

Expatriation, immigration and transformation in the novels of bharati mukherjee: A study of feminism, identity and diasporic consciousness

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Abstract:

Bharati Mukherjee's novels make important contributions to the field of diasporic literature because they deal with the themes of expatriation and immigration, as well as feminism and transformation. Her works depict the emotional, psychological, and cultural conflicts of immigrants striving to make sense of their traditional values and customs when forced to navigate the challenges of Western culture. This paper aims at examining selected novels like *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife and Jasmine* so as to analyse the experiences of displacement, alienation, identity crisis and self-transformation suffered by female protagonists. The study also examines the process of immigration as psychological and cultural reconstruction as depicted by Mukherjee. Her female protagonists defy male limitations, fight racial and cultural prejudice and slowly construct their subjectivities in transnational locales. Mukherjee conveys the complications of being bicultural and the search for hybrid identities through a series of feminist portraits of immigrant women caught between tradition and modernity. The paper also explores how the protagonists' journeys towards selfhood and independence are influenced by feminism. In conclusion, this study has confirmed that transformation is the main motive in Mukherjee's fiction, a process through which her characters can overcome oppression and reconstruct themselves in the multicultural societies.

Keywords: Diaspora, Expatriation, Immigration, Transformation, Feminism.

INTRODUCTION

Expatriation, immigration, and transformation will remain the central themes of the recent diasporic literature as they reflect the experiences of those who have to reside in complicated cultural environments. These themes are not only the elements of narrative weaving but essential lenses in which Bharati Mukherjee explores the processes of identity formation, cultural negotiation, and personal transformation in the works of Bharati Mukherjee. Mukherjee, a renowned Indian-American author is known to have described skilfully the experiences of the Indian immigrants in the socio-cultural realities of the United States. Her stories are a complex combination of psychological, social, and political aspects of migration

that show the drastic consequences of the geographical displacement of an individual on his or her identity. Through a critical analysis of the chosen novels by Mukherjee, it is possible to identify various roles of expatriation and immigration as triggers and settings of change, which allows her characters to traverse, disrupt, and frequently renegotiate the borders of belonging.

Unlike expatriation, immigration suggests a more procession, legally regulated movement of people across the national borders, usually surrounded by socio-political, economic, and cultural discussions. The novels by Mukherjee, e.g., *Jasmine* (1989), *The Tiger Daughter* (1971), and *Miss New India* (2011), Additionally, Offer a summary of the immigration experience in the United States, highlighting the challenges and aspirations of individuals navigating their new environment. In her writings, immigration is not a phenomenon that is fixed and one-dimensional but is rather dynamic and includes adaptations, resistance, and changes. The characters she creates struggle to overcome barriers of cultural dissonance, racial bias, gender norms, and financial limitation and reflect the complexity of immigrant existence. Mukherjee's depiction of immigration underscores the significance of structural factors and human agency in illustrating how immigrants navigate social pressures while striving to exhibit their uniqueness and retain aspects of their cultural heritage.

EXPATRIATION EXPERIENCE OF BHARATHI MUKHERJEE IN CANADA

This study clarifies the difficulties encountered by emigrants, as shown in the literary oeuvre of Bharati Mukherjee. Bharati Mukherjee started her writing career with the release of her first work., *The Tiger's Daughter*, in 1971. She went to America in 1961. She emigrated to Canada after her marriage to Clerk Blaise in 1972. She obtained Canadian citizenship in 1980. Thereafter, She became an American citizen after migrating to the US with her family. Bharati Mukherjee lived in Canada for 15 years. Thereafter, she moved to the United States. Her first two books depicted her experiences in Canada, which she found unwelcoming. She illustrates her degrading experiences in Canada as an expatriate. Canadians saw expatriates as inferior, second-class citizens. The works of Bharati Mukherjee published up to 1990 may be categorized into two groups. The first section covers the era before to 1980, while the subsequent division pertains to the period after 1980. The first phase has a direct autobiographical element. She depicts her authentic experiences in Canada in her writings from that era. The subject of the first phase is expatriation. The second part addresses the subject of immigration. Consequently, her works depict a transition from expatriation to immigration.

Bharati Mukherjee authored *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife* when she was living in Canada. *Darkness*, a collection of her short tales, was released. These accounts relate to the traumas linked to expatriation. They also denote the transition from expatriation to immigration. After 1980, the immigrant sensibility in her art becomes clearly apparent. In the United States, her anthology *The Middlemen and Other Stories* was published. Her receipt of the National Book Critics Circle Award brought her much prominence. *Jasmine*, her third book, was published in 1990, signifying a full transformation. It may be accurately termed an authentic American book. *Jasmine* embodies the authentic American spirit. Mukherjee's style and treatment exhibit changes as well. She is direct and unemotional. She is increasingly assimilating into American culture over time. Her integration into American life and culture is very evident.

This paper explores and analyzes the concept of expatriation and immigration, feminism and transformation in the chosen novels of Bharati Mukherjee in a critical manner. It attempts to provide an analysis of how Mukherjee depicts the emotional and cultural dilemmas of immigrants, especially women, who are trapped between their own traditions and the norms of Western cultures. It focuses on how female protagonists in novels like *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife*, and *Jasmine* are transformed and how they experience alienation, identity crisis, adaptation, and discovery. The paper then examines the cultural negotiation and personal reconstruction of identities that Mukherjee presents with respect to immigration, and how this creates hybrid identities. This study aims to illustrate the importance of Mukherjee's work in the field of diasporic literature and feminism, by analyzing the interconnections of gender, culture, and displacement.

BHARATI MUKHERJEE CONVEYS HER VIEWPOINT IN AN INTERVIEW REGARDING EXPATRIATION, IMMIGRATION, AND TRANSFORMATION.

We, immigrants, have intriguing narratives to share. Numerous individuals have resided in newly independent or fledgling nations beset by civil and religious strife. Upon relocating from our native nations to this nation, whether by choice or compulsion, we are compelled to assimilate two centuries of American societal evolution. In my literary works and short tales, I attempt to convey this. My goal is to introduce Americans to the vibrant perspectives of recent immigrants in our nation (The Times of India, October, 1989). Bharati Mukherjee's book *Wife* explores the themes of expatriation and feminism. Amit Basu intends to establish residency in the United States. He believes it is the country of opportunity. Dimple, Amit's spouse, is notably ambitious and aspires to reside in a liberated nation such as the USA. The

first phase of expatriation is detachment from the predominant social environment of one's homeland. This feeling of solitude hinders or postpones absorption. Dimple aggressively acclimatizes to the new habitat. She thinks that one ought to embody American identity while in America.

Dimple attains the phases of acculturation and assimilation, although she must relinquish Amit, who remains connected to his Indian identity. The whole cycle of expatriation shown in *Wife* encompasses immigration, alienation, adaptation, and integration. Both *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife* take place in India and the United States, symbolizing the homeland and the distant place. In the book, Dimple's Americanization is almost complete. The activity has both physical and psychological dimensions. Bharati Mukherjee's third book, *Jasmine*, focuses on immigration and expatriation. Jyothi Vihh, the central character, is the wife of a man who was killed in a terrorist bombing. Joyti has an intrinsically defiant nature. She is reluctant to accept the status of a widow in India. She criticized feudal norms and traditions in India. She is intrigued by the English language and American culture. Jyoti's trip from Hasnapur to the US and her transformation from Jyoti Vihh to Jasmine. Prakash, her husband, revolutionizes her existence. Her partner has passed away, however the seeds of change have already been planted. She can no longer be restricted by convention and social expectations. *Jasmine* undertakes many adventures. She dispatches Half Face, her attacker. She comes in America on a trawler, adopting her new identity as *Jasmine*. She consigns her past to a suitcase and incinerates it. In the US, she lives with Professor Vadhera. In every circumstance, she changes her name as needed. The story of *Jasmine* illustrates the modern lady with a rebellious nature who refuses to conform to her environment. They exhibit the mental resilience and determination to face all obstacles and hardships. The theme of trip is prominent in *Jasmine*, as she embarks on both physical and psychological journeys. She transforms as she navigates several identities: Jyoti, Jasmine, Kali, Jase, and Jane.

Diasporic literature explores the relationship of individuals or communities with their homeland and their desire for assimilation into the host country. The writings represent the transitions between source cultures and target cultures. In his article "*Diasporas and Multiculturalism*," Victor Ramraj identifies two categories of diasporas: traditionalist and assimilationist. The traditionalist maintains a distinct identity, whilst the latter assimilates with the host nation. Uma Parameswaran, in her work "*Ganga in Assinibonine: Prospects for Indo-Canadian Literature*," delineates four periods of the immigrant experience in Canada.

- The first aspect is the confrontation with the expanse of the Canadian landscape.
- The second pertains to the challenges faced by immigrants in acclimating to unfamiliar environments.
- The second-generation Canadians of South Asian descent have acknowledged that their home is here, rather than overseas.
- This is not only a location, but a space where one may really express oneself.

FEMINISM, IMMIGRATION AND TRANSFORMATION IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S NOVELS

Feminism: Although humanity is categorized into several groups, God. The Almighty has categorized them into two distinct classes: men and women. Women are essential to human culture. No civilization can advance without the active involvement of women alongside males in developmental endeavors. Since time immemorial, women have been marginalized and have never been seen as equals to men.

Immigration: in literature is the migration of people to a foreign land that they have the intention to settle in permanently. The literary works on immigration center on the problems that migrants go through when trying to adjust to new social, cultural, and racial settings. Immigrants find themselves in the world of alienation, cultural clash, and discrimination and at the same time struggling to achieve acceptance and belonging in the host society.

Transformation: denotes the radical shift in identity, consciousness and worldview that follow the experience of migration. As people are exposed to different cultural norms, social structures and value systems, a process of self-redefinition takes place whereby they are redefining their own personal and social identities. In literary texts, change commonly arises as a result of fighting towards, adapting to, and surviving which causes the creation of hybrid or transnational identities.

'*Wife*' describes the journey of a young Indian woman named Dimple Disrupt as she tries to balance the stresses of daily life with the Bengali ideal of the submissive wife. Dimple is wed to Amit Bose, an ambitious engineer. Preparing to immigrate to the United States. Dimple perceives the adaptations to marriage as more challenging than she anticipated. The relocation to New York has left her in a condition of shock and despondency. Jasmine, the heroine,

departs from India ostensibly to honor her husband's last request of pursuing education at an American university by self-immolating on a pyre of his garments and credentials. Similar to her narrator, Jasmine has a chameleon-like ability to shift herself with escalating speed and audacity; she embodies Jota, Jasmine, and Jose with remarkable ease and abandon. Transformation is undoubtedly its main topic. *The Tiger's Daughter* illustrates the tension between reality and illusion. Nevertheless, *The Tiger's Daughterhood* used a documentary approach to underscore the contrast between the two domains and their corresponding mindsets. Tara's personality displays a distinctive blend of American and Indian characteristics that are always at odds. At times, she makes futile attempts to affirm her American identity. However, it disrupts the cadence of Indian life throughout her stay in Calcutta. Neither her newly acquired American identity nor her former Indian identity can provide her with solace. Her damaged mentality is the result of this fight. The owner of the planet may be understood on several levels. Hannah Easton, a Puritan from Massachusetts, uses the story of Salem Bibi, Raja Jadav Singh's concubine, to share her experiences. The emperor's tear and the diamond Hannah pilfers from Aurangzeb's battle camp are both featured in the book. She suggests two benefits of women's emancipation in "*The Holder of the World*," arguing that it is not only a twentieth-century phenomena. Because it enables people to see their potential within the greater community, it was common throughout the epic era and the seventeenth century. The main characters in a number of Bharti Mukherjee's novels are married or divorced women who often get into relationships that lead to sexual adventures. Is it possible to classify these female characters as free women? They engage with others carelessly in order to satiate their emotional demands, and rather than stopping at that juncture, continue to forge new relationships. The conventional perspective of seeing romantic relationships culminating in marriage or established love affairs is now radically redefined. Conversely, their unruly behavior and promiscuity cast doubt on their ideals and aspirations for immigration and settlement in the USA. The intricacies of the narrative established in the first segment are abruptly resolved in the subsequent section via a romantic moment and the ensuing alterations.

PREDICAMENT OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF BHARATI MUKHERJEE

The Tiger's Daughter examines the post-colonial predicament of Tara, an English-educated aristocratic expatriate, upon her return to India and articulates biculturalism. She simply has to deal with chaos and hardship. It mirrors Mukherjee's own experience of traveling back to

India with her American husband in 1973, when she was profoundly impacted by the unrest and poverty of the country. Together with her earlier works, the book offers a first investigation into Mukherjee's interpretation of the conflict between Eastern and Western civilizations. The main character, Tara, was born in Calcutta, had her education in the US, and wed an American guy. The radiant Tara leaves her American husband behind and returns to India after spending seven years abroad. When she returns, the city she finds herself in is very different from what she remembered; it is characterized by riots, strikes, and civil upheaval. Tara tries to combine her husband David's contemporary world with the traditional world of her father, the Bengal Tiger. Through Tara's viewpoint, Mukherjee has shown Indian culture.

Wife (1975) tells the story of Dimple, a lady who wants to go beyond the traditional standards of being a wife. Bharati Mukherjee, an expatriate, wrote "*Wife*" in a depressing atmosphere of dissatisfaction about the predicament of Indian women and Canada's racial prejudice. The evil aspect of the protagonist's dual nature is revealed in this book. She envisions marriage, her understanding shaped by Indian films and periodicals. She enters into matrimony after several aspirations but cultivates a passive resistance to her conjugal existence. Upon her husband's immigration to America in pursuit of fortune, she struggles to assimilate into American society. Regarding her immigration to America, she wishes to leave her history behind. She forcibly causes miscarriage by skipping rope. She remains a disadvantaged character, unable to assimilate into American society, within both her Indian and American contexts. She murders her spouse and ultimately takes her own life.

In *Jasmine*, Jasmine represents the journey of an immigrant woman who continuously transforms herself while confronting displacement, cultural conflict, and identity reconstruction in a foreign land. An astrologer, standing under a banyan tree, foretells Jasmine's coming widowhood and exile at the start of the story in a typical rural setting. Even though they live in a traditional, orthodox neighborhood, she, as a girl with contemporary views and perspectives, disregards the prophesy. She manifests as a dissenter against the established norms of the medieval feudal society and the predetermined trajectory of her destiny. *Jasmine* vehemently refutes the astrologer's forecasts.

“You are a crazy old man. You don’t know what my future holds!” (1)

The astrologer strikes her, leaving a mark on her forehead, out of frustration. The wound is like a third eye to her. This unwanted and dowryless lady steadfastly refuses to wed a widower

chosen by her grandmother. She marries Prakash Vihh, a contemporary man, and adopts a new identity and way of life. Her husband names her "*Jasmine*," after the fragrant flower. After marrying Prakash, she becomes a true Indian wife, aligning her goals with his. In turn, Prakash shares with his wife his intense American aspirations. With her marriage, she sees a brighter future in America. Sadly, her aspirations are dashed when her husband unexpectedly passes away the day before he leaves, at the hands of Sikh extremist Sukhwinder.

In "*A Father*," Self-division is best shown by Bharati Mukherjee's portrayal of Indian men and their internal conflict. The author outlines a number of conflicts, such as learned vs inherited beliefs, cultural and ethnic variations, and reason against superstition. They are granted sexual freedom by the other country, but this freedom causes pain rather than pleasure, which fuels conflict. The person believes that his soul is caught between the two. Mr. Bhowmick's wife never wavered in her support of his studies at Carnegie Tech. The act of artificial insemination performed by his daughter provoked outrage, embarrassment, and irrationality. Although he had a respectable position as a government engineer in Ranchi, he was disinclined to establish permanent residency in the U.S. Mr. Bhowmick's animosity is evident when he intervenes in a violent confrontation between his wife and daughter. He was just as furious and angry as Goddess Kali. "Who needs a man?" Babli responds. She let out a hiss. My child's biological genesis is a syringe and bottle. Men lose their lips. I want to conceive a kid.

In "*Lady from Lucknow*," The main character, Nafeesa Hafeez, is a Pakistani immigrant. Nafeesa and her IBM-employed husband, Iqbal, set up temporary residences in many countries, including Lebanon, Brazil, and Zambia. They have now established residence in Atlanta. Despite being in a lovely mansion, Iqbal feels uneasy since it is "not quiet." Nafeesa entered into an arranged marriage at the tender age of 17. Like the Pakistani girl next door, Husseina, she exhibits her tendency to question social norms and limitations. Dualities entangle these characters. The state generates conflict between the concepts of loss and recovery.

In *Leave It to Me*, the protagonist embarks on a turbulent journey characterized by intricate connections. Mukherjee adeptly constructs a story that explores the significant influence of these connections on the protagonist's fate, resulting in a sad and ominous conclusion. The complex web of relationships and conflicting associations reflects the complicated nature of life, illustrating how the protagonist's activities lead to her eventual demise. In her recent work, *Leave It to Me*, Shalini Gupta observes that Mukherjee examines life from an external

perspective while exploring the hippie path in post-hippie America. Behind synthetic, unverified trappings, As grandiose as "cosmic glue," reality turns into a Karma-Cola.

CONCLUSION

Bharati Mukherjee's novels are rich with the experience of expatriation and immigration, of feminism and change in the context of diasporic literature. She vividly captures the psychological struggles, cultural alienation and sense of identity crisis of immigrants, particularly women, in the face of unfamiliar social and cultural worlds. The author, using characters like Tara, Dimple and Jasmine, portrays the traumatic yet redeeming process of uprooting and finding oneself. Her characters struggle continually between the East and the West – both in terms of their own lives and in the context of the surrounding culture – in order to illustrate the complexities of bicultural and transnational life. Mukherjee's fiction also focuses on the plight of immigrant women who defy patriarchal limitations and try to establish their individuality in alien societies. Some characters are fragmented and despaired, others are empowered through adaptation and reinvention. Thus transformation becomes the main theme in her novels, a theme that represents both individual and cultural change. Her stories imply that identity is not static, but is always changing due to migration, memory, culture and personal strength. In addition, Mukherjee reimagines the immigrant journey as a psychological and social re-construction as well as a physical one. Her novels play an important role in feminist and diasporic discourse as they draw attention to issues of cultural conflict, assimilation, racism, alienation and hybridity. In the end Mukherjee's compositions are an homage to individuals who defy limitations and forge new identity in a multicultural environment and thus becomes one of the most influential voices in the current diasporic literature.

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