

# Diasporic and Expatriation Experiences in Bharati Mukherjee's Novels

**Dr. Sudhir Kumar**

Assistant Professor

Department of English and Foreign Languages

MD University Rohtak

**Abstract :** Globalization has shortened the distance of miles and this world has become closer through this impact. It has given a new voice against race, color and culture. Especially Europe and America sparkle twinkles in a number of Asians and Africans to cherish sole dream to a new world for a better life. The manners of a person of a particular society in which he is brought up are refined by the culture of his group class or society. When a person's dreams are bigger and he feels that they can come true, he is allured to migrate to a new world in search of bright future and for that he tries his best to adjust in that new culture which is totally different from his own culture.

**Keywords :** Globalization, Society, Culture, English Literature, Immigration, Expatriation.

In the post colonial era, for various reasons people from all over the world are transplanted from one place to other. This resulted in cultural mixing and it has given birth to a hybrid culture where migrated class of this hybrid society has no love lost for its motherland. Cultural conflict has been minimized as man has become primary while all other things have become secondary in modern times. Although in every country situation is not almost the same when people under the impact of globalization lead to hybrid culture. The Indian immigrants' condition is not better one. The experiences of Indian immigrants are recorded by Das Gupta and Dr. Sethi:

Very few Americans accept you as their own in the first generation and very few will interact with the middle class but there also, apart from the professional meetings, there is a little social acceptance in the first generation you can feel these barriers.

They migrate to a new world for a better life but there they lead the life which is worse than the one they left behind. The reason lies in the people who have migrated are still rooted in their culture and those who are born in America and Europe have assimilated themselves into the western culture. When these immigrants face cultural dissimilarity in terms of ethnic, racial, linguistic and religious determinants, their dreams to conquer the world falls hollow. Those who find themselves unable to adjust with a foreign culture, this cross culture dilemma affects them most. The issue gets irredeemably complex for them Bill Ashcroft et al opines:

Post colonial culture is inevitably a hybrid phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the grafted European cultural system and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate and independent local identity. Such construction or reconstruction occurs as a dynamic interaction between European hegemonic and peripheral subversions of them.

This dilemma of cross culture has received an impetus among many contemporary authors of the post colonial era. These authors focus and highlight this burning issue of today. The experiences of immigrants are penned down by them. Millions of Asians and Africans including Indians who face the crippling effect of race, gender and class from time to time have different authors worldwide as their mouthpieces, who voice their opinion on these critical issues. The third world writers have produced a corpus of literature in the ethnic literary tradition. To name some of them are Camara Laye, Wilson Harris and George Lamming. Anita Desai, Amy Tan, Raja Rao, Bharati Mukherjee, Kamala Markandaya and V.S. Naipaul etc. The immigrant sensibility and the fluid identity both are explored and recognized respectively by these third world writers.

In Indian English Literature many authors have achieved fame and popularity in the genre. Bharati Mukherjee, Indian born American novelist hold a distinguished position among the post-colonial to Indian English Fiction, she enjoys a secular fame. This paper is an endeavour to observe and analyze the different aspects of Indian immigrants as drawn by Bharati Mukherjee in her works. In her adorable works she makes out a real picture of Indian immigrants plights and problems in the western ethos. Characters are drawn from different economic and social setup to bring forth their plight caused by cultural and social forces in the alien land.

Bharati Mukherjee's own experiences as an immigrant became the recurring issue that jerked her violently. She was herself a victim of racial and cultural prejudices. And that is why it is quite common to find the problems of immigrants and expatriates in her fictions. As a Canadian citizen her painful experiences are recorded through her creative impulse. She admits the difficulties in, "Finding of a new identity is the painful process of pulling yourself out of the culture that you were born into and then replanting yourself in another culture."

Bharati Mukherjee gets strength from the traumas of displacement, disturbance and the dilemma of finding a new place in the new world, instability and anxiety prevailing in the society to present such literature in which the portrayals of the novelist represents the predicament of the universal man or women. She has a unidirectional approach to these problems that acquired a complex turn in her novels. Her views are neatly sophisticated on this very dilemma. Polly Shulman writes that Bharati Mukherjee presents her best while producing this kind of writings. Cultural fusion may be the solution to this problem to some extent but it is humanly impossible to keep away one's harrowing past, "Assimilation implies forgetting and

blotting out the past, but the past is what the present is made of. If she weren't still an Indian Mukherjee wouldn't be the wonderful American writer as she is." Bharati Mukherjee's early novels *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) and *Wife* (1975) explore the very condition of Indian expatriate in America investigating the above while Jasmine dares to live on her term keeping her past assayed.

Her first manifestation of cultural conflict is '*The Tiger's Daughter*' (1972). Tara Banerjee the daughter of Bengal Tiger, the owner of famous Banarjee and Thomas (Tobacco) Co. Ltd. is sent with great enthusiasm to America for higher education where she starts the dumb bottle of class consciousness. Her reactions are full of fear and anger in America. While managing with American life in Pough Keepsie, she feels nostalgic and homesick. When Tara's roommate refused her offer to accept Mango chutney she feels greatly insulted of discrimination, "Little things pained her. If her roommate did not share her bottle of mango chutney, she sensed discrimination." Another example of discrimination from residence hall is very pinching. "The girls in the residence hall tried to draw her out. They lent her books and hand lotions unasked.

That she would not break down before these so called cultured Americans, she prayed to Kali for strength. Such harsh treatment from the girls was beyond her expectations. Through such examples Bharati Mukherjee as a conscious artist has very successfully penetrated the psychology of expatriates in the foreign lands, especially in the sixties and seventies when racism and class consciousness was greatly hurting and humiliating in the west:

For Tara, Vassar had been an almost unsalvageable mistake. If she had not been Banerjee a Bengal- Brahmin, the great grand- daughter of Harilal Banarjee or perhaps if she had not been trained by the good nuns at St. Blaise's to remain composed and lady like in all emergencies, she would have rushed home to India at the end of her first week.

The situation of cross cultural dilemma arises where there is no solution and the immigrants are always reminded of their state as a foreigner and stranger. With so many dreams in eyes they move to a foreign land only to face a bitter experience of racism and disappointment. There they remain only alien unable to find a way for coming out of this reality.

Tara's husband David Cart Wright mistook her love for family as her dependence. He was hostile to genealogy. She could not communicate with him frankly about her culture, her tradition and her family especially about her mother as she was afraid of her husband misunderstanding her. She created a different story about her mother because, "she had feared a foreigner would not understand such devotion to insurance terms and payments. It was the one detail in her life she had deliberately misrepresented."

She becomes victim of nostalgia on finding it impossible for herself to make David understand. This nostalgia makes her feel inadequate, incomplete and fragmented in America and she plans to come back to Calcutta. So the effect of racism has been felt by Bharati Mukherjee herself :

In Canada she feels isolated, separate in the vastness of this under populated country The media has made me self consciousness about racism. I detect arrogance in the slow fottedness or sales clerks. I am tired of being exotic, being complemented for qualities of voice, education, bearing, appearance that are not extraordinary.

Her stay in Canada left bitter scars on her memories, "I cannot describe the agony and the betrayal one feels, hearing oneself spoken of by one's own country as being somehow exotic to its nature a burden a cause for serious concern."

*The Tiger's Daughter* is the reflection of whatever the novelist felt in Canada. The quantity of people is always demoralized by the racial consciousness. They become nostalgic as well as ill tempered. When they face the reality it spoils their dreams. Multiculturalism is the most spectacular and in many ways the most fundamental social change that the post colonial era has gifted to the world but through this the prejudices of racism are spreading at length, especially, the class consciousness is noticeable in the west.

Tara wanted to have a long talk with David about her friends she had played with, "Seven years ago done her homework with Nilima briefly fancied herself in love with Pronob and debated with Reena at the British council..." But she was afraid of his remarks about India and Indian things as he himself thinks. "Calcutta as the collective future in which garbage disease and stagnation are man's estate." Reena comments, "These foreigners just want to take snaps of bullock carts and garbage dumps. They are not satisfied with modern people like us." Even Tara herself cannot associate with the poverty beggars and starved children in modern India. She wondered how David would react if he ever comes to India. "Would he sling his camera like other Americans and photograph beggars in Shambazar, Squatters in Tollygunj prostitutes in free school street. Would he try to capture in colour the pain of Calcutta? She thought he would cover the obvious."

Tara is not content and homely with lifestyle of America. Because of cultural discrimination her love for her husband remains unexposed. Writing to David seems to her like talking with a figure standing in shadows. In seeking communication these are no avenues. "Her voice in these letters was insipid or shrill and she tore them up, twanging at the waste of seventy five naya-paise for each mistake."

The changed India has shocked her. She had many happy and sweet memories but feels devastated now. How to explain, "The bitterness to David who would have laughed at her friends He'd laughed when she described Rajah's burial in a children's cemetery, been disgusted that servant had been kept just to feed and walk like a dog." Tara's situation is every much similar to Salman Rushdie who ruminates on being an

Indian writer in England and on writing about India from the outside. The foreigner remains foreigner and alien. She realizes that truth. Even her Indian friends feel the same about the west :

Pronob one of her friends had argued. I would hate to be an immigrant .... I would not mind giving up the factory but I'd hate to be nobody in America. How do they treat Indians, Tara though tries to avoid the situation, she gives very diplomatic answer, yet she had not convinced Pronob that he thought such and anonymity inadequate compensation for the loses of class power and privilege.

Immigrants are locked by the west into their shelves and inhabit them all their efforts of compromise and adjustment become devoid of any possible solution at the cost of their individuality and inherited traits. Their hearts ache at the policy of multiculturalism. Bharati Mukherjee believes that education leads to self improvement and national enlightenment. She very plainly opposes why a minority should be made to feel guilty.

In India, Tara faces satirical language. Her marriage with David is credited as contemptible. Her father would suggest her, "Caste, class and province are more valuable in marriage than giddiness." Her father took a long time to accept him as his son-in-law. Bharati Mukherjee, the author herself has faced the same situation. In an interview with Runar Vignisson she tells, "My father's reaction was what kind of family does he come from have you checked out his family to because genetic and socio-economic screening is so important in Indian traditional, Hindu marriages."

When Tara tries to be helpful to her aunt Jharna she aggressively rebukes, "you have come back to make fun of us, haven't you? What gives you the right? Your American money? Your Mleecha husband? And then to the heights of 'extremity, Tutunwala's sexual assault on her broke her down completely and her glittering ideas about India shattered. Torn completely she wanted to leave the country, immediately as she felt the same as earlier while leaving America. Tara introspected things about India and Indian idealism. The author herself recalls, "The yearn India had forced me to view myself more as an immigrant than exile."

A vital effort is made by Bharati Mukherjee to capture the image of the immigrants who claim to be an active part of American society and are trying to assume a new identity in U.S.A. or Europe by struggling hard. These strugglers reinstate themselves in a new cultural milieu. Bharati Mukherjee herself is such an immigrant; she has assimilated into American ethos. With the exception of the native Indian every American who lives there is either an immigrant himself or descendant of an immigrant. She, as a creative artist portrays the other immigrants experience in America. Sushma Tondon Remarks, "Bharati Mukherjee viewed immigration as an opportunity to the writer when to represent the experiences and the same time

land her voice to her belief that it signified a release from constrictive social and cultural restraints back home.”

Thus we can conclude by saying that Bharati Mukherjee’s novels and short stories express the nomadic impulse only of Indians who in their deliberate search for a materially better life, migrate to the west and consequently face tensions of this new multicultural world.

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