

DIASPORIC SENSIBILITY IN THE NOVELS OF BHARATI MUKHARJEE

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ABSTRACT

Bharati Mukherjee was one of the foremost novelists of Indian diaspora who explored the theme of socio-cultural, awareness, rootlessness, nostalgia and Indian diaspora in her novels with depth and intensity. Mukherjee in her novels clearly depicts the problems faced by the Indians and other third world immigrants who attempts to assimilate in the American life style. The protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee's face cultural shock because of their immigration to foreign lands. Her Heroine leave their own soil to make her dream true. In this struggle, they adjust and adapt themselves from the cultural shock in the alien land. Mukherjee makes her protagonists travel to the hopeless and redemption less part of their life and from there makes them reconcile, fight back and emerge for a new world of order.

KEYWORD: Diaspora, rootlessness, cultural shock, redemption less.

INTRODUCTION:

Bharati Mukherjee belongs to a group of Indian diasporic writers who have made their presence felt and proved themselves to be representative voices of the Indian subcontinent. Bharati Mukherjee in her novels like the Tigers daughter, Wife, Jasmine, The holder of the world, Leave it to me, Desirable daughter and The tree bride attempt to bridge the gulf between home and exile. Being a writer of the Indian diaspora, she in her main theme throughout her writing centers on the condition of Asian immigrants in the USA and Canada, with particular attention to the changes taking place in south Asian women in a new world.

The diasporic experience can be judged in terms of its manifestation in the attitude to home and host. There are three elements which separate these Attitude from one to the other. One is that of the exile who has nostalgia for the home country and whose attitude to the host country is negative. The double diaspora is characterized by a dispersed, approval of one, if not both the hosts. One time diasporic has negative stand and novels fall in this category. Nostalgia, directness towards the culture you are absorbing, re-stitching and the divided settler evolving into a permanent alien and getting transformed into a perfect immigrant are the elements of consciousness. In the present paper an attempt has been made to investigate or recognize the seven

elements of diasporic consciousness like memory, return, strangeness, desire to integrate, transience, desire for permanence, a sense of belonging and embedding in Bharati Mukherjee's novels. The paradigm of the diasporic experience may be identified as enunciating, renunciation and denouncing.

Diaspora lives in one country as community but look across time and space to another. The migrant diaspora and their descendent experience displacement, fragmentation, marginalization and discontinuity in the cultural discourse of the subject country. They retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original Homeland, its physical location, History, festivals and achievements.

DISCUSSIONS:

A lot of researchers have been done on Bharati Mukherjee's novel. Majority of works discuss individual or community attachment to the homeland and the urge to belong in the settled land and as a result of this they reveal

a hybrid existence. The problem faced by diasporic community such as displacement, alienation, identity crisis and cultural conflicts are discussed. At the present point of Indian history, a writer's analysis of his self necessarily involves the evaluation of his own attitude towards these two aspects of his being—one inherited from birth, the other imbibed through education. In fact, her literary work *THE TIGERS DAUGHTER* (1972) to *THE TREE BRIDE* (2004), trace the significant evolution of creative sensibility from expatriate and immigrant.

In the novel, *The Tigers Daughter*, the Tara Banerjee is the protagonist of the novel. Tara returns at home after seven years in America. In it, Mukherjee seems to be compelled to work out her form from her psyche. In order to do so, she makes a metaphysical trip back to Calcutta of the late 60s and early 70s with naval riots and protests. This novel exemplifies her hostility with implied alienation to both India and Canada. The novel shows her double alienation. In North America, Tara felt herself as alien where she was racially and an outsider. In India she was not married to a person but to a foreigner and foreigner was a burden. Thus, their alienation is at two levels. In the end, the two worlds cannot be reconciled as the alienation from the mother country seems stronger, Tara chooses to return to David and America. Mukherjee's daughter reflects the confrontation between illusion and reality. Tara, being an immigrant, away from home, idealizes her own country and cherishes nostalgic memory of it. Tara was packed off by her father at the early age of 15 for America. In America, she experienced homesickness. Little things pained her and she sensed discrimination everywhere. She prays to Kali for her strength so that she would

not break before the Americans. Bharati Mukherjee affirms that in the life of women immigrants, the deviation from cultural roots generates the psyche of self-betrayal.

In the novel *Jasmine*, Bharati Mukherjee constructs the dilemma of a young Punjabi widow who struggles with alternative identities for setting her roots in diverse cultural surroundings. The resistance against cultural apathies and gender discrimination makes her plight more dreadful. A woman has to accept the path of her husband, she looks forward to America, a land of opportunities, but this dream gets shattered by the murder of Prakash on the eve of departure. (DAYAL, 1993) she decides to go to America and fulfill Prakash's mission and perform "SATTI". Having learned to "waltz to talk" like an American, she grabs every opportunity to become American. In the end she kills SUKHWINDER, the Khalsa lion who killed Prakash. After that she goes to Iowa assuming a new name "Jase" (DAYAL, 1993) there are myriad roles played by Jasmine as Jase, and Jase abuses the power of a woman. This power could be colossal, which should have been channelized to destroy evil and fight against all ills of mankind, Jasmine has broken away from the shackles of caste, gender and family. She has learnt to live not for husband, not for her children but for herself. Jasmine is a survivor, a fighter and an adaptor. She retains her Indian sensibility but she also protests against conservative Indian attitude.

In the novel *Wife*, Mukherjee writes a woman named Dimple who has been oppressed by such men and attempts to be the ideal Bengali wife, but of fear and personal instability she murders her husband and eventually commits suicide. She resents being a wife in the BASU family and rebels against wifedom in many ways, one such way is the one including a miscarriage by skipping herself free from her pregnancy, which she views as Basu's property even in her womb. He needs her only for sexual indulgence. She feels it's some sort of guilty.

IN THE STORY OF DESIRABLE DAUGHTERS, the theme of the questions of nostalgia for a lost home, disillusionment of expatriation, fragmentation of self, cultural translation and negotiations. Mukherjee provides the lines from Sanskrit verse adapted by Octavio Paz; that is,

No one behind, no one ahead.

The path the ancient cleared has closed.

And the other path, everyone's path..

Easy and wide, goes nowhere.

I am alone and find my way.

There are three daughters who grow up in Calcutta and eventually are scattered in three different corners of the globe with their individual lifestyles. Padma leaves in New Jersey among the elite class of Indian migrant. Parvati leads a comfortable life in a posh locality in Mumbai in a typical aristocratic Hindu family. She always keeps herself busy in household chores. Tara lives in the west in California leading a dull life after getting a divorce from her business-magnate husband. It is a story of adjustment of human beings in different circumstances. The story has a post-colonial background. It is a blending of belongingness and exile. Tara Chatterjee, the narrator, is the youngest of the three sisters. She has the same position of Tara of *The Tigers* daughter, trapped between the two worlds: the old and the new. At nineteen Chatterjee got married to Bish Chatterjee, a wealthy man. Now at forty, she is a divorcee living in San Francisco with her teenage son and her boyfriend. Mukherjee has dealt in the need to have a boundary to mark out the native identity as essential. Identity is intertwined with the concepts of home, root and origin. Therefore, these identity markers need defined cultural, psychological and geographical boundaries and borders to reinforce the essence of human existence.

Tara, the female protagonist and the narrator of the novel, narrates the

story because in her words "... am exploring the making of consciousness" (5), it is a story of "roots search" (17) and in all this it entails her return to India and subsequently to Dacca, the erstwhile India of 1879.

IN THE NOVEL *THE HOLDER OF THE WORLD*, rediscover the exile as a voyage of the human concentration. In this novel alone, the expatriation, take place from eastward to westward. Mukherjee clearly portrays the difference between the life in the homeland and host land. In this novel, Hannan Easton, the protagonist, emigrates from the United State to India in the seventeenth century, she considers her host land as her second homeland yet she undergoes some sort of expatriate feeling at the later stage. The protagonist maintains a constant touch with the homeland. The holder of the world seems to be very different because in all other novels, the central character moves from east to west, but in this she moves from west to east. The main focus is towards time-travelling. One can

understand this from the introductory quotes, I live eastern, central and pacific. I mean the past, the present and future (HW)

The story take place in the seventeenth century and during this time, India was under the control of Mughals. Sandhya Rao Mehta feels that the novel reinforces exile as the voyage of a mans thoughts,

Like jasmine who travels westward, Hannah Eastons voyage to the orient is... ambitions of the protagonist. Hannah, like jasmine, becomes an expatriate as a result of a quest of a vital life of feeling and emotions (194)

The novel energetically crosses over the ancient as well as the modern ethos of the U.S.A and also India by means of the traditional colonial U.S.A post-colonial histories which link the pasts of Christian America and expatriate India play a repositioning of ethnic blend where numerous cultures encounter. This story travel nast in its manifold coating of transcultural places and immigration is decorated by means of a significant piece.

Conclusion

Bharati Mukherjee uses caustic wit, race, genial comedy and shrewd observations of human nature to fix all the follies and foibles of the society with comedy, wit and satire. Her novels represent the expatriate sensibility, women have experienced through marriage and/ or travel abroad, tremendous physical and mental changes in their personal lives. Though they seem to be well suited for adaptability in an alien culture, the shock they go through initially is indispensable. The reason is they all are born Indian and brought up very much immersed in Indian traditions to feel and behave as custom demands, but at the and live like western women, looking forward to it with a dreamy and tinted glass outlook. They speak of feminism and liberation easily, but stumble in living the same. This is what is found to be the main struggle in the lives of all of Mukherjees ladies.

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