ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 1| January 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2024: 8.402 || ISI Value: 1.188

IDENTITY BEYOND HOME AND EXILE IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S *THE TIGER'S DAUGHTER*

Susheel Kumar[1], Dr. Md Iftikar Ahmed[2]
[1]*Ph.D Research Scholar of English at Sant Baba Bhag Singh University Jalandhar, Punjab , India, 144 030.*
[2]*Supervisor, Assistant Professor of English at Sant Baba Bhag Singh University Jalandhar, Punjab, India, 144 030.*

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra19949
DOI No: 10.36713/epra19949

ABSTRACT
Bharati Mukherjee is one of the most renowned and prolific English writers. Her prose narratives mainly concentrate on diaspora, acculturation, nostalgia, otherness and identity. The aim of this paper is to evaluate identity beyond home and exile in Bharati Mukherjee's The Tiger's Daughter and the commitment with the diversity of dilemmas that females are facing today. It also highlights how the concerns of migration, hybridization, in-betweenness marginalization, cultural conflicts and potential alterations dominate through Indian woman's diasporic understanding. The article investigates Tara's predicaments and cross-cultural inconsistencies and dichotomies following upon transformative occurrences in female identity. The narrative also discloses how Tara Banerjee is exposed to exile, isolation and lack of recognition both in her homeland and hostland. Her journey demonstrates how she is gradually annoyed and culminated to her deprivation of individuality, false impressions and hopelessness, and ultimately reaches to her dialectical self. Thus, her predicaments become the matters of preferences and principles in life.

KEY WORDS: *Home, exile, diaspora, homliness, unhomliness, identity, hybrid, ambivalence, nostalgia.*

Bharati Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughte*r (1971) deals with questions of identity beyond home and exile due to the dispersion, dislocation and relocation of her major character Taramoni Banerjee from India to America and vice-versa. The trauma of exilic experience and search for identity lead Taramoni to isthmatic and in-between positions both in her homeland and hostland. Her hybrid status also generates ambivalence and nostalgic situations which need reconnection, redefinition and recognition. During her journey, her native Bengali culture, traditions and values are revived and reviewed through her placement, displacement and re-placement in her alien culture and later on, in her native land. Bharati Mukherjee states in her interview with Alison Carb that the diaspora settlers have to make many compromises, face uncertainties and apply adjustments. She explains her American immigrant experience as,

> We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate. Many of us have lived in newly independent or emerging countries which are placed by civil and religious conflicts…when we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb 200 years of American history and learn to adapt to American society… I attempt to illustrate this in my novels and short stories. My aim is to expose Americans to the energetic voices of new settlers in this country. (38)

Taramoni is dispersed from her own home by her affluent Brahmin parents fearing that riot-stricken Bengal under British Raj might bring uneasy and uncomfortable atmosphere especially for the girls.For them, "In the daytime, this is a gloomy place, only a Colony of beggars take advantage of the shades" (Mukherjee1). Bharati Mukherjee also highlights the contemporary situations in riot-stricken Bengalunder British Raj as, "there were more unreasonable murders, the suspicious drownings, bloody and mutilated bodies discovered in paddy fields (7), ... Calcutta was losing its memories in a bonfire of effigies, buses and trams" (9). Even in times of disorder and suspicion, Taramoni's father is however known as, "the Bengal Tiger Benarjee is powerful, just and fearless" (9), cannot avoid such inevitable things surrounding them. Mukherjee depicts the overall picture of the contemporary life like, "There is, of course, no escape from Calcutta. Even an anger concedes that when pressed. Family after family moves from the provinces to its brutish center, and the center quivers a little absorbs the bodies, digests them, and waits" (4).Thus, his helplessness paves Tara's migration from the homeland.

On the other hand, Tara's parents are equally confident that she will manage all the things in foreign landbecause she has already been prepared and trained through Catholic education by Belgian Nuns at St. Blaise. Moreover, by affording all her expenses in America, they will not only be able to save her from violence in her homeland but also she will earn educational degree in America. But they could not penetrate that their abandonment drives Taramoni into rootlessness and marginalization. It turns out to be Tara's exilic situation knowingly or unknowingly.Her

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 1| January 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2024: 8.402 || ISI Value: 1.188

rooted self and migrant experiences in America have left indelible impact on her. Bharati Mukherjee explains these issues in her interview with Chen and Goudie in 1997 how she has also faced such issues as:

> I describe myself as ethnonationalism, and I'd say I am an American writer of Bengali-Indian origin. In other words, the writer/political activist in me is more obsessed with addressing issues of minority discourse in the U.S. and Canada, the two countries I have lived and worked in over the last thirty-odd years…. At this moment, my Calcutta childhood and adolescence offer me intriguing, incompletely-comprehended revelations about my hometown, my family, my place in that community: the kind of revelations that fuel the desire to write an autobiography rather than to mythologize an Indian national identity. (159)

Thus, Tara becomes Mukherjee's mouthpiece who is sent to America for higher studies.Tara is filled with happiness and excitement who accepts her primrosy migration from her roots, but reality lies in the fact that it is something like an exile in disguise. Edward Said'swords in *Reflections on Exilesand other Essays* are worth mentioning: "Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past" (177). When Taramoni is physically cut off from her parents and native land, he she becomes 'other' in another country. Here, it is pertinent to mention that from parents' point of view, safety, security and bright future of a girl are their priorities, whereas for Tara, it is primrosy flight for comfortable life. But she does not know what Edward Said observes:

> Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. (*Reflection on Exile and Other Essays*180)

In America, Tara does not feel at home, however, she tries to adopt, adapt and adept her alien language and culture. With the result of which she lacks association, assimilation and acculturation. Rather she becomes alienated and marginalized identity in her hostland. No doubt, she gets married to David Cartwright at her own choice and voice on account of safety and security in her new culture, yet she could not handle situations there perfectly. David, being a typical American, has his own culture, values and philosophy who dislikes India for injustice, strife and struggle.Actually, David is a staunch follower of his hegemonic western culture who dislikes wretchedness of Taramoni's country and her city for having "unemployment, hunger and bribery" (Mukherjee 136). All the time David can be seen either in criticizing her traditions or making fun of her country as a British colony.

In America, Taramoni Banerjee gets under the web whom she should share her feelings. She becomes nostalgic for her homliness and longs for her home. She knows that for her husband, she is typical foreigner and Eastern whereas her Indian fellows consider her a sinner who has already polluted herself by marrying to a foreigner or an outcaste. She cannot communicate her family background and life in Calcutta to her husband who considers the Western culture superior and civilized to the Eastern.

Moreover, the habit of asking questions about Indian customs and making fun of them by her husband make Tara completely isolated and insecure under the same roof. Thus, she receives changed but hostile circumstances in her hostland. And she decides to shatter all her romantic dreams and childhood memories in the hegemonic world at once as her alienation is developing strongly towards her marginalization and separation. M. Sivaramkrishna in *Indian English Novelists* states that due to her American husband and western education, Tara senses the feelings of rootlessness, alienation, marginalization and seclusion in her:

> Tarafinds it difficult to relate herself to her family, city, culture in general since her marriage to an American, her western education are enough signs to brand her as an 'alienated' westernized woman. The implicit logic is that since she is exposed to the West and has absorbed its values she must be necessarily alienated. Therefore, even when she tries to 'voice' her continuing attachment for an identity with India, the voice does not carry conviction for it is at variance with the usual stance – of indifference and arrogance – one generally associates with the 'westernized' (exiled) Indian. (74)

Tara makes every possible effort to learn western ways of life and culture. Her assimilation with the western culture has not yet brought about any fruitful solution. Andshe starts considering that her stay in America for full seven years has been useless and incomplete. Now she wants to clarify the causes of her exilic diasporic life. Thus, she routes to her roots and culture in search of her real self, home, steak identity. While driving past Bombay's Marine Drive on her way back to Calcutta, "to recover her roots" (Maya 15), she finds the street to be "run-down and crowded and yet seven years ago, she used to 'admire' the place and find it 'fashionable" (Mukherjee18).But, in Calcutta, Tara misses David and fears that she will lose him permanently.

In India, without her husband's company, she receives shocks, humiliation and harassment. Here, she finds herself in-between spaces of nation and narration. Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* insists that this encounter with newness, the diasporic identity "renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living" (10). Thus, all cultural systems are constructed in the, "Third space of enunciation" (Bhabha 37).Tara's Americanized self sees India through her spirit of foreignness which is now dominating her identity. She behaves

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 1| January 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2024: 8.402 || ISI Value: 1.188

like a tourist in her erstwhile native land which seems to be a new hostland, whereas she considers America her new homeland. Thus, Taramoni Banerjee Cartwright is torn between her homeland and hostland. Here, she considers her homeland as new hostland, and her hostland as her new homeland. It happens only due to her exilic experience that emerges into split and strange personality.

The way Tara is received at the airport by her relatives, her journey through train, scenes of poverty, backwardness and hunger in Bombay and Calcutta, riot stricken Bengal, her assault, her uneasiness with domestic life are the reasons which lead her to dislocate, marginalize and isolate herself even from birthplace. In the midst of continuous violence, riots, killings and exploitation, she is ready to accept the reality that she belongs to her husband, David Cartwright but not to typical and traditional Bengali family. Thus, shefeels second probable exilic like experience which is now self imposed.It is voluntarily acceptable to her. Her initial exile from her home to seek homliness in America brings her to unhomliness, whereas her unhomliness moves towards the process of her identity formation which is yet incomplete.Tara feels herself superior and distinctive identityequal to the western people. Partha Chatterjeeh in *The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question* remarks:

> The material/spiritual dichotomy, to which the terms 'world' and 'home' corresponded, had acquired … a very special significance in the nationalist mind. The world was where the European power had challenged the non- European peoples and, by virtue of its superior material culture, had subjugated them. But it had failed to colonize the inner, essential, identity of the East which lay in its distinctive, and superior, spiritual culture.... In the world, imitation of and adaptation to western norms was a necessity; at home, they were tantamount to the annihilation of one's very identity. (239)

Gereth Griffiths observes that this physical exile being already loaded with linguisticdisplacement binds the diasporic identity to face cross-cultural authenticity or inauthenticity of experience on an alien land. With the result of which, Tara faces "displacement, disruption, ambivalence, or mimicry, discursive features founded not in the closed and limited construction of a pure authentic with sign but in endless but excessive transformation of the subject positions possible within the hybridized" (241). Thus, Tara's journey to the foreign land is both a physical and cultural transformation and disruption. But she does neither make adjustments to the western hegemonic culture nor does she able to define herself there. Her physical self is deeply attached with her roots and traditions whereas her cultural self seems misguided. With the result, she becomes a marginalized personality in the west. But when she returns to her homeland without her husband to seek balance in identity, she finds unexpected happenings in India. Brinda Bose observes that Tara has to suffer from double displacement who is "already twice-marginalized" (47). Firstly in her hostland, and secondly back in her homeland from where she was exiled. These happenings create her dual, double and confused personality. Brinda Bose in *A Question of Identity* questions herduality in the following remarks:

> Duality and conflict are not merely a feature of immigrant life in America. Mukherjee's women are brought up in a culture that presents them with such ambiguities from childhood. The breaking of identities and the discarding of languages actually begin early, their lives being shaped by the confluence of rich cultural and religious traditions, on the one, hand, and the 'new learning' imposed by British colonialism in India, on the other. These different influences involved them in tortured processes of self-recognition and self-assimilation right from the start; the confusion is doubled upon coming to America. (50)

Confusion gives ways to marginalization and separation in Taramoni. She does not understand which traditions sheshould apply or follow; her Bengali language and heritage, British education and American affiliation. She finds herself a hypocrite and hybrid diasporic identity who is straddled within her longing and belonging. Salman Rushdiein *Imaginary Homelands* highlights the questions of diasporic acculturation:

> Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is in part the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us with such angles. (15-16)

Bharati Mukherjee considers this ambiguityin Tara as, "It was not a simple loss... this forgetting of prescribed actions; it was a little death, a hardening of the heart, a cracking of axis and centre" (Mukherjee56).Taramoni Banerjee Cartwright seems helpless in her roots and axis, but not hopeless. One thing is clear to her that she has become a split identity as Sushma Tandon in *Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction: A Perspective* observes:

> The heroine finds it difficult to relate, since her marriage to an American and her Western education brand her as an alienated woman. Since Tara is exposed to the West and has absorbed its values, she must be necessarily alienated and, therefore, even if she tries to voice her continued attachment for, and identity with India, the voice does not carry conviction because it is at variance with the usual stance of indifference and arrogance as these are associated with the Westernized Indian. (32)

Taraaffirms that American culture has vaguely covered and hovered her like an invisible spirit making her rootless. In America, she discovers that she is not 'at home' in the house of her husband,asa result, the home of her native homeland becomes her priority. In order to come out of her dialectical position, she wants to solve issues of home, homelessness, homliness and unhomliness. In addition, her life can be meaningful and substantial, if she searches her true self in her native land from where it was started long ago. That's why she becomes ready to

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 1| January 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2024: 8.402 || ISI Value: 1.188

visit India for solace and togetherness as New York has turned into an exotic place. Sushma Tandon observes:

> After seven years abroad, after extraordinary turns of destiny that had swept her from Calcutta to Poughkeepsie, and Madison, and finally to a two room apartment within walking distance of Columbia, strange turns that had taught her to worry over a dissertation on Katherine Mansfield, the plight of women and racial minorities[...] New York, she thought now had been exotic. Not because it had Laundromats and subways. But because there where policemen with dogs prowling the underground tunnels. Because girls like her, at least illmost like her were being knifed in elevators in their own apartment buildings. Because students were rioting about campus recruiters and far away wars rather than the price of rice or the stiffness of final exams. Because people were agitated over pollution ..... New York was certainly extraordinary, and it had driven her to despair. (33-34)

Tara's return to Calcutta enables her to compare and contrast India and America. Bharati Mukherjee puts it as, "The gestures, the tones of voice, the deportment and dismissals that she had forgotten in the States suddenly came back with dazzling assurance. She had not thought that seven years in another country, a husband, a new blue passport could be so easily blotted out" (Mukherjee 25) as she becomes optimistic that her experiences in her hostland are slowly taking new turns. Tara highlights her in-betweenness and ambivalence through emotional soliloquy:

> The darkness outside the window deepened, giving Tara time for unhappy self analysis. For years she had dreamed of his 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 ... she was an embittered woman, she now thought, old and cynical at twenty two and quick to take offense. (24)

No doubt, Tara receives few pleasant moments in Calcutta during her trip but for her, "Calcutta was the deadliest city in the world; alarm and impatience were equally useless" (168) just as New York was "a gruesome nightmare" (63). In this way, the places of her location, dislocation and relocation bring nothingness but negative sensibilities. When Tara is found stranded in a locked car outside Catelli-Continental Hotel, a violent mob of Naxalite protesters attack the old aristocrat by the name of Joyonto and kill Tara's friend, Pronob, a businessman, she is shocked to see that nobody is safe and secure in Calcutta even at present, and starts thinking how "she would ever get out of Calcutta" (210). She is ready to relocate herself by "breaking away from the culture into which one was born, and in which one's place in society was assured and re-rooting oneself in a new culture" (39). Moreover, she realizes that reconciliation between home and exile is impossible to her, and her stay in India is wastage of time. So, she should take quick decision to restart her life with her husband only in America in her own ways. She has understood, "If she were to stay, there would be other concessions, other deals and compromises, all menacing and unbearably real, waiting to be made" (202). Through her mature vision, self-analysis, self-reliance and decision, she sidelines her anguished and emotional sides of life. Now she is ready to lead her life beyond her home and exile. She can face western hegemonic encounter on the foreign land as she is strengthened to make her existence, space and identity in anywhere.

WORKS CITED

1. *Bhabha, Homi K. The Location of Culture. Routledge, 1994.*
2. *Bose, Brinda. "A Question of Identity: Where Gender, Race, and America Meet in Bharati Mukherjee." Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives, edited by Emmanuel S. Nelson, Routledge, 1993, pp. 47-63. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315269993-3.*
3. *Carb, Alison B. An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee. The Massachusetts Review, vol. 29, no.4, 1989.*
4. *Chatterjee, Partha. "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question." Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History, edited by Kurn Kum Sangari andSudesh Vaid, Kali for Women, 1989, pp. 233-53.https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb02446.0001.001*
5. *Chen, Tina, and S. X. Goudie. "Holders of the Word: An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee."Conversations with Bharati Mukherjee, University of California, Berkeley, 1997, pp.76-100.*
6. *Griffiths, Gereth. "The Myth of Authenticity." The Post-colonial Studies Reader, edited by Bill Ashcroft et al, Routledge, 1995, pp. 237-41. http://www.jakedavidson.com/PCI9.pdf*
7. *Mukherjee, Bharati. The Tiger's Daughter. Penguin, 1990.*
8. *Rushdie, Salman. Imaginary Homelands. Vintage, 2010.*
9. *Said, Edward. Reflections on Exile and Other Essays. Granta, 2001.*
10. *Sharma, Maya Manju. "The Inner World of Bharati Mukherjee: From Expatriate to Immigrant." Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives, edited by Emmanuel Nelson. Routledge, 1993, pp. 3-22. https://www.routledge.com/Bharati-Mukherjee9781138283824*
11. *Sivaramkrishna, M. "Bharati Mukherjee." Indian English Novelists, edited by M.S. Prasad, Sterling, 1982, pp. 71-86.*
12. *Tandon, Sushma. Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction: A Perspective. Sarup and Sons, 2004.*