

# MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT- SUMMARY

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**TITLE: A Study of Multicultural Discourse In Immigrant Fiction**

**YEAR: 2008-2010**

**The following is the Summary of the Minor Research Project sanctioned by the University Grants Commission, WRO:**

## **(i) Objectives of The Project**

- a. To study the lives of immigrants and their children, and the texts that examine and illumine them.
- b. To examine the strands of multiculturalism and the discourse patterns among the immigrants.

## **(ii) Work Done**

The immigrant experience is widespread, and requires understanding, as people struggle to maintain their sense of themselves and their values while adapting to new cultural environments. The study examines Immigrant writers and has found these works to be a rich storehouse of multicultural elements. A reading of Indian writers post-independence has been done. Critical material has been identified to enable one to develop the framework of the study. The novels selected were Chitra Diva Karuni's *Jasmine* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. The novels selected have been analysed keeping in mind concepts like Hybridity, Identity, the Other and cultural consciousness. The passages for analysis have been selected and analysed.

In the choice of themes and authors there is a wide range from aesthetics, history, family relationships, diasporic experience, politics, feminism, problematics of definition of Indian English fiction, existential dilemmas and spiritual quests, to deconstruction of predefined Western notions about Indian myths. It is seen that groups that once were marginalized are more assertive participants in the multicultural discourse.

They do not see their own clothes, food, beliefs, values, or music as constituting a distinctive culture, just as they do not see themselves as having a cultural rather than

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individual identity. As you might expect, the exceptions are children of first- or second-generation immigrants whose families and neighborhoods have consciously preserved linguistic, religious, culinary, and social practices identified with the “old country.”

Have branched into interdisciplinary work namely, sociology and psychology to get a more holistic understanding of sociolinguistics. Have explored the vibrant Indian writing in English and plan further studies in this domain.

The study was able to find common themes or strands running through that make Immigrant writing have a striking identity of its own. Some of the findings were: nostalgia for a home that now exists only in memory; conditions of dislocation and isolation; the loss of a supportive community and often unsuccessful attempts to forge new support systems; a crippling loss of a relatively coherent earlier identity; intergenerational conflict, as children grow up assimilated into the new culture and reject, in anger, frustration, embarrassment and humiliation, the attempts by their parents to preserve connection to them through common cultural practices and assumptions; foolish or harmful misunderstandings and misreadings of the new cultural environment; the experience of racism, with its accompanying senses of rejection and humiliation and attempts to invoke, through memory and story, the sustaining myths and symbols of the past.