
CULTURAL SHOCK IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S *TIGER'S DAUGHTER*

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Abstract

Bharati Mukherjee, an Indian born American writer, has made a significant contribution to diasporic writing. Mukherjee is considered as a voice of Immigrants. Her works explore themes such as racial discrimination, cultural shock, Isolation, nostalgics memories of their homeland and the trauma of uprootedness.

Bharati Mukherjee's first, autobiographical novel, 'The Tiger's Daughter' talks about the dual cultural shock received by the protagonist Tara both in India and America. The novel begins with 'Tara Banerjee's return to India after seven years with her American husband David Cartwright. Mukherjee an expatriate writer portrays Tara's experiences in India. Tara hopes that her homeland will heal her pain and it will protect her child like a mother from all her problems. But expectations fails as situations take a different turn. Tara's experiences bring out a gloomy state of mind. Tara believes that her pains and problems will be erased by her return to India. But it has only created new wounds. She feels that Calcutta has lost all its charm. Her bitter experience at the railway station, Marine drive, the deformed beggars in a railway station, finally the sexual act of the politician makes her feel miserable. Everything looks hardly exotic and adverse. Everyday people migrate to some alien land to seek their fortune. They undergo several problems to adjust themselves and struggle hard to come up in life. At this juncture, the works of Mukherjee suitably reflect their pain.

Indian English literature has acquired increased significance in contributing to the expansion of literature. It is a medium used by Indians for creative expression. Writers like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Pravar Jhabwala, Anita Desai, Namitha Gokhale, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, and Manju Kapur capture the Indian experience skillfully in their own styles.

Diaspora a relatively new development in the post-colonial literature remains a favorite topic to investigate literary outputs. 'Diaspora' is a Greek word meaning 'to disperse'. Bill Ashcroft defines diaspora as 'the voluntary or forcible movement' of people from their own land into another foreign land. The diasporans live as a community together in the new country but acknowledge that the language, religion, custom and culture of the old country have a legitimate

claim over their loyalty. These emotions make them experience conflict, fragmentation, marginalization, and discontinuity in the cultural discourse.

Bharati Mukherjee, one of the prolific writer of diaspora focuses on immigrants and their struggles. As a writer of diaspora, her writings centers around nostalgia, search for identity, disillusionment, psychological and cultural conflicts encounter by her protagonists. Diasporic writing centers around the problems of 'Home' and 'exile'. Bharati Mukherjee's novels too concentrate on the same themes.

Bharati Mukherjee was an Indian born American writer who was born on 27th July 1940 at Kolkatta, West Bengal, in a Bengali origin family. She was the second daughter of Sudhir Lal and Bina Banerjee. She was born and brought up in an upper middle class Hindu orthodox Brahmin family. Mukherjee and her family moved to London in 1948. There she attended school, and she continued her education at Loretto convent school. She got a B. A degree from the University of Calcutta in 1959 and then Mukherjee and her family moves to Baroda, India. In India, she continued her higher education and she was awarded Master of Arts degree in 1961. In the meantime, Mukherjee received an educational scholarship to study at the University of Iowa, U.S.A.

During her stay at the U.S. in 1963, September she met the Canadian writer Clark Blaise, whom she married later. Mukherjee received M.F.A and she went on to earn her Ph.D. in English and Comparative literature from the University of Iowa in 1969.

After marrying Clark Blaise Mukherjee migrated to Canada and there she became a naturalized citizen of Canada in 1972. During her stay in Canada, she encountered many problems, usually faced by the immigrants. It was the hardest time of her life and she found herself discriminated and she confesses this in many of her interviews.

The exile experiences are explored in her later works. She wrote her first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* in 1971 and this novel is considered as her autobiographical novel. Because she connects herself in most of the incidents in the novel. The story of the novel is about an East Indian immigrant's fight to connect to the American (western) culture. Her second novel *Wife* published in 1975. This novel also discusses the problems faced by an immigrant and how she became the victim of neurosis.

In 1980 Bharati Mukherjee and her family moved to America where she became a permanent American citizen. In America Mukherjee received many awards and got many responsible positions. Her writings won many "National Endowment Award for Arts" she served as Professor at the University of California-Berkley and she had authored a number of novels and short-story collections. Mukherjee, the Queen of Diasporic writings, left this mortal world in 2017 January 28 at the age of 76 at Manhattan, New York.

Bharati Mukherjee's literary creations are the outcome of her own emotions. Her writings focus on the Asian immigrants in America and more particularly she concentrates on

Indian woman in the new world. This novel expresses her first year of married life in the U.S and her longing for the motherland. The protagonist plans to visit her own country; unfortunately, it is not like the one she dreams. *Tiger's Daughter* expresses her personal experience of being caught between two cultures.

Bharati Mukherjee's first autobiographical novel *The Tiger's Daughter* talks about the dual shock received by the protagonist Tara both in India and America. 'Tara Banerjee' is the protagonist of the novel *Tiger's Daughter*. Tara the daughter of "Bengal Tiger", was sent to America 'Vassar' college for her higher studies during her stay at America. She married an American writer David Cartwright, after seven years of her immigrant life, she came back to her motherland, but she felt alienated and isolated in her own motherland.

If an immigrant moves away from his / her motherland to another alien country, they feel that they are disconnected from their own country and there is a conflict in adopting a new culture. Generally, there is a dilemma of choosing two cultures. As in the case of immigrants, the cultural shock is an inevitable one.

Cultural shock is an output of conflict between two cultures that an immigrant has to adopt. Social shock in an immigrant's life is inseparable. In the works of Mukherjee, she colored her personal feelings and pains of racism that she experienced in her expatriate life. Cultural conflict is an unavoidable part of exile life. Mukherjee who married a Canadian writer and faced many problems including racism.

The Tiger's Daughter, Bharati Mukherjee's first novel centers around a young Bengali girl 'Tara Banerjee Cartwright', daughter of Bengal tiger and granddaughter of Hari Lal Banerjee. The owner of Thomas Co.Ltd. Tara, the protagonist of the novel was born in Calcutta. Her father Bengal Tiger is a very strong man. He works for medical and disability insurance to his factory workers and Bengal Tiger conducts night classes in the tobacco firm for the illiterate workers. This sense makes him send his only daughter to America to acquire higher education.

At the age of fifteen, Tara undertakes a journey to America for higher studies. During her stay at Poughkeepsie, she feels homesick and felt neglected and broken when her room-mate refuses to share her mango chutney and she prays God 'Kali' for her strength. Her early days in America were filled with homesick, Headaches, nightmares. Hence she cherished her nostalgia of her own country.

Tara meets David Cartwright an American writer, and she falls in Love with him and Tara got married to David and Tara became Tara Banerjee Cartwright. After her marriage, Tara feels alienated from her own culture there is a conflict between two cultures. Tara feels that in India marriage is not a union of two persons but it is the union of two families and culture, but this ideology is totally contrasted in the culture of America, in America; marriage is just a contract. Tara is wavering between two cultures and she is in a confusion to adopt the culture of new or her own. She always feels insecure and discriminated because she married an American,

who does not know about her culture. After seven years, Tara plans to visit India. She believes her pain and problems will be magically erased. She could return her homeland Calcutta. Tara hopes that her homeland will heal her pain and it will protect her like a mother protects her child from all her wounds. Her expectations fail as the situation takes a different turn.

Tara starts to chew her past memories about Calcutta, she feels that Calcutta will have developed a lot. This feeling fills her with happiness ends soon. She watches a new Calcutta which has lost all its charm. This Calcutta is not the place where she lived and dreamed. Tara totally collapses there is a big cultural shock. There is a great clash between dream and reality. When she reaches Bombay airport, she is greeted by her relatives as 'Tultul' but it is very strange to her western ears another cultural shock faced by her is the vision in the railway station. In the station she comes across many sick persons and beggars, the station looks like a hospital rather than the railway station. The train journey with 'Marwadi' and 'Nepali' makes her feel isolated and disgusting. Like these such incidents make her to think about America and makes her murmur America, a dreamy land.

Tara thinks that Calcutta is totally changed and growing worse than what she dreamed. She feels broken when her relatives address her as "An Americanwali" and her husband as a "Mleccha". Tara begins to fluctuate between the two edges. Again she feels discriminated when she forgets Hindu rituals and worship for an Indian woman the religious rituals and worship are part of their life but Tara's forgetting the religious rituals, asserts her loss of cultural identity. She is like an alien in her own home.

In India, Tara encounters a number of disgusting adventures and misadventures. Such as her visit to the funeral sermon, a beggar girl affected by leprosy. Then she watches some beggar children eating at the street and finally, the sexual act of the politician Tuntunwala upsets her.

All these incidents make her face her feel shocked and isolated. Now she declared "Calcutta the deadliest city in the world; alarm and impatience were equally useless".(TD 168) .Tara finds her own land Calcutta as an alien land. The cultural and social shock she receives forces her to take a decision to flee from India. Self-humiliation, isolation and her cultural shocks in Calcutta makes her feel that India is her abandoned motherland and America is her adopted fatherland.

Work cited

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