

**THE ALTERCATION BETWEEN HALLUCINATION AND VERACITY IN
THE TIGER'S DAUGHTER BY BHARATI MUKHERJEE**

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Abstract

Bharati Mukherjee has portrayed the inner tumult of a woman, skirmishing within herself, between her own expertise and that plunge on her by the contiguous. The stipulation of the girls from lower echelon as obtained by Mukherjee, is really deplorable- in fact it is so wretched that the writer speculates if the age old practice of strangling to death the girl baby right at the moment of her birth was not less vindictive than making her undergo a life long affliction, beginning at the tender age and ending only with her death which generally occurs much earlier than ripe old age. She has very adroitly handled the inner psyche of the culturally uprooted expatriates. This paper scrutinizes The Altercation between Hallucination and Veracity in the Tiger's Daughter. Tara, in the work of fiction realized that she had capitulated before David not for love as she had imagined. She had conceded because she wanted to shun divergence in order to show to the family that her marriage had been a success. So she had continued to lie and conciliation shedding bits of herself along the way. The devaluing of women that happens always with respect to their potentials both intrinsic and acquired, their work and their contribution to society, should come to an end. The breaking of the hush of women through the processes of rediscovery and resurgence is the desperate need of the moment.

Keywords: vindictive, affliction, adroitly, devaluing, resurgence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mukherjee's fiction ambivalently projects deconstruction as well as reconstruction of gender roles as her protagonists are constantly in search of inner space which is instrumental in the reconstruction of gender uniqueness. *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) is a story about a young girl named Tara who comes back to India after seven long years of being away and on her return finds only paucity and mayhem. It is an autobiographical tale about an East Indian settler who is unable to amend to North American culture, but who at the same time is devastatingly sentient that she will never again belong to the culture she has left behind. Bharati Mukherjee has very adroitly handled the inner psyche of the culturally uprooted expatriates. *The Tiger's Daughter* reflects the confrontation between delusion and actuality.

2. METHODOLOGY

In the *Tiger's daughter*, Tara's predicament is representative of the larger predicament of women in contemporary India where the new socio-economic forces have shaken old cultural sorts. The break-up of the joint family, the nucleus of Indian cultural life is the instantaneous and visible pictogram of this looming change. This breaking up had affected relationship at various levels, especially relationship at the husband wife level. The society continues to be male-dominated and attitudes towards women continue to be the same.

Bharati Mukherjee beautifully patents the cultural conflict through the protagonist, Tara who goes to America for higher studies. Though afraid of unknown ways of America in the beginning, she tries to regulate herself to it by getting married to an American. After seven years when she returns to India she finds herself a total stranger in the inherited locale. She is totally lost and confused as she realizes that she is now neither Indian nor truly American. The protagonist was packed off by her father at early age of fifteen at America, because he was prompted by suspicion and twinge for his country. Tara is homesick in Poughkeepsie and even little things pained her. She sensed bigotry if her room pal did not share her mango chutney. She defended her family and her country fervently. She prayed to kali for potency, so that she would not break down, before the Americans. It was destiny that she fell in love with an American.

2.1. Susceptible figures

Tara's husband David was dreadfully Western; she was submissively conniving in her marriage. She could not communicate the finer nuances of her family background and life in Calcutta. Her husband asked naive questions about Indian Customs and Traditions. She felt completely insecure in an alien atmosphere. Tara could not communicate to him about her family, her background and of life in Calcutta. This failure of communication is rooted in their cultural differences.

In common, India marriage is not merely a union of two individuals; it is a coming together of two families. But in western countries like America, a marriage is simply a contract between two individuals. He asked credulous questions about Indian customs and traditions while she felt completely insecure in an alien atmosphere because of her foreign husband. Whenever she happened to countenance any problem she used to pray to Kali for strength, so

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that she would not break down before the Americans. It was her fate that she fell in love with an American.

Indian society has always had strict rules. The pressure created by these rules is huge, and it directly acts upon the individual, sometimes leading to isolation, and even alienation. It is important to understand how it leads to failed marriages and finally how social pressure subverts homes. Women and children are the main victims because they are susceptible figures with very small importance in the family circle. They are enclosed in a patriarchal society. So the first piece of the puzzle deals with the family as a micro society which contributes to the development of this pressure that crushes the individual. The family has a great role to play in the creation of isolation, so it becomes one of the main actors of social pressure since the family is a social organism. In certain cases, it is a huge devouring monster that keeps eating the vitality and the individuality of its members.

Marriage is one of the main social conventions in India, but hypocrisy is the key word which rules in Mukherjee's novels. After a gap of seven years Tara planned a trip to India for years she had dreamed of this revisit. She alleged that all hesitations and all vague fears of the time abroad would be erased quite magically if she could return home to Calcutta. Her landing at Bombay airport made her realize:

“For five years she had dreamed of this return to India. She had Believed that all hesitations, all shadowy fears of the time abroad would be erased quite magically if she could just return home to Calcutta. But so far the return had brought only wounds. First the corrosive hours on Marine drive, then the deformed beggar in the railway station, and now the inexorable train ride steadily undid what strength she had held in reserve. She was an embittered woman, she now thought, old and cynical at twenty two and quick to take offence.” (p5)

2.2. The conservative attitude

Tara Banerjee returns to India after seven years stay in America. When Tara reached Bombay airport, she is not contented with her relatives. Tara's Bombay relatives cannot accept a woman who not accompanied by her husband, David. According to Indian tradition, a man should lead the woman. He plays a protective and vital role in every woman's life. Traveling alone, living alone and moving alone are part of unfamiliarity in many parts of India. In Indian tradition one should marry in his own caste and religion.

“First the corrosive hours on Marine drive, then the deformed beggar in the railway station, and now the inexorable train ride steadily undid what strength she had held in reserve.”(p4)

If anyone marries from another caste, he will be treated as an outcast or a sinner. But the protagonist Tara contravening these rules and marries a foreign man who is a Jew. She totally forgets her caste and religion through her marriage. Tara is shocked to find herself unable to sing the particular *bhajan*, an Indian devotional song, which she used to sing in her childhood. She has an intense desire to behave like an ordinary Indian. She is haunted by the question of her identity, as to who she is and which place she belongs to.

Tara is really astonished and wonders how this foreignness of spirit begins in her heart. Her husband is not only from a different cultural background but is a different kind of person

altogether. Tara is by nature pitiable and docile. She seeks to please him and to save her marriage. She clings to the moments of response and communication. She is willing to accept her role as a traditional wife and does not seek anything outside marriage. The novel deals with the struggle of a young, beautiful and daring Indian woman trapped by her brutal husband. She experiences in the hands of vindictive and unjust male dominated society. Tara the heroine of the novel gets suffocating environment with her husband David. Therefore, he wants Tara to act as a traditional wife and to his ideal of subdued womanhood. It is tradition in David that urges him to believe that woman has to live under the control of man. Tara finds it a suffocating experience. She has no voice in the ordinary decisions of everyday life, not even in the choice of curtains or chair covers. Tara's life with David lacks continuity and warmth. She feels isolated inside the martial world.

Mukherjee makes the conservative attitude of the Indians who are crazy of foreign things and clothes but they do not appear of marriage with foreign people. Even in the presence of her mother Tara feels estranged. Within herself, Tara becomes mentally tumultuous and makes her return to the USA. Tara notices a lot of change in her surroundings and feels agitated at the lack of seriousness in the group of her friends. Everybody wants to hear about her experiences in America. In this scenario, she misses David excessively. Finally she becomes depressed and disgusted with the deteriorating situation of India finding it difficult to adjust with the situation, desiring to go back to the USA to her husband.

Tara realizes that America has transformed her completely. She is not able to give an Indian outlook to her own country. Now she finds only disease, despair, riot and poverty in India and it is the ugly aspect that borders her consciousness. In her mind there is always an ongoing conflict between her old sense of perception for country and her changed outlook. She is the distinctive envoy of a young woman. Thus Tara's journey to India her own native land ironically proves frustrating gradually leading to illusion, alienation, depression and finally her tragic end.

Tara looks forward to the role of a wife with the hope that casting herself in a new role which will help her in winning her freedom. But she was lonely. Her husband could not understand her feelings as a result of which she was torn from within. The art of communication between husband and wife is essential to marital happiness. This estrangement between Tara and her husband reminds one of Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock* where an ever widening gap in communication between Maya and her husband is felt throughout the novel. Their married life is punctuated all along by matrimonial silences. After getting exposed to the alien culture, David and Tara fail to communicate with each other. This has a telling effect upon their relationship. This failure in communication develops a breach between the couple which widens day by day and ultimately ruins their relationship.

Inimitably Indian are superficially westernized, she is basically human. They give vent to their feminine susceptibility in their frenzied desire for an authentic communication with the self as well as the society. Though the law has tainted, attitudes hadn't and she feels uprooted in a husband-centered world. It is intricate to begin a new for the past lives on in the present, in the memories of the shared years and the lives of the children. But when divorce comes it is not absolutely easy for her. Marriage is neither a system of slavery nor an escape route. But it exposes the extremity of cruel faces in the society that work against women.

The Indian born woman feels greater love and security in the arms of her American husband and thinks only about him at the time when her end is approaching. This strangeness

from David's side as well the non acceptance of her marriage by her friends and family made her feel that her marriage was a wrong decision of her life and she is conscious of her sin of marrying an American without matching her horoscope.

3. Outcome

Tara's situation becomes miserable oscillating between the two identities one of an Indian Bengali woman, and other of an American wife. In an attempt to Americanize herself she loses her Indian identity despondently. Tara Banerjee is not only an immigrant but also a woman. This creates a difference in the Indian context. In India a woman's fate is decided very early in her life because the parents start discriminating between their male and female child from the very beginning. It is constantly hammered on the girl's consciousness that she has to move somewhere else so she must be submissive and assimilative in every situation. Thus a woman starts a life of duality and conflict since her childhood. After marriage she is in the hands of new people that belong to an entirely new set up. Being in India she always wanted to communicate with her husband about her experience, but she could not. She was unable to write a letter to David because of the lack of suitable words and in an appropriate voice:

“Her voice in these letters was insipid or shrill, and she tore them up, twinging at the waste of seventy five naya paise for each mistake.(p65)”

4. Conclusion

In *The Tiger's Daughter* Mukherjee sets about exposing how it feels for a fifteen year old girl to leave a sheltered home hedged by class privilege and wealth and settle in an alien land. In her phase of womanhood she breaks all the social taboos by marrying a foreigner and then again coming back to her homeland to see whether she can find her place at home again. Tara Banerjee the main protagonist of the story, an upper class Indian Bengali Brahmin, finds herself Sandwicheed between two cultures. She breaks her family tradition by marrying David who is an American. This action of Tara is an attempt to get security in an alien land. But again her marriage proves to be a failure because it was an emotional marriage, a decision taken impulsively. In spite of trying hard she is not able to develop a compatibility with David while he and his society always remained different to her.

The women of today are in a fair way to dethrone the myth of femininity; they are beginning to affirm their independence in concrete ways; but they do not easily succeed in living completely the life of a human being. Reared by women within a feminine world, their normal destiny is marriage, which still means particularly subordination to man; for masculine prestige is far from extinction, resting still upon solid economic and social functions.

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Indian Scholar

ISSN 2350-109X
www.indianscholar.co.in

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal