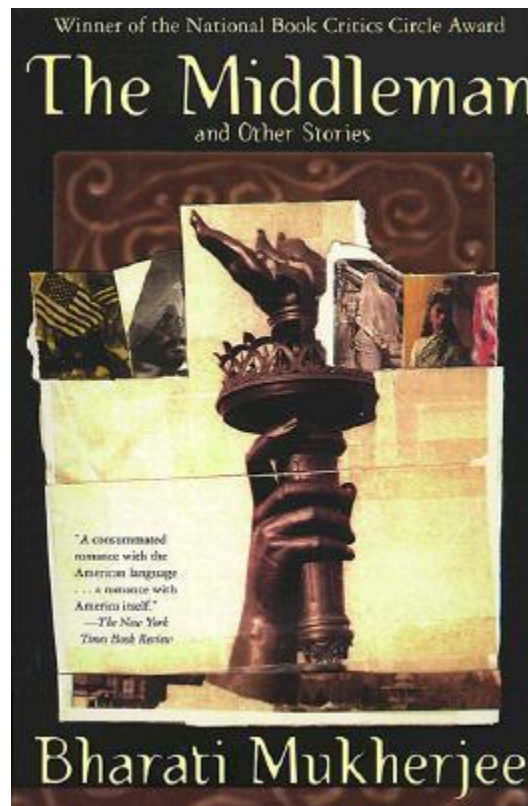


Multi-Racialism in Bharathi Mukerjee's *A Wife's Story*

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Abstract

A Wife's Story is published in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988). Bharathi Mukerjee's *A Wife's Story* scrutinizes a multiplicity of tribulations that occur in ordinary woman's life. It shows the quandary of bodily and psychologically beleaguered women and ultimately the story ventures to specify the connotation of being a modern woman in order to surmount the obstruction in her life. Panna envisions herself as a new woman at the end of the

story. The story is interwoven with the sense of irony at what immigrants must undergo to effect a cultural transformation.

Keywords: Bharathi Mukerjee's *A Wife's Story*, cultural change, phallogocentric.

Introduction

A Wife's Story is a popular story of Bharathi Mukherjee. The story deals with the life of a wife - her sense of self as a woman, as spouse and how she is transformed by the culture she inhabits. Mukherjee not only indicates the psyche of an immigrant but also presents how a new culture creates both cultural and sex alienation. In fact, it is a story of an East Indian woman transforming into an American.

Panna Transformation

Panna gradually perceives differences between her old and new cultures that are in some ways freeing and expanding, and, in other ways, jarring and unnerving. For Example, she is able to hug Imre in the middle of the street, an informal, spontaneous show of affection that she could not demonstrate toward her husband in India, where cultural restraints do not allow such personal displays. In India, Panna was not even allowed to call her husband by his first name.

The story focuses on another immigrant who responds in her unique way to the problem of adapting to another culture. Each immigrant undergoes the acculturation process, but it not only is different for each person, but also reflects the relativity of cultural values. In the United States, charity is a model with high ambitions, but in India, she would just be a "flat chested old maid".

Tourist Point of View

Panna shifts back and forth between seeing the united states from the tourist's point of view – her husband's ravenous shopping sprees. She views herself as already alienated and different from her husband and the culture and country he represents. They tour Manhattan and take the ferry to dingy snack bar at the base of a scaffold, and therefore forlorn Statue of Liberty.

Her husband is disappointed by the disparity between American's image and its reality; he thinks New York is no better than Bombay.

Cordial Relationship

Panna understand her husband to certain extent. Just by listening to his voice over the phone she can already figure out how he looks while he is telling her about the bombing at his workplace. She says, "I know how my husband's eyes look this minute, how the eye rim sag and the yellow corneas shine and bulge with pain". She also knows that he will be fine;" Tomorrow he will come out of it. Soon he will be eating again. He will sleep like a baby". This is a kind of ability and understanding you develop with your spouse after living together for some time. Some of the women are unable to know the mood of their spouse just by talking to him on the phone, she can easily "predict" his response and reaction too.

Submissive

Panna also knows that her husband likes her to dress up in traditional Indian costume, so she deliberately changes out of her cotton pants and shirts and puts on a sari when she goes to the airport to meet him. She even puts on a whole set of jewelry; the marriage necklace, gold drop earrings and heavy gold bangles; accessories she does not wear often in Manhattan due to safety reason, as clearly stated in the sentence. "In this borough of vice and greed, who knows when, or whom, desire will overwhelm". Some of the wives know their husband's preference's too. He does not like them wearing long skirts and long- sleeved shirts because he thinks a woman looks old in that kind of attire. He also does not like her wearing high heels because she would be taller than him if she does so.

Phallocentric

Panna husband is traditional and male dominant. She still does not call her first name. He gets jealous whenever other men talk to her. In fact, every action of panna at the tour irritates him. He wants her to go back to Indian with him ignoring the fact that she has not completed her study. He says "I've come to take you back ". I have seen how men watch you". When panna tells him that she cannot go back, he throws the food trays into the garbage demonstrating his

male chauvinistic behaviour. He demands her to be obedient. He remains as a traditional husband, but she has changed much. The new culture has changed her. In fact, she views herself different from her husband as well as the culture and country he represents.

Conclusion

“A Wife’s Story” touches the hearts of the readers and they can really empathize with Panna and understand how she feels in her relationship with her husband. Panna’s exposure to a new culture transforms her, which changes her feelings toward her husband. She thinks the play insults her culture and also insults her as a woman. She is so offended that she decides to write to Mamet to protest his depiction of East Indians.

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