



CROSS CULTURAL SHOCK IN 'THE TIGER'S DAUGHTER' AND 'WIFE'

Dr. George Augustin

Principal, Kumbhalkar Social Work Evening College, Nagpur

Email: ma_george3@rediffmail.com

Oriental writing in English is enhanced by the cultural roles and cultural adjectives in the fast changing world of reality. The writers of the third world literature in English have formed emotional affection with their places of dwelling and remained foreign to the place where they were belonging to. Bhartai Mukherjee, the Indo-American and Indo-Canadian, is caught between the cultures of the Eastern and the Western that constitutes the main concern of her writings. Cultural alienation is the result of the confrontation between two different cultures. The cultural altercation with two dissimilar patterns and ways of life an individual lives leads to a feeling of melancholy, annoyance and solitude. This may be called a cultural shock. Similarly when an individual leaves her own culture and enters into another, she finds the old values coming into conflict with the new ones as it is not easy to adjust and assimilate to the new ways of life. Mukherjee, in her narrative, projects cultural-shock as a main theme by which the troubles of an Indian tax exile in Canada and America can be solved by recognition of the difference in the assimilated culture environment.

Bharati Mukherjee's The 'Tiger's Daughter' and 'Wife' mull over on the cultural divergence of the East and the West as the heroines of Indian origin in these novels suffer from a cultural-shock by going to the States as immigrants- an inventive rendering of Mukherjee's own personal experience in going West and the after effects of the cultural-shock felt by her personally. Tara, the heroine of The Tiger's Daughter, reacts both mentally and physically to the changed scenario and in Wife, Dimple, accompanies her engineer husband to New York where she cannot easily adjust to the new ways of life. In it, Mukherjee projects her

own cultural dilemma after seven years other living in an alien culture. She was a student at Vasar, and then she became an Indian wife to her American husband, David Cartwright, who never appears in the novel, and his manifestation is shown Tara's reflections and her letter to him. The anatomy of change is visible when one reads this novel as Tara is surprised to find that she has changed in just seven years, from the time when she has been a carefree girl in Calcutta, a daughter of a wealthy tobacco manufacturer. She is to see change in an alien environment as the wife of an American, it amazes and disturbs her and later the same continues where Tara visits Darjeeling where she is to face ugly, and violent incidents, her refined sensibility is assaulted and jolted, as she has not anticipated the violence perpetrated on her. It is too big for Tara to bear the cultural shock after her return from America to reunite herself with parents, relations and friends as at the end of the novel without taking leave of all; she leaves for America in a hurry as she is confronted with the genes of her own culture. In The 'Tiger's Daughter' four important episodes are responsible for the cultural row:

1. The primary one is her visit to the burning ghats with a tea estate owner, Joven to Roy Chowdhury who decides to save her from the chaos surrounding the traditional way of life in Calcutta, but in the process unwittingly administers the first serious shock to Tara's sensibility.
2. The second episode is a picnic organized by Tiger Banerjee at his factory premises where on seeing the small snake in the swimming pool, she reacts by screaming loudly.
3. The third other shocking experiences is at Darjeeling where the Indian middle-class tourists behave rudely towards her.

4. The fourth one is her seduction by Tuntunwala at the Nayapur Guest House. In the end as she is not able to bear the cultural shock and its imbalances though born, brought up and educated in Calcutta, she develops the feeling that it is not possible to adjust to the changed conditions after her exposure to life in the West. This violent seduction damages the very fabric of Indian cultural life and culture.

Bharati Mukherjee writes in the novel *The Tiger's Daughter*: For years she had dreamed of this return to India. She had believed that all doubts, all shadows fears of the time abroad would be wiped out 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 pessimistic at twenty-two and quick to take offence. Bharati Mukherjee's 'Wife is ambitious of making a successful professional career in the States. She considers the same problem from a reversed position by portraying Dimple's marriage to Amit, an engineer. The man has all the rights and rights while the woman is states. Dimple, the faithful wife, gradually loses faith in the ambitious dreams when she finds that it is not easy for her to adjust to the American ways as the cultural and social gulf divides the two worlds to fathom her anguish and terror in such a dislocation. Marriage to Dimple "would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, fund raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love but when this promise remains unfulfilled, she turns to thoughts of America and wishes to begin life afresh there. On the contrary she decides to induce abortion." Mukherjee writes, "She began to think of the baby as incomplete business. It cluttered up the preparation for going abroad. She d want to carry any relics from her old life; given another chance she could be a more exciting person...."

Dimple's desires and hopes are always centered in a dream world where reality could not be easily comprehended. She is unable find or to realize herself in any context. She watches her husband die, her responses are still tuned to the world of advertisement and so on. The cultural-shock, experienced by her, should change her as

a woman but it fails to operate on Dimple as her personal life is marred on the one hand by her experiences in America and by her failure to have her sexual impulses gratified on the other hand, Tara's sense of cultural-shock on going abroad is identical with what the author's herself experiences under similar circumstances are. In fact, Bharati Mukherjee projects the self in *The Tiger's Daughter* as someone who encounters a double culture-shock: the first on going abroad to the USA for higher education and the second on return to India as a bride of a Canadian writer, Bharati Mukherjee's Tara, with all her emancipation and western outlook, is horrified by the coarse joking of the middle class Indian tourists when she comes across at Darjeeling.

Later, her decision to cut short her visit to India is precipitated by a sense of shock over her unsolicited seduction by Tuntunwala. Bharati Mukherjee admits, "In Canada, I experienced an awful lot of Asses were roughed up, it was there in housing, in jobs. Canada was a very hard place to a dark-skinned Asian in. After five years we moved to New York and I have never felt remorse for that decision." 12 The immigrants project the resentment of other culture and are shown in her novels as aliens to American culture due to their different cultural origin and racial identity. Mukherjee's world of immigrants and their desperate need to belong to the new world bring a sense of cross-cultural adventure in her novels. It is to be admitted that *Wife* does not begin where *The Tiger's Daughter* ends, but it moves in the opposite direction Dimple struggles to adjust to life in New York city, but the culture shock is too much for her and in the end, she is driven to despair, madness, violence and to the killing of her husband. Dimple's murder of her husband in a overanxiously charged atmosphere is almost surrealistic.

Mukherjee writes, She sneaked up on him and chose a spot, her favorite spot just under the hairline, where the mole was getting larger and browner, and she drew an imaginary line of kisses because she did not want him to think she was the impulsive, foolish sort who acted like a maniac just because the husband was suffering from insomnia. She touched the mole very lightly and let her fingers draw a circle around the delectable spot, and then she brought her right hand up and with the knife stabbed the

magical circle once, twice, seven times, each times a little harder. (Wife: 212)

Bharati Mukherjee's handling suggests that Dimple's dilemma transcends that of an individual, who is entangled in the indeterminate state of cultural-shock as she writes about the experiences and life-styles of human beings who suffer from a cultural dichotomy and rootlessness. A close experience of both the worlds—the Occident and the orient—gives Bharati Mukherjee an genuine and objective perspective with a delicious combination of malice, charm, irony and sympathy. Mukherjee admits, Life should have treated her better, should have added and subtracted in different magnitude so that she was not left with a chimera. Amit was no more than that. He did not feed her reveries; he unreal. She was furious, desperate, she fell sick. (Wife: 156)

She pushes both her heroines to the edges of their worlds with the desire to liberate them for a new world order. However, social and cultural change is a recursive process and women have to play the steering role by subjecting themselves to the overcrowded Barracoon and remain alien to themselves. Mukherjee writes, "...was a pretty pink and the flakes were mushy and would have embarrassed and advertiser, and then she saw the head fall off... women on television got away with murder"

Uniformly, Tara and Dimple are projected, as 'middle women' between two cultures and both are shown as experiencing culture shock in diametrically opposed conditions. Their disappointment in India and America in that order is not sudden but gradual, over a period of time, and by stages. Both the heroines, Tara and Dimple, take drastic steps at cultural adventure in her novels. It is to be admitted that Wife does not begin where the Tiger's Daughter ends, but it moves in the opposite direction Dimple

struggles to adjust to life in New York city, but the culture shock is too much for her and in the end, she is driven to despair, madness, violence and to the killing of her husband. Dimple's murder of her husband in a neurotically charged atmosphere is almost surrealistic. Mukherjee writes, 'She sneaked up on him and chose a spot, her favorite spot just under the hairline, where the mole was getting larger and browner, and she drew an make-believe line of kisses because she did not want him to think she was the impulsive, foolish sort who acted like a maniac just because the husband was suffering from sleeplessness. She touched the mole very lightly and let her fingers draw a circle around the delectable spot, and then she brought her right hand up and with the knife stabbed the magical circle once, twice, seven times, each times a little harder.

cross-cultural shock dilemma Mukherjee the end to away from the cultural maladjustment that enmeshes the but miserably fail in their attempts. In these novels, Bharati Mukherjee conveys a message that, the East or the West, whether she has ad traditional Indian education or studied at a prestigious America institution, the Indian woman, when facing an unfamiliar cult environment, has problems that take capricious turns. Under circumstances, no philosophy can help her, as she has to tackle be problems by herself and save her identity from cross-cultural shock dilemma in a derelict world of fantasy and unfamiliar people.

References:

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