

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE MRP (No. F. MRP/12th Plan/14-15/KLMG047 dated 10/12/2014) – “CROSS CULTURAL EXCHANGE AS A MODE OF EXISTENCE: ADIASPORIC ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED WORKS OF JHUMPALAHIRI, MONICA ALI AND AMY TAN”

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This project “Cross Cultural Exchange as a Mode of Existence: A Diasporic Analysis of the Selected Works of Jhumpa Lahiri, Monica Ali and Amy Tan” is an in-depth analysis of the diasporic identity formations with regard to Jhumpa Lahiri’s novels *The Namesake*(2003) and *The Low Land*(2013), Monica Ali’s novel *Brick Lane* (2003) and Amy Tan’s *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*(2001) . JhumpaLahiri is an Indian Writer who writes in the USA and her writings are based on the lives of immigrant Indians in America and their struggle for existence. Her works focus on the identity crisis of the contemporary diasporas and the cultural gap between parents and children in the host land. Monica Ali, a Bangladeshi diasporic writer settled in England probes into the experiences and struggles of a Bangladeshi family settled in London through her novel *Brick Lane*. Amy Tan who is part of the Chinese American Diaspora delves deep into the cultural clash and problems that exist between the first and second generations of the diasporic community. These three writers intend to trace out the trauma of diasporic community in the host topoi through the characters of Ashima and Gogol in *The Namesake* ,Gouri and Bela in *The Low*

Land, Nazneen and her daughters in *Brick Lane* and LuLing and Ruth Young in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*.

This project work is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introductory chapter which introduces the topic. It traces the root of diaspora literature and provides a birds eye view of twentieth century diaspora literature. It goes on exploring the general characteristics of diaspora literature and the major women writers of Indian diaspora, Bangladeshi diaspora and Chinese diaspora in the USA and the UK. It ends with a description of the literary career of JhumpaLahiri, Monica Ali and Ami Tan.

The second chapter “Cultural conflicts in JhumpaLahiri’s *The Namesake* and *The Lowland*” focuses on the detailed diasporic analysis and the problem of identity faced by the first as well as the second generation immigrants in these novels. It parades through how they fail to become hundred percent Americans in their approach to life. It centers on their latent sufferings and how they overcome it. The third chapter “Cultural Dislocation in Monica Ali’s *The Brick Lane*” tries to find out the immigrant ethos present in the novel. It analyses Nazneen’s life in London and how she finds her identity in an alien land. The fourth chapter “Acculturation in Amy Tan’s *The Bonesetter's Daughter*” deals with the relationship between the mother who is Chinese and her daughter who cherishes English ways of living. It ends with how the daughter embraces the Chinese culture to find her true self.

Lahiri’s writing is featured in her ‘plain’ language and very clean, neat and engrossing narrative technique. Her characters are mostly Indian (Bengali) immigrants, navigating between the cultural values of their birth-place and their adopted nation. Her writing is autobiographical and frequently draws upon her own experience as well as those of her own experience as well as

those of her parents, friends, acquaintances, and others in Bengali communities with which she is familiar. Lahiri investigates her character's struggles, dilemmas to faithfully reflect the details of immigrant psychology and behavior. Lahiri is nostalgic about the past and it seems that she strongly wishes to go back to that origin. The way she has presented Bengali girls and married women have also undergone radical changes not only in the host topoi but in the homeland too. The tendency to preserve one's heritage and ethnic identity is strongly felt in her novels.

Lahiri's insight into the psychology of relationships, aging, maturity and loss is remarkable. Her subject, in the novel as also in her stories, is the loneliness of dislocation. What makes her work stand out is, at least, partly due to the gentle and persuasive way in which the atmosphere of displacement is evoked. In the present novel also, she talks about Gogol, a young man about the same age as the author, born like her to immigrant parents from west Bengal, who grows up into a brilliant student and a successful architect even as he has to struggle to discover himself through successive ill-fated relationships and appreciate the worth of expectations of his parents. Bela in *The Lowland* is more English than Indian.

Monica Ali deals with the dichotomy between the 'home' country (Bangladesh) and the 'host' community (London). As Hussain Yasmin mentions, "Issues of home, belonging and identity are central to *Brick Lane*. The idea of diaspora in *Brick Lane* invokes the imagery of the traumas of separation, dislocation and adaptation that are central to the experiences of migration"(95). Monica Ali in *Brick Lane* emphasizes the ideas of dislocation, alienation and changes in the nature of the diasporic people. This novel too concentrates on the idea of fractured consciousness by talking about the cultural difference.

Amy Tan in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, by using the life history of three women characters namely Precious Auntie, LuLing and Ruth touches upon the history of China. Her

novel in detail talks about the cultural and behavioral difference between the two generations of the diasporic community. LuLing and Ruth represents the first and second generations of the diasporic community respectively and the misunderstanding between them. Ruth's character present the cultural difference faced by the diasporic people between inside and outside home. When Ruth was in school LuLing forbids her daughter to mingle with the White students. She does not want Ruth to grow up in the Western culture and restricts Western food. Throughout her life she prefers to stay separate. Ruth, who is born and brought up in the US, easily assimilated with the White community. In this novel less number of Chinese diasporic characters is mentioned and the author gives importance only to these three characters. Among them LuLing and GaoLing prefer homeland identity and Ruth prefers settled land identity.

These novels voice out to the issues of diaspora related to the depiction of homeland, host land settlement, identity, alienation and assimilation on the host land. It aims to uphold the idea that being marginalized and discriminated did not lead to destruction of selves but leads to forming identities. This issue was strengthened much more in the writing by women. Individual characters such as Nazneen, Ashima, Gogol and Ruth may evolve into independent, self assertive, intelligent people capable of living in the new globalised environments. It also discusses issues of race, religion and women as subaltern. This study intends to find out how far these novelists are successful in portraying the life of diaspora people in the foreign land. Their cross cultural interaction proves to be their mode of existence whenever they find it difficult to find their identity on the host topoi.

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find it difficult to find their identity in an alien soil. This project gives a cross section of the individuals of different nationality in a diaspora community and investigates how far they are successful in expressing themselves in the foreign society.