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A Glimpse Of Immigrant Experience In The Novels Of Bharati Mukherjee

Abstract

Bharati Mukherjee as an immigrant writer has given new shapes to Indian writing in English. Bharati Mukherjee writes in the tradition of the immigrant experience rather than the nostalgia of expatriation. Bharati Mukherjee in all her novels bring out the heterogeneity of this immigrant experience. Bharati Mukherjee has performed important role in universalizing the experiences of immigrants and expatriates through her novels. Bharati Mukherjee's novels is the problems of women particularly as immigrants. Bharati Mukherjee has established herself as a powerful member of the American literary scene. Bharati Mukherjee has portrayed the characters of women through her understand prose-style. She offers her view of immigrant attitude and an insight into the literature of immigration. The dangerous life of immigrants and the values of the immigrant's place have carved out the assimilated of the Third World immigrants. Bharati Mukherjee asserts that America offers hope to those come from various culture of irony, cynicism and despair. So we can say that in all novels of Bharati Mukherjee can be assessed as a web of immigrant human relationship

Keywords: Immigrant, universalizing, heterogeneity, cynicism, assessed.

Introduction

Bharati Mukherjee's novels 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 in a country of immigrants" (Alam, Fakrul)

Bharati Mukherjee explains her experience as an immigrant writer in her novels. She expresses her life experience which she got in India, Canada and in America. She talks about immigration, assimilation, and expatriation. Her first work talks about exile, then assimilation and later works about immigrants. In her novels female protagonists were placed in a central position and through these female characters Mukherjee portrays the process of immigration and shows the transformation of the women, that how much they feel loneliness and alienated. As an immigrant writer, she needs to focus on her present surroundings and invest "India of the mind" With the help of a constantly evolving imagination, like her fictional characters, she looks forward, not to the present reality, for she feels that reinvention of self, not nostalgia, is her strength. Mukherjee's novel expose both the paradoxical energy and emptiness of American society as well as the anti-theatrical combination of flexibility and adherence to tradition displayed by Indian immigrants to the United States.

Bharati Mukherjee defiantly announces to her American readers, "I am one of you" and in this assertion she has declared herself as an American in the immigrant tradition. Mukherjee's novels show these aspects of identity and alienation. Her earlier works show a complex weaving of colonialism, history and culture shocks, as these works still have some ties with the homeland. There are novels like, *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife*, *Jasmine*, *The Holder of the World* and *Leave It to Me* which deal with the theory of alienation and bring out the experience of an immigrant. Bharati Mukherjee's female protagonists are immigrants and suffer cultural shock but they are potential women and are anxious to establish their

identity by undertaking their heroic journeys. Even though she has been acknowledged as a “voice of expatriate-immigrants” sensibility, a close observation of her novels reveals that she has been written all the novels with predominantly feminist views. Since Bharati Mukherjee’s women characters are the victims of immigration, all the critics focus her novels as problems and consequences due to immigration but actually the problems are not because they are immigrants.

Immigrant experience in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee

Bharati Mukherjee believes herself as an immigrant writer and her works are a part of her progress of becoming and making a new identity. She decodes her convictions about a writer's responsibility when she explains to VrindaNabar in an interview:

“I am inventing an America for myself I am writing on America that has not been written about. The frontier is up there, in front of me. I am pushing it back all the time. This is what makes the new stories so different. They are a natural outgrowth of where I am. I feel it is the writer's business to write about his or her environment, whatever that may be.”

During her odyssey as a writer for almost four decades Bharati Mukherjee's creative tenaciousness has undergone many changes. There has been an ongoing search from expatriation to immigration in her writings. Her main deed as a writer has been the life of South Asian immigrants in America and Canada and the problem of acculturation and assimilation. Her novels reveal a progress from expatriation to immigration. This movement concurs with her migration from Canada to America. Mukherjee's understanding and reaction to her experience in Canada led her to see herself as an expatriate and this theme of expatriation is reverberated in her writings in Canada.

Because of the evidently different experiences Mukherjee has had full life, she has been described as a writer who has lived through several stages of life. Mukherjee's identity

is first as a colonist and then as a national subject in India, then as an exile from India, then an Indian expatriate in Canada and finally as an immigrant in a country of immigrants. In the end, she shifted into a celebratory mode as an immigrant, and then as a citizen in the United States and as a famous writer. Mukherjee, who began as a writer of Indian origin, had searched solace in Canada before in the end realizing her true self as a naturalized American citizen. She is a representation of multiculturalism, and eventually becomes the right person to write about the immigrant experience and the test that precedes and accompanies such cultural schizophrenia.

Mukherjee is a writer who resists the question of nostalgia for one's native country and globalized world, culture in the transformed, exploring inhumanity the contradictions in her own native culture and presenting a dramatically rectified image of India, America, the world and the new immigrants. Mukherjee is the voice of immigrants from all over the world, writing about them in the convention of immigrant experience rather than expatriation and nostalgia. She strongly protests hyphenation in her national identity as an Indo-American or an Asian-American writer. She bears in mind on the immigrants' true catch for empowerment, self-respect, their identity and a triumphant survival in the settled country.

Bharati Mukherjee has selected novels as a medium of statement to help her readers establish her position at the intersections of cultures in the traditions of East and West. In the limits between America and India, she surely occupies an indefinite stage. Duality and struggle are at intersection and feature in immigrant life in America and Mukherjee's novels dramatize these qualities very impressively. In the New York of Bharati Mukherjee's novels and stories, Anglos have become others, and the society of new immigrants and outsiders becomes mainstream America.

Mukherjee in her novels offer justice to the immigrants from all over the world in America. She is a born writer with amazing talent to inform different aspects of an

immigrant's life. Her staying in America and treasuring the melting pot of America made her a writer of immigrant literature and a writer of Indian Diaspora Literature. Her anchor impresses to and fro between the extremes - India and America. In Mukherjee's novels hybridity and syncretistic are continuously explored, and her characters' lives signify constantly expanding horizons of marginal realities. Within these horizons there seem to be no fixed center but an interweaving, and endlessly intersecting fabric of writings of marginality, in which the characters' gender, nationality, class and ethnicity play a key role.

The immigrant experience in Mukherjee's novels is many-sided and forces the problems with cultural identity that immigrants face. This problem of identity is harshly linked to the geopolitical space that the immigrant assimilates and is expressed in the novels not as a simple sadness for one's country of origin but as the need for immigrants to build for themselves a statement of home. Bharati Mukherjee's novels emphasize the need for immigrants to choose their home by constantly adapting themselves to the new homeland and by constantly renegotiating their relation with the old homeland. The immigrant's relationship with the old home and the new home is neither constant nor colossal, and Mukherjee's fiction insinuates the heterogeneity of the immigrant experience.

In the tradition of novels in English about India, Bharati Mukherjee's novels bear a marvelous belief. She writes as a novelist who grew up in Calcutta, knows Indians, and mainly Bengalis' culture personally and brings to her books this personal insight as it has been improved and refocused by many years of living in North America. Whether she is writing about Indians living in India or in North America, she links to the authority of her background a keen sense of the violence and disorder, however controlled, which can lie beneath the surface of a society, new or old, or of a person. Traditions can serve to avoid the triumph of violent acts; they can also sharp violence by their very restrictiveness.

Bharati Mukherjee's novels are of expatriation, of a campaign and a journey to culturally different societies which help to question and traditional, moral, and social values. In Bharati Mukherjee's novels, we find a persistent struggle to return to roots, on the part of the diasporic people, trying to win the absorption and melancholy connected with their life. The loss of roots is revealed in the distorted image in the mirror, and the mirror, instead of revealing the image reveals the face of a stranger. In her novels she gives much thought to the condition of Indian women immigrants in North America in the aspects of cultural conflicts and in their control of their fate.

Bharati Mukherjee writes about what she calls the cultural hybridization of the new America and discovers, in violent and often quaint context, aspects of the conflicts between the Indian and American cultures. Bharati Mukherjee establishes her texts against a milieu of complex, transnational economic activities and mass uprooting's in the Third World. In the novels of Bharati Mukherjee bear the stamp of the rootlessness caused by diaspora. In her novels she gives much attention to the condition of Indian women immigrants in North America in the aspects of cultural conflicts and in their control of their fate. She mainly focuses on the continuum of the immigrant experience moving from the small and the singular in the tyranny of three time zones - the past, the present, and the future. Neither can she separate herself from her past nor do her characters have any reality in the future. The theme of identity in Mukherjee's novels in her IndoAmerican duality and personal dilemma is ambivalent, irrational, schizophrenic and poised between two worlds and rooted in neither.

Bharati Mukherjee is gripped by the experience of expatriation and immigration. Almost all her novels find out this theme from different perspective. The tugs and pulls of culture and disparities in social patterns are the main forms in her novels. Expatriation is a complicated state of mind and emotion which includes a contemplative yearning for the past. It is

perpetually symbolized by the parental home, the pain of exile and homelessness, and the struggle to survive the difference between oneself and the new antagonistic surrounding.

Conclusion

Bharati Mukherjee, a famous and leading immigrant writer, expresses in her novels, the flow and misery of the alienate people. Their displeasures, their loosening clutch on life and their lives spent in a distressful longing for their roots can be seen as a lamentation for the diasporic condition. She vibrantly expresses the features of diasporic condition.

The fictional characters of Bharati Mukherjee can be understood in the light of her experiences as a Bengali and as an immigrant - factors which have definitely moulded her literary sensibility. Bharati Mukherjee's characters are immigrants who show the ambivalences caused by the unexpected transplantation from a well-known culture to a foreign one.

Bharati Mukherjee's characters are an in-depth analysis of the twin cultures vital in their minds. Her writing efficiently pictures the cultural boggle experienced by her characters and the cultural and emotional dislocations suffered by them in adapting to their new surroundings. Her novels are transcultural novels that promulgate the immigrant anguish very clearly. It highlights their initial failure to adapt themselves completely into the foreign culture and society. They abide to their roots and the ultramodern surroundings, yet they are conscious of the empty in their hearts.

In the galaxy of Indian Women Writing Bharati Mukherjee takes a significant position. She focuses on the inner world of women. Bharati Mukherjee's novels have a female centrality. She explains the transformation of women when they pass through the process of immigration.

Bharati Mukherjee tries to observe in her fiction the hybridization of the new American and how the new Indian immigrant has dealt with the cultural conflicts and social inevitable how this has affected his or her identity as well as how this evolution has contributed to American multiculturalism. The immigrant and the expatriate are main figures in Mukherjee's novels because she uses them to cross-examine spatial location and dislocation.

Bharati Mukherjee is a straight-forward immigrant in American society. She has become a celebrity for her unique approach to expatriate and cross-culturalism as the metaphysical experience of exile and as the mediator of behavior change, both in the majority and in the minority cultures. She is anxious about making her portrait of Indian life perspicuous and appealing to the American reader.

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