



FRACTURED IDENTITY AND THE TRAUMA OF ROOTLESSNESS: A STUDY OF *TIGER'S DAUGHTERS*

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Quest for self and search for identity arrest natives psyche in the maze of tradition and modernity. Neither they can detach themselves from their past and sweet memories of their native and where they were regarded or respected as intellectuals and brilliant typhoon, nor do they indulge in their future. The reason to that in a foreign land, they are treated not more than a servant or secondary. In such circumstances they feel hopeless, alienated and totally alone. In the regard Sushma Tandon remarks: "The uncertain hazard of new land make quote exposed them to perilous risks. In such a helpless condition, they needed to be friend for unaided, they know they were doomed." All the immigrants of third world fall under the same predicament. Their adjustment in a different social, religious, economic and cultural milieu becomes quite pathetic. The new culture baffles the immigrants; this arrests the disorder and chaos in their inner consciousness and in the new society. The social custom, cultural differences, language

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standard and way of living always bother the immigrants in present scenario. They are electoral to accept new society as an individual or an intellectual. At this stage they strive for self-identity, which means the need for autonomy, an earnest desire on the part of suppressed or neglected to declare that they have an individual identity. Dr. R.S. Pathak Comments:

It has taken two make quote main directions-Philosophical and sociological; the philosophical quest involves a web of dualism from which the protagonist must disadvantage his complex identity (17).

Whereas this third world opens the path for an individual to make his own discovery in order to comprehend its system.



But in all this, one experiences loneliness and unfriendliness, which are well exploited on the other hand more abroad and to settle there seems painful to them. Moreover, it hurts their self-esteem and respect the white people navigates social landmines that can be annoying and funny at times, hurtful and depressing to them. The multiracial citizens find reality more complex and seek a fair multiethnic deal. In this contest Sasthi Brata gives an appropriate analysis of the predicament of such person:

This side of the twentieth century we have seen refugees galore leaving behind them a wild trail of heroism and tenacious nationalism. But what does one do about those voluntary exiles who were born in a home they found foreign and came to a land, which shocked and unsettled them (229-30).

To deal with this alienation, the immigrants take shelter in nostalgia as it provides emotional and psychological relief. But it accentuates the immigrants' sense of alienation, aloofness, rootlessness schizophrenia and other psych-socio

problems, particularly when they find themselves not able to cop up in the rapidly changing circumstances of their native land so they fell themselves neither fish nor fowl in this world.

The theme of quest for identity consists of the manifold conflicts and is grown on many grounds. The conflict cultures can be seen in one's search for self. The first form, conservative multiculturalism that indicates the white groups who do not question their whiteness as an ethnic category but position other ethnicities and minority groups on a lower ladder of civilization. This creates a feeling of aloofness in their heart. The second one termed as liberal multiculturalism defends the natural equality existing among white and other communities. This erodes into an ethnocentric and universalizing humanism. But it is rarely found. The third form considered as left liberal multiculturalism emphasizes cultural differences, and suggests that the stress on the equality of races only erases the importance of the cultural differences between those who are responsible for different behaviours and social practices. In this conformity people are trapped in a constructed identity on the basis of their ethnicity, gender or class. Shifting,



conflicting, discursive and ideological relations, formations and articulations reflect identity. Whereas the fourth position entails a radical understanding of the concept of differences. Critical Multiculturalism stresses the central task of transforming the social, cultural and institutional relations in which meanings are produced.

The identity of the individual and that of his nation are inextricably co-related. While probing his individual identity, a writer forges his nation's identity also. This quest for identity in a country like India is, unlike that in the west, more socially oriented and less personal. The problem of rootlessness is intimately related to the loss of and quest for one's identity. It is the loss of identity that results in rootlessness. The dispossessed personality's search for identity is, in fact, a commonplace theme in modern fiction, but for most Indian-English novelists, the quest has a peculiarly Indian immediacy.

Rootlessness is incontrovertibly a major theme in its sociological, cultural, religious, economic, feminist and political dimensions in Indian English fiction. Even if the novelists succeed generally in presenting it poignantly without projecting a way out, the literary merit of their Endeavour, when

successful coalesced in its artistic framework, cannot be questioned.

Bharati Mukherjee has penetrated the theme of Rootlessness very widely and emphatically in her esteemed works. Her characters feel authentic awareness of self in an incapacitating sense of aloofness. Her friendship with their American or European neighbours seems supportive that can sustain this feeling stronger.

Bharti Mukherjee's novels reveal the feelings of rootlessness in the heart of protagonists. Mukherjee sees third world as a source of this problem. The people have a peculiar outlook and standard of living of their own. Racial conflict here becomes the root cause of rootlessness that is eternal and unmanageable. People obsessed with earning more and more and to get a high position in the society are surviving amongst confusion, conflict and chaos of which they have become habitual. In the novel *The Tiger's Daughter*, Tara Banerjee, one of the finest creations of Bharati Mukherjee, deals with the expatriate sensibility and a rootless existence. Her complex state of mind, a wistful longing for the past, symbolizes her struggle to maintain the difference between the old and new setup. At both places, she



builds a cocoon around her as a refuge. Thematically, *The Tiger's Daughter* resembles Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*. In this novel, the protagonist, Sindi Oberoi remarks on his own life, "I was foreigner in America. But then what difference would it have made if I had lived in Kenya or India or any other place for that matter?"

The same idea about Tara's life has been presented. Though well brought up in western setup and married to an American, David Cartwright, Tara cannot adjust in the adopted land. In America, she was under stress and was always conscious of her being an Indian. Her relation with her husband was also questioned as she thought that marriage in America was a contract between two individuals but in India it binds two families. Not only David's family but also everything related to America leaves her in the past memories. Her idealism of Indian tradition makes her feel totally Indian or bound with Indian tradition which she can't give up. As an expatriate she leaves. After seven years, she comes back with the dream-twinkling eyes. She sees everything in India and Calcutta with a foreigner's eyes.

The new Americanized Tara finds all her ideals and dreams crumbling while

confronting the change and transformed circumstances of her own land. At airport, her nickname Tultul addressed by her relatives and friends annoys her. It sounds very strange to her. Her reaction towards railway station is again prompted by her American experience. It seems to her 'more like a hospital, "Howrah Station took Tara by surprise. The airport in Bombay had at least been clean. The squalor and confusion of Howrah Station outraged her." Her coming back could not be proved as useful for her when she came into contact with her fellow traveler. This gave her shock. She thought it very disgusting and did not like them. Her fellow travelers in train were Marwari and a Nepali. She State:

The Marwari was indeed very ugly and tiny and insolent. He reminded her of a circus animal who had gotten the better of his master, and the other occupant, a Nepali was a fidgety older man with coarse hair. He kept crossing and re-crossing his legs and pin chip the creases of his pants. Both men, Tara decide? Could effortlessly ruin her journey to Calcutta (20).

Tara has now discovered that she is an outsider in her native land. She sees only



poverty, hierarchies of power and class and beggars in India now. At the station she finds herself surrounded by vendors, beggars puling at sleeves and children coughing on tracks. This leaves her in complete chaos and isolation : “Had Tara visualized at the start of the journey this exposure to ugliness and danger, to viruses that stalked the street, to dogs and cows scrapping in garbage dumps, she would have refused Joyonto’s invitation.”

Everything is haphazard and unreal here. The changed and hostile circumstances of India are beyond her belief. Tara Banerjee is such a protagonist in the novel as is divided between two worlds and rooted in neither of them. Bharati Mukherjee describes, “Just after her arrival her friends celebrate and arrange the parties in her honour. She enjoys all this. Her friends had seemed to her a peaceful island in the mist of Calcutta’s commotion; she had leaned heavily on their self-confidence.”

But when the layer of reality discloses, it pinches her. Her friends suggest that her marriage has been imprudent and they make her feel guilty for marrying a foreigner. Her marriage to a Mleccha is not accepted here. Now she is alone to

communicate. In Calcutta, her marriage is not regarded. This had upset her. She accepts, “So David bought books on India. This innocent information enraged Tara. She thought the latter was really trying to tell her that he had not understood her country through her that probably he had not understood her.” Now she realizes that she has become out of place both in America and India. This ruins her inner self and she thinks that she is misfit for both India and America.

Her attitude is different from that of Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* Everything Indian is admirable to him almost to the point, of worship. He is a creature of tenderness, love devotion and the affection; but nothing impresses Tara and for that she becomes rootless and out of place both in India and America. For her, Calcutta is a land of riots, burning of buses, workers surrounding the warehouse and all ill things, as Conrad sees in *Heart of Darkness*. In America, she was under stress and pressure, was very much conscious of her Indian ness, but things are not better in India too. Matthew Arnold very clearly describes for such situation:

Such situation wandering between worlds One dead, the other powerless to be born With nowhere to rest my head (28).



As all these incidents have shaken her and she has become the victim of doom and despair. She states: For years she had dreamed of this return to India. About India is shattered now. She had believed that all hesitations, all shadowy fears of the time abroad would be crazed quite magically if she could just return to Calcutta. But so far the return had brought only wounds.” These incidents shifted her inclination for her return to the States, to her love, to her husband. There is no native-outsider conflict in this novel but only a nagging regret in the heart of the protagonist about her having to remain an exile all her life. Dr. Nagendra K. Says:

Tara caught in the midst of the rioting mob marking the invisible presence of her husband David, leaves the reader stunned and wondering as the novel ends there. In a sense, the turmoil outside is but an external manifestation of Tara’s inner state of mind and by leaving her amidst that turmoil, Mukherjee hints at the irreconcilability (p.43).

The places are worthless for them. Such situation cuts them off from the society

and they begin to live in isolation and feel alone with no friend. In the novel *The Tiger’s Daughter*, the author has presented the expatriate’s psychology in a realistic way very beautifully.

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