

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. The Background of the Research

Migration has become one of the most important issues of the contemporary world. Consciously or unconsciously, they would definitely relate to the natives. It becomes a challenge for the Indian immigrants to face the differences with the natives, especially Americans. Jhumpa Lahiri, like many other postcolonial writers, describes the problem and cultural assimilation experience which are faced by Indian immigrants in the United States or the Western world. In Lahiri's stories, it can be seen that cultural assimilation happens to people who come or live in a new place. Those people go through the process of assimilation as the way to mingle with the people in the new place.

In this research, the writer is interested in analyzing *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri. Jhumpa Lahiri is a second generation Indian-American immigrant female writer. She was born in London 1967 and raised in New York by her Bengali parents. Lahiri tries to tell her own experiences as a child of an Indian immigrant who lives in the United States. She grew up in the United States and this situation raises the dilemma because of living in two cultures. One online article states that Lahiri admits "I'm lucky that I'm between two worlds...I do not really know what a distinct South Asian identity means. I don't think about that when I write, I just try to bring a person to life" (Tsering).

Lahiri published her debut collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* in 1999 and a novel *The Namesake* in 2003. She has received many awards and one of them is the most prestigious Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Her second short stories became the No. 1 in *New York Times* best seller entitled *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). In 2013, she has published *The Lowland*. Her second novel was partially inspired by real world political events. Jhumpa Lahiri considered as a great female writer in the work based on those achievements.

*Interpreter of Maladies* is a collection of nine stories, there are “A Temporary Matter”, “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine”, “Interpreter of Maladies”, “A Real Durwan”, “Sexy”, “Mrs. Sen’s”, “This Blessed House”, “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar”, and “The Third and Final Continent”. In this stories, Lahiri tries to describe the problems and experience faced by Indian immigrants in the United States or the Western World. Based on Lahiri’s short stories in *Interpreter of Maladies*, from nine short stories in the book, the writer finds the issue of cultural assimilation is presented particularly in six stories, which are “A Temporary Matter”, “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine”, “Interpreter of Maladies”, “Mrs. Sen’s”, “This Blessed House”, and “The Third and Final Continent” because those stories show the interaction between two cultures that affect the cultural assimilation.

The book contains the stories of the first and second generation Indian immigrants, as well as a few stories involving the idea of otherness among communities in India. Most of the characters in the stories have identities like other contemporary postcolonial literary characters. No matter where the story takes place,

the characters struggle with the same feelings of alienation and struggle between the two worlds.

The writer describes the influences of cultural assimilation based on Lahiri's perspectives as a second generation of Indian and how the characters deal with the problem in those short stories. Furthermore, all short stories collection make the writer hypothesizes that they must adapt to the second culture to establish a good relationship with the people around and survive in a place where the culture is.

### **1.2. The Identification of Problem**

Six short stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* shows the problems and difficulties faced by the first and second generation of Indian immigrants when living in the United States. Some characters accept the culture but the other half shows the inability to do so. The writer believes that as a person who lives with the mixing of cultures, Lahiri wants to shows her own perspective of being an immigrants.

### **1.3. The Scope of the Research**

This research is basically a textual analysis, focuses on analyzing the six select short stories collection *Interpreter of Maladies*. More specifically, it presents the suffering, sacrifices, and struggle of assimilation and sees how Lahiri's perspective about living as an Indian in the United States. Besides, this research also covers the similarities and the difference between the first and second generation of Indian and Indian-American.

#### **1.4. The Research Questions**

There are questions which need to be answered in this research:

1. How does cultural assimilation give influences to the first and second generations?
2. What are Lahiri's perspectives about cultural assimilation that appears in her works?

#### **1.5. The Objective of the Research**

Based on the research questions that have been stated above, the aims of this study is to find the influences of cultural assimilation to the main character of the six select stories in *Interpreter of Maladies*. Not only to find the influences of assimilation, but this research also reveals Lahiri perspective as the second generation of Indian who lives with the mixing of cultures. She wants to give an illustration of being an immigrants.

#### **1.6. The Review of Related Studies**

Research has shown that the contradictory of characterisation exists in several works in literature. Dhivyapriya and Jagadeswari on "Cultural Dislocation and Culture Shock in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*" and Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife*", discuss about different novels from two Indian writers; Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee. They critically discover about the contrary characterization between those two novels. At first, they talk about the interesting conflicts of Indian writing that covers every continent and part of the world. They give us several ideas on how the

Indian writers spell out their opinions and ideas into the novel. Although, Dhiyyapriya and Jagadeswarionly intoduced with the character of Gogol from Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* (2013:35-36). This research gives me a lot information about the Indian writers spell out their opinions and ideas into their works. From this research above, the writer can concluded that most of the conflicting analysis is still distracted by other things such as long explanation about Diaspora journey of the character and the crisis identity. This article helps the writer to gain more ideas because they show conflicts of Indian writers.

Prianka Sharma on her article "Bewildered Relations in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*", she focuses on the relationships among characters that analyze in each short story. She concludes that Lahiri is not only focused on a woman and man who struggle to build connection, but also the lost connection between people (2012:2-9). This article helps to conduct the research because provides the point of view in each story. From this article, the writer get a lot of information. The writer conclude that the main character in this stories are not able to shape their realities, it is not because they do not have the ability, but because they do not know how to place themselves in their world.

The other research is a research written by Annisa Munawara entitled "The Effect of Diaspora to The Second Generation Indian Immigrant as Reflected in Four Select Stories from Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*: Postcolonial Studies", she claims as the second generations of Indian diaspora, they carry Indian identity. On the other hand, they also adopt or assimilate their second culture, America (2015).

From this research, the writer conclude that in the process of assimilation between the two cultures, the immigrants tend to be confused of their identity and might lose on the way; it makes them suffer from psychological conflicts. However, this thesis only discussed four of the nine short stories in *Interpreter of Maladies*.

In this research, the writer will discuss the suffering, sacrifices, and struggle of assimilation in the short stories collection *Interpreter of Maladies* and the writer will also show Jhumpa Lahiri's perspectives about cultural assimilation as the second generation.

### **1.7. Theoretical Framework**

In this research, the writer discusses the problem of identity and alienation by applying postcolonial literary criticism. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin in their book *Empire Write Back*, "postcolonial literary criticism deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies" (186) and "covers all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin explain above shows that postcolonial deals with the effect of colonization. This is not only covering the physical area in a country but also talk the culture, history, and every aspect of human life which have been influenced by colonization. Colonization is not only covering the phsycal area of a country but also touched the culture. According Tyson in *Critical Theory Today* states that the cultural colonization is the inculcation of the colonizer's idea and culture into every aspects of the colonized country, caused the ex-colonials suffer a psychoogical

inheritance of a negative self-image and alienation from their own indigenous cultures, which had been forbidden or devalued for so long that much pre-colonial culture has been lost (2008:419).

During the process of assimilation, a person will inoculate a new culture in their aspect of life; the loss of native culture is always to happen. A Hungarian scholar, M. Kozár also notes, "...assimilation is an integrative process within the family and between generations, and is not socially and culturally equitable, thus resulting in hybridity and the confusion of cultural identity. The assimilation of the first generation is never complete, they are in an in-between state where they have already left their culture behind but have not integrated the new culture yet. On the other hand, the second generation tends to aim at total assimilation, by breaking away from the roots and traditions" (in Pataki 2). Their reactions to hybridity and the cultural problems around adaptation, acceptance, cultural shock, and rejection.

One of the interesting characteristics in postcolonial criticism is dual identity issue. There would be a person with two identities; colonizers as well as colonized. Then, it is known as hybridity. The term hybridity has been crucial in Homi Bhabha's view of the ambivalence of colonial discourse. It commonly discusses about cultural mixing or mingling between the colonized and colonizer. In hybridity, the original culture usually will not disappear easily, although the adapted culture will strongly influence. According to Homi Bhabha, concept of hybridity occurs as the ambiguity of identity that bring a person to a position of 'in-between' or in the middle. It means that hybridity is a process where two different cultures or traditions being mixed

which results in a hybrid subject. It can be considered as someone who stands ‘in-between’ because they stand between both the original and adapted culture.

The cultural identity often being the main issues in postcolonial literatures. Stuart Hall defines in his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* that there are two definitions of cultural identity, first is “cultural identity is one, shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’ hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common” (223). It means the cultural identity is stable, unchanging and collective, and not affected by the shifting of the stories. In the second, “cultural identity is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is nor something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture” (1990:225). This quotation explain that cultural identity experiences the continious development of history.

Kathryn Woodward in her book *Identity and Difference* states that “...identity gives us a location in the world and presents the link between us and society in which we live...identity gives us an idea of who we are and how we relate to others and to the world in which we live...” (1997:1). The relationship of individual to society has always been problematic. Chris Barker also confirms in his book *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* “identity is a social construction of culture” (2005: 170-171). Conceptually, identity and subjectivity are connected even inseparable. Subjectivity is related to one’s personal identity, where the feelings, emotions, desire, and willingness. Subjectivity also related to consciounes and unconscious person. Then



this identity becomes vulnerable to any changes that occur around them such as their dominance or minority which causes identity changes.

## **1.8. The Method of the Research**

### 1.8.1. Collecting Data

In collecting data for this research, the data consist of the primary data and secondary data. The primary data, which is taken from the literay work itself, the short stories collection of Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies*, and the secondary data which are taken from literary theory and articles related to the study. The data is collected by using library research methods such as reading the books, articles, and journals and browsing the internet.

### 1.8.2. Analyzing Data

In analyzing the data, the the writer reads, understand, and analyze the primary data using the postcolonial point of view. The writer finds the relation between the issue and the theory and then describes about the process of assimilation in short stories collection *Interpreter of Maladies*.

### 1.8.3. Presenting Data

In presenting the result of analysis, the descriptive method will be applied since the research is a qualitative one. The written result of the research contains quotation from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentations. By using descriptive analysis, the writer will report the analysis descriptively about the issue of assimilation using primary and secondary data.