



ENUNCIATION OF ROOTLESS WOMAN IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S THE TIGER'S DAUGHTER

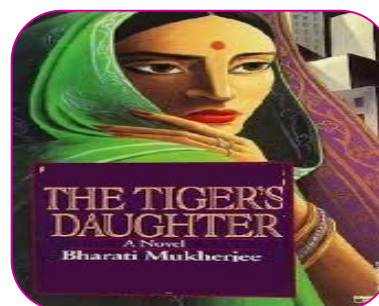
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ABSTRACT

Bharati Mukherjee, an Indian born American novelist, is a feminine singer in Indian Diaspora. Her novel extracts the cross cultural everyday experiences faced by her different women with various images in her novels. Even Mukherjee had some difficulties to adopt the native culture, customary traditions, civilization and all that. The quest for rootlessness and search for self identity are the major- themes of the novel *The Tiger's Daughter*. Another interesting aspect of Indian English fiction is many Indian women writers like Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Shoba De, Jumpha Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Bharati Mukherjee have made it possible to speak of women in Indian English fiction. This paper intrinsically and elaborately portrays the past and present position of women and the problems they face in their motherland as well as in abroad.



KEYWORDS : Bharati Mukherjee, Culture, Identity, Diaspora, Tara, Image, Rootless.

INTRODUCTION

"The first hour of colonialism has struck, and millions of inhabitants of Africa, Asia and Latin America raise to meet a new life and demand their unrestricted Right to self-determination" - Che Guevara, speech to the United Nations, December 11, 1964.

In the postcolonial period the lives of the ordinary people and their cultural characters have been widely discussed in Indian English writings. The issues of expatriation, globalization, diaspora, cultural transmission, alienation and identity crisis have been elaborately pointed out in postcolonial literature. Through these issues of diaspora, Mukherjee creates an important and inevitable place in world literature.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE ROOTLESS WOMAN IN THE NOVEL

Bharati Mukherjee is one of the most remarkable women writers in Indian English fiction. Most of her novels trace out the details of diasporic experiences in her life. In the novel *The Tiger's Daughter*, Mukherjee creates a heroine Tara who resembles herself.

Tara Banerjee Cartwright is the protagonist of the novel. She was born in Calcutta and received education in New York. She married David, an American and settled down in New York. An expatriate writer, Bharati Mukherjee never displays her own Indian identity. She can only speak of a cosmopolitan Bombay or Calcutta, of Catelli-continentals, Camac Streets and St.Blaises (These places are extracted western flavors).

She is a western educated Indian woman; her journey starts as a journey of homesickness. She is steeped with the western ethos which makes her vision misty and not able to relate her friends and surroundings.

The sense of human violation and discrimination plays a very vital role in the city of Poughkeepsie, New York; even her roommates refuse to share her mango chutney. So her condition becomes very bad and unable to share her inner feelings, thoughts and ideas with the foreign girls. She prays to Goddess Kali for more strength because she feels thoroughly insecure in the foreign land. In connection with this, Choudhury observes:

"She had been desperately homesick, lonely, and desperate to belong- in fact she was in the typical position of an immigrant....she had to adjust to things which had been outside the purview of her previous idea of life as a whole". (82)

In the second part, the novel begins with Tara's return to India after seven years stay in the United States. Tara's Bombay relatives are going to airport to welcome her. They have a garland and sweetmeat to put her. "The Bombay relatives hugged her and spoke to her in Bengali". (TD, 15) Then her relatives asked her "Where is your husband? How dare he not come"? (TD, 15) They are revealing their disappointments "that David had not accompanied her". (TD, 15) Her Bombay relatives are compelling Tara to spend at least a week before going to Calcutta for marine drive. Thereafter Tara enters into the railway station, her Bombay uncle suggests Tara to fly instead. "But Tara would make no concession to their kindness. She was anxious to rest by herself, she explained; the train journey would be perfect as long as her compartment was air-conditioned". (TD, 19) In the train, she travels with Marwari and Nepali. "Both men, Tara decided, could effortlessly ruin her journey to Calcutta". (TD, 20). Tara encounters a double culture shock; one is from New York and another one from India. She thinks about her husband and records the impression of New York. "New York was certainly extraordinary, and it had driven her to despair. On days she had thought she could not possibly survive, she had shaken out all her silk scarves, ironed them and hung them to make the apartment more "Indian". (TD, 34).As a result, there are frequent pen service happens between Tara and David.

First, she wants to understand India but her effort has not brought her the desired results, because of the gab. The novelist Mukherjee, as diaspora writer portrays Tara's experiences in India. Tara's self-analysis finally brings an unhappy ending. This novel is conceived in a difficult situation of life when the author was struggling to determine her own identity, keeping in mind the Indian heritage. Tara expected that her return to India would erase her displeasure of living abroad which is described in the following lines.

"For 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 beggars 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 offense". (TD, 25)

As Mukherjee points out "Tara could not give shape to the dark scenery outside, to her it seemed merely alien and hostile". (TD, 25) Moreover, India has already become an overseas land for her "How does foreignness of the spirit begin? Tara Wondered". (TD, 37)

According to C.P.Ravichandra, "the immigrant has an anger wild ass to whom or where he belongs is a question that decides his or her present politics....."

As Neelam Tikkha explains "immigrant is the new traveler who leaves his primary space for the first time, consequent to conscious choice necessitated by his desire for better prospects".

The third chapter of the novel deals with Tara's life at Calcutta with her Catelli- continental friends. She feels that her friends definitely offer some useful advice to her unsteady mind. But the results are different and they treat her in a clumsy way.

“Her friends let slip their disapproval of her, they suggested her marriage had been imprudent, that the seven years abroad had eroded all that was fine and sensitive in her Bengali nature. They felt she deserved chores like washing her own dishes and putting out the garbage” (TD, 55).

Moreover, the concept of the marriage in India is entirely different when comparing with other nations. Her Indian friends have accepted foreign behaviorism, culture, attitude, etiquette and dressing sense but they do not approve to marry a foreigner. Because marriage is not only a union of body and soul but it is a merger of two souls. As F.A. Inamdar observes, “Tara’s friends are not at all interested to listen to Tara’s Americanized voice. They want to discuss in the matter of their fantasies of that life. Then her communication becomes automatically a failure”. She tells Sanjay:

“New York, she confided, was a gruesome nightmare. It wasn’t muggings she feared so much as rude little invasions. The thought of a stranger, a bum from Central Park, a Harlem dandy, looking into her pocketbook, laughing at the notes she had made to herself, observations about her life and times, old sales slips accumulated over months for merchandise long lost or broken, credit cards, identification cards with unflattering pictures by which a criminal could identify her”.(TD,69)

The fourth chapter of the novel deals with the matter of Tara’s journey to Darjeeling, seduction by Marwari Tuntunwala at the Nayapur guest house and return to America. As Mukherjee rightly declares

“The seduction of Tara had been tastefully executed by Tuntunwala, and the maid in the corridor remained ignorant of all untoward details. There were no apologies or recriminations. Tuntunwala assumed that “heart’s matters” were unimportant”. (TD, 199)

CONCLUSION:

Finally Tara decides to return to America with broken heart. She realizes that she cannot share the knowledge of Tuntunwala with others. In The Tigers Daughter Bharati Mukherjee expertly and subtly builds the tension between the two cultures. No doubt Tara becomes eventually aware that while she has not yet eased herself into American culture, she no longer derives life’s enrichment from motherland. She always cherishes the memories of Indian life style recollected by the new impression of poverty, economic and political disruption. Thus the novel ends with Tara’s strong decision that goes back to America along with the memories of her Americanized husband. The novel ends with the lines:

“And Tara still locked in a car across the street from Catelli - continental, wondered she would ever get out of Calcutta, and if she didn’t, whether David would ever know that she loved him fiercely”. (TD,210)

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