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S. R. Karpagam

Ph.D Research Scholar

A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College,

Poondi, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India

Dr. B. R. Veeramani

M.A.,M.Phil., Ph.D. Research Guide

Associate Professor of English

A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College

Poondi, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India

svssankar15@gmail.com

Psychological Condition Of Tara Lata In The Novel

“Desirable Daughters” By Bharati Mukherjee

Abstract: Bharati Mukherjee is one of the major Indian women writers lived in America. She has written more than a dozen books that have earned her international recognition as a major writer. ‘Desirable Daughters’ is a story of three Bengali sisters in the USA weaving the childhood memories of the girls in India and also history of India. The protagonist is Tara, 36 year old Indian American. She is the youngest of the three daughters of wealthy engineer. She comes from tradition Bengali family. At the age of 19, she marries Bishwapriya (Bish) Chatterjee, a suitable husband selected by her father. When the couple moved to the USA from Canada. Bharati Mukherjee found her true self. She realized that the USA was truly a Liberal Nation with democratic values. She experienced enthusiasm and openness in America life and

culture. She loved the USA for respect and individual liberty, freedom of expression. In her novel *Desirable Daughters* (2002) is concerned with female identity and rerooting of the self. It is a story of three Bengali sisters living in USA weaving the childhood memories of the girls when they were living in India and also the history of India. Here to Author explores the expatriate's plight and search for identity until rerooting take place.

Keywords: Migrant, alienation, expatriate, identity.

Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*, explores the significance of characters representing Indian migrants to USA. The novel depicts the psychological condition of Indian Women living in US, and her dilemma of adjusting between Home and alien cultures. Being women they expect lot about her future, especially those who are going to settle in US, they don't want to repeat old customs.

The main character of the novel *Desirable Daughters* is Tara Lata, who is bold enough to face problems. Because, her childhood memories only made her a strong women. It is a story of three Bengali sisters in the US contrive the childhood memories of the girls in India also history of India. The three daughters of Bhattacharjee family namely Padma, Parvati, and Tara are desirable in their girlhood in the sense that they fulfill the requirements of daughterhood- beauty, intelligence, politeness, obedience. "Our father could not let either of my sisters out on the street, our car was equipped with windowshades" (P.29).

The novel opens with tree bride Tara Lata, protagonist who lives in Bengali village. She is to be a traditional young bride in an arranged marriage. Unfortunately the groom is bitten by venomous snake and he dies. Even though both families properly worshipped God to avoid this problem.

“A Bengali girl’s happiest night is about to become her lifetime imprisonment. It seems all the sorrows of history, all that is unjust in society cruel in religion have settled on her” (P.4).

In olden days people believed, if the groom died before marriage the bride is considered as unlucky person as well she don’t have other choice. Though, she is not only responsible for this problem. In some cases, the bridal parents are also ready to accept this as truth. The bride groom’s father comes to claim his share of the dowry even though the marriage has not taken place. The bride’s father refuses to give him. In a critical situation, bridegroom’s father is not ready to worry about loss of his son, he concentrate on money only. There are a very few people like this man; they could not understand what the real problem is.

But the narrator says in Hindusim, the only way for a woman to reach nirvana through the work ship of her husband. Through this statement came to know that is spouse less woman both a social outcast and unable to be reincarnated. In order to save his daughter from this problem Tara lata’s father symbolically marries her to a tree. This is considered a better face for her than remaining unwed. Her father believed that this tree wedding will definitely give bight future.

It is like a belief; crush the head of a snake after killing it, no, it is not. Because a snake captures the images of those who killed it and later its family may seek revenge. The truth is that the poison in snake fang is dangerous even after it dies. The snake by default is hard wired to snap the fangs whenever something comes between them. Crushing snake’s head destroys it. A snake’s detached head can immediately act by reflect and potentially bite. The novel depicts marriage as the medium of exploitation rather than bliss. Tara married a man that she has never met, she accepts to marry Bish because of her father’s wish.

“I married a man I had never met, whose picture and biography and bloodlines I approved of because my father told me it was time to get married and this was the best husband on the market”(P.26).

The story shifts to present day San Francisco. Tara Battacharjee named after her tree-
bride ancestor has divorced her wealthy husband, one who, her father's choice but not fulfilled her desire both physically as well as mentally. Her son Rabi is on her mother side. She suffered a lot between tradition and modernity. She wants to make her life more adventurous in dress, food, culture etc., she began to call her husband's name as Bishu, while in India she could not utter his name. In Indian conservative society husband is treated as God. But Tara breaks the rules, she loves to live the American life, economically independent. She has a white boyfriend named Andy “my balding, red-bearded, former biker, former bad-boy, Hungarian Buddhist contractor/yoga instructor, the man Bish calls “Tara's minister”, my carpenter (P.25).

In India divorce is an end to life, whereas in US, it is their own choice to live their life happily. And moreover marriage is a lifelong commitment. When Indian parents successfully get their children married, it is considered as a fulfillment of their life, and they feel extremely happy and relieved from their duty as parents. Being an Indian their reputation is a critical part of their identity and self-respect.

So here is an open secret, something everyone knows about but which no one ever talks about she is very much happy with the company of Andy as she was not with her husband who saw love as interchangeable status and honor.

Tara refuses to see herself as a foreigner as anything but American. She is able to define herself through what she is not but she is ready to struggle with what and who she is. She describes herself as feeling invisible but to her, this invisibility is freeing. Tara is different from her two sisters named Parvati and Padma. Her older sister Parvati always reminds India,

where all three sisters were born. She married in a love match rather than through an arranged marriage. She has a tradition role of Indian house wife. Though her marriage is loved and arranged, she reminds a typical Indian tradition house wife. She obeyed her family rule and always supports her family through her positive activities where she learned from her family.

As a single parent Tara might come across many problems in bringing up her son. Her son Rabi was not happy with that school, as well atmosphere. Tara says

“ he was going to school with the children of San Francisco’s bohemian elite, kids who’d never harbored an illiberal thought , nor suspected the existence of repressive social codes and norms of behavior”(P.153).

Tara is not ready to live ordinary life she is trying to balance herself in the borderland between American and Indian until the day had come. A secret drops itself into Tara’s lap or on to her couch. She arrives home one afternoon, to find a stranger sitting with Rabi in her living room.

He said that he was Christopher Dey and he was looking for Tara’s eldest sister Padma, whom he claimed to be his mother. Rabi and Tara got confused. But Christopher Dey gave a proof, which Ronald Dey is a teenage lover of Padma. But Tara was totally confused about his claim and her sister’s activist in the past. It was unimaginable that her sister could become pregnant out of wedlock. Though, they belong to orthodox family, that taught girls to be docile and virtuous.

Tara wants to know truth, so she travelled to Eastcoast to visit her elder sister Padma. She is most beautiful among the three and more over she is a well known news anchor, who also runs a designer saree business on the other side. At present she was a member of the New Jersey Indian cultural elite. Tara enquires about Ronald dey. Padma replied casually that she had some nice time together and she even wanted him to be her lover. But it was just that and nothing more. She also added one more information that a few days before she had

received a letter from Ronald Dey revealing that he had an illegitimate son, but had not divulged who the mother was.

Tara stands in middle of the whirlpool. She wants to know truth. In the tight corner, Tara realizes her mistake and wants rejoin with her husband Bish. Tara recall her husband's word and its importance of marital ethics. At the same time Bish failed to be good husband one who support and take care. Both Tara and Bish realized the value of martial relationships. A terrible moment in the house makes their reconciliation. Firstly Bish thought that it was an accident caused by cooking gas that was left open carelessly by Tara. But it was not that exactly. The next day's newspaper reports confirmed that,

“it was maliciously planned by Andy her jealous lover who felt alarmed to find him being slowly replaced by Bish” (P.274). Andy jealous about her lover. As Mukherjee writers: “What set him could well have been the attempted reconciliation of the chatterjee's”(P.275).

The unidentified body discovered on beach that was on Christopherdey. Whether the news was the one or imposter would always be a mystery. Tara realized her mistake, because of her Andy's company. He understood Bish who was injured to rescue both Rabi and Tara. From her experience in America, she learned lot. The most important thing is she realizes the values of marital life and sustaining familial bonds. After that she came back to Calcutta for a change, to forget all the misfortunes. At the same time Tara's mother explained about importance of marital realtionships and its duties. However they got the desired happiness in life when they reconnected to their cultural roots. The alien country confused them into perplexed and emotionless beings. But the power cultural roots save them. And they lead a life as calm and silent bliss.

The protagonist of the novel decides to find her roots by travelling back to India with her son. The two travel along the path amidst imagery that echoes the descriptions used in a

Tale of Tree bride at the beginning. Tara has a vision of Kerosene lamps that again echoes the opening scene, and experiences a spiritual moment of wonder.

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