

Dilemma and Socio-Cultural Issues in Bharati Mukherjee's Novel *The Tiger's Daughter*



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Abstract

The word expatriation delineates an individual's rehabilitation from one place to another and again establishes their roots in a new land. When a person left their homeland and starts living in a new land that is called finding a new home in an unknown place. Everything is changed after immigration. Immigrants tradition, land, identity these all changed by the time. In every tradition they have their own set of values, beliefs and behaviors that make one particular life distinguishable from other.

Bharati Mukherjee's novel, *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) portrays a women character Tara Banerjee Cartwright caught in the cultural conflict. She Born in typical Bengali Brahmin family. She gets married to an American boy David Cartwright and resides there for seven years. When she visits back to India, she finds herself rebel in her own native culture. This novel shows her Indian sensibility were totally lost. Bharati Mukherjee attempts to convey here all possible cultural issues that are normally faced by the first generation immigrant. Tara lives in a foreign land after her marriage she decides to visit India for knowing something about her Bengali culture. After coming to India she feels uncomfortable with her relatives and friends and she feels like strangers in her own family. She looks all the thing happened around Her with Americanized vision. The protagonist of Mukherjee's novels they all are immigrant sufferer and all are fighting for their self identity. Tara Banerjee Cartwright experiences and how her behavior manifests her native and adopted culture in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter*. And finally in the end she moves to America with her protective husband.

Keywords: Culture, Displacement, Immigrants, Tradition, Women

Introduction

Bharati Mukherjee, novels depict the issues of her own cultural in West Bengal in India, her displacement from India to Canada where she establish herself and makes her individual personality. For the writer in *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Jasmine and Desirable Daughter*, the dilemma of belongingness in these novels is a matter of pain which explores the problem of nationality, culture, location, identity in Canada. She explores her sense of alienation in Canada where she spend her life as an immigrant that forced her to make an effort towards the process of economic, social and cultural adjustment. "Culture alienation is a world phenomenon today. The tremendous difference between two ways of life, leads a person to a feeling of depression and frustration. This could be called cultural shock. When a person leaves this own culture and enters another, his old values come into conflict with the new ones. Bharati Mukherjee has claimed: "We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate My aim is to expose Americans to the energetic voices of new settlers in this country." She describes the American experience as one of "fusion" and immigrants grow by the interchange and experience."¹ In *The Tiger's Daughter*, Bharati Mukherjee focuses on the life of the expatriate and immigrants. The theme of displacement and adjustment to non-native culture, and the immigrants in a foreign soil have been very deftly delineated by Bharati Mukherjee. Here she agonizes with the nation identity and self identity which is interconnected with her Indian society.

Aim of the Study

This paper focuses on the problem of immigrant's social detachment from their native land. They are shifting from unknown land. Bharati Mukherjee's protagonist left their birth place and move to America

and their she makes her identity. She faces lots of problems for establishing herself. In Bharati Mukherjee's novel *The Tiger's Daughter* depict the problem of alienation rootlessness, identity. And the aim of this paper is to focuses on these issues.

Jasmine, The Tiger's Daughter, Days and Nights in Calcutta, and later *Desirable Daughters* these are the works which shows *rootlessness, homesickness alienation and loneliness in the novels*. In *The Tiger's Daughter* the protagonist Tara makes an ambitious journey return to India after seven years for only to rerooted again her home and knowing much more about her native country and her Bengali Culture which she belong. "For a years she had dreamed of this return to India. She had believed that all hesitations, all shadowy fears of the time abroad would be erased quite magically if she could just return home to Calcutta. But so far the return had brought only wounds. First the corrosive hours on Marine Drive, then the deformed beggar in the railway station, and now the inexorable train ride steadily undid what strength she had held in reserve. She was an embittered woman, she now thought, old and cynical at twenty-two and quick to take offence."² She was very enthusiastic for coming back to their native land. But her dreams were shattered. This novel emphasizes the need to redefine the notion of culture and the notion of identity from a non native perspective. The term culture is means everything for an Indian person. Because it shows our morals, ethics, mannerism and the way we are living. So the culture is a thing which separated us from everyone and gives the proof of particular nationality. The culture and identity both words are connected with each others. Because culture is a thing which make our personality and with that we are living in Indian society and culture is thing which gives identity. So basically both are depend on each others. In this novel Tara, returns to India after seven years of her nostalgic and homesick feelings. "After a gap of seven years Tara planned a trip to India, for years she had dreamed of their return. She believed that all hesitations, all shadowy fears of the time abroad would be erased quite magically if she could return home to Calcutta."³ The protagonist of this novel is Tara Banerjee is very diplomatic girl. She came to India for rejoined with her family and knows more about her culture.

Bharati Mukherjee writings attempt to explore the cross cultural issues occurred due to Diaspora. Many of the Indians diasporic writers they are trying to depict a picture of shifting culture from native place to non native place. The immigrants always suffer from the homesickness, feeling of detachment and modifying their personality according to that society. And this is a huge change of individual life. "The female protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee's earlier novels are characterized by their rootlessness and their incapacity to belong; while even their attempt to find roots are either half-hearted or unrealistic."⁴ But immigrants try their best at first to keep their own identity in their own community. But outside of community, their social identity is lost due to their migration from their homeland to adopted

country. Her novels deal with culture and identity identities. She portrays women characters as a single unit. And they tackle their problem lonely without taking others help. So this shows an individual personality. Bharati Mukherjee trying to shows woman as individual identity, single unit and independent. This is the reason she wants all her liberty to live her life in her own way. She illustrate a women threw her characters like Tara, Jasmine, Dimple, so these are the women's who suffer many time in their life. The immigrant experience is very difficult to speak because they are sufferers. Her novels focus on the Problems of the Indian expatriates and immigrants and to bring in light their diasporic experience. She tries to depict migration experience and life style of Indians in foreign land and this experience is constituted in migration resettlement and assimilations. In the works of diasporic writers, one of the most important themes of their writing is the sense of displacement homelessness and rootlessness. Mukherjee's protagonist's environment are very much similar with each others. They are fighting for their identity, intolerance, and other problematic situation in society. They are facing the multicultural reality in the process of cultural differentiation and adjustment. Bharati Mukherjee's one novel *The Tiger's Daughter* the purpose of this novel is to explore the pleasures and problems associated with being a migrant writer. This novel explores the meaning of culture, homeland, nation and identity, from the perspective of diaspora native. Writers in diaspora, such as, Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Rohinton Mistry they all are the sufferer of displacement.

The expatriate writers or their writings have been able to transform the sufferings of a woman to an aggressive or independent person. They are trying to seek their identity and freedom. She is bound in a various relationships within the family and society. Their writings reflect what we consider an emigrant sensibility generated due to cultural displacement. They are fighting between two situations and they are trying to balance between dual societies. "Tara's mind is constantly at conflict with the two personalities—one of an Indian and the other of an American. During such moments she feels to go back to her husband David because she feels that she would be more at ease there. Caught in this gulf between the two contrasting worlds, Tara feels that she had forgotten many of her Hindu rituals of worshipping icons which she had seen her mother performing since her childhood."⁵ And that is the reason for coming India to rerooted herself and knowing about Bengali culture. The woman is sufferer of this trauma because it is very difficult for shifting from one place to another. "Bharati Mukherjee has admitted that an issue very important to her is: "...the finding of a new identity ...the painful or exhilarating process of pulling yourself out of the culture that you were born into, and then replanting yourself in another culture."⁶ She is bound with their culture and their native land and established herself in a new country. The trauma of displacement is bound her to a new community and new identity. In this context we may review the novels of Bharati

Mukherjee, whose writings are largely honed by her personal experience as a woman caught in-between, which itself has been described as a text in a kind of perennial immigration.

The Tiger's Daughter is a fictionalized story drawing on Mukherjee's own first years of marriage and her return home for a visit. At the historical conjuncture, the protagonist, Tara Banerjee, returns to India after marrying an American and faces a different India after seven years. The novel addresses Mukherjee's personal difficulties of being caught between two worlds, homes and cultures and is an examination of her identity in terms of society and nation. *The Tiger's Daughter* is Tara Banerjee, a Bengali Brahmin of Calcutta and daughter of an industrialist known as Bengal Tiger; she gets married to an American named David, who is a writer. After her marriage Tara becomes Tara Banerjee Cartwright. After her marriage she makes a trip to India. When the twenty-two-year-old Tara visits India She is treated differently as an exceptional Indian woman married to a foreigner. "Tara's husband David was painful Western, she was dutifully devious in her marriage. She could not communicate the finer nuances of her family background and life in Calcutta. Her husband asked native questions about Indian customs and traditions. She felt completely insecure in an alien atmosphere. "Madison Square was unbearable and her husband was after all a foreigner." The clash is deeply felt in the psyche of Tara who is uncomfortable with her friends and relatives in India. She feels all alone in her native land and sometime with the culture and her own family. The greatest irony of her return is that she feels loneliness in her own native land. Her new self is no doubt responsible for this disturbance of her pleasure. Tara is not comfortable with her family it means that she is attached with their husband land and detached from their native land. And when she recognized the social changes in India. She finds the new perspective towards the social issues like dirtiness and poverty in India make worse her, frustrate discomfort and disgust.

Conclusion

The visit to Calcutta made Tara realize that India had changed a lot. The tour to India made her understand that she was more of an immigrant, than an exile, because she was more comfortable in abroad than India. "Tara homesick eyes noticed many changes in the city of Calcutta. She was outraged and could not respond to these changes. She longed for the Bengal of Satyajit Ray, children running through cool green space."⁸ The changed situation Mukherjee forced on two cultures. One is Indian and another is American and Tara is a victim who suffers in between. In India "Tara's visit to a funeral pyre at the river bank, her meeting a small beggar girl afflicted with leprosy, the vision of beggar children eating off the street, the superficialities in the lives of

her friends, the riots and demonstrations and her claustrophobic rape by the politician Tuntunwala—to bring out the trauma of Tara's visit to India. Tara's visit to Darjeeling is also marred by ugly and violent incidents."⁹ Tara becomes shocked when she knows about these incidents. Which was happened in her society where she was spends her childhood. And now she is very much affected from the condition of society. Here Bharati Mukherjee depicts the situation after seven years. "The protagonist being depressed and disgusted with the deteriorating situation of India and her new personality finds herself difficult to adjust with the situation and finally wishes to go back to the USA to her husband, but she becomes a victim of violence in India. During those moments when she is caught up in the violence, her mind is preoccupied with her husband David in America."¹⁰ But after these circumstances she realized that she is more comfortable in America where life was easy. Because in India she finds many problems for living. "Tara's journey to India her own native land ironically proves frustrating slowly leading to his illusion, alienation, depression, and finally her tragic end. The greatest irony hidden in the story of Tara is that the survived the racial hardships of survival in a foreign country but nothing happens to her. She becomes a victim of her tragic end in her native soil—her home, which she had longed to see since her stay in New York, and where she comes to seek peace. Her desire to find a place to love and security which she missed in New York end ironically in frustration. The irony with which we are left is that Tara an India born woman feels a greatest love and security in the arms of her American husband and thinks about him at a time when her end is approaching."¹¹ And finally she moves to America.

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