DIASPORIC SUFFERING IN DESIRABLE DAUGHTERS BY BHARATI MUKHERJEE

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the diasporic suffering in Bharati Mukherjee's Desirable Daughters. This novel depicts the life of three sisters, who are born in India and settled in different foreign countries. They try to establish their position in traditional Indian society. The diasporic suffering of Tara is more evident in Desirable Daughters and, her quest for identity to fix herself in society leads her to suffer. To find her identity, in a foreign land, she goes from place to place and, the sense of immigrant in a foreign land is fixed in the minds of Tara. Her displacement in the alien land leads her into various problems of alienation, assimilation, a strange feeling to adept in the foreign land and, to the foreign culture. The attempts of Tara to identify herself as an immigrant and the diasporic suffering in a foreign land are explained in this paper.

Keywords: diasporic, suffering, immigrant, identity

1. INTRODUCTION:

Literature is the reflection of the reality, the real-life incidents, characters, life of people and their emotions are the subject of most writers. The works of literature are fictional and factual, whether they are fictional or factual their sole purpose is to entertain and enrich its readers. Philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, through their philosophical writing, convey the values, morals, and to enlighten the readers. The contribution of the Indian writers in the English literature is greater and now they have reached a greater milestone through their literary works. Writers like Sarojini Naidu, Anita Desai, ManjuKapur, Sir AuroBindo, Mulk Raj Anand, are known for their notorious novels explicitly mention the Indian culture and traditions.

The Indian women writers have also proved the utmost in their works discussing the problems of women faced in their daily life. These women writers took upon the themes like identity crisis, alienation, suppression, oppression, liberation in the Indian cultural contexts. Meenakshi Mukherjee quotes here: "Whatever be the language in which it is written, a novel by an Indian writer demands direct involvement in values and experiences which are valid in the Indian context." (P 5)

Bharati Mukherjee, an Indian American immigrant writer known for her popular fiction in a cross-cultural context. She was born on July-27, 1940 to wealthy parents in Kolkatta. After her marriage, she got settled in Canada and to America made her write about the themes like alienation, search for roots, issues of immigrants in her works. She admits: "the experience of cutting me off from a biological homeland and settling in an adopted homeland that is not always welcoming to its dark-complexioned citizens has tested me as a person, and made me the writer I am today." (P 21)

Through the protagonist of Bharati Mukherjee, we can read the diasporic sufferings of the diasporic writer in the alien land.

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Diasporic suffering in Desirable Daughters

Mukherjee's Desirable Daughters is a story of three sisters and their ways of life in different situations. Padma, Parvati, and Tara are the daughters of the Motilal Bhattacharya belong to a Bengali brahmin traditional family. The protagonist of the novel, Tara marries BishwaChatterjee in an arranged marriage. The story is narrated from the first person's point of view by Tara. Tara takes pride in her traditional Brahmin way of life. To move forward in life she adapts to the new American culture.

The protagonist of the novel Tara and her two sisters are the blend of tradition and modern outlook. Tara, the narrator of the story takes the reader to the world of fluidity, and to float with time. The traditional family background and ethics are very much rooted in her. The move from the native land to the foreign land makes her feel as if she is an exile. Through the character of Tara, Mukherjee herself reflects her mind. Maya Manju Sharma quotes: "In her fiction, Mukherjee handles western themes and settings as well as characters who are westernized or bicultural. Yet, she is forced to admit that the very structure of her imagination is essentially Hindu and essentially moral." (3)

Clifford says, "Diaspora women are caught between patriarchies, ambiguous, pasts and, futures. They connect and disconnect, forget and, remember, in complex, strategic ways" (5) Similarly, in the novel, we find Tara between the histories of the past and her present life in America. When she finds her relationship with her husband doesn't work well, she walks out of the relationship. AvtarBrah quotes: "The identity of a diasporic imagined community is far from fixed or pre-given [...] As such, all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even though they are implicated in the construction of a common we." (6)

The diasporic writers suffer a dual mindedness, they are the victims who cannot leave the present without forgetting the past. The cross-cultural consciousness is very much in the minds of Tara. Culture is more dominant in her, she couldn't find peace either in America or in India. Her mind shuttles between the nations. Tara feels overexcited about her life when she accompanies her husband to a pub. "This is the life I have been waiting for, I thought, the liberating promise of marriage, and travel, and the wider world. Bless Daddy and Mummy, they found me the only man in the world who could transport me from the enchanted garden of Ballygunge to Stanford University in the early 1980s, which has to count as one of the intellectual wonders of the modern world. (DD 81)

The readers are able to find that Tara's ability to adapt to the new culture in America is difficult. Tara knows well that her unsettled mind when she remarks about her Hungarian lover Andy, "It's one of those SanFrancisco things I can't explain in India, just as I can't explain my Indian life to the women I know in California." (DD 25-26) Tara is Indian by the mind and externally an imitator of American culture. Tara always feels guilty about her luxury and lavish spending in America. "I am feeling just a little alien and uncomfortable a tinge of not belonging, in the midst of such welcoming comfort and I think it must be the way Bish feels." (DD 24) She also feels for her separation from her husband because of her alienated feeling. She runs after the relationship to get satisfaction. She finds it difficult to fit into the American way of living. Though she divorces Bish, Tara finds it intolerable to accept the reality because the customs and the tradition are very much in her blood.

Bharati Mukherjee tries to establish the fact that India is a land of tradition, values, spirituality which the American society fails to appreciate. She says, "I am tired of explaining India to Americans. I am sick of feeling an alien" (DD 35) Tara envies the life of Parvati and Padma because they are much into the daily routines of life and feels content. Diasporic suffering is very obvious in the character of Tara. Mukherjee has beautifully portrayed the continuous diasporic suffering which continuously haunts her of self-realization, Indian traditions, and values which can be read through Desirable Daughters.

REFERENCES


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