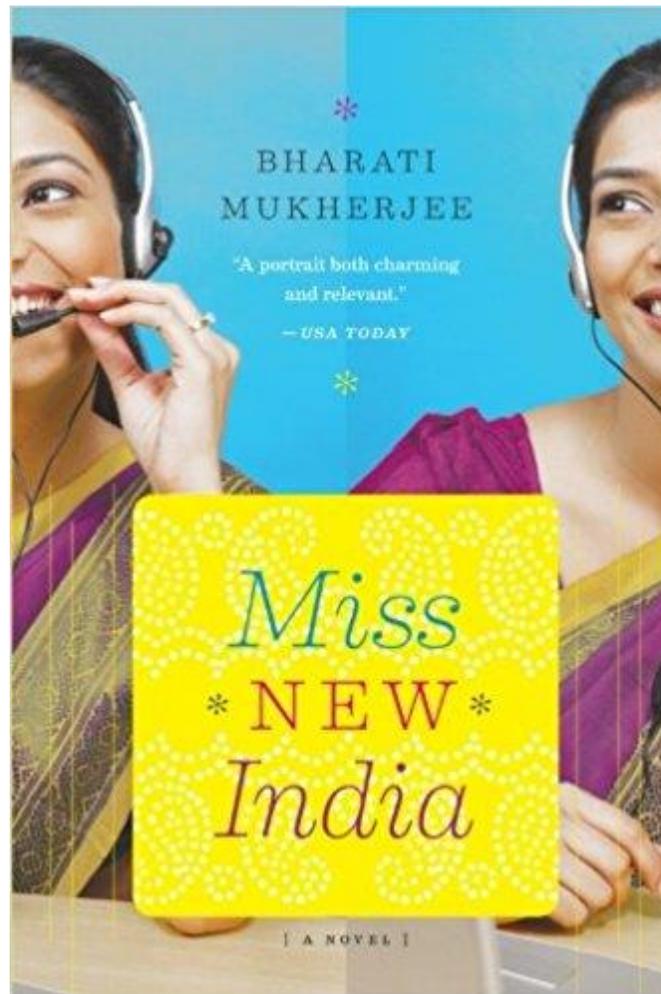


**From Cage to Sky: Bharati Mukherjee's *Miss New India*
An Analysis**

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Abstract

In Indian Culture, women encounter many problems and difficulties within their families and in the society. The life of women had been restricted until now by certain limits. They cannot lead their own lives as men do. Women were supposed to come across many hurdles both in their family and in the society just to live their day-to-day lives. Culture, Custom and Tradition pulled

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them back to where they began. Like the parrot in the cage, they cannot express their wishes but can only parrot the others. The present paper spotlights the determination of Mukherjee's protagonist towards her destiny to be free and her unexpected experiences in a new state and her attempts to frame the desired life. No one can expect the red carpet welcome in every place. But, if any one wants to achieve, he/she should be in the position to have the attitude to imagine the road before them, which is in reality filled with thorn, is rather filled with only rose petals.

Keywords: Bharati Mukherjee, Protagonist, women's oppression, dislocation, experience, determination, society, tradition

Portrayal of Women in Pre-independence Indian Writing in English

In Pre-independence India, women faced a different status in the society. They were suppressed inside the four walls of the kitchen and most of them were illiterate. They were not allowed to express their wishes and needs in the family. The Indian authors' portrayal of Indian women claimed the notice of the world. The great Indian English Writers like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayanan and Kamala Markandaya tried to draw more natural characteristics of the female.

Later on, the writers tried to show the female characters in new vistas. Women writers like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Manju Kapur, Shashi Desponde and others visualized their protagonists not as the solely dependent creatures of the patriarchal society, but women of having high determination and spirits. In Saxena's *Role of Women in English Literature*, Malati Agarwal says (Saxena, A., 2011: iii)

No doubt, the female protagonists of these Indian writers have to face many vicissitudes of family life but they keep abreast of all hurdles which come in their way in their marathon struggle from seeking their identities in this patriarchal society. They fight for their emancipation and empowerment. Education that has been their eye opener has made these oppressed and suppressed women aware not only of their duties but also of their rights. The writers have been dealing meticulously with this emancipated 'new woman' and

her efforts to face challenges and also how she, while living within the bonds of marriage, frees herself from the inhibitions of society, culture, and her own conflicting emotions.

Search for Identity and Self-Realization

Following the predecessors, Bharati Mukherjee has also projected her perspectives through the theme of search for the identity and self-realization. The Protagonists of Mukherjee want to live their lives not as shadows but as real people.

Mukherjee mainly concentrates on the themes that draw the feminist aspects in her writings and she uses her writings to bring forth the female predicament in the patriarchal society and the deprived soul of the alienated protagonists. At the outset, she is also considered as the expatriate writer who is later on known as the Diasporic writer. Being the diasporic writer, she mainly focused the female protagonist's struggles towards the acculturation of the new culture. She expresses her own real time experiences with the family society through the characters. The character sketches of Mukherjee reflect images of herself which makes us realize the sufferings of the immigrants in the other country. Concerning the above, the novels like *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Jasmine*, *Wife and Desirable Daughters* stand as testimony to the skilled character-sketching of the writer.

Miss New India

Mukherjee's recent novel, *Miss New India* slightly differs from the novel in the earlier times and the protagonist in the novel feels alienated when she moves from her village to the urban side. Anjali Bose, the protagonist of the novel, was born in Gouripur. She had graduated from Vasco-da- Gama High School and enrolled in Vasco- da- Gama College's B. Comm. Programme. She had the ability of capturing others' attention even with the first impression she made. Unlike other village girls, she had very high spirited belief in the flourishing of her future. She wished to lead a fanciful and free life in the streets of Mumbai. She often asked questions of herself to step towards the next walk of life in modern society. She acquired all these only through the guidance of Mr. Peter Champion. He was the only person responsible for her goal setting and getting the attitude to face anything and everything. He tutored English Conversation

Course to Anjali and motivated her to be a unique personality, different from the average village girls.

Anjali and Her Parents

Although many voices have been heard about the women's liberation, women are not allowed to experience that as freely as they wish. Like all Indian parents, Anjali's parents also forced into marriage because they wished to fulfil their parental responsibility. Due to parents' compulsion, she accepted the marriage proposal. Suboth Mitra, before whom she stands as the bride, played as the major reason for her change of mind. During the marriage negotiations, Anjali and Mitra planned to go for an outing, where Mitra misbehaved with Anjali and created the bad impression. Mitra had the tendency to see the girls as very inferior beings. He hurt Anjali physically and mentally. She was very shocked about his character and thanked God for being able to identify his real nature before the marriage. If she had known this after her marriage ceremony, she could have lost her life and she would have been treated as his slave. She was not in the mind-set of explaining everything to her parents, instead, she decided to leave the house. She wrote a letter to her parents as follows:

I will not marry any boy selected by anyone but myself, especially not this one. If this leads to a barren life, so be it. As you should plainly see, the boy you selected has dishonoured me. He should be sent to jail. I am leaving this morning for Patna to see my sister, whose name you are reluctant to utter. When I am settled again, I will write. The process may take many months. I am ready to take my place in the world. I beg you not to try to find me. Your Loving daughter A. (Mukherjee 64)

Life Away from Parents

She achieved the position to choose how to fulfil the future days. The inner self of Anjali kindled her to step into the world which she dreamt of often. She acquired the mind-set of not bothering about the others' words, because she felt that they were only the spectators. They would not be traveling with Anjali in her journey to find her destiny. She stood up with the high

spirit of achievement, ready to face anything. She straightaway went and met Mr. Champion and he offered her fifty thousand rupees for the transportation and to make her residence there.

With the guidance of Mr. Champion, she entered Bangalore with high spirit and enthusiasm; she wondered about the streets of Bangalore and its fanciful life. Her heart beats increased and the sense of fear and hesitation occupied her much. The things, which she came across in the new state, gave her the excitement and she often compared Gouripur with Bangalore's highly modernized society. Anjali's imagination towards her destiny led her to have her day dream. She felt that she can enjoy the life fully and go to the extreme state of enjoyment, because there was no familiar figure to complain against her to her parents. So, she desired to live the life as a free bird which had been released from the cage.

Anjali's determination led her to notice the wall of the streets of Bangalore. She often noticed the advertisements about the call centre placements where they offered language training programmes. She dreamt of earning Lakhs and Lakhs every month. The life at Bangalore naturally generates that type of thinking which induces the person to change his/her attitudes. Change is unchangeable; to prove these words sometimes people need to be changed according to the circumstances. Very often, the surroundings and outside decide the people's characters.

Girish Gujral and Others

She happened to meet Mr. Girish Gujral in her dreamland Bangalore, who nurtured her in all her steps towards learning the new life. He was the man of gentle behaviour and was kind hearted with Anjali Bose. She freely approached him for her needs. She felt that half of her dreams had been accomplished after the unexpected introduction of Mr. G.G. Anjali could realize the fatherly affection and attention in Mr. G.G's caretaking. He showered her with the love and support needed to achieve in the unknown land. She never felt that she was an alien.

Mr. Peter Champion introduced the successful call centre trainers Miss. Usha Desai and Mrs. Parvati Banerji to Anjali in order to refurbish her interpersonal skills. They supported Anjali in all her efforts and gave her training to become an efficient Customer Support Specialist. Anjali got acquainted with Bangalore's trends and was ready to face the sporadic changes and tried to adapt and assimilate it. Being an unquestionable woman, she was ready to enjoy the life

by going out and having a party even though she was brought up in an aristocratic family at Gouripur.

Bitter and Sweet Experience

Although, she enjoyed the life at Bangalore, she also happened to experience the bitter time in her life history. She was locked up for the untoward incident that happened in the Bagehot House, Kew Gardens. Anjali never thought that this type of bad omen would come into her route of success. Police treated Anjali very cruelly and posed indecent questions to her. That time, she happened to recall her life at Gouripur. Mr. GG took care of Anjali's issues and undertook necessary steps to help her come out from the grief.

It entrenched the relationship and the development of their understanding very much. She fell in love with Mr. G.G and she thought that Mr. G.G had offered his shoulders for her to rest her sufferings. She thanked God for His blessings for offering her such a kind person. She realized that her parents experienced only the fight against the British Raj, poverty, superstition and communal riots. They didn't live in a society where murder and exploitations occurred often. They knitted a net around themselves and lived their life safely in their homeland. But Anjali's determination on her future showed her a new route and gave her the strength to face any critical situation. Due to the high spirit of achieving something, her inner self instigated Anjali's escape from Gouripur. But, after the accusation, she realized the true facts and she scolded herself for the unexpected events that occurred due to her arrival at Bangalore. She left Gouripur with a lot of hope, but fate led her in different directions. Though she had strange experiences at Bangalore, it led her to a good companion to lead her future with a new outlook.

Women in All Fields

Today, women have stepped into the all fields of technology, finance and industry to exemplify that they are equal to men and can take part in all societal development. Women were ready to dedicate their entire lives for the family in the ancient period; they restricted their own dreams and achievements. But, in this current social arena, women are ready to break up the familial bond and come out with flying colours. They wish to prove their individuality and originality. They don't want to be marginalized and dependent on the comments of others.

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Amarnath Prasad, in his *Women Empowerment in Indian Writers in English* admits, “Recognizing the achievements of ordinary women who have made transformative changes in their societies is the way to support women’s empowerment at the grassroots level”. (Prasad,13) Anjali Bose, can also be considered as the protagonist who draws the route for the future and she is the embodiment of courage and confidence. She comes out from her home that seems like a cage and to the free sky, but before meeting the clear sky she happens to come across some murky clouds also.

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