

Sense Of Ostracism In Bharati Mukherjee's "The Tiger's Daughter"

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Abstract- *Bharati Mukherjee in her novel "The Tiger's Daughter" tries to unknot the complicated traumas not belonging to her homeland. It is primarily a novel of cultural transplantation. Mukherjee's writing largely reflects her personal experience of such fiery subjectivity in cross-cultural boundaries. She wrote this novel while she was in Canada, when she was deeply aware of being a brown woman in a white society. This paper focuses on the sense of displacement of the woman protagonist in the novel 'The Tiger's Daughter'. Tara, the protagonist lost her identity in the heck of marriage and it was dismantled by leaps and bounds. The novel discovers her sense of culture shock when she travels back to India, intertwined with the fundamental situation in Calcutta and West Bengal. This emphasizes the need to recuperate and redefine the perception of 'home' and the perception of 'identity' from an immigrant's view. The term home has the direct recommendation of a factual homeland that takes love, friendliness and security for granted. Though home chiefly suggests a specific geographical area, in the perception of immigrant experience, because of the need to belong in the instantaneous reality, its limitations are engaged.*

Keywords- exile, expatriate, ostracism, traumas.

Sense of Ostracism in Bharati Mukherjee's "The Tiger's Daughter":

Ostracism is the process of devaluing or abandoning one's own land or cultural background. Among the Indian diasporic writers, Bharati Mukherjee occupies a notable place in redefining the concept of diaspora. Mukherjee depicted her own experience in her writings and has represented an interesting study of the problems and difficulties of an expatriate person in the United States as well as in India. The portrayal of an Indian woman in Bharati Mukherjee's fiction is innumerable, conflicted and an interrogative miracle. She shows a significant amount of cross-cultural sensitivity and a kind of sarcastic modernity in her portrayal of expatriate women.

"Exile is the unhealable rift forced between a human and a native place, between the self and its true home: it's essential sadness can never be surmounted. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever."
-Edward Said, Reflections on Exile

Mukherjee's protagonists are all sensitive and are contrarily proficient in the new cultural society. They are blended in a location of uncertainty concerning their identity, bias and other social domination. They exchange dislocation and face the multicultural reality in the process of cultural differentiation. The multiculturalism leads to the struggle for a new life and a break with the past. Mukherjee's writing largely replicates her personal experience of such febrile situation in crossing cultural limitations.

In novels such as "Jasmine", "The Tiger's Daughter", "Wife" and "The Desirable Daughters", Mukherjee enhances her women characters such as Tara Cartwright, Dimple, Jasmine and Tara Chatterjee are on the boundary in which they have chosen to spend their lives. There has been an expedition from expatriation to immigration in her works. The theme in her works discusses the condition of Asian immigrants in North America, with particular attention to the difficulties faced by the South Asian women in a new land. Mukherjee's experience of immigration from India to Canada is reflected in her work "The Tiger's Daughter". She said "I was (bicultural) when I wrote the Tiger's Daughter; now I am no longer so and America is more real to me than India [...] I realized I was no longer an expatriate but an immigrant that my life was more here [...] I need to belong. America matters to me. It is not that India failed me- rather America transformed me." [iii]

“The Tiger's Daughter” (1971), “Days and Nights in Calcutta” (1977) and later “Desirable Daughters” (2002) are her attempts to search for Indianans. This corresponds with Mukherjee’s journey back to India with Clark Blaise in 1973; it was marked by similar experience of turmoil and political rise. Mukherjee says: “My first novel, *The Tiger’s Daughter*, embodies the loneliness I felt but could not acknowledge, even to myself, as I negotiated the no-man’s land between the country of my past and the continent of my present shaped by memory, **textured with nostalgia for a class and culture I had abandoned, this novel quite naturally** became my expression of the expatriate consciousness.”[iv]

Bharati Mukherjee’s “The Tiger’s Daughter” (1971) highlights the cultural conflicts of East and West. This is an immigrant novel on returning home Mukherjee depicts a clash of ideologies in culture through the life of her protagonist Tara. Tara makes an ambitious journey back to India after many years only to notice her homeland infected with a tradition of scarcity, messiness and uncertainty. It deals with the protagonist leaving her homeland for higher studies. Though scared of residing in different location, she tries to adjust the new environs. There she met a young man David Cartwright, with whom she fell in love with. She happens to marry that man and got settled in a foreign country to start a new life. In the process, the protagonist goes through trials and tribulations while starting her new life in the foreign land. She faced discrimination and isolation that made her to feel that her marriage isn’t supporting. Tara was much comfortable while she was a student but becoming a citizen in an alien land made her discouraging.

Unable to cope in a foreign country, Tara decides to make a trip to India after seven years. Her first stepping on the land of India fills her with disappointment. The Calcutta which she left before seven years has completely changed. The mere picture of her city’s shabbiness irritates her. On her return to India, she laments at the poor condition of the Bengali-Indian society. Mukherjee’s attempt to find her place in the family, to reconnect with the past and her frustration as a foreigner is well portrayed through the protagonist Tara. She experienced

suppression and alienation in Canada while in India she is looked upon as a non-resident from an alien land. The changes in Calcutta and among her relatives made here to have a sense of ostracism.

Tara’s sense of ostracism was deepened when she was addressed as ‘Americawali’ and her husband as ‘Mleccha’ by her relatives. She finds it difficult to adjust with her relatives. At times she remembered David and felt he would miss her. In order to comfort her, she sought the company of her old school friends. She had a great time with them and relied on them for emotional sustenance. Tara longed for someone who could understand her better. She met her old friend Reena and believed to be the best companion.

Religion plays a vital role in any culture. Tara, a Hindu woman disremembers all the rituals done in her family. She was distressed and recognized what America has done to her. Tara’s reaction towards the changes in Calcutta made her friend Reena to remark about her that she has “become too self-centered and European’ (TTD 128). Her trip to Darjeeling also ensued in violent happenings. Her alienation in America continues in India too. She fears to stay in India and as well as to get back to America. Her problems and difficulties make her to suffer from psychological and cultural identity.

"He has lost his own country and has not acquired any other."
-Rudyard Kipling,
Kim, 259

Bharati Mukherjee consequently portrays the problems of exile through the life of her protagonist Tara. Tara finally came to a decision that her foreign land is much better than her pestilence-stricken Calcutta city. When her journey is decided, she plans to meet her friends. During her meet with friends, Tara becomes a prey of viciousness, caused by a flock of protestors. Her friends were heavily injured and she was found sealed inside a car. Thus her vision on India continued to be insecure and enigmatic.

Mukherjee is aware of this 'newness' which can be the survival strategy that Tara started denying her mother state of educated Bengali society and recurring to her adoptive country and American husband. Tara's shocking experiences, her dilemma as a marginalized self, pushed her to the edge of her native world. Her failure to adjust to the new world of her choice has been described by the novelist in a typical diasporic existence. Tara happens to settle these two completely opposite worlds in her mind and heart but fails. Like Bharati Mukherjee's protagonist is wavering between her two socio-cultural identities, between her traumas in an alien soil and her nostalgia for India her home country.

Tara's decision to adapt to American society is measured by her rejections of Indian modes of life. The traumas that she experienced in her motherland influenced her that she desired to discard her past and cuddle her home in the foreign land. This reflects the conflict between illusion and reality. The protagonist experiences the sense of ostracism; first on going to America for higher education and the second on returning to India as a wife of an American writer. Because of her disillusion she feels alienated.

On the question of exile of women, Mukherjee does not assign them to a separate limited field. She depicts women are passing through the same difficulties and crisis as men, and as emerging equally heroic. The bravery of her characters is not a matter of physical courage alone; it is characterized by her concern for the fate of the human world and intricate awareness of life.

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