified as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional and conventional. Feminist literary criticism establishes its relation to the movement of political feminist for social, economic and cultural freedom and equality as it emerged as an out of the two centuries old struggles for women's rights.

Patriarchy ideology underestimates the females by comparing them with waiting ovum. They argue that males ate something superior and definite having separate identity and history. As pointed above male members of the society to their best. Females were behaved as the second sex. That is why directly or indirectly females started revolting against this kind of suppression and patriarchy. In the same

way feminist criticism sometimes raises the anger against the patriarchy to create a less oppressive environment for women.

Society considered anything unnatural if she tried to disobey the social norm. In this concern, Troil Moi has presented Beauvoir's view in *Feminist literary Criticism*: "Feminism is a cultural construct: One's not born women, one becomes one." (209). The role of women in the society are cultural constructs because female infants don't know what they are, they are just like clay and it is the society which shapes them as a female. Power is an essential weapon in human society. Feminist criticism is a politically powerful tool whose main task is to make the patriarchal society realize that their rigid rules and regulation and to make women conscious if the age. Kate Millet reminds that faultfinding primary condition of feminism.

The feminist movement emerged to raise the women's status to keep them alive in literature. During the period women writers became more excited and valued their sexes. They did their best to be recognized through their writing. The central point in Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is that both men and women are perfect human beings. There should not be any' matter of superiority and inferiority. They are themselves a singular, separate individual. Caroline Bird in the cover page of the book *Born Female* has inscribed that the females are exploited brainwashed, under privileged being by birth (1963). Another American journalist, Betty Friedan challenged the femininity of woman of feminine natured in her book in the *Taahe feminine Mystique* (1970) that all women were happy as housewives.

Thus it is clear all feminists call for changes in the social, economic, political, cultural order to reduce and eventually overcome this domination against women. The

bottom line of this subordination is the lack of freedom. Feminists address these issues to instill a sense of human existence which is devoid of sexual biasness.

Simon de Beauvoir's book entitled *The Second Sex*. (1949) is very important on this ground. Through this book Beauvoir establishes the principles of modern feminism. She focuses upon pitiable condition of women in patriarchal society stating that where a woman tries to define herself, she starts by saying "I am a woman. No man would do so . . . man defines the human, not women" (134). It reveals the fundamental asymmetry between the term masculine and feminine. Woman has reverted into a lopsided relation with man, he is the one, she is the other" (135). According to her, all the male writers assume that the females as a negative "object or other to man who is supposed to be the dominating and defining subject". Here man is assumed to present humanity in general.

In the book, the problem Beauvoir emphasizes that women to perceive man as self (as subject) and themselves as other. And she explicitly exposes the condition of women so that they could realize their existence. She says:

Women have been essential as the one born to be a wife or a mother. But she is stripped off motherly rights because motherly rights are also overpowered by fatherly rights. A wife's duty is to be in the bed to gratify the husband's lust but the husband is not aware whether he is gratifying the bust of his wife. (145)

Myth for Beauvoir is explained by its usefulness to man. She defines as one of those snares of false objectivity into which the man who depend on ready-made values rushes headlong. Women, therefore is inessential in the eyes of men who want her to accept as 'other.' She has indicated the advantages of recognition of feminist criticism and theory which are useful to learn social, institutional and personal power relation

between the Sexes.

Likewise, feminist critics use wit to deconstruct the male dominated ways behaving and seeing. Feminine is a second and cultural constructive form of women. Then women reach a certain age and understand their gender, they are of cultural norms reversed for the female. Society considered anything unfeminine and unnatural, if she tried to disobey the social.

In the story “A Temporary Matter” protagonist female character Shoba is going through emotional turmoil in her life she has lost her baby in a miscarriage, Her husband has locked himself within four walls of the house and has not given any emotional support to her. He is never there for her. To set herself free from a loveless marriage She finally decodes the convention during series of power cut by confessing him all the lies she told, the secrets she had kept as he result they come close physically but she doesn't let physical intimacy become barrier for her to stay in that toxic relationship. On an emotional note like a strong independent woman she rents an apartment for herself away from Shukumar and plans to start a new life for herself.

In the story “Sexy” Miranda is dating and sharing an intimacy with an Indian man, Dev. She knows from the very beginning of their affair that Dev is married man and is definitely of not her race or culture However keeping aside marriage, race and nationality she pursue relationship with Dev for personal happiness, to fulfill her bodily desire. She chooses her happiness and sexual freedom which is also her women right.

Born in a rigid Bengali society Mrs. Das, mother of three children and wife of Mr. Das, openly shows her interest in another man Mr. Kapasi work as part time interpreter for a doctor. In the later part of the story Mrs. Das had broken another

strict code by sleeping with her husband's friend and giving birth to his child. Sexual freedom is what she desired, though she loved Mrs. Das, she had intimate relationship with his friend. She breaks code of being perfect Indian wife by having sex with his friend to get rid of her loneliness getting pregnant by his child without letting both of the man knows whose child it was.

The characters of the selected stories had normal life. There was love, affection, hope and passion in their relationship. Gradually, the problem of trust issue, lack of communication, emotional detachment, leads the characters the story to become faithless. In the absence of someone they are involved with another person because these women have desire which is more than just food, clothes, work and money. Though, they are not disloyal but they are suppressed under the code of rules and regulation set by the society. Miranda, Shobha, Mrs. Das are all living a secret life which is not visible to her husband. All these characters are fighting inner battle of what is wrong and right, they are not appreciated and loved by their partner. Their life takes a different turn when these women go ahead and make decision which they think in best for them and takes control of their own life.

The thesis focuses Lahiri's short stories as the mirror of modern society. The society has explored and has the life, thoughts, emotional and psychological perception of its people. Old days forever kind of love, unbreakable trust, faith and truthfulness lack in modern era. The main objective of this study is show changing role of woman in modern time their changing expectation and desire.

She is the best- paid dancer in a bar of the notorious Mira Road. Leela has a husband who is already married, a few lovers whose names she can't remember, and the best friend Shobha. The stories deal with the always shifting lines between gender, sexuality, and social status within a framework. Lahiri further notices:

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. (19)

Mandira uses the word patriarchy to refer to kinship systems in which men exchange women. Symbolically power that father's exercise within these systems. This power, she says, is responsible for the psychology of women. It is also a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Mandira decodes by earning in same restaurant where Shobha works.

Dev and Miranda's relationship in "Sexy" exists because of sex attraction stemming from materialistic obsession and fashion. Their first interaction takes place in a department store where Miranda buys cosmetics essentially to continue interacting with Dev. Miranda is compelled to change herself to fit Dev's preferences. From this moment on she becomes infatuated with him and his culture. She learns Indian words, buys Indian groceries, and reads Indian maps. This sets the stage for miscommunication. Lahiri states:

There was something he'd sworn he would never tell her, and for six months he had done his best to block it from his mind. Before the ultrasound she had asked the doctor not to tell her the sex of their child, and Shukumar had agreed. She had wanted it to be a surprise. (21)

The excerpt lines articulate the notion that Asian's sexuality cannot be considered independent of one another, nor can they be regarded as merely preservative separate.

Regarding miscarriage, her husband wants to hide and misguide through doctors.

Really, Shobha gets an idea to lose her pregnancy.

Decoding of Sexual Code in “Sexy”

Miranda a 22 years old young, single and beautiful woman is physically attracted to Dev, who shares Indian descent, is much older and Married. Miranda is informed in their very first conversation in a shopping center that he is buying cosmetics and beauty products for his wife but she still fantasizes Dev. “That day, stopping to smell one of the more pleasing cards, Miranda noticed a man standing at one of the counters. He held a slip of paper covered in precise, feminine hand” (85).

This is inner thought Miranda battled when she saw Dev for the first time at a shopping center buying female stuff and toiletries. She has noticed every bit of him which indicates first sight lust she had for a irresistibly good looking man Dev.

“The man was tanned, with black hair that was visible on his knuckles. He wore a flamingo pink shirt, a navy blue suit, a camel overcoat with gleaming leather buttons” (86). These line from the text showcases how Miranda attracted for Dev at the very first sight. He was delight to watch and she carefully marked his physical feature, his clothes and his attributes but she obviously is not emotional about this relation she wants him by her side, walk with him, date him, sleep with him but won’t want him as soul mate or life partner. A Young woman fantasizing older man is obvious breaking of societal code. Also, Miranda attraction is a slap to social convention which forbids woman to have sexual fantasies or get attracted to man from different race.

“And those are for her?”

“Who?”

“Your aunt Mira.”

“They’re for my wife”. He uttered the word slowly.” (88)

Dev has cleared his relationship status in his very first conversation with young Miranda but that didn’t stop attraction. A Societal thought that woman are always emotional and want relation to turn into marriage not for sex is decoded by Miranda. In fact, *sexy* explores Miranda’s effort to become perfect mistress for Dev. Being Dev mistress she explored all her sexual urge as Dev made her feel like no other man from her past did.

“Dev was always first to pay for things, and hold doors open, and reach across a table in a restaurant to kiss her hand. First to bring her bouquet of flower so immense she’d had to split it up into all six of her drinking glasses, and the first to whisper her name again and again when they made love” (89).

Describing the reason for falling for Dev Miranda state these lines, Dev is a complete gentleman to her and pleases her in bed. His presence makes her happy unlike Shoba and Mrs. Das Miranda is happy with her relationship and sexual life, her only problem is to leave Dev is he isn’t hers and their relationship is bound to end sooner or later. When she realizes her relationship could end someone else’s marriage and that Dev has no emotional strings attached to her but is just spellbound by her long legs and sexy persona she chooses to break up. Miranda starts and ends relation thinking for herself which is not what society consider a mistress would do. Woman who is indulge in sexual relationship with a married man in society are said to be home breaker, gold digger and woman’s enemy but breaking society assumption on her relationship with Dev she calmly enjoys their time together and leaves him without any drama or scene

Simone De Beauvoir in her book “The Second Sex” (1949) had state about the role patriarchy and society has prescribed to become woman “Women have been essential as the one born. To be wife or mother. But she is stripped off motherly rights overpowered by fatherly rights. A wife’s duty is to be in bed to in the bed to gratify the husband’s lust but the husband is not aware whether he is gratifying the lust of his wife” (145). Miranda has gratified her lust with a man who isn’t her husband being in his bed as a mistress gives her no sense of guilt. She isn’t ruining his sex life with his wife nor coming in between to break their marriage, secretly fulfilling passion for love and sex is what Miranda has done which is decoding of sexual code. She decoded this rule for her satisfaction and happiness. Being with Dev makes her feel sexier, happy, desired which she never felt before. A woman thinking about her happiness over what’s right and wrong is rare and like Lahiri’s other character Miranda is one of such rare woman.

“You’re Sexy, ’he declared

“What did you say?”

“You’re sexy.”

Miranda sat down again. Though she knew it meant nothing. Her heart skipped a beat. Rohin probably referred to all womenas sexy. She remembered the day in Mapparium standing across the bridge from Dev. At the time she thought she knew what his words meant. At the time they’d made sense. (107)

Here when little Rohin called Miranda sexy her definition for the word sexy changed. She realized that it was only her beauty and physical attraction that Dev was attracted to and she felt worthless. Even 9 year old called her sexy and nothing more than that. She found her vahilue diminishing if she continues to be just a sexy mistress for Dev.

This self realization makes her heart concern more for herself and her future to come. All this time she was simply trying to please her man which also indicates pleasing patriarchy but from now she wanted to free herself from tag of Dev mistress and become something more significant.

Miranda is open to sexual relationship with an older man from different race, she do not believe in sex after marriage concept, she could easily leave Dev to start a new life and relationship. Miranda has broken different expectation that society has from woman to stay virgin before marriage, not to be with a man who is married or in relationship, to be emotional and submissive. The only reason why she choose to be different from most of the other woman is patriarchy was because decoding this code made her free and happy. Her previous action of being with Dev and her later action to leave Dev was to be happy and free.

Changing Of Gender Role In “The Temporary Matter”

The story “A Temporary Matter” takes reader into the house of Shukumar and Shoba who are struggling hard to overcome the trauma of losing their first born. Lahiri has subtly shown how Shoba who should be more emotional, broken, stressed after miscarriage actually makes herself strong and gets back to work and keep herself busy while Shukumar hibernates within four walls of his house avoid work, contact and communication with his wife Shoba who lives with him in the same house. Its role is reverse in Shoba and Shukumar’s case. Shoba not only is strong but she solely takes the responsibility of the entire house , earns in the family while Shukumar is unemployed her husband has no problem with her earning, coming home late, giving no time to him and taking responsibility of entire house.

“It astonished him, her capacity to think ahead .When she used to do the shopping, the pantry was always stocked with extra bottles of olive and corn oil,

depending on whether they were cooking Italian or Indian” (6). Shoba was the one who earned, she used to buy all the necessary stuff for home. A woman earning and a man staying at home is not widely appreciated in society. After the death of their child a rift arises between the couple. Shoba is seen more courageous to deal with this stress. She keeps herself busy with work. Shukumar on the other hand stays at home engaging himself inside the walls. He even fails to maintain proper communication with her. After losing her child in miscarriage, not getting any emotional support from her husband, dragging further relation with no romance, communication, intimacy, future plans and mutual support Shoba eventually gives up on Shukumar. In her strategy to bring back old spark they play confession game during power cut which does bring them close and on a happy note she decides to leave the house with subtle hint that she might come back to Shukumar if he makes proper effort.

The baby had been born dead. Shoba was lying on a bed, asleep in a private room so small there was barely enough space to stand beside her, in a wing of the hospital they hadn't been to on the tour for expectant parents. Her placenta had weakened and she'd had a caesarean, though not quickly enough, the doctor explained this things happen. (4)

The trauma and pain of Shoba can be experienced when doctor informed her about the death of her baby. When she was lying in a small cabin without her husband Shukumar by her side, the feeling of left alone during the most critical and heartbreaking stage of her life was the reason she could not trust Shukumar emotionally again. The love she had was gone and now this relation was just a responsibility imposed on her with whom she had to live with. “He thought of how long it had been since she looked into his eyes and smiled or whispered his name on

those rare occasions”(5). Shoba clearly had disdained herself with Shukumar to set herself free she had to either ignore or leave him.

Judith butler states “The pattern of women’s lives, their expectation and idea, their orientation to social reality are significantly shaped by the models of womanly conduct set out in stories, legends and song preserved from the past” (257). As butler says women have followed certain pattern since past because it was prescribed to them by their past. Shoba too follows all the codes to keep her marriage, she isn’t complaining when Shukumar was not with her when she lost her baby, when he doesn’t work nor maintain physical and emotional closeness with her. In the later part of the story she fixes her relation with her husband and informs him that she is leaving him to live alone. Woman earning, making decision at home, working late, leaving her husband, staying away from husband without divorce is not what women do, that is a complete decoding of gender role and women role. Simone de Beauvoir, in her book, *The Second Sex* states that “One is not born woman, one becomes woman” (102). One becomes woman in patriarchy when She obeys her husband decision Keep conjugal family life , have kids and look after family stays with her husband through the thick and thins of life Shoba isn’t an ideal wife or woman for patriarchy she is a decoder who kept her happiness, success, peace of mind and happiness above her marriage. Shoba is a new woman who didn’t accept to drag failing relationship just to keep up with social code. She has instead played a reversed gender role in the story. Like men do in most of the patriarchal Indian household in their family she earns money, she works late, she gets up and goes to office early, she doesn’t care about household, she has even stopped paying attention to her looks and makeup.

“Shukumar gathered onion skins in his hands and let them drop into the garbage Pail, on top of the ribbons of fat he’d trimmed from the

lamb. He ran the water. In the sink, soaking the knife and the cutting board, and rubbed a lemon half along his fingertips to get rid of the garlic smell. (5)

Shukumar cooked meal, cleaned the mess and served it for both of them. He even knew techniques to get rid of garlic smell, such are the attributes society finds in woman especially in a married woman.

With her strong will power Shoba planned to live alone and leave the man she had loved and married to because it was clear Shukumar cowardly could not talk to her straight when the light is on, he had no guts apologize with her make the first move to save their marriage. Despite being together they were apart .To set herself free from her past she left Shukumar and his house with no divorce, there is subtle hint she might come back to him if he makes an effort to communicate and be more open to her or she might even start a new life with someone new away from him in both ways she has freed herself from the responsibilities of saving her marriage and went away to start a happy beginning freed from past trauma and social code.

Challenging Marital codes in “ Interpreter of Maladies”

Lahiri’s story “Interpreter Of Maladies” opens in a road trip of a Das family with Mr. Kapasi as their tour guide. Mrs. Das a Bengali woman, mother of three kids still is much young and unlike typical mother or wife she doesn’t give any attention to her kids or husband. She is rather seen caressing herself and very much annoyed with her kids and husband. “The little girl stuck out a hand. ‘Mine too mommy, do mine too’ ‘Leave me alone,’ Mrs.Das said, blowing on her nail and turning her body slightly. ‘You’re making mess up” (48).

In the above stated line an attitude of Mrs. Das to her daughter request to get nails painted is rudely discarded by her. Mrs. Das obviously is not a caring mother

which is very uncommon with Indian mother. Grown in strict codes in Bengali family Mrs. Das has no attributes of typical mother or a wife her attitude towards her kids is against patriarchal norms.

“In patriarchal society women are like objects having no agency. What they should do and not is usually determined by convention which is totally biased. In such context, women aim to break the convention by exploring self”. (214)

Millet statement about woman exploring self when they are binded by lot of social agency is very much the case of Mrs. Das. She was married young, She fell in love with Mr. Das and her entire life revolve around this man she got married to him, become his friend to girlfriend and wife it was like a set up where she had no option but to go with the flow. She had no friend and no life outside periphery of her domestic life in such suffocated relation she broke patriarchal code herself to explore herself, to explore flirting with another man Mr. Kapasi and to explore physical relationship with Mr. Das friend and getting pregnant with his child were the rigid patriarchal norms Mrs. Das broke without her husband knowing about.

We married when we were still in college. We were in high school when he proposed. We went to the same college, of course. Back then we couldn't stand the thought of being separated, not for a day, not for a minute. My entire life I saw him every weekend. Either at our house or theirs. We were sent upstairs to play together while our parents joked about our marriage. Imagine! They never caught us at anything, though in a way I think it was all more or less a setup.” (62)

Mrs. Das had no chance to escape from patriarchy when she was with her parents, her marriage was set up from the time when she was very young. When you meet same man everyday at college, at home, during weekend and spent almost every second

with him its obvious to fall in love and consider him as her partner when she only had him everywhere she went. Though their marriage was love but for Mrs. Das this love was forced by patriarchy. She never got chance to meet any new man, she never was free to go on a date, make many friends, flirt, talk, make a circle, have some casual sexual experience apart from her partner. Her reason to cheat her husband with his friend was an outburst of her desire which she could not fulfill when she was young and free. She unapologetically cheated her husband, had sexual relationship with his Punjabi friend, conceived his child and was raising him as Mr. Das son. From not taking care of her kids, cheating husband, getting pregnant with another man's child to flirting with a middle-aged guide Mr. Kapasi ,Mrs. Das has shattered all the marital code Indian woman are urged to follow to explore her sexuality, to kill her loneliness and being not able to do anything new in her life. A planned life, marriage and children made Mrs. Das not care for her husband and her children. She was oppressed not appreciated. She broke the code with someone who made her feel more satisfied and free.

Conclusion: Decoding patriarchal code for personal happiness and Choices

The research has analyzed decoding of patriarchal codes by lead female character in the selected stories “A Temporary Matter,” “Interpreter Of Maladies” and “Sexy” by Jhumpa Lahiri. These stories examine woman not as a victim of patriarchy but decoder of patriarchal codes. They are morally right and wrong with their decision but what they did to break the rule has set them free and made them bold and strong. These stories ironically present the vivid pictures of modern day woman and their changing perception towards relationship and marriage. While researching, the researcher has used the concept of feminism and patriarchal rules to prove the reason for why has female protagonist violated these code.

Lahiri's protagonist are modern day woman who work, earn, party, romance, enjoy sex and are less judgmental towards their action but instead go with the demand of the situation. They want everything their male counterpart might have had experienced. In addition to being free Shoba, Miranda, Mrs. Das are lonely too, their relationship with their partner has made them more alone and vulnerable. Their miserable relationship too is the reason for them to decode to code. When a woman sees her worth getting degrading, she definitely chooses to be with someone or becomes something where she is praised and valued more. Shukumar did not understand Shoba's struggle and he left her alone when she lost her child and even after that he did not attempt to make her happy.

The more he avoided communication and closeness with Shoba the more she got carried on by outside world of work and friends. When she realized she is more happy and free without him, she decided to leave him. Miranda was and overwhelmed to receive attention from a man whom she was attracted to in a first sight. In the initial phase she was happy to be his mistress and enjoyed making love with, dressed up for him and went out to travel or in a date at times, when Dev started to divert his attention towards his wife and did not make enough time for her, did not appreciate the moment he spent with her she was upset and started to evaluate her worth in his life. It was while babysitting Rohin she discovered that she just did not wanted to be a sexy woman for Dev, Rohin or anyone. To save herself from falling into the trap of loveless relationship she left Dev because that was right thing to do. Her decision to leave Dev opened a path for her to make time for her friends and world outside. She was more free, outgoing and was looking for a man who would genuine love her heart not just her body. Similar to Dev and Shukumar, Mr. Das never made an effort to appreciate Mrs. Das. She never had life outside his patriarchal circle and he did not

made any effort to socialize Mrs. Das more. She was just a housewife and child producing machine for him. Hence, tired of a monotonous life and from being taken for granted she stopped caring for her children and husband and started to get attracted towards new man who would sexually please her or talk to her, admire her. Modern woman want to live their life and do things without being morally judged and without making social norms and restriction as their barrier.

Shoba in “A Temporary Matter” works, earns, has made herself stand strong despite suffering from miscarriage and emotional turmoil of loveless marriage. Living with Shukumar did not make her happy. To forget her loss and to give herself and a relationships fresh start she leaves Shukumar, her marriage and his house with a subtle indication that she might come back to him if he would love and appreciate her like he did in the past or else in a new house a new relation could flourish. Her life choices and happiness are her responsibility and social code could not stop her from leaving her husband.

In the second story “Sexy” Miranda is living a life of mistress with Dev. She is happy with the way Dev treats her, showers her with gift, whispers her name while they are making out and compliments her as sexy. Keeping aside Dev is married and society perception towards a woman who is mistress of middle age man from different race she keeps relationship as it kept her happy. When Dev stopped admiring Miranda and started to focus more on his wife Miranda lust for Dev diminishes. She easily avoids talking to Dev and moves on in her life without any drama and emotional string attached to it. 21 year old white girl lusting over older man, enjoying sexual freedom and accepting to move on easily for the sake of personal happiness is different from what society considered a mistress would do.

Likewise, Mrs. Das is also involved in violating marital social and moral code by flirting with married guide Mr. Kapasi, accepting to have had sexual intercourse with her husband Mr. Das Punjabi friend. She confess being alone and bored in her monotonous life as housewife and a mother. As she could not experience physical relationship and flirting with other man during her young days hence, violating code and opening her secret with strange man and getting physical with Mr. Das friend was her way to take revenge to patriarchy and experience what she could not in her young days.

Each action of the character in the stories is to set themselves free. As all these three woman are with the man who doesn't love them, appreciate them, has no mutual respect and affection they are either leaving them, cheating them or avoiding them it's their way to take revenge towards patriarchy.

The researcher has found out that women these days have started to break the social code irrespective of its moral consequences. Married woman leaving their husband, children, living alone, they are open to sexual experience, dates and flirting. Willingly and unwillingly, they are involved in breaking of patriarchal code. Like man gets easily accepted in society for cheating their partner, having extramarital affair, casual sex, they are free to earn and live alone women are trying to attain same level of freedom and equality. If it makes you happy, fulfilled and satisfied moral code and social code do not count, self is important. Personal happiness over any codes/relationship is what woman wants.

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