

Can the Subaltern Speak? Marginalized Females in Lahiri's *Interpreter of*

Maladies

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Abstract

Being a postcolonial voice from a younger generation, an Indian immigrant and a diasporic writer who was born in London and raised in America, Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction reflects sacrifices and struggles of the Indian and Indian American women in everyday life. This thesis examines how the female characters in *Interpreter of Maladies*, a collection of nine short stories by Lahiri, are marginalized females. They are the silent Other who struggles to speak their voices and make themselves heard. Spivak (1988) states that "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (p.287). The short stories collection was published in 1999 and it won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000. The majority of Lahiri's female characters in *Interpreter of Maladies* are caught between the hammer of the West and the anvil of the East (India). The researcher investigates the reasons behind females' subalternity and the outcomes of their marginalization both in India and America using Spivak's ideas of subalternity and Otherness. The thesis analyzes the females' attempts to empower themselves and speak their identity loudly and affirmatively. Finally, the researcher traces where the female

characters meet or differ in their struggle to assert their voices, or surrender to their doubly-burdened situation.

Keywords: diaspora, female subaltern, marginalization, Otherness, Post-colonialism