



Clashes of Culture in the Novel of Bharati Mukherjee

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research is to examine Bharati Mukherjee's books from a multicultural standpoint. One of the most prominent novelists from the Indian diaspora in the US is Bharati Mukherjee. This Indian-American writer focuses on the challenges Indian women have when assimilating to American culture as immigrants and their experiences as immigrants in the United States. Mukherjee's novels mostly center on displacement, alienation, and integration in the foreign land; her own biographical journey spans India, Canada, and the United States. In addition to eight novels, she co-wrote two non-fiction works with her husband Clarke Blaise and two collections of short stories, including *Darkness and The Middleman* and *Other Stories*. The artistic realm of Bharati Mukherjee perfectly embodies the experience of immigrants in intercultural encounters.

Introduction

The meaning of existence is revealed in the writings of Bharati Mukherjee. The identity of women is a major theme in her literature. The main focus of the issues is on immigrant women and their struggles, issues, and sufferings. The literary contributions of affluent Indian authors writing in English, excluding the realm of sensationalism, have garnered significant attention from critics and enthusiasts. Many novelists have acknowledged Indian fiction as a powerful force in the world of fiction and have provided expression to the creative spirit in English.

Indian English novels were initially controlled by men. The three mainstays of English-language Indian novels, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R. K. Narayan, were like a fictional colossus. However, in the years following independence, a sizable number of women authors who have contributed critically to the subject and undoubtedly improved it have appeared to be within easy reach of Indian English novels. They include Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Arundhati Roy, Bharati Mukherjee, Shobha De, Gita Mehta, Kusum Ansal, Gita Harikaran, Kamala Markandaya, and Anita Desai. These contemporary Indian women writers of English novels explore many facets of feminism and the experiences of immigrants, while also presenting the female perspective of their female characters. American novelist Bharati Mukherjee, who was born in India, has carved out a special place for herself in the literary world during the past forty years. Among other modern writers, she is regarded as one of the leading novelists from the Indian diaspora. Her writings are the only ones that are included in collections of Indian Diaspora writers, Post-Colonial Literature, Asian American, Canadian, and mainstream American writing, as well as Indian Women Writers in English. She has authored prose, essays, journal articles, non-fiction, novels, and short tales. In her writings, she has interwoven themes of racism, prejudice, isolation, and cross-cultural tensions. She writes about the New World, where hard labor and perseverance lead to prosperity for immigrants.

These authors have set themselves apart via the use of creative style, social authenticity depiction, support for women's emancipation, and representation of feminine sensibility. They attempt to depict the tortured awareness of the woman, who in her quest for self-discovery changes from a meek victim to a spirited outlaw, overcoming the barriers the predominantly male world erected between her and her potential. The woman's insubordinate mentality turns to extreme behavior, such as promiscuous behavior and sexual promiscuity, which serve as a means for her to declare who she truly is.

The basis of Bharati Mukherjee's topics in the majority of her works is the problem of an individual who feels truly and terribly alone. In the artistic landscape of the 20th century, the concept of alienation and cultural estrangement is commonplace. Indian diasporas have emerged as new, affluent, globally mobile writers, claims Sarangi Jaydeep. Their cultural segregation and vagrancy are their defining characteristics, making them the new socio-cultural elite.

The characters appear lost and sad, marching ahead of their attackers. Their robotic gait suggests that meaningful relationships are lacking at this era of technological advancement and globalization. It has come to light that cultural distance and being shunned are universal phenomena.

A casual read through these authors' novels reveals a common concern in their experiences. Therefore, a significant portion of current Indian writing in English is composed of fiction written by women writers from India. Bharati Mukherjee believes that the forefront of Indian English fiction—especially that written by women, as previously mentioned—may be the main focus of the current academic scene. As a remarkable individual from the Indian abstract scene, Bharati Mukherjee has made a name for herself. Her most significant works reflect her pride in her Indian ancestry.

Born in Calcutta, India on July 27, 1940, Bharati Mukherjee is an American novelist and short story writer of Indian descent, whose works capture the essence of Indian culture and the experiences of immigrants. Mukherjee was raised in a prosperous family in Calcutta. From 1944 until 1948, she went to an anglicized Bengali school. The family went overseas for three years before coming back to India. Mukherjee completed his studies at the University of Calcutta (1959) and the University of Baroda (1961) with a B.A. She later joined the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, where she graduated with a Ph.D. in 1969 and an M.F.A. in 1963. She called Montreal, where she resided from 1966 until 1980, provincial and racist. In 1980, she relocated to the US and started working as a university professor. 1989 saw her become a citizen of the United States and her acceptance of a postcolonial and global literature teaching job at the University of California, Berkeley.

In addition to cultural tensions, Mukherjee's work often has violent undertones. In her debut book, *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972), the story of an Indian woman raised in a sheltered environment is startlingly different from American society when she returns to a turbulent Calcutta. In *Wife* (1975), an Indian woman's journey into lunacy is chronicled. She is imprisoned in New York City by her childhood anxieties and passivity. Many of the stories in Mukherjee's debut collection of short stories, *Darkness* (1985), notably the well-known "The World According to Hsü," are incisive analyses of the dark inner lives of her characters as well as critiques of racism in Canada and conventional Indian attitudes of women. *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988) and two subsequent novels, *Jasmine* (1989) and *The Holder of the World* (1993), both focus on immigrants from underdeveloped nations living in the United States.

CLASHES OF CULTURE IN THE NOVEL OF BHARATI MUKHERJEE

Known as the "Grande dame" of diasporic Indian English writing, Bharati Mukherjee is regarded as one of the most prominent Indian women authors in the English language. She has written fiction and non-fiction on immigrants and has been referred to as an Asian-American, Indo-American, Indian Diaspora,

and mainstream American writer. According to Blaise and Mukherjee's "Prologue" to *Days and Nights*, page vi, "Bharati has become one of America's best known authors and short-story writers." According to Raj Chetty (2006), Bharati Mukherjee, an American author, might be considered "Lahiri's foremother" (75). She became an expatriate writer like V. S. Naipaul, an immigrant writer, and an American mainstream writer like Bernard Malamud and Henry Roth as a result of her trip from India to England, India, the USA, Canada, and the USA. Her specialty has been examining the intersection between the First and Third Worlds from the viewpoint of an immigrant to North America, specifically Canada and the United States.

She is a civil rights activist, an educator, and the writer of two anthologies of short stories, two highly acclaimed novels, as well as non-fiction works. She draws on her personal experiences of bridging cultural divides. She is a well-known writer from the Indian diaspora in the United States, but she rejects her hyphenated identification as an Asian-American or Indo-American and instead expects to be recognized as a (North) American writer (Mukherjee, "American Dreamer"). Her writings may undoubtedly be interpreted within the national framework of Indian English-language literature as well as the global framework of Indian diaspora literature. Her work also situates her inside the American environment. Because of her resolute rejection of the emotional paralysis of exile and her acceptance of the immigrant condition, she is the strong voice of immigrants from all over the world in the United States.

"I have been murdered and reincarnated at least three times. The politically charged, shrill, civil rights activist I was in Canada and the urgent writer I have become in the last few years in the United States are very different from the very correct young woman I was trained to be and was very happy being."

After the partition riots, Jyoti was born into a conventional family eighteen years later. Despite being an unwanted girl, she is bright and brave, the first pupil of Masterji to ever be considered for an English education. The astrologer predicts that Jyoti would become a widow and go into exile at the beginning of the book, but she rejects this fate. Since her early years, she has yearned for a "special" life and believed herself to be unique, attractive, and bright. She rejects the conventional ideologies. She therefore yearns to escape the unpleasant, filthy tasks that women are required to complete as part of their duties: The charming little girl of the maid servant was gathering up fresh dung near the buffalo enclosures on the far side of the land. She was slapping the chips into the shape of a cake and kneading

it thickly with straws. She would place the cakes against our kitchen enclosures' adobe walls and let them to dry into fuel. (JS 16)

She was acutely aware of who she was from the start. Her psychological makeup originated from two complexes: her gender identity and the perceived stigma associated with being a "country girl." "Big-city men like us village girls because we are raised to be kind and have no minds of our own," she states very bluntly. Similar to livestock, village ladies will follow your lead no matter which direction you point them.

She meets Prakash, a contemporary city man who thinks that customs should be destroyed. She identifies her husband's wishes with her own after marriage, making her a real wife in the Indian sense of the word. Prakash was attempting to gain admission to an American Institute of Technology at the time. He requested that she address him by his first name because he was so understanding. He turns out to be the perfect husband that any woman could hope for. Through his selfless efforts, he managed to save Jyoti from the foul stench of Hasnapur by changing her into the fragrant flower, Jasmine. Prakash is a modern, progressive individual. He is a proponent of the equality of men and women. The name also conveys the peace that exists in Prakash and Jyoti's marriage. Their names both mean "bright." He consistently promotes entirely novel ideas about freedom and personal identity. However, Jyoti's psychological limitations as a result of her culture prevent her from losing her individuality in Prakash's nontraditional, innovative ways:

"He requested that I address him by his first name." He clarified that a woman is only still a vassal in feudal society. It is feudal in Hasnapur. Wives in Hasnapur addressed their husbands with only pronouns. In the early months, I would cough to get his attention or to start with, eager and obedient even if I still found it difficult to call him Prakash. "Are you paying attention?" He would ask, "Do I hear a crow trying human speech?" each time I coughed. (JS 51)

Even while Prakash has a very open mind, it becomes clear that he put his own beliefs and viewpoints on Jasmine. It is clear that he clenches her in his fist, trying to shape her identity to suit his needs, much like Lady Caroline did with Valmikiin Kamala Markandaya's "Possession." As Jasmine admits, "Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities," the truth is that her integrated psyche was fractured even before she entered the trans-cultural areas and experienced the anguish of alienation on the foreign land. (JS 70) Jasmine was allowed to daydream about living with Prakash in America in the future. Jasmine regrettably does not have this happy dream for very long.

Conclusion

The current investigation came to the conclusion that one of the most well-known immigrant writers is Bharati Mukherjee. As a prominent writer from the Indian diaspora, she explores the themes of home and outcast in her works. She is a distinctly Indian diaspora novelist. The voice of the postmodern woman producing English-language literature is Bharati Mukherjee. Her portrayal of Indian women characters in her novels demonstrates the intricacies of the Indian mind, making her a forerunner in the rapidly evolving field of novel writing. A cursory reading of Mukherjee's books reveals that her main goal is to support women's rights. Her writings truly capture the personalities and inclinations of the populace she lived among. The intricate tales in Mukherjee's early works are devoid of the narrator's specialization. That being said, her subsequent efforts have become increasingly successful in apprehending their targets. Thus, Bharati Mukherjee is a typical writer for women's activism.

An Indo-American woman named Padma is a hyphenationist. She serves as an ambassador of Indian culture in the US. Parvati is a traditional Indian woman with formal education in the West. She struggles with her responsibilities as the head of the home. These are the three unique approaches of fitting in the modern society. The theme of *The Holder of the World* is sexual awakening via a second romantic partner. *Wife*, "The Lady from Lucknow," and "A wife's narrative" all touch on this theme. In *The Holder of the World*, Hannah Easton's connection with the Raja of Devghat serves to illustrate it. By compelling the reader to acknowledge the multi-cultural components of American history and the immigrant experience, this novel challenges the white-centricity of canonical American literature. Hannah carries Black Pearl, her kid with Jadav Singh, with her when she returns to America as Hester. Being Indo-American, Black Pearl's entire being represents the blending of civilizations.

The book introduces immigrant history and culture into the canon of American literature. Through it, Mukherjee is advocating for immigrant writers such as herself to have a place in the canon of American literature. She refers to herself as American since that is how she views herself as an American writer. She is rejecting a hyphenated existence as an Indo-American writer rather than foolishly taking on an alien identity. The author believes that in order for her characters to become immigrants, they must experiment with different identities, which frequently requires them to give up their old identities. Her artistic approach to portraying the psychological harm that frequently results from immigrants' adaptation and transition is this. Violence was used to bring about this transition in the earlier books, particularly in *Jasmine*, as her immigrant protagonists frequently experience dislocation while they grasp

at the opportunity to recreate themselves in the new environment. This is related to the diaspora, which is the movement of people from one country to another. *Desirable Daughters*, on the other hand, does not feature this diasporic violence because Mukherjee no longer feels the need to depict the anguish of the transplanted person because the idea of the immigrant protagonist has already developed.

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