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THE UNNOTICED DISPUTES AND DILEMMA OF WOMEN IMMIGRANTS IN THE
SOCIETY AS PORTRAYED BY BHARATHI MUKHERJEE

NISHA. A

M.Phil Scholar under the Guidance of Dr.Manju, HOD , Dept. of English,
Sree Narayana College, Chavadi



NISHA. A

ABSTRACT

Bharati Mukherjee, the eminent Indo-American writer deals with the problems of women immigrants who struggle to make their own identity and an autonomous life in America. Bharati Mukherjee differs from other writers in the sense that her basic concern is for the cross cultural conflicts faced by the Indian women immigrants. All her novels represent the contemporary women's fight to make her own identity, freedom and life in the patriarchal society. She writes deeply about the cross- , cultural conflicts, the disputes, dilemma, confusion, isolation and the tension these women face in the foreign country. They become neither real Americans nor real Indian .In between this they try to imitate the Western culture, but cannot totally withdraw from the inborn habits. The family or the society becomes a threat for them. Still they fight boldly to achieve their rights. A new picture of modern, educated, post-independence, Indian women. Her characters are bold and determined, ready to face the bitter realities of life .Whether in America or in India women have stereotyped roles to play. Man becomes the decision maker of her and the fact is again proved that the destiny of a girl depends on whom she should marry .Unlike the traditional women who only know to cry, her characters are modern, educated and at least try to make their independence to live, to die and to face the fate. The readers feel that all these women are from their neighborhood with simple ambitions of all girls in the society.

Key words--eminent, immigrant, conflict, contemporary, isolation

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INTRODUCTION

The female protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee live in the present society. They are from the middle class families and they represent the Indian women who are destined to suffer in the patriarchal back ground. They reach America after their marriage and when they reach the United States, destiny moulds their life in a different way. Even though the world claims about equality, we can see these women characters who suffer to achieve equality, freedom and an urge to love and to be loved.

Bharati Mukherjee's novel 'The Tiger's Daughter', deals with the story of Tara Banerjee, who returns to India after her seven years stay in America. When she reached the Bombay airport she feels so alienated that

her relatives are not so happy at her who is not accompanied by her husband David. Here Mukherjee portrays the Indian concept where woman should be accompanied by her husband after marriage. (Ramesh & Phaniraja). In India from childhood onwards woman must be accompanied by a man; either her father, brother, husband or son . She is not supposed to travel alone. He has a protective role. Tara breaks the Indian tradition where one should marry from his own caste. She marries a foreigner who is a Jew. She forgets her caste and religion after marriage. In India she feels so strange to even her mother. At last she decides to go back to the United States. Bharati Mukherjee boldly criticizes the attitude of Indians who are so crazy about foreign things and life but are not ready to accept the marriage with foreigners. 'Dimple Dasgupta' a young Bengali woman, protagonist in Bharati Mukherjee's 'Wife', also wants freedom and love. In her conservative family atmosphere she leads a protected life and she starts making fantasies about her married life. She imagines that marriage would bring her freedom., marriage would bring her love.(3) She wants a polished life. She marries Amit Basu and moves to New York with her husband shortly after their marriage. Amit is caring but takes Dimple for granted the day they got married (Reetika pg 3). Like other Indian women she also wants to stay home and to look after her husband and to work like a servant without any complaints. She becomes totally disappointed. Amit and his family wants her to be totally submissive . Her mental struggle is so critical that finally in a turbulent situation she kills Amit and commits suicide. The mental and physical isolation of a woman immigrant, the cultural contrasts, her husband's remarks, gender discrimination...all these are clearly visible in 'Wife'. Dimple reacts violently against her position but finally she couldn't achieve anything. The pathetic condition of women in this society is clearly visible in this novel.

Bharati Mukherjee's novel 'Jasmine' is an exploration of the mental strength, of a Punjabi rural girl, Jyothi. She marries Prakash, a young energetic man who prepares to go to America. Prakash sees Jyothi as an individual and helps in grooming her. He names her Jasmine. She decides to go with him. But destiny changes her life when Prakash is murdered on the eve of their departure. She becomes a widow who is destined to cry. But she sets for America to fulfill the ambition of her husband with the help of her brothers. She learns to walk and talk like an American. But the miserable situation of a woman, even In America she is not safe. Jasmine is raped by the captain of a ship .Still she finds strength to continue living instead of committing suicide. At last she stabs the man and takes revenge. She changes her name as 'Jase' and fights for her existence. Jasmine transforms her 'self'. Jasmine's circumstances changed her life and brought transformation in her life. She is such a powerful protagonist that unlike the crying women protagonists, Jasmine stands alone with her head straight never bent before destiny. After the mental, physical conflicts, sorrows, solitude and frustrations, Jasmine becomes the real winner and carves out a new life in a foreign country.

CONCLUSION

Unlike other feminist writers, Bharati Mukherjee's writings reflect the basic idea of 'self-empowerment', the essential thing of all human beings. (Reetika page 5). Mukherjee invests her immigrant characters with a kind of self-excluding attitude, a desire to remain culturally and socially isolated from American society even extracting a financially better future from it (Jenny Valjento). Bharati Mukherjee's women characters never live or cry like the stereotyped pathetic women characters commonly see in traditional stories. She questions the notion of society where people believe the American life is a dream of the fulfillment of all ambitions and they all live in a heaven like life with money and all luxury things.

Mukherjee's characters are those from our life and they are the helpless victims of destiny. Still they never kneel down. They struggle for their freedom, rights and identity. Even though they all are from the same background, with same mental strength, they show such courage and determination, that we cannot see even in male members in the patriarchal society. Mukherjee opens before the readers the new perspectives of feminism. They suffer solitude, physical, social and gender discriminations. They argue, they fight , they love and are alone in the group. Sometimes they all show the softness and the pathetic condition of women. They are helpless to encounter the realities of male supremacy. Even in Western societies, men establish norms and women have to obey. A woman can become the destroyer and creator. They are forced to play their roles in

the prewritten script of life like all of us. Destiny plays a very important role in their lives like all human beings. Bharati Mukherjee stands as a typical feminist writer.

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