

A Comprehensive Analysis of Cultural Migration and its Crucial Study with Regard to Feminism

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Abstract - Cross-cultural encounters between feminism and migration are explored in this study, *Feminism and Migration: Cross-Cultural Engagement is a valuable resource. Some of the most well-known and emerging scholars in this field provide in-depth analyses of how social, cultural, political, and economic forces influence the new perspectives that women on the move develop through a variety of topics, such as theorizing feminism in migration and the contesting identities and agency that these topics entail. It emphasizes the significance of feminism's diverse meanings and interpretations. And the main study in which discussed A Comparison from the Feministic Point of View, A Comparison from the Cultural Point of View, The Cultural Conflict, and The Isolation of women.*

Keyword - cultural, women

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INTRODUCTION

A comparison of the predicament of women in the selected novels and short stories is helpful to bring out the similarities and differences in the immigrant women's experiences and behaviour. A comparative study sharpens and brings accuracy in the understanding of the intensity of women's issues under discussion in the selected literary texts. It is also necessary to acquaint the contemporary generation with the problems emerging due to the cross-cultural migration. The conclusions drawn on the basis of a comparative study may be more acceptable, authentic, reliable, valid and general. Thus, a comparison is necessary between the predicament of all the women protagonists in migration, the reasons and effects of their problems and sufferings and the way they prefer to come out with the problems.

Though, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Shauna Singh Baldwin carry a collective diasporic consciousness, they are the woman writers of Indian diaspora who use different approaches to look at the problems of immigrant women. Though they may or may not agree, these three Indian diasporic women writers are the feminists because through their writings they explicitly or implicitly try to define, establish and defend the problems of women and the equal rights and opportunities for women. In a way, by focusing on the issues related to women they advocate and support the rights and equality of women. Their writing is explicitly political which analyses and ameliorates the patriarchy, sexism and gender. They explore the nature of gender inequality

by examining women's individual, familial and social roles during their cross-cultural experiences. This is an analysis of women from a female perspective and an attempt to expose and resist the sexism and sexual politics.

The female protagonists of these three women writers fight for the equality with men and independent or similar status by attempting to create their own identity. The female protagonists of these three women writers attempt to create their own identity by fighting for the equality and independence. These women are presented as more deserving and having more humanity, rationality and mental capability while celebrating their difference from the men in the cross-cultural world. The predicament of women in the selected texts exposes the social, physical, psychological and cultural repression of women as entrenched and maintained by the patriarchy not only in their homelands but also in the adopted lands. The women attempt to prove that the practices, attitudes and modes of behaviour considered appropriate for women are not natural but cultural products. Such modes of behaviour differ between the cultures because of the factors of class and ethnicity within the cultures. It suggests that the femininity is man-made cultural product adopted by the women in order to participate in a culture which functions largely in terms of the masculine and feminine binary oppositions. They focus on the social and economic factors that maintain the marginality and lesser status of the women.

A Comparison from the Feministic Point of View:

The Post-colonial literature includes the literature by the voiceless classes and feminism is reciprocal to the subaltern studies as it confronts the multidimensional manifestation of the deep rooted cultural, social and political injustice. The feministic approach helps to explore the diasporic female subject produced by the history. The sufferings of the immigrant women need a more careful study in the wider context of feminist studies. The existing myths demarcate the activities of the women on the basis of the physical differences between man and woman. It is scientifically proved that in the human society the women are naturally prepared for some specific works. The child bearing capacity of the women is also considered as one of their special works and it is said that women are 'naturally' fit for it and it is 'unnatural' to expect any intellectual business from them. The writings of women are always seen as feministic business by the male critics. Shashi Deshpande observes:

It is curious fact that serious writing by women is invariably regarded as feminist writing- A woman who writes of women's experiences often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have angered her, roused her strong feelings. I don't see why this has to be labeled feminist fiction. A (male) critic once said about a novel of mine, "She can be quite brilliant when she is not raising her banners of protest." What banners of protest was my thought! Any woman who writes fiction shows the world as it looks to a woman- to apply the tag of feminist is one way, I have realized, of dismissing the serious concerns of the novel by labeling them, by calling the work propagandist. (De

All the three selected women writers have used their personal life experiences as a raw material for their literature. Thus, the authenticity of their presentation is strengthened as it is not merely based on the imagination. Bharati Mukherjee autobiographically presents her personal difficulties of being caught between the two worlds, homes and cultures. She herself leaves India to live in the North America and marries an American and later returns to India as an outsider. Her works mainly focus on the issues of Indian women and their struggles in migration, the status of new immigrants and the feelings of expatriates. Mukherjee is in exile from India, an expatriate in Canada and an immigrant in the United States. Mukherjee's own struggle with her identity works as the motivating force behind her protagonists' attempts in search for their identities. Similar to the author, the majority of her immigrant protagonists appear to be changed in the style and psyche in the process of adaptation to the American culture and ethos. Through the novels and short

stories, she attempts to find her identity in her Indian heritage. She is at her best to draw on her experiences of India and Canada while writing with insights about the New World in America to which she presently belongs. She describes her American experience as one of the 'fusions' and immigration as the 'two-way process' in which the Americans and immigrants grow by the interchange and experience. She represents her own experiences, feelings and problems through the stories of the immigrant women.

A Comparison from the Cultural Point of View:

A culture is a product of the social, political and ideological norms that enforces the various practices, attitudes and modes of behaviour. The culture varies society to society. When a person leaves his own society and tries to settle down in a different one, the cultural clash begins. The cross-cultural issues cause tremendous transformation in the life of the immigrants. Subha Mukherjee in her research article states;

Cross-cultural issues have metamorphosed human lives and transformed the lives of Indians living abroad, causing serious maladjustments, faltering relations, strenuous anxieties, losing identities and tottering individuals. (Mukherjee 59)

The problems of women in migration as presented in the selected texts need a comparative study. For women, the femininity is a cultural product to be adopted in order to participate in a society. The above discussed all feministic problems that the immigrant women face are linked with the cultural problems, because as the feminist critics argue that the femininity is a cultural product in the human societies. The following are a few of the cultural problems of the immigrant women which are presented by the selected Indian Diasporic writers and to be taken for a comparative discussion.

1. The Cultural conflict
2. The Racial discrimination
3. A sense of dislocation
4. The Nostalgia
5. Tracing the roots
6. The Expatriate sensibility

The Cultural Conflict:

When a person migrates out of his motherland, he/she carries a deep rooted sense of his/her own culture to the adopted country and obviously that does not match with the native one. Thus, the

cultural clash is natural. The clash of cultures is witnessed at two levels. At one level, it is in the mind of the migrated person and at the other level it is seen in his/her social interactions with the native citizens of the host country. In Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter*, the protagonist Tara studies in America. Tara suffers through the clash between her Indian culture and the American culture. She tries to prove and maintain her Indian cultural identity. She always prays the Goddess for the power to never surrender before the Americans. She follows her Indian cultural upbringings even after her marriage with an American. Tara believes that in an Indian marriage culture a totally stranger groom takes his bride and rapes her on a brand new flower-decked bed. While in her American marriage, she is very dutiful like a true Indian wife. In the Indian culture a wife feels proud of doing the house hold works. In America she expects the credit from her American husband for the dirty works like washing toilets and bathrooms. She always fails to communicate the Indian culture, customs and traditions to her American husband. Tara suffers from the culture shock that a person experiences after a feeling of depression and frustration while adjusting between the tremendously different two cultures. Her stay for seven years in America causes tremendous damage to her Indian culture and she turns into a split, a hybrid personality. She thinks that her visit to India is the only remedy for her feelings of the cultural loss. She comes to India with many expectations. But depressed and disgusted with deteriorating situation of India, finally she determines to leave to her husband in the USA.

Similarly, Lahiri's *The Namesake* presents the large submerged territory of 'cross-culturalism', which does not allow understanding fully a meaning of straddling the line between two cultures. It focuses also on the complex and conflicted world of the Indian immigrants caught between two cultures in the United States. It deals with the themes of immigration and conflicting collision of the cultures highly distinct in the religious, social and ideological differences. Mukherjee's Tara struggles alone with the cultural crisis, but Lahiri's Ashima struggles with her entire family to maintain her Indian culture in the powerful influence of the American cultural context. In Indian culture a woman wishes the emotional support at the time of her delivery. But in the United States Ashima struggles through language and cultural barriers. According to the Indian culture, Ashima's grandmother is chosen for naming her son. However, the letter never arrives and soon the grandmother dies. The American practice of naming after ancestors is contrary to the Bengali culture. In Bengali Culture children are given two names; one is a pet name used only by the family and close friends and another is used by the rest of society. So, later Gogol is given 'Nikhil' as a public name. The Indian culture puts a moral burden on a woman to adjust with the situation at her husband's house. The same force compels Ashima to adjust with the situation

without complaining for the sake of her son and her father's prestige. Tara makes her personal attempts to maintain her cultural tradition, whereas Ashima makes it social by gathering the Indian immigrants together on certain occasions. Ashima continues to celebrate the Indian ceremonies and functions to keep her Bengali-Indian culture alive. It's her cultural adjustment for the sake of her children that she stares celebrating Christmas. The real challenge before her is to teach them about the Indian religious ceremonies. She is always afraid of the American life style and she tries to protect her children from catching that life style. So she sends Gogol to the Bengali language and culture lessons held in the house of one of their friends. The teachers are considered similar to the God in the Indian culture. But the American school teachers like Mr. Lawson cannot survive a fifty- minute class without excusing for a cigarette and the girls in the class say that the male teachers are indescribably sexy. Gogol's American school arranges a study tour to a graveyard to read the American surnames written on the stones.

Gangulis struggle to find their place in the society while respecting their roots in the process of adapting to the American culture. Ashima focuses the privacy of the Bengali culture. The struggle between two cultures comes as the Gangulis wish to raise their children with the Bengali culture and values in the surrounding culture of the United States. The second generation exists in a liminal space of the cultural borderland between America and their families in the country of origin: India. Much later in their lives, the second generation immigrants truly begin to value their Bengali heritage. They watch MTV, cut their pants off the bottom and follow the life style of America, which Ashima tries her best to prevent and it turns in quarrels. Her daughter Sonia takes English lessons from the same Mr. Lawson, joins a dance class and goes to the parties with boys. Sonia develops a typical American smile in her face. There are frequent quarrels between Ashima and Sonia. Gogol wants to be an American and not a Bengali. He attempts to do so and starts smoking secretly. He becomes bold enough to kiss a girl in a party. He goes home less frequently, dates the American girls and turns angry whenever anyone calls him 'Gogol'. During his college years, he continues to smoke cigarettes and marijuana and to go to the parties. Once he participates in a party at Ezra Stiles with a fake ID, introducing himself as Nikhil: a newly achieved identity and he loses his virginity to a girl wearing a plaid woolen skirt and combat boots and mustard tights; a girl he cannot remember.

When Ashima's husband goes for the research project in Ohio and children study somewhere far in the other towns, Ashima finds a job in a library to pass the time. She develops the cross-cultural sisterhood with the American co-workers at the library. It truly manifests Ashima's cultural growth

and represents her exploration into a culture that is alike and yet different to her own. The American co-workers too are isolated, but their reasons differ. It is because of her culture that Ashima would never be alone despite the divorce. Ashima ensures how to retain her cultural heritage throughout the familial and communal development from powerless to powerful and even empowering the circumstances. When Gogol introduces Maxine to his parents, Ashima dismisses Maxine as something that Gogol will eventually get over. In the Indian society the young generation observes the values of respect and submission to the wishes of elders and it is obvious that Ashoke and Ashima avert their gaze when Maxine runs her hand through Gogol's hair in their presence. Gogol envisions his mother's feelings and reactions during the encounters. Gogol observes the difference between his mother and Maxine's American parents at a dinner party.

Gogol observes maternity and hospitality, especially of Maxine's mother Lydia in comparison to his own mother and concludes that the maternity is cultural. In observing Lydia, Gogol is struck by her difference from Ashima. Lydia entertains effortlessly, spends money lavishly and is very comfortable to acknowledge not only her daughter's relationships but also her sex life. Gogol realizes the fate of his relationship with Maxine as a piece of the cultural eccentricity. Gogol realizes a total alienation from his Bengali roots when Lydia, Maxine and Gerald joke about mistaking Gogol's cultural and ethnic heritage as Italian. They are entirely unknown to his cultural values and background so central to his identity. Gogol realizes that he cannot deny his connection to his mother's culture, her maternity, his proximity to his mother's essentialism and his own need for the American-Bengali hybridity. In effect, he becomes an object of comparison through which Lydia and her friends are allowed to better express their Americanness. Gogol tires to mask entirely his Bengali culture. This realization Gogol experiences also results in immersing himself into an entirely Bengali-American relationship with his then-wife Moushumi. Maxine admits that she feels jealous of his mother and sister and this accusation strikes Gogol as so absurd that he has no energy to argue anymore. Gogol breaks off the relationship and begins to spend more time with his mother and sister.

After Gogol's breakup with Maxine, Ashima suggests Gogol to meet Moushumi, a daughter of her Bengali friend, unfortunate as her intended American groom changes his mind at the last minute. However, tied down by the marriage with Gogol, Moushumi becomes restless and begins to regret for what she has done. Gogol often feels like a poor substitute for Moushumi's American ex-fiancé Graham. The predicament of Moushumi focuses on the failure and frustration in attempts to get united with the American mainstream culture. Graham's turning his face at the last stage indicates the impossibility of the India and American union. In a party that Gogol attends with Moushumi at her friend's house, he realizes the

reality of the American cultural hypocrisy. The difference between Bengali and American leads towards the impossibility of meshing them together. Though frequently with them in the parties, Gogol realizes how mismatched they are. Gogol finally learns that the solution is not to fully abandon or attempt to diminish either culture, but to mesh the two together.

Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter* presents the cultural clash of the first generation immigrant woman and Lahiri's *The Namesake* presents the first and second generation of immigrant women, whereas Baldwin's *The Tiger Claw* concentrates only on the second generation immigrant woman. The readers do not find the clash between the young and old generations in *The Tiger's Daughter*, but *The Namesake* and *The Tiger Claw* focus on the cultural crisis along with the clash between the two generations of immigrants. In *The Tiger Claw* an Indian immigrant woman Noor is a victim of the cultural clash during the time of World War II. She rebels against the Islamic culture in which the women are suppressed in the name of culture, religion and patriarchy. She is belittled at home as a woman and later also among the Europeans for being an immigrant 'other' woman. The treatment to Noor's mother as an immigrant woman in the Eastern world focuses on the similar evils on a cultural basis. Her mother always advises Noor not to love someone of another religion, someone belonging to a different culture as she has experienced the confusion and pain of mixing the blood and religions. She tells Noor about her sacrifices in love for Abhajaan and how Dadijaan and the Indian family considered her his concubine for years, until she bore a son.

Whether it is motherland or a foreign land, the cultural obligations are carried with the family wherever it goes. Though Noor is elder than Kabir, her father never chooses her as his heir because according to the Sufi culture the son bestows mantle. The love between Noor and a Jewish pianist Armand Rivkin is destroyed because of the cultural and religious difference. Her uncle Tajuddin says that Noor is not better than a Montmartre prostitute and threatens her not to speak with Armand again. Due to the Islamic cultural obligations, her Uncle never allows women in the family to have either an identity card or a license to drive or a bank account. All women in France need permission for marriage from a male relative. Education is denied to the Muslim women. When Noor brings her Red Cross nursing certificate, Uncle Tajuddin compares her achievement to joining a brothel. He blames her mother's American example for the scandalous situation. Kabir introduces Noor to officer recruiting for the resistance because he doesn't want his sister to touch the unrelated men by being a nurse. Uncle Tajuddin decides that all the books by writers unknown to him are to be banned, destroyed and thrown out. Even the books of other religions collected by Abhajaan become the first to throw out

without caring for the emotions of Noor's mother. The elders in the family do not care for the young woman's feelings, as if her feeling have no value at all.

Noor's fellow agents like Gilbert and Viennot look at her as a helpless woman belonging to a different culture and crave for her body. She has to break away from her religious practice of Ramzaan-fast because she needs to assure the uniformed German army men that she is one of the natives of France and not an immigrant Indian. In the French culture, unlike the Indian in which the swastika symbolizes health charm, the cross symbolizes the male power through the right bent spokes and the female through the left bent. But for the Germans it means one power only- male: red for blood; white for Aryan purity and black for Hitler's intent to obliterate 'others'. A French lady Renee opens her home for the secret agents; such hospitality to strangers is part of the life in the places like India and not usually exhibited by the Europeans. Renee betrays Noor by reporting to the Gestapo in exchange of her husband Guy's release from the camp. Later, Renee is charged for betrayal and a committee of four women is appointed. It is impossible that a French woman, a white European will be convicted by the panel of white women for denouncing an immigrant Indian Muslim woman. Thus, they offer her clean chit.

In Mukherjee's short story "Orbiting" marriage of an Italian woman Renata's parents is a kind of taming of the West and everything about her mother could be explained as a cultural deficiency. Her mother is a Calabrian and father is an American. The American culture underscores the ease, rather than the abruptness with which the love affair is ruptured. Renata thinks of the cultural difference. She thinks that her Afghani lover Ro will take a few months to catch her culture. Each culture establishes its own manly posture and the different ways of claiming the space. So she is mad for Ro's way of loving her. In "The Management of Grief" the problems arise because of the cultural difference between the immigrant Indians and the Europeans. When Miss. Templeton and Mrs. Bhavie try to communicate and help the Sikh family which has lost their both the sons, the old parents refuse to sign any paper out of the fear of losing everything in the host country. They deny accepting the fact of their sons' death and hoping for their sons to return. Mrs. Bhavie explains to Miss. Templeton: "I want to say, in our culture, it is a parent's duty to hope." This indicates the cultural troubles during the period of disaster.

The Isolation of women:

In the human society women are isolated by men as 'other' creatures while considering them naturally weak. But feminists challenge this notion of thinking. They try to project that women are biologically, psychologically, culturally and socially more capable than men because of their capacity to participate at

the same time in the general society and to maintain their feminine world. The literature of the selected three writers focuses the reality that immigrant women are culturally isolated. Woman's isolation becomes more intense when she comes out of the stability of the cultural frame where other women of her community may identify with her. But in an alien country she feels isolated both from her close relatives and among the strange people around. She is isolated as a woman first and then as a woman belonging not to the native culture. The adjectives 'immigrant' or 'foreign-returned' isolate the immigrant women among the people at both the host and home lands.

Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter* is about the isolation of an Indian expatriate woman. The protagonist Tara suffers from the feeling of isolation from her motherland. The American students in her American school isolate her by not sharing her mango catani, for she belongs not to their culture. Later, when she marries an American, she becomes a victim of isolation. Her American husband offers her no credits for the household work she does. She also feels that she is unable to reduce distance between her and her American husband David as she fails to communicate her cultural heritage to him. Frustrated by the failure, she thinks that her visit to India will bring her happiness back and she comes to India. She feels isolated at the very first reception by the relatives at Howrah station. Tara's relatives relate her improprieties to her American attitude to the life because of her seven years stay in America and she is found 'stubborn'. Her aunt Jharna reminds her about her marriage with mlecca husband, which has isolated her from the caste and community. Tara is no longer able to feel a part of her family. She belongs to the old Bengal which is now lost. She is not able to feel at ease with her old friends who, like her family, belong to a Calcutta which is rapidly fading. Isolated Tara forms the beast beneath them. After returning from America the antithetical feelings beset her among the friends and she feels afraid of their tone, omissions and superiority complex. These are the same friends with whom seven years ago she had played, done homework, loved and dated. Later, her friends also disapprove her. They suggest her marriage has been imprudent and the seven years in the America have eroded all that was fine and sensitive in her Bengali nature. Moreover, they feel that Tara deserves chores like washing her own dishes and putting out the garbage. Once Tara notices that her friend Nilima is pointedly ignoring her while talking with her would-be groom. Tara complains at Reena about the same. At that time Reena reveals the truth to Tara that Nilima feels that her marriage will be broken if the people come to know about her friend's marriage with a foreigner. In India her marriage is not considered to be with a person, but with a foreigner, and she always feels the burden of this foreignness. Her friends are curious to know about her adjustments and not about

her marriage responsibilities. Mukherjee's Tara feels isolated from her husband whereas in Jhumpa Lahiri's

The Namesake Ashima feels more lonely and isolated from her family among the Americans. Ashima is an isolated immigrant Indian woman in Boston. She is a young bride after an arranged marriage preparing to deliver her first child in a hospital at Massachusetts. Unlike Mukherjee's Tara, Ashima suffers from isolation only in the foreign country and not after returning to her motherland. Ashima wishes the emotional support at the time of her first delivery. In Calcutta Ashima might have all the women in her family around her, but in the United States she struggles through isolation. She prepares to bear the physical pains, but is afraid of being isolated mother in a foreign land. Ashima feels unhappy for missing the letter by her grandmother containing an identity for her son. Her husband remains busy in the university and she feels very much isolated at house alone with Gogol. She suffers from sleeplessness. She sits alone and cries for the whole day. She spends hours in napping, sulking and rereading her same five Bengali novels on the bed. She is shocked to know about her father's death and in America no one comes to meet and console her. Mukherjee's Tara runs back to India to find solution for her isolation in America. Unlike Tara, Ashima tries to find solution in America itself. To cope with the isolation, she gradually becomes a cultural mother for her community in America and starts gathering the people from same background around her. Her all friends hail from Calcutta and for this reason only they are the friends. Her son Gogol feels isolated because of his unique name. Gogol is not the first name. Gogol Ganguli has a not only pet name turned into good name but also a last name turned into the first name. In fact, he knows no one in the world, in Russia or India or America or anywhere who shares either his name or the source of his namesake. Gogol isolates himself as much as possible from his roots and his family for many years.

CONCLUSION

Indian Writing in English is, in a way, a product of the cultural clash with the Westerns and the clash is presented in the Indian English novel from its beginning. While evoking the colonial legacies in the contemporary society with the similar theme of cultural clash, the contemporary Diasporic Indian English writers impress the international readers. A number of women writers of Indian Diaspora portray immigrant women's problems in the cross-cultural encounters. A comparative study of such problems helps to widen a sense of understanding and to bring accuracy in understanding the intensity and also to put forth comparatively more acceptable conclusions. Mukherjee's abundant use of the sexual element in each of the stories sounds unrealistic because the powerful familial, cultural and moral protest is not considered seriously. She gives the equal dignity and equal freedom to her women who are neither

restrained nor bound by the obligations towards their family. The social and cultural assumptions, prejudices and background are totally neglected. She has focused only the immigration from the Third World countries to the West and the Eastward movement of the Westerns is ignored, which too may have the similar adventures.

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