

DIASPORIC IDENTITY IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S JASMINE AND DESIRABLE DAUGHTERS

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Abstract: Bharati Mukherjee, a writer, and scholar who lived in India, Canada, and the United States, is unique which is positioned to observe the incomplete background of characters with enlarging established characteristics. Her novels, which include *Jasmine*, and *The Holder of the World* explore the identities of diasporic women equally in contemporary time United States, Canada, and India, and in the ancient. *Jasmine* (1989), is a novel by Bharati Mukherjee an award-winning author of *Darkness*. One of the most suggestive novels that we have about what it is to become an American. A Beautiful Novel, Poetic, Perfectly controlled. *Jasmine* is the mixing of the east and west through the narration of a seventeen-year-old Hindu woman who departs from India to the U.S after her husband's murder. The story stretched out as a level of a young widow suddenly widowed at Seventeen. She displaces herself from her lifetime in India and re-roots herself in quest of a new life and the image of America as well. It is a story of Disruption and Replacement as the protagonist continually sheds lives to move into other roles, moving towards westward. The conspiracy is rather emotional and this novel is another one of the streams of consciousness technique that each small thought can arise at any time when the character is ready to compare the past events with the present time.

Keywords: diasporic, identity, desirable, westward etc

Mukherjee's best contemporary novel, *Desirable Daughters*, Opens with the story Tara Lata, The Tree Bride. When her teenage groom is killed by a snake on her wedding night, 5-year old, Tara Lata is free with the degradation of life as NOT QUITE A WIDOW----- [but] a woman brings her family misfortune and loss of life by her father's quick movements. He makes her join in matrimony to a tree. Tara Lata, the Tree-Bride, leaves the remainder of life in her father's compound, growing only when she is pulled off by the expatriate police force for her support of India's freedom fighters. The Lifespan of Tara Lata befits a touchstone for the narrator also called TARA. Multiculturalism is a theme that echoes throughout the book.

In Mukherjee 's previous works, characters redefined themselves with each new three-dimensional pattern, however, in this novel, Mukherjee discovers what happens to a gendered uniqueness that has been shattered by strike blows, melted down. Does flexibility truly offer a female character a way of redefining her identity and her relationship to home, as Mukherjee intends in *Jasmine*?

In researcher's point of view, it's an assumption that Bharati Mukherjee feels isolated at the same time and doesn't want to be an Indian Writer as she has seen The Indian Women Suffering through her eyes. It is purely her assumption. She is finding herself with the identity of American resident rather than India but she is talking about Indian culture now and then in her works.

A search for Diasporic Identity in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and *Desirable Daughters*:

The theme of Diaspora provides an introduction to the concept of Diaspora and Diasporic writers in Indian English Fiction focussing on Diaspora from its origin to the present drawing upon a brief development of Indian Diasporic literature as represented in Indian writing. Even one moves from his homeland and is out of the country, his/her native continues to be chasing by his own root culture. It is this bonding that makes him adjust in host land. One category of immigrants get adjusted with a new culture to have a life but whereas other categories fail to adjust to the host culture and they can't enjoy the fruits of immigration. Home and dislocation appeared again and again as central themes in the writings of Indian Diasporic writers. It speaks about the Diaspora and how it has been defined and identified in distinctive Geographic origins. The term Diaspora comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, mainly to historical mass-dispersions of an involuntary nature.

Many Scholars have found out a change in trade or labor migrations and in the social coherence within the Diaspora community and its connections to the inherited lands. Some Diaspora communities uphold strong political ties with their homeland. Other qualities that may be distinctive of many Diasporas are thoughts of return, relations with other communities in the Diaspora and lack of full integration into the host country. Language and Cultural aspects were changed when Indian Diaspora writers wrote some works and while developing works, according to their culture, they even adopted the host culture. Diaspora covers a major ground in all its richness and variety touching upon numerous, cultural, ideological and intellectual discourses. Diaspora is a Catchphrase which is especially connected with a particular subject and is used more often in News Papers. Diaspora registers more major communities than Post-Colonies and their lived experience in all their good and

bad feelings on something or some persons, contradictions, multiple traversals, imaginary 'returns' to homelands, nations of the mind and this unfolds in all such extremely large number of communities across the Globe. The term Diaspora is sometimes used to denote the development of human civilization all over the world. The Origination of the Primitive human and later dispersion to establish human societies in different parts of the world means Diaspora and Diasporic condition. The term Diaspora have been used as a marker of movement across cultures and the dislocation such movement causes. The History of Diaspora can be generally divided into Three Phases leading to the Postmodernist Diaspora viz., Ancient, Medieval and the Modern Diaspora. The Ancient Diaspora can be called as Traditional Reference of the term "Diaspora" denoting the exile of Jews from Israel back in the Sixth-Seventh century B.C and later in the Second Century A.D. from Jerusalem. The Jewish movement is called as Exile because it was a movement with force, where they were being separated from their homelands and relocated as a lost group in the new lands.

The Medieval Era from about 200 AD to 900 AD was witness to a large group, especially because of opening up new routes between different countries. Many Tribal People relocated themselves in search of a better life. Later many other religious located in new lands. The Modern era movements during The Period of Colonialism were largely due to War, Slavery and Search for Economic betterment. People from Colonized Lands moved to Other Colonies as paid laborers or were transported as slaves. Man, entering into new land is unable to handle his conflicts, constantly marks his identity. This chapter talks about two main themes in Diaspora identity which are Migration and Acculturation. Migration is nothing but shifting of people from one end to another end permanently or temporary shelter in any part of the world. It is done voluntarily or forcefully due to lack of famine, poverty, religious intolerance, lack of Job opportunities. The Theme of Acculturation is their own understanding in the host land, the other category of writers assume it and introduce in their works by the close observations of the lives of immigrants. The literature of the Indian Diaspora is delivered by many writers, for example, Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai, S.S.Baldwin, V.S.Naipaul, Anita Desai, Kavita Daswani, Uma Parameswaran, Rohinton Mistry, Meena Alexander, Jhumpa Lahiri, Meera Syal, Anita Rao Badami, Bharati Mukherjee, and many others analyze problems of immigrants. These writers display situations that immigrants face in the alien land. The chapter also includes the writings of these writers in a brief manner like V.S Naipaul's *Half a Life*, Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, Jhumpa Lahiri's *Namesake* especially Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine & Desirable Daughters*.

Through these novels, the Diasporic Identity is projected and brought into an approach. Her novels and short stories often reveal contemporary themes and concerns. One of those is the emotional and psychic consequences of the search for self-identity. A quest for the definition of self and search for identity are the main features of the Indian women who are caught up between Tradition and Modernity. They are in a situation unable to detach themselves from their past completely and not even cling to the future ahead. Mukherjee writes how the female Protagonist tries to tackle the problem of culture and endeavors to assume a new

identity in the U.S. The Protagonist Jasmine leaves her country to fulfill her wishes. On reaching the U.S, she begins to search for self-independence. She fights hard to achieve it and at last, she realizes that self-independence is not to be an Indian or American but to be at harmony with herself. In finding her own identity, she comes across many people and places and overcomes all her problems with the courage to gain her identity. In *Desirable Daughters*, though the female protagonist is at ease with her American identity, still she identifies with her Indian roots. Always examining her present status in America, she faces problems in her life. She is not certain about the breaking of the values in which she changes herself to be changed. Unable to bear the problems, sometimes she weeps and gets what she wanted and it is the only way she can handle her emotions. The Three sisters Padma, Parvati, and Tara step out of their house to different places and in this process, they come across many problems and gain their identity. The whole novel moves around searching for the identity of illegitimate child Chris Dey.

Bharati Mukherjee finds a chance in immigration. The characters of self which signify not only one's release from primary, social and cultural aspects but one's ability to change and to be changed by the new landscape where one needs to build one's identity. In Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, a change took place through violence as her protagonist Jasmine most often undergoes suffering through dislocation as she takes the chance to re-invent herself in the world which is new. Bharati Mukherjee's main character 'Jasmine' is a critical model for assimilation as she is using some values of Indian cultural heritage in spite of her stay in the American culture. Even if the other immigrants remained suspended between two cultures or forces, Jasmine was happy that she was able to assimilate the new culture. In *Desirable Daughters*, the three sisters Padma, Parvati and Tara move to a foreign place and gets accustomed to the new culture. Tara, The protagonist of the novel is portrayed as an assimilated immigrant in America by molding herself depending on the lifestyle of America entirely but in her acceptance of her son's ordinariness and his homosexuality. Yet she is unable to detach herself from Indian roots.

In *Jasmine*, Jane carries in her womb Bud Ripple Meyer's baby and bud wanted to marry her before the baby is born but she scares to tell him about her fate and will. By not telling or not marrying him, she thinks that she saved his life. He was unsteady on his feet. On the contrary for female, male migrant needs to pass through the different ordeals, which the novelist herself has faced. In this journey of migration and transplantation, the situation demands her to surrender for the survival. Prakash, her husband keeps her away from having children for some time, as she was too young and not matured. He tells her to improve herself in order that they may have a bright future in America which is a land of possibility where they can achieve better things than in India. After the heavy blow in her life, Jasmine who was leading a miserable life was saved by a generous Quaker lady who is named Lillian Gordon, saves her and with her support, she becomes a normal person and gains physical and mental stability. Thus there are many incidents which made her survive. In *Desirable Daughters*, Tara Lata, the great grandmother of Tara Chatterjee fought against the British during the famine and send all her distant relatives to Calcutta. The Padma also being a television star

gets adjusted to the American way of living. Tara wonders at her sister Parvati as she does a lot of work in the kitchen as Indian housewife being in host land. Tara is way ahead of Bharati Mukherjee's other fictional characters. Her unconditional love allows her to accept her son who is gay seems to be that she is prone to accepting new ways of the new world. Bish Chatterjee accepts his wife's lover and does not decline to appreciate his capabilities. He accepts everything with an open mind, whatever used to happen in his life. In fact, Bish Chatterjee in his views he is modern and acceptance of the new world and its ways which are evident in his persona. He is a great person on the other Indian male characters of Bharati Mukherjee.

In *Jasmine*, Mataji was afraid of the circumstances that had taken place in Lahore. Love made her panic at what was in store. In their village, many burned to death like dowry-less wives, rebellious wives, and barren wives. In the beginning, when Sukhwinder tries to argue that the state is Hindu state and Sikh state, there comes a man who says that India is for everyone. There she falls in love with the voice of Prakash. Bharati Mukherjee presents Jasmine as a powerful woman and as a goddess. Bud when kisses her, her third eye which is on the forehead glows like a light which is trained for lives to come. Bud praises Jane how beautiful she is and how much he loves her. Bud is a person who always expects surprises from Jane in resting room. As Jasmine is charged to take care of Duff, daughter of Taylor and Wylie Hayes, she starts falling in love with Taylor who was good at her and When Wylie decided to leave Taylor and tries to go to her lover Stuart, then meanwhile Taylor and Jasmine both become attached and form a strong relationship. Even Wylie tells Jasmine to be with Taylor and thus she wins Taylor. When Jase finds Wylie hugging her and crying, once more she feels that America had thrown her again. Jase is reminded of the topic which was discussed by Taylor that is weak gravity and one cannot be separated by another. Bud's wife Karin feels that because of Jane, Bud is going away from her. She even tells that she had a dream that Baden was hit by a tornado and Karin goes away to Elsa country leaving Bud to Jane unwillingly. Karin points out at Jane that she was the person who brought destruction in their lives. In *Desirable Daughters*, Tara Bhattacharjee, main protagonist shifts from her husband to her lover and back to her husband as a lover. She had many affairs with many lovers. Andy leaves her, for Tara disobeying him by going to New Jersey to find out the identity of her sister's unauthorized child. She returns home with Bish and Rabi. The night before the bomb blast could take place, she takes the role of a seductress, lover, and a wife to her husband. Bharati Mukherjee's protagonist could not be judged like an individual who doesn't have morals because having affairs is not illegal in the American culture. Knowing that Chris Dey who is claimed to be the unauthorized child of Padma, Tara tries to crush on many toes, Padma by becoming pregnant with Ronnie day who is considered to be untouchable and she leaves from there to a foreign country and gets married to another man. Thus Divorce and Extramarital affairs took place in these two novels.

It sums up the different views expressed by Diasporic writers. Diaspora writers have been selected to project the internal issues of societal, political, historical and cultural issues. Bharati Mukherjee guides her protagonists through the lines of adventures and worst ordeals

to the real self-realization and reconciliation. She is at her best in the description of cross-cultural conflicts and how her heroines have power over their destinies. Racial and cultural otherness in the majority community combined with a generational cultural alienation from one's own ethnic community leaves hyphenated Indians trapped in the space of the hyphen between two cultures. Diaspora Indians cannot be at home unless they admit the Indianness of past homes, whether in terms of origins, cultural affiliation or even duty. The acknowledgment can manifest as rejection or acceptance, but the conversation between homes remain active and a necessary requirement of settling. The Indian community plays a critical role in this home-formation either as merciless guardian of the old culture who punish any disobedience or as an easy foundation and support network that nurtures and teaches by example. Bharati Mukherjee has, in reality, paid special awareness to the condition of the Indian woman immigrant in North America. Her women characters go ahead lives of quiet distracted but few of her heroines triumph over the obstacles they dealt with.

For Mukherjee, both the journey as well as the destination are important. Mukherjee feels Immigration from the Third world to this country is a metaphor for the process of uprooting and re-rooting. Her protagonists have marvelous impending to discover hidden reserves of energy in them. The flashback bone method and first-person narration prove to be effective and consistent for the projection of Jasmine's multicultural assimilation. *Jasmine*, a story from an omniscient perspective, centering on a Trinidadian Indian teenager who is savoring the United States for the first time. *Jasmine* is about the recent migrant to the United States trying to assimilate, then *Desirable Daughters* is about an immigrant who found success and the American Dream, but senses that she has lost something irreplaceable in the pursuit of that desire.

The narration of *Desirable Daughters* is like a bedtime story. It's oral tradition through which the stories of heroism are handed down to ages and ages which links the past, present and future of the protagonist, her familial bonding with Indian traditions, her past which affects her future in California, the present, which was shaped under patriarchal guidance has somehow boomeranged, bringing her back to India to find a foothold. Tara takes everything in her stride which matter more. Resurrection becomes the basis of her life.

One can see in Mukherjee's characters, a kind of isolation and emotional openness, on the other there is a sudden arousing and definite decision. The heroines of all these books are extraordinarily pretty, and it is the beauty that determines a good deal of their fate but whereas the heroine in *Jasmine* is a physical manifestation of some Hindu Goddess of destruction, leaving death and despair in her wake as she pursued her dream. *Desirable Daughters* is an exciting version of the Joy Luck Club to a certain limit and with Indian Daughters as a replacement of Chinese. It definitely gave some within reach into the life of higher group Brahmin family. Mukherjee's way of storytelling keeps everyone involved throughout the novel. The story is spectacular yet the theme of independence and going back to one's roots keep everyone firmly rooted. The novel ends with Tara finding the house of Tree bride which forms the theme of Tree Bride, The latter novel, Second of the Trilogy. The life and culture of America finds its voice in this novel, blended with and seeped in Indian

Culture. Thus, a work focussed on Mukherjee's most recent works informed by a theoretical framework based on Postcolonial, Diaspora may be an enriching contribution to the studies of contemporary Diaspora and the works by this Diaspora Indian writer.

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