

## EXPLOITATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S NOVELS

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to study the significance of women empowerment in society and also discusses the writings of Bharati Mukherjee who is an eminent writer in Indian Diasporic literature. She is interested in writing the lives of Third World Women who are liberated from the shackles of constrictive patriarchal society. She is widely acknowledged as a 'voice of expatriate immigrant sensibility'. Women empowerment has become a significant topic of discussion in regards to development and economics. Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process.

**Keywords:** Women Emancipation, Survivors, Warriors, Assimilation.

**Status of Women in Ancient Days:** In the olden days, women were treated as mere slaves. Men used to treat and keep them under their control. They were denied freedom. The mere duty of women was to obey the words blindly and do the household activities. They were within the four walls of the house. They were being suppressed in the family and also in the society. At first, being a daughter she has no rights to choose her career and life partner. Then, when she entered into the family life, no rights to speak and tell her opinion freely.

**Free India:** The condition of woman is gradually changed in free India. They play a vital role in the development of the country. They have got equal rights for education and also in politics. Their voice will now be as forceful and important as that of men. Many Indian writers have written about the liberation of women in society. Writers like Anitha Desai, Virginia Woolf, Alice Walker, Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharati Mukherjee etc. have started questioning the prominent old patriarchal domination.

**Bharati Mukherjee:** Mukherjee was born on July 27, 1940 in a wealthy Calcutta family. She lived in a semi-westernized Bengali family that valued English education and at the same time 'observed Hindu practices and beliefs'. Even in her childhood days, she has the passion to become a writer. Her family members motivated her to go to US for her higher studies which helped a lot to become a renowned writer in Indian diasporic literature. This educational trip becomes a turning point in her life. While studying at the University of Iowa, Mukherjee fell in love with Clark Blaise. She married him on impulse and immigrated to Canada.

Mukherjee settled in Canada for fourteen years. She suffered racial discrimination and humiliation at the hands of the immigrant intolerant Canadians. She felt that she has lost her identity in alien land. She has no opportunity and lost self-image. She suffered in Canada for fourteen years only for the sake of her

husband who wished to live in Canada. At her home, she received love from her husband but out in the society, she was discriminated and hated. Then, she moved to US and settled there.

**Major Themes:** Mukherjee writes about the problem of the expatriates and immigrants. She deals with the issues of migration, their struggle for identity, their inner conflict and their final emergence as self-assertive individuals. She has evoked with the study of feminism in her writings. She deals with the theme related to cross cultural issues and their search for identity. She writes about how the Asian migrant women tries to tackle the problem of loss of identity in alien land and their overcome and also endeavor to prove their new identity in the U.S.

**Bharati Mukherjee's Literary Career:** Bharati Mukherjee's literary career and her creative works directly correspond to the stages of her personal life. Her literary output can be divided into three distinct stages:

- The Expatriation phase (1972-79)
- The Transition phase (1980-88)
- The Immigration phase (1989 to present)

During the expatriation phase, Mukherjee was living in Canada and her mind was filled with the intolerable climate of the place. In this phase, her works deal with the theme of cross-cultural conflict, discrimination, marginalization, and social acceptance. Women protagonist who migrate to the alien land for their future career prospects. After their immigration, they fail to adapt to the new milieu. They yearn to get back to their homeland. Even when they move to the native land, they cannot find oneness with their homeland. They feel lonely and alien in both native and alien land.

In the transition phase, she has written collection of short stories. It speaks about the rootlessness of women characters. They suffer racial discrimination in Canada. They exhibit a tendency to fight the identity crisis that clouds their psyche and try to forget their homesickness.

In the last phase, Immigration Mukherjee has written many notable novels. This last phase of her creative life shows her thorough understanding of the multi-cultural American milieu and the difficulties involved in the process of acculturation. The long struggle in the alien land gave them will power to face the obstacles and overcome it with their might. They become bolder and dare enough to face the struggles and emerged as warriors and survivors.

**Bharati Mukherjee's Writings:** Bharati Mukherjee is widely considered as the best representative of the mood of the Indian diaspora. Her fictional works focus on the immigrant and his cross-cultural existence and identity. In all her works, she realistically portrays the plight the Indian women who faces various problems in the alien land. She discusses the problems of Identity crisis, cross-cultural conflict, alienation, rootlessness, nostalgia. She has projected her personal experiences in her novels. Her personal immigrant experience becomes the material for more than half of her work. She vividly shows the transformation of the feminine psyche. Her portrayal of the character is realistic and psychological. Her writings help the reader to understand the problems associated with immigration and migration. Her notable works are 'The Tiger's Daughter', 'Jasmine' and 'Miss New India'.

**The Tiger's Daughter:** Mukherjee's early novel, *The Tiger's Daughter* published in 1972. She narrates her own personal experience. The novel is about the isolation of Indian expatriates. It is the story of Tara Banerjee, the great granddaughter of Hari Lal Banerjee and the daughter of Bengal Tiger, the owner of famous Banerjee and Thomas (Tobacco) Co.Ltd. At her early age, she is sent to US for higher studies. She has homesick, loneliness nostalgia in the strange

land. She was unable to cope and adapt to the chaotic and strange life of New York. One day, while rushing to find a cab, she met a man who was her husband later. The man is David Cartwright. Tara married David hastily. David was unable to understand her feelings of homesickness as he is a foreigner. He sees it as a weakness on Tara's part.

After seven long years in New York, Tara eagerly returns to India to reunite with her family members and friends. She believes that her return to her native land will give a relief to her nostalgic feelings. She is heartily welcomed by her family members and relatives. The showy welcome by her relatives with the garlands and sweets did not give comfort to her. Her friends and relatives call her by the nick name, 'Tutul' it sounds strange to her Americanized ears. The railway station looks like a hospital to her. She could not find any comfort in the quickly passing world outside. Tara now realizes that she could not connect with them meaningfully. After a stay in America, her outlook has been changed. Her family members and relatives are the same. She is changed and they are not. Tara feels psychologically exiled from both Indian and America. This rootlessness and baseless existence characterizes her psyche.

**Summation:** Bharati Mukherjee is a strong voice in Indian Diaspora writing. Her writing clearly shows her gradual moving from alienation to assimilation. From this, we can clearly understand that the primary aim of her writing is to champion the cause of women. Her novels truly adhere to the temperament and mood of the Indian women who are unaware of the new culture and its ways. Through her unique rendering of the themes of expatriation, immigration and displacement, she has proved herself to be the 'voice of the immigrant women in US'.

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