

# THE ASIAN IMMIGRANT'S LIFE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA FROM BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S WRITINGS

Dr. N. Mary Suvarna Latha

*Lecturer in English, B.S.S.B.Degree College, Tadikonda, Guntur (Dt) -522236. Andhra Pradesh.*

**Abstract-** The most common issue in diasporic works is the effects and dilemmas of immigration. The goal of Bharati Mukherjee's work is to portray the social reality of Asian immigrants' lives in modern-day America. In her novels *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife*, and *Jasmine*, she effectively depicted the impact and repercussions of immigration on the lives of her Indian immigrant female heroines, Tara, Dimple, and Jyoti, respectively. Immigration turned Tara into a confused individual, Dimple killed her husband and killed herself, and Jyoti, who came to America to fulfill her late husband's ambition and become "sati," eventually adapted to American culture.

**Index Terms-** Immigration. Identity

## I. INTRODUCTION

In her writings, Bharati Mukherjee mostly addresses issues pertaining to women, particularly those who are experiencing psychological imbalances as a result of cultural shocks and conflicts with conventional beliefs in a foreign country. Mukherjee's personal experiences of cultural conflict, racial injustice, and identity crisis as an immigrant served as the primary inspiration for how she portrayed female protagonists in her works. Her female protagonists struggle with immigration issues and are eager to forge their own identities via their adventurous travels. They boldly leave the male-dominated society in order to achieve independent identity, and this becomes a common story for many immigrant women. In this study, the cause of immigration and its effects are examined through the protagonists' life stories. Additionally, cross-cultural conflicts and their transformation into a variety of outcomes are correlated based on the characters' inherent personalities, immigration expectations, and reality.

## II. THE TIGER'S DAUGHTER

Tara Banerjee is the female lead in the book *The Tiger's Daughter*. Her father sent her to study in America when she was just fifteen years old. Tara had home sickness, racial prejudice, and adjustment issues

there. She made a sincere effort to adapt to the new circumstances, but her "otherness" prevented her from succeeding. The strange atmosphere made her feel nervous and alone. "Vassar had been a nearly irreparable error for Tara." Although her parents wanted her to marry a wealthy Bengali boy, she fell in love with an American, David Cartwright, and they were married. In order to gain an identity in American society and to remove the label of "other," she marries David. She believes that there is a significant mental divide between them now that they are married because they were raised with two very different social ideals. Because of this, she finds it difficult to communicate to her husband her Indian societal traditional values and practices as well as her longing for her Calcutta home. Her longing for her native customs causes her to fail in her attempts to change from an Indian girl to an American bride. She couldn't stay stuck in her newly found American self, and she couldn't resist her Indian self. Her unstable personality and weak mental faculties, which prevent her from fully choosing one reality, are actually the root causes of all her misfortunes. She consequently finds herself positioned between her two personalities.

Tara wants to leave this situation, but her spouse never really supports her. David prefers to think of her as a loving Indian wife who will perform her household duties without hesitation. In addition to her household chores, Tara performs tasks like "cleaning the bathroom" that she never performed in her father's house, but her husband never shows gratitude for them. She finds it difficult to decide if she was happy in her father's house or David's. She now understands that her choice to wed an outsider was emotional and incorrect. As she makes every effort to become an American wife, it becomes abundantly evident to her that she has lost her identity as a unique woman. Because she lacks autonomy in her husband's home, she is dissatisfied with her existence. She gets depressed because she

believes that her father controlled her life before marriage and that her husband now controls her under the guise of marital bondage. Her feminine self aspires to be free from the male-dominated culture. Tara chooses to return to India in order to discover her lost roots in order to get out of this predicament.

Tara hopes that her quest for personal identity will come to an end when she returns to India. However, she doesn't find this exciting. The serene Calcutta of her youth, where kids play in refreshing green areas, is gone. She observes that the Naxalite movement has put her once-loving and tranquil city in a state of extreme instability. She is extremely sensitive since she witnesses poverty, riots, industrial agitation, and other political expressions all around the city. She hopes that her friends, family, and relatives would embrace her completely. She frequently gathers at the Catelli-Continental Hotel with her pals Reena and Pronob to talk about her experiences of being torn between two opposing circumstances. However, they never show her any sympathy. She experiences the same sense of alienation in their company that she does in America. She comes to the realization that her childhood friends don't care about the hardships she endured in America. Her friends never accept her marriage to a foreigner and consider it an unusual deed of a Hindu Brahmin Bengali girl. They "were curious only about the adjustment she had made". Her mother also believes that her daughter brings shame to the family by marrying an outsider.

When she loses the memory of the family's god-worshipping customs, she herself feels alienated. After grinding the sandal wood paste, Tara used her fingers to scrape it off the sticky surface and transferred it into a tiny silver dish. However, she was unable to recall the ritual's next phase.<sup>4</sup> She visited the polio-infected child at her aunt Jharna's home. Tara anticipates that her aunt will greet her warmly and be pleased to see her after a long absence. However, she feels the same emotions as a foreigner there as well. Her westernized perspective prevents her from accepting her aunt's superstitious attempt to use religious rather than medical remedies to heal her child. She has pity for the youngster. However, her aunt cannot comprehend her pity. When her aunt says, "You think you are too educated for this, don't you?" she feels hurt. She realizes that her family no longer views her as the "Tultul" of seven years ago, but rather as Tara Cartwright.

The worst irony of Tara's existence is that she is haunted by the same sentiments of otherness and rootlessness that she experienced in America, and she becomes more of an outsider than a true foreigner in her home country and among her own people. She is certain that her prolonged stint overseas has altered her personality, which is impeding her ability to reintegrate with her family, old acquaintances, and relatives. She took a journey to Nayapur with her pals in order to find mental peace from these circumstances. Tuntunwala, a Marwari politician, rapes her there. For fear of embarrassment, she is afraid to tell anyone about this happened. "In a land where a friendly smile, an accidental brush of the fingers, can ignite rumors," Tara muses after losing faith in her friends. She becomes aware that she is an immigrant in her own country as a result of this encounter. She realizes that it will be extremely difficult for her to make amends with her homeland. She ultimately decides to return to the Western nation and seek comfort from her foreign husband when her hope of rediscovering her identity in her own heritage is dashed. Through the portrayal of the character of Tara, the novelist gives the hint that if once one crosses the boundary of native land; it becomes very difficult for the person to find out his root and identity there again if he or she has lack of mental strength.

### III. WIFE

Dimple, a twenty-year-old Hindu Brahmin modern girl from the middle class, is the protagonist of Wife. She is passionate about her marriage. We might infer from the novel's intriguing title that it tells the story of a woman who consistently upholds all of the customary norms and behaviors expected of her. However, the novelist provides the plot a dramatic turn by using Dimple as a character. The effects and repercussions of immigration on Dimple's life are emphasized throughout the book.

Dimple, a teenage girl, views life romantically. She has always existed in a fantasy world that she has constructed for herself. She avoids the harsh and terrible realities of life by constantly reading novels and film magazines. For her, marriage is the key to unlocking a world of freedom and happiness. Dimple comes from a middle-class, traditional household that never allows a woman to make decisions about her marriage and believes that a daughter should obey her father's choices. As a result, Dimple's dream of marrying a neurosurgeon was not realized, and she was forced to wed Amit Kumar Basu, a consultant engineer

and the ideal son her father had selected. When she walks into her husband's house, her dreams are dashed. Under her mother-in-law's watchful eye, Amit feels like a prisoner in her tiny home. She feels suffocated by the house's outdated interior design and finds it irritating.

In addition to being irritated, Dimple is thrilled to hear that she and her husband will be moving to America, where all of her dreams will come true. But as soon as she realizes she is pregnant, all of her excitement goes away. It is believed that pregnancy is a gift from God to women. Being able to carry a child is a source of pride for women in our society. A woman is viewed negatively and becomes hated by her family as well as by society if she is unable to conceive. She views her pregnancy as a barrier to traveling overseas rather than as the greatest gift of her marriage. She doesn't want "to carry any relics from her old life" because she expects her new life will be pleasant and free of her old annoyances and frustrations. She wishes to end her pregnancy in order to remove this barrier. In an attempt to get her body back to its regular cycle, she begins eating "hot green chillies."

The moment where Dimple murders a pregnant mouse in the restroom suggests that she can live her life without any restrictions. Her happiness in killing the small animal is a manifestation of her mental illness. Desperation drives her to purposefully skip in order to murder the unwanted fetus inside her. She had poured water from the heavy bucket over her head after skipping rope until her legs went numb and her stomach burned as a form of self-abortion. Any lady who views her effort to abort her own child as a gift from God will find it very moving. Finally, Dimple and her husband leave all obstacles behind and move to America. She is now embarking on a new chapter in her life in her dream country. However, she finds little solace in her new environment in America. While Amit is busy looking for a new career in New York, she feels upset and lonely once more. They had to stay at Jyoti and Meena Sen's house because of their dire financial situation shortly after arriving in New York. Their entire home is furnished in Indian style, which is completely at odds with Dimple's vision.

Dimple is constantly reminded of her homeland by Meena Sen's actions and demeanor. She therefore wishes to leave their apartment and blend in with her new environment. She attempts to strike a balance between her new world (America) and her old world (India), and she aspires to be a perfect wife like

Sita, the Indian mythological figure of sacrifice, patience, and purity. However, she is unable to resist the allure of American society and the idea of Western women's self-determination. She expects Amit to provide her with the required assistance and emotional support, but she does not receive it for his business. Dimple is despondent, and her condition is getting worse over time. She becomes close to Ina Mallick, an Indian immigrant in the United States, in her loneliness. She plays a significant role in making Dimple's misfortune worse. She is more American than a native American since she smokes, drinks, attends night classes, wears jeans and mascara, and has extramarital affairs with Americans. Dimple views Ina as an idol of her new country and is greatly affected by her. Dimple fell in love with Milt Glasser after meeting him as Ina's friend.

When Ina offers Dimple a drink at her party, Amit quickly stops her by stating, "She does not like alcoholic beverages.". Dimple believes that she is still subject to male dominance even in the new country. Additionally, she believes that Amit never permits her to embrace America's modernism and openness. She has a psychic disorder as a result of her insecure dream about living in the West. She used to go out with Milt and Ina to keep herself occupied. She eventually develops a closer relationship with Milt and they start dating physically.

This behavior demonstrates Dimple's transformation, which is greatly impacted by the American concept of freedom and is unencumbered by the traditional womanhood of her culture. She does not find long-term mental peace and comfort in this relationship. She feels bad because she believes she is betraying Amit and breaking her wifely duties. She is vacillating between the moral principles of her own country and the new one. She turns neurotic when watching TV to kill time. Her mental state is entirely unknown to Amit. He never made an effort to comprehend her mental state. "You must go out, make friends, do something constructive, not stay at home and think about Calcutta," Amit tells Dimple without spending any time with her. She loses her sleep because she is so disturbed. She holds Amit responsible for every issue she faces in life. She chooses to murder him because she sees him as a barrier to her life. Finally, she stabs him seven times in the neck with her kitchen knife in a fit of craziness, plagued by sadness and hoping for freedom. Dimple's release from the confines of marriage is symbolized by these seven stab wounds.

Dimple's life is tragic since she marries Amit to escape her father's laws and regulations, but she kills Amit for the same purpose and ends her own life. By analyzing this story, we may conclude that Dimple's life would have turned out differently if she had the mental fortitude to embrace the altered circumstances of her life in America. Furthermore, it might be argued that Dimple's extreme demise is caused by her lack of adjustment power and her great expectations to escape the shackles of a male-dominated society.

#### JASMINE

In her third novel, Jasmine, Bharati Mukherjee presents her female protagonist as a fighter, survivor, and adaptable. It tells the tale of Jyoti, a rural Panjabi girl who forges her identity in America thanks to her extraordinary mental fortitude and fearless personality. Since she was young, Jyoti has been a warrior. In a feudalistic environment when female children are viewed as undesired and a "curse" for the family, she is born as the fifth daughter of her parents. Jyoti's mother attempted to choke her to death when she was a youngster because she thought her fifth daughter may bring a curse to the family, but she lived. Jyoti has been brave since she was a young child and does not believe in superstitions. She defiantly challenges the village astrologer's predictions regarding her widowhood and banishment. "You're a crazy old man," she says, expressing her belief that no human being can predict the future of another person. You have no idea what lies ahead for me. She demonstrates her rebellious nature once more when she marries Prakash Viji, a contemporary young man, instead of the widower her grandmother had chosen. Prakash is a very free-spirited man who gives Jyoti a new name, Jasmine, and encourages her to forge her own identity.

A terrorist bombing kills Prakash the night before they leave for America. Jasmine must live as a widow in her father's home in Hasnapur following Prakash's passing. However, a widow's poverty never saps her enthusiasm for life. She makes the decision to travel to America in order to fulfill her husband's unfulfilled dream. With falsified documents, she boldly departs Hasnapur for America. Jasmine faces many challenges on her route to America. She is sexually assaulted by Half-Face, the ship's captain. After arriving in Florida, the captain sexually assaulted her in a motel. In retaliation for Half-Face's horrible deed, she kills him. For a brief moment, Jasmine makes the decision to terminate her life, but, like a true fighter, she tells herself that she has not yet finished her task and that now is not the time to die. "I couldn't allow my

personal dishonor to interfere with my mission," she explains. Since I hadn't yet destroyed my husband's outfit, I had plenty of time to die. Her entire life is altered by this tragedy, which also gives her a new outlook on life and encourages her to fight for a respectable life at any costs.

Jasmine stays with Professor Devinder Vadhera and his family in New York. However, she finds it annoying that the Vadhera family is so possessive of their indigenous customs. Because she was an illegal immigrant, Jasmine was eager to obtain a green card. She makes every effort to follow all American customs. She moves out of Vadhera's home and starts again on Claremont Avenue as the day mother of Duff, the child of Taylor and Wylie Hayes, going by the new name "Jase." The fact that Jasmine changed her Indian name to an American one and moved around a lot shows how determined she is to fit in with the mainstream in America. Wylie and Taylor assist Jasmine in acclimating to the new society. Because of his affectionate and considerate personality, she fell in love with Taylor. For almost two years, Jasmine lived with Taylor and Wylie Hayes. As an immigrant, these two years had been the best of her life in America.

Jasmine's euphoria is destined to fade quickly. She is forced to leave Taylor's home after witnessing Sukhwinder, the terrorist who killed her husband, in the park. She relocates to Iowa after spotting Sukhwinder in the park. One might assume that Jasmine is a coward for choosing to flee Taylor's home. She is a fighter with the bravery to confront the terrorist, yet she flees to protect Taylor and Duff from Sukhwinder because she is not a coward.

Jasmine begins her life in Iowa as a bank teller girl. She subsequently moves in with her coworker Bud Ripplemayer and becomes pregnant. "Jane Ripplemayer" is the new identity that Bud provides her. The foundation of Bud and Jasmine's relationship is primarily a give-and-take approach. Bud required Jane's attentive assistance because he was disabled, whereas Jasmine sought to establish a permanent identity in the new society, so she seized any chance that presented itself. Despite her desire to blend in with American culture, Jasmine never downplays her Indian heritage.

Like an Indian wife, she looks after Bud and always attempts to meet his requirements at home. For Bud's happiness, she has given up all of her uniqueness

and happiness. However, Bud consistently attempted to domesticate Jane's character's Indian self without ever attempting to comprehend her feelings. Jasmine was unable to discuss her recollections of her previous life with Bud because of his attitude, and Bud never paid any attention to it either. In Bud's house, she feels like a prisoner. Taylor, her ex-lover, calls her at this point in her mental illness and offers to take her to California. After agreeing to his suggestion, Jasmine looks back at Taylor. Although it may appear that Jasmine is being extremely self-centered by leaving Bud, who is entirely reliant on her due to his physical incapacity, Jasmine values her independence over her responsibilities.

Every choice Jasmine made in America was carefully considered in order to become an American, and her personality has progressively altered. She is steadily becoming more mainstream in America, as evidenced by her frequent renamings to Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase, and finally Jane. However, she had to overcome numerous obstacles in order to assimilate, which boosted her confidence and cleared the path for her future actions. Jasmine was able to eventually integrate into the American mainstream by moving about a lot like a nomad. Bharati Mukherjee's female character Jasmine is described by Samir Dayal as "a perpetual nomad" who "shuttles between differing identities." As a result, Jasmine is effectively portrayed by Bharati Mukherjee as a powerful female character rather than the main character of her earlier books. In our earlier study, we focused on the issues Dimple and Jasmine encounter as a result of trying to leave their home country, and we came to the conclusion that "as immigrants, they face the same problems to adjust in the new cultural milieu." Their lives take two different turns as a result of their adjustment difficulties and search for a new identity in a foreign country. Due to her weak thinking and lack of inner strength, Dimple was unable to adapt to the changing circumstances and ended up killing her spouse. However, Jasmine overcomes strange circumstances, blends in with the new society, and emerges victorious from life thanks to her extraordinary mental toughness and adoptability.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The current paper highlights Tara's experiences as an immigrant and a white American wife in the United States, where she moved for further education. She feels perplexed and unable to discover who she really is. In an attempt to restore her roots, she goes back to Calcutta, but she still feels alienated and alone amidst her friends, family, and even relatives. Her immigration

made her less mentally resilient and left her feeling empty about who she was. She feels as though she has moved to India, but she also feels as though she is finding mental comfort in the United States. Tara's personality became confused as a result of her immigration. Dimple's immigration had deadly effects on her life in the book *Wife*. Although she was unable to resist the openness of the American lifestyle, she never abandoned her Indian ideal of a wife. She thus lost her mental stability, killed her husband, and killed herself. Jasmine, on the other hand, eventually adapted to American society as an immigrant after coming to America to fulfill her husband's ambition and become "sati." As a result, it can be concluded that the situations they encountered as immigrants had a direct influence on their lives and that there are a variety of effects of immigration on the diasporic lives of Tara, Dimple, and Jyoti.

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International Journal of Humanities and Social  
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