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A Perspective on Indian Diaspora and Bharati Mukherjee

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Abstract ;

The present paper throws light on the identity crisis in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee's major novels. We know that we are living in the age of globalization. There is a tremendous progress in each and every field. The internet facility is helping a lot to the entire world. Hence migration is taking place at large. Characters are always engaged in the nostalgia of their culture and daily life. This paper points out the identity crisis in the light of Bharati Mukherjee's novels

Identity crisis is a period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person's sense of identity becomes insecure, typically due to a change in their expected aims or role in society. There are various causes of identity crisis including improper upbringing, lack of affirmation and unpleasant past experiences. Other factors as stress, tension, troubles and social demands.

A number of women novelists have made their debut in the 90's . The first novels are much effective in revealing the true state of Indian society when it comes to the treatment of women. There is completed authentic presentation of contemporary India, with all its regional varieties. It is only from the last two decades, several writers make it possible to speak of a new generation of Indian English novel. Among those are Salmon Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Shashi Tharoor, Namita Gokhale, Shashi Deshpande and so on. Most of these novelists are either temporary or permanent immigrants. These women writers's commitment lies majorly on tracing out the 'Immigrant Women's problem, which is the currently significant topic in literary canon.

Bharati Mukherjee was born in 1940 in Calcutta. She married a Canadian fellow student, Clark Blaise, at the University of Iowa, in 1963. She became a naturalized Canadian, got Canadian citizenship and lived in Toronto and then in Montreal and held teaching positions at McGill University and Concordia University. She migrated to the to the U.S.A. in 1980 with her family and became a U.S.A. Citizen in 1988 . Her remarkable works are *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) *Wife* (1975) *Days and Nights in Calcutta* *Darkness* (1985) *The Middleman* and other stories (1988) *The Sorrow and the Terror* (1987), *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the world* (1993), Bharati Mukherjee's novels and short stories often reveal contemporary themes and concerns. One of these is the emotional and psychic consequences of search for on self identity and immigrancy psyche.

In the novel *Jasmine* the main protagonist *Jasmine*' search for identity and her true self began from the day she was born . As a girl child she was almost strangled to death so that her parents might free her from the problems of marriage . But she survived that attack . In fact , her childhood memories became the instrument in her fight against fate and her search for self identity . She was predicted of widowhood and separate by an astrologer when she was seven years old. She was not troubled down by fate . She always tried to raise herself above blind beliefs and fallacy . "Fate is Fate , When Beulah Bridegroom was fated to die to snakebite on their wedding night , did building as still fortress prevent his death ? A magic snake will penetrate solid walls when necessary".





Mukherjee's works focus on the phenomenon of migration, the status of new immigrants, and the feeling of alienation often experienced by expatriates as well as on Indian women and their struggle. Her own struggle with identity first as an exile from India, then an Indian expatriate in Canada, and finally as an immigrant in the United States has led to her current contentment of being an immigrant. Mukherjee's works correspond with biographer Fakrul Alma's categorization of Mukherjee's life into three phases. Her earlier works, such as *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Parts of Days and Night in Calcutta*, are her attempts to find her identity in her Indian heritage. Mukherjee continues writing about the immigrant experience in most of the stories in *The Middle Man and Other Stories*, a collection of short stories which won her the National Book Critics Circle Award for Best Fiction, *Jasmine*, and essays. These stories explore the meeting of East and West through immigrant experiences in the U.S. and Canada along with further describing the idea of the great melting pot of culture in the United States.

In her first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) "The new structure of thought" which Mukherjee tries to express in her novels arises from the tension between basically recognizable situations and emotions. To be more explicit, the situations in Mukherjee's novels do have surface identity with motifs already part of the Indo-English fictional syndromes: Tradition/modernity Conflict-East confrontation-Rural/Urban dichotomy. In the second novel *Wife*, Mukherjee writes to be the ideal Bengali wife, but not of fear and personal instability murders her husband.

Mukherjee's novel *Leave it to Me* is completely American. The only Indian touch is the prologue, which retells the mythological story of Mahishasuramardhani, the Devi, who killed the buffalo demon. The book is soaked in blood and reeks in violence.

Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter* is a very fine manifestation of this inner conflict of an immigrant. This is an interesting study of upper class Bengali Buhamin girl, named Tara Banerjee Cartwright, who goes to America for higher studies. The novel pursues an opposite direction with return of Tara to India. Tara has married an American and has been away from home for seven years. Although she has regarded herself 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 this return, but now finds herself, imbued with the foreignness of spirit. Her seven years stay at Vassar changed her outlook in life, though America did not fascinate her. When she comes in terms with American life her reactions are one of fear and anger.

The new culture and identity in which an immigrant has imbibed himself hardly gets accepted by the people of his land. He becomes a stranger when he went abroad and when he comes back, he becomes a stranger once again. Such a person may enjoy material prosperity, but the loss that has occurred for him is irreparable in the form of loss of original identity and a family tie.

Thus Bharati Mukherjee always focuses upon immigrant women's experiences, opportunities and their quest for identity. Her immigrant narratives consist of a fresh perspective to bear on immigrant's experience of India, the West and the world. It is apt when Bharati Mukherjee has claimed: "we immigrants have fascinating tales to relate.....My aim is to expose Americans to the energetic voices of new settlers in this country". She describes the American experience as one of "fusion" and immigration a "two-way process" in which both the whites and the immigrants grow by the interchange and experience. The issues of Diaspora, globalization, consumerism, transnationalism, cultural hybridity, alienation and identity crisis

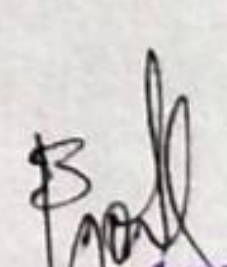


have become the prime-motif of most post-colonial literatures. The self, dislocated in space and time from its roots has a homing instinct- the desire to discover its "in betweenness" in a transnational and trans-cultural space. Problems of identity figure more prominently in the novels of Salman Rushdie, V.S.Naipaul, Caryl Phillips, Bharati Mukherjee and Anita Desai. In these writers the quest for identity is not tagged to the self alone. It goes beyond the self to issues of culture and linguistics (as in Desai's Baumgartner's Bombay in relation to Hugo's Teutonic background). All these factors give rise to emergent trends and tendencies like hybrid cultural forms among the migrants. These migrant writings deal with issues like home self and identity.

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