

Quest for Cultural Identity in Bharathi Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter*

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Abstract

Bharathi Mukherjee is one of most powerful scholarly figures of diaspora Indian English writing. She has been named as an Indo-American author, Indian Diaspora writer and writer immigrant fiction. *The Tiger's Daughter* has been appraised as Bharathi Mukherjee's rich first novel and is thought to be skillfully created with energetic discourse and full clear sections Bharathi Mukherjee's works to a great extent mirror her own involvement as a lady got between two cultures. Tara is a young protagonist and an Indian-born woman who, like the writer, returns to Calcutta, after having spent seven years in the United States, to visit her family, and discovers a country quite unlike the one she remembered. She becomes painfully aware that while she has not yet eased herself into American culture, she no longer derives substance from values and morals of her native land. Memories of gentle Brahmin life-style are usurped by the new impressions of poverty, hungry children and political unrest. Tara's westernization has opened her eyes to the gulf between the two worlds that still make India the despair of those who govern it.

Introduction

The Tiger's Daughter emphasizes the story of Tara. She runs over a comparable sort of bewilderment on her visit to India following seven years. Tara Banerjee Cartwright is an autobiographical presentation of the author herself who is also married to an American. Bharati Mukherjee portrays herself as an American author in the novel *The Tiger's Daughter*, which demonstrates the Indian pulse throbbing more in her. It gives the idea that she has not possessed the capacity to leave the shadow of her Indianness, there are various scenes in the novel and we locate the run of the mill soul of a Bengali which is found in her utilization of the run of the mill Indian terms. The protagonist's propensity for holding her lady surname after marriage emblematically mirrors her intuitive personality which is still profoundly established in her native land. She has not possessed the capacity to overlook it despite her changed character. She has not been able to forget it in spite of her changed identity.

Quest for Cultural Identity

Though Tara has always regarded herself as an Indian, she discovers that she is more an outsider than a native, concerned with the complex and confusing web of politics, poverty, privilege and hierarchies of power and class in India. She has dreamt for years of his return, but now finds herself imbued with the foreignness of spirit attributable not only to her American domicile but also to her early education in Calcutta at a private school run by Belgian runs. Her seven year stay at Vassar changed her outlook on life, though America did not fascinate her.

She thought that New York had been exotic. Not on the grounds that there were policemen with canines lurking the underground passages. Since young ladies like her, in any event relatively like her, were being cut in lifts in their own apartment buildings. Because students were rioting about campus recruiters, and far away rather than the price of rice or the stiffness of final exams, because people were agitated about pollution. The only pollution, she had been warned against in Calcutta had been caste pollution. . New York positively remarkable and it had driven her to lose hope.

Tara's psyche is continually at strife with the two identities one of an Indian and the other of an American. Amid such minutes she feels to backpedal to her better half David since she feels that she would be quieter there. Gotten in this inlet between the two differentiating universes, Tara feels that she has overlooked a significant number of her Hindu ceremonies of adoring symbols which she had seen her mom performing since her childhood. When she returns to Calcutta after her sojourn in the West, find her greatly changed. She had once admired that the houses on Marine Drive indicate their shabbiness to her. Bombay's railway station appeals more like a hospital. She has turned supercilious. When a Marwari family and others enter her compartment, she ironically and contemptuously remarks.

The Marwari was in fact terrible and minor and disrespectful He reminded her of a circus animal who had gotten the better of his master, and the other occupant, a Nepali was a fidgety older man with coarse hair. He kept crossing and re-crossing his legs and pinching the creases of his pants. Both men, Tara decide, could easily demolish her trip to Calcutta.

To her scenery outside appears 'merely alien and hostile'. The friends she had played with seven years ago, done her homework with Nilima, briefly fancied herself in love with Pronob, debated with Reena at the British Council. But now after her return from America, she fears their tone, their omissions, and their aristocratic oneness. She finds that she is admired neither by her family nor by her friends. While the Indians condemn her marriage to a Mleccha as having stopped too low, being a Brahmin in an upper caster, David, her husband, does not give her much credit for clearing bathrooms which she considers a wifely duty. This gradually leads her to develop a split personality.

In the prayer room when she develops apprehensive over her mom's basic demand to impart devotion to her family and she overlooks the following stage of the custom, she felt it was not a straightforward misfortune. Tara dreaded, this overlooking of endorsed activity, it was a bit of passing, a hardening of the heart, a breaking of center point and core interest. Regardless, her mother came quickly with the assistance of words.

Tara realized that she had become rootless and out of place both in India and America. This innocent information enraged Tara. She thought that the latter was really trying to tell her that he had not understood her country through her. She became afraid that David no longer wanted to make her over to his ideal image and love. Her suspicious grew further and she believed that perhaps her mother also no longer loved her for having willfully abandoned her caste by marrying a foreigner or perhaps her mother was offended that she no longer remained a real Brahmin.

Tara's journey from Bombay to Calcutta brings an equally disgusting experience to her. In Calcutta too, she finds everything changed and deteriorated. The Calcutta she finds now is under the grip of violence due to riots, caused by the confrontation between different classes of society. This shatters her dream of Calcutta and makes her react in a negative manner. Slowly her changed personality makes her a misfit in the company of her friends and relatives and makes her unable to participate in the ritual function of home. Her alienation is deepened as she is welcomed by her relatives as 'Americawali' and her husband a 'mleccha.' her aunt Jharna and her old Catelli-Continental friends talk about her husband David as a 'mleccha.' Such labels of distinction intensify the alienation in the mind of Tara and they deepen the angst of her mind. Contrary to her expectations Tara that her mother's attitude towards her has changed, and she too seems to be unhappy at her marriage.(A.P. Barat 55)

In such a trying situation she finds herself at home nowhere. Tara's efforts to adapt to American society are measured by her rejection and revulsion of Indian modes of life. She finds in India nothing to her liking. Cateli-Continental Hotel evokes emotion of escape from Calcutta; there is, of course, no escape from Calcutta. For her Calcutta appears nothing but a city with riots, buses burning and workers surrounding the warehouses.

She feels alienated and irritated by the trivial and trivializing passions and attitudes of the well-heeled, mainly English-speaking Bengalis with whom she socialized in the Catelli-Continental Hotel, an enclave away from the disorderly world outside. These westernized friends yet disapprove of a Western husband, for one of her friends, being an American immigrant, is inadequate compensation for the loss of the class power and privilege as an Indian.

Tara's state is comparable to, though not identical with, that of an expatriate who stands apart from the emotional and spiritual tenor of the country that had once been her own. She comes to visualize her husband's face, not fully and whole but in bits and pieces. The psychological, social and cultural displacement that she suffers from makes her nervous and excitable at a picnic. For instance, she becomes hysterical over a harmless water snake, expecting tragedy where there is none.

The aimlessness and diffusiveness of her return are underpinned by the number of journeys beginning with the train journey from Bombay to Calcutta, which crises – cross the novel and are suggestive of the heroine in search of some knowledge or revelation that proves elusive. A new friend, Joyonto R. Choudhary, takes her out to see the funeral pyres on the Ganges and organize a picnic in her honour. She visits the hill resorts of Darjeeling, and then the new township of Nayapur. During a tour of Chaudhary's compound, where a squatter settlement has established itself, Tara is assaulted by a little girl in apparent jealousy over her. She realizes that there is no single cry. She could point to the latter and say that she had then become a totally different person.

The third section of the novel is concerned with Tara's early experience in America, her loneliness, her attempt to stick to Indian ways and the gradual cultural change leading to her marriage to David Cartwright and the fourth brings her back to India and Tara's move from Calcutta to Darjeeling with its own peculiar brand of foreigners. Here, in Darjeeling she is seduced, and this act seduction is symbolic of her foreignness which is an experience which cannot be undone.

The critic feels that there is a questioning of the Indian situation, of how the post-independence generations relate to their own country and how they get past the colonial experience and free themselves from the Western attraction. For both Tara and Dimple there is no way out. The distance covered by them cannot be retracted. They are immigrants both in place and mind and theirs is the foreignness of the spirit.

Conclusion

The tiger's daughter is very fine manifestation of quest for identity and cultural conflict. It was considered in an exceptionally troublesome period of life when the protagonist of the novel was attempting to decide her own personality in the Indian culture. Tara is found between two differentiating societies American and Indian Tara is caught between two contrasting cultures American and Indian Tara's stay in India made her perpetually feel like a fish out of water. This leads her towards a quest to discover herself but she gets herself entangled in web of illusion, isolation and dejection leading to a deplorable.

References

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