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Cultural Transformation and Individual Identity: A Study of Assimilation in the Novels of Bharati Mukherjee

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Abstract

Aim: The Aim of the paper is to show the Indian women struggle in the society for their rights. My aim in this paper is to analyse the sufferings faced by women in Identity and Cultural Transformation. In the novel Jasmine, we analyses that there are multiple identities of the main protagonist. Jasmine meets different people and her identity changes according to their will. Jasmine had suffered many challenges when she goes to America to fulfil her dead husbands wish. In desirable daughters by Bharati Mukherjee, there are three daughters who are having different paths in their life. And the main protagonist named Tara did not wanted to marry and wanted to continue her studies further. But because of her father she had to get married. Then she tries to find her own identity.

Methodology: Firstly, I read the primary text by Bharati Mukherjee. Then I did secondary reading and read some research articles on this topic. Simultaneously, I had formed a comparative analysis of both the chosen text and framed the outline for my paper. Thereafter, I studied the two texts on the aspect of assimilation, cultural identity and transformation.

Outcome: Through this paper, the researcher has found the struggles to identify in oneself in a new country and challenges one faces in cultural assimilation.

Conclusion: In Bharati Mukherjee's novels Jasmine and Desirable Daughters it is clearly shown that how women struggles for their identities. Both of them struggle a lot. In Jasmine novel the protagonist undergoes a journey of self-identity. The protagonist is shown as a courageous woman who tries to adapt herself to the life of America. In the Desirable Daughters, the protagonist remembers a past story and she finds a sense of peace in her life at the end.

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This paper focuses on the individual identity of the persons. In this paper we will be seeing that Bharati Mukherjee's novels deals with the theme of individual identity. In this paper we will see that in Jasmine novel which was set in the 1980s is about a young Indian woman who is in America and is trying a lot to adapt herself in America in order to survive and her identity was changed many a times. We will also see in this paper another novel of Bharati Mukherjee i.e., desirable daughters which is a story of three sisters describing about the lives and their ways of dealing with identity.

Bharati Mukherjee was born in 1940 in Calcutta and died in 2017. She was an American novelist. She was a versatile writer. She won National Book Critics Circle Award in 1988. She wanted to become a writer since her childhood she completed her graduation from Calcutta University in 1959 and pursued her master's from the University of Baroda. She got M.F.A degree from the Iowa University in 1963. She also completed her Ph.D. in comparative literature from Iowa University in 1969. As a brahmin, Ms. Mukherjee had to marry within her caste, but a year after her first meeting with Clark Blaise and they had a two-week romance and then in 1963 she married him. She began writing books with her husband writer Clark Blaise. She won the National Magazine Award in 1981.

Her writing captured mostly the process of migration the migrant life of characters, the feeling of alienation and the struggle of Indian women for identity. She is a diasporic fiction writer. The word diaspora refers to the dispersion of religious groups from their established homeland. Diasporic literature especially Indian literature it is due to the colonization and decolonization. It was a period in Indian history in which many of the Indian people migrated to different other countries due to colonizers or due to the need of work. Her novels deal with the issue of Identity. She represents India as a post-colonial writer who affiliates with the west and she is one of the post-colonial immigrant experiences in America. Her main concern as a novelist was to depict the life of South Asian immigrants in USA and Canada in her works and the problems of assimilation faced by the characters which has created the cross-cultural crisis. She was herself a migrated author Bharati Mukherjee. She is conscious about the socio cultural and

psychological conditions which the characters face in the host country. Her writings cover vast issues of dislocation fragmentation nostalgia for home, racial hatred, cultural and gender hatred, racial conflicts, identity crisis etc. Mukherjee wrote two novels while she was in Canada: *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife*. She also wrote *Days and Nights* and *The Sorrow and the Terror* in Calcutta co-written with Blaise. Her second book of short stories included *The Middleman* and other stories. She also wrote *Jasmine*, *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride* which included the themes of women's experience of marriage cultural identity racism and immigration.

It was published in 1989. There are twenty-six chapters in this novel. The main protagonist of the novel is Jasmine. In the starting, Jasmine is retelling the story of her own life. She tells that when she seven years old she went with the group of the women to a village which was in Hasanpur in that place only she was born and she used to live. So, one day a beggar who was sitting under a Banyan tree need a prophecy that in an incredibly early age she will become a widower but after listening to him Jyoti refused to accept that prophecy. The beggar pushed Jyoti in anger and she get hurt and get from mark of a star on forehead. She was studying in one of the schools in Hasanpur and her teacher motivates her to read more English books and she also have a lot of in Interest in English. Her teacher request her parents to let her study for more years in school so her parents allowed Jyoti to study for more 3 years in school. But one day Jyoti's father died and when she was of 14 years of age then she was motivated by her brother's friend named Prakash. Thoughts of Prakash were very liberal. There was a war was going on between Sikh and Hindu in Hasanpur and the Sikhs wanted that Hindu should run away from Hasanpur. Thoughts of Prakash were vastly different from the thoughts of Sikhs and when Jyoti's brother asked her that whether she wants to marry Prakash or not then Jyoti asked her brother that does Prakash know how to speak English. To this Jyoti's brother tells her that he knows how to speak English very well and in sometimes he is also planning to go to America. After listening this Jyoti agrees to marry Prakash and when she was of the age 14 she got married to Prakash. Prakash thinking was of very progressive nature and when

he got married to Jyoti he tells Jyoti that she should call him by his name and he changes her name from Jyoti to Jasmine which shows that Jyoti's previous life is over now and a new life has started with new name Jasmine. Prakash had a professor and key sent a letter to Prakash motivating him to come to America. Prakash tells Jyoti that once he had filled the form of Florida University and now it has been accepted and he has to go there and after going there he will be writing letters to Jyoti to this Jyoti gets a little bit upset but then she gets happy see her husband wish and dreams are getting fulfilled. Prakash took Jasmine to take a gift and he took her to a saree shop where a bomb has been put and as the bomb got blasted Prakash died there itself. Jasmine then goes to live with her brother and mother and then she decided that she will fill the dream of Prakash by going to Florida University so she asked her brother to help out in making a fake passport so that she can go to Florida University. Her brother help her out and a fake passport has been made. When she went from Europe to Florida in a gulf shuttle ship then in that ship she met a person who was going to Kingsland and he tells Jasmine that the captain named Half-face is not a good person and she should be alert and when that person reached his destination then before coming out of the ship he gave Jasmine a knife for her safety.

When Jasmine reaches Florida then that captain named Half-face tells Jasmine that it is not safe for her to roam around alone on the border and then by making her fool he took her to a remote hotel room and he rapes her. Then Jasmine cried a lot and thought that she would kill herself but then the next moment she realize that if she would kill herself then the dream of Prakash would not be fulfilled and then she decided to kill that captain and she murdered the captain. Jasmine was broken mentally physically and all over and then she was in an unbelievably bad condition even worst condition. When she can out of the hotel after some time she met Lillian Gordon in her way who saw that one leg of jasmine was split so she took Jasmine to her home and call the doctor for the treatment of Jasmine . Gordon bought her new American clothes and Jasmine stayed with Gordon for at least one week. Gordon made Jasmine learn how to be confident and also made her learnt the American language so that she should be

confident outside and nobody can catch her thinking as if she is an immigrant. Jasmine while living in Gordon's house shared her elder daughter's room who was a successful photographer. Then after one week Jasmine requested Gordon that she wants to go to an area named Queens where Mr. Vedheera lives who is the professor of Prakash. Gordon accepted the request of Jasmine and made her sit in the bus and gives her a card in which the number of Mr. Vedheera was written and then she goes and lives with the family of Mr. Vedheera and in Mr. Vedheera's house everyone used to speak in Hindi and in his surrounding also there was Indian surrounding but she was feeling as if she has taken favour from Mr Vedheera so she did not feel that much confident and she felt scared. Then one day she requested Mr Vedheera to make her issue a fake green Card.

When one day Jasmine meets Kate and Kate made Jasmine meet Taylor and Wylie who has adopted a daughter. Jasmine worked there as a caretaker and felt independent. Jasmine and Taylor started loving each other and Taylor's wife ran away with someone else leaving Taylor and then Jasmine Taylor and Duff started living together as a family. Taylor called her Jase. One day they went to a park and their Jase saw a hot dog vendor who had killed Prakash they both recognized each other and Jase got scared and she got panic attack thinking that that person will kill her and Taylor and Duff and when Taylor brings Jase home then Jase tells Taylor everything what happened in past in India. Then Jase requests Taylor that she wants to go to Iowa and there she meets Mrs. Ripple Mayer. Mrs. Ripplemayer had a son named Budd Ripplemayer who gave Jase a job and they fall in love with each other and build up a relationship together. Budd called her Jane. Budd immediately leaves his wife and him and Jane started living together and they adopted a son named du.

Du was very attracted towards electronic item and engineering and seeing this Jane remembers Prakash because he was also very much interested in appliances engineering. One day a local farmer shot Budd Ripple Mayer in the lower part of his body due to which his lower part got paralyzed but Jane took a lot of care of Budd and after some time Jasmine got pregnant of Budd's baby. Budd had a neighbor Darrel who had good relations with his father but one day his

father died and he got scared that how he would be able to manage with such a big farm then he decided that he would sell that farm and then before going he shared his feelings with Jane and asked her that she should come to New Mexico with him and there they will open a new radio franchise Store. But Jasmine refuses and after that Darrel suicides.

Du also goes away. Budd and Jane was left alone. One day Jane received a letter from Taylor in which it was written that Taylor and Duff were coming to meet her. But insisted Jane a lot to get married to him but Jane did not agree but when Taylor and duff arrived to meet her then she was really confused what to do. She was confused that should she fulfil her duty towards but because but was paralyzed and he cannot move and it is her duty to serve him to help him out or should she choose her love that is towards Taylor because she wanted to go with Taylor because she was in love with Taylor. After thinking a lot of Jane goes and sits in the car of Taylor and she chooses her love and new journey towards California started. The novel ends.

There are three sisters who were born in Calcutta named Tara, Padma, and Parvati. They were born into a wealthy Brahmin family. In the starting, Tara remembers a mythical story which she heard from her childhood. She remembers one of her ancestors it is sister's named Jai Krishna who had three daughters. One of his daughters was named Tara Latta. Tara Latta was engaged to a boy at the age of five as it was a norm in India in the past of arranging a married relationship during childhood. Just before the ceremony the groom of Tara Lata was bitten by a snake and he dies and grooms family goes to Jai Krishna Tara Lata's father and says that Tara Lata is responsible for their son's death. The groom's father ghost and ask for dowry as he blames Tara Latta for the death of a son but to this Jack refuses this demand by saying that he would see his daughter marrying a tree rather than paying the price for a marriage that did not take place. Jai Krishna forced Tara Latta to remain a virgin for her whole life and due to this Tara Lata the ancestor of the narrator came to known as the tree bride. The narrator then describes her present by telling that she was named Tara Lata. She describes her past when she was 19 years old. Tara, Lata's Eldest sister Padma wanted to

become an actress in the Indian industry and she got an offer in a movie which was of big budget but she was forced by her father that she could not play a role of actress in that movie because Her father considered it a minimal job. Padma started having an affair with an actor named Ron de but as he was a Christian Padma couldn't marry him but after some time Padma ran away from home and got settled in a new place that is New Jersey America where she worked as a news anchor. Tara's and her sister part with it got against her father and did a love marriage without her father's permission. After Tara Latta completed her schooling she wanted to continue her studies further but as her father was already. Frustrated by her elder to daughters so he decided to marry Tara Lata as per his choice. He tells Tara Lata that he has seen a boy and he found suitable for her and he showed her the picture and also tell Tara Lata that the marriage will be in 3 weeks And ask Taralata was aware of her father's pain because of her 2 elder sisters so she didn't want to create more pain and she decided to marry as per her father's choice. Tara gets married to a person named Biswapriya Chatterjee. He used to live in America and Tara Latta also settles in America and she leads an opulent life. Husband focuses on his newly established software business. Tara Lata became a housewife and fulfilled all her duties and then she gives birth to a son whose name was Rabindranath and she used to call him Rabi. Rabi is remarkably close to his mother. Biswapriya used to spend 15 hours in his office and when he used to return home then after following his Indian religious things then he noticed his wife and son. After some time, Tara started thinking as an independent woman and she realized of her dream which was not fulfilled. She wanted to be an independent. As her views were not getting fulfilled.

So she was getting frustrated Divorce her husband and lead an individual independent life. When she divorced her husband then she got millions as settlement and she started her living in San Francisco her son. After divorcing her husband started breaking a lot and he wished that he could be able to prove to be a better husband and because of this regret he continued to take financial care of Tara and his son. Tara started working as a teacher in a primary school and after some time she had an affair with a man called Andy who was a yoga instructor.

Tara compares her life with her two sisters. One day Tara finds a stranger at the gate and that stranger was Christopher Dey. Christopher Dey describes himself as the illegitimate son of Padma who had an affair with a Christian man in her teenage. Christopher also shows Tara a letter written by Ron Dey who is his alleged father. Tara knew Ron Dey since her teenage and she remembers that her sister Padma had an affair. Tara was shocked because it meant a huge sin in Indian culture. First sin was that Padma was not a Virgin when she was married. And second she bore a child out of wedlock. After reading the letter from Ron Dey, Tara decides to find out the truth. Christopher continues to irritate Tara and due to this and he breaks his relationship with Tara. Tara decides to take the help of her second sister that part of it and finding out the truth and Parvati agrees to help her out then Tara comes to know that Padma had given birth to an illegitimate son of Ron Dey but he is not the son of Padma and Ron. He has a history of fraud and this fraud belongs to an Indian hacking group that had planned to blackmail and rob Biswapriya Chatterjee and due to this they had targeted Tara. Tara has lost her lover Andy and she decided to travel back to India with her son and when she arrived in Calcutta and goes to the birthplace of the tree bird then she feels that somewhere there is a similarity of her with the tree bride as if she is the tree bride.

In Bharati Mukherjee's novels *Jasmine* and *Desirable Daughters* it is clearly shown that how women struggle for their identities. Both of them struggle a lot. In *Jasmine* novel the protagonist undergoes a journey of self-identity. The protagonist is shown as a courageous woman who tries to adapt herself to the life of America. In *Desirable Daughters*, the protagonist remembers a past story and she finds a sense of peace in her life at the end.

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