



The glimpse of immigration in the works of Bharati Mukherjee

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ABSTRACT

The present study and honest attempt to examine how in her novel, Bharati Mukherjee has been widely acknowledged as a voice of expatriate-immigrant sensibility. Bharati Mukherjee's novels offer yet another proof of her genuine interest in exploring the theme of cultural confrontation in the context of a historical novel writer. She attempts a kind of re-discovering of Indian treasure and art collections and manages to locate the most perfect diamond in the world kept in a museum. Her fiction makes a very violent attempt to chronical struggles of the immigrants and their sincere effort at attempt to assimilate themselves in the melting pot. Bharati Mukherjee has been widely acknowledged as a voice of expatriate-immigrant sensibility. Bharati Mukherjee has been widely acknowledged as a voice of expatriate-immigrant sensibility.

Keywords: Bharati Mukherjee, Immigration, Canada

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian author, Bharati Mukherjee occupies a unique position among her literary "the foremost chronicler of the colleagues as multicultural New America". In Canada she always felt a resident alien:

"For a commonwealth citizen like me becoming Canadian took no more than five minutes in an unpretentious office. A maternal French-Canadian uncle insisted over my protests that Indian citizens were British subjects. In the end undid the work of generations of martyred freedom fighters. Pledged loyalty to the British Queen and became a Canadian citizen. In Canada I feel isolated. Separate in the vastness of this upper populated country. I cannot bring myself to snowshoe or ski, Unspoilt nature terrifies me. I have not yet learned the words of the national anthem. In Canada I am both too visible and too invisible, I am brown. I cannot disappear in a rush hour Montréal crowd. The media has made me self-conscious about racism. I detect arrogance in the slow-footedness of sales clerks. I am tired of being exotic. Being voice, complimented for qualities of education, bearing, and appearance that are not extraordinary."

She wrote her first novel. 'The Tiger's Daughter' in 1975 and the next "Wife" in 1975. Notwithstanding the 'cordial reception' of her first two new novels. Ten years passed before the publication of her third piece of fiction. In between she produced works of other genres and non-fictional writing in collaboration with her husband – 'Days and Nights' in Calcutta in 1977.

"Kautilya's concept of Diplomacy" A New Interpretation (1976). Her decision not to write fiction temporarily was not made by choice for Canada had, by the 1970s become, for the author, a place of Rabid Racial Discrimination'. As a result of the influx of South Asian immigrants into Canada. Frightening outbursts' of 'paki-bashing' and 'dot-busting' towards Asian by white Canadians started taking place. She tells Alison Carb:

"The 1970s were horrendous years for Indians in Canada. There was a lot of bigotry against Canadian citizens of Indian origin. Especially in Toronto and it upset me terribly when I encountered this or saw other people experiencing it."

She noticed a 'pattern of discrimination' for she was refused service in stores. And 'I would have to board a bus last when I had been the first person in line. Bharati Mukherjee wrote an article, "An invisible women" on racial strife in Canada. An essay "Invisible Woman" is a blistering reflection on those years. She writes: "Many including myself left (Canada) unable to keep our twin halves together."

This essay appeared in Saturday Night and won her the National Magazine Award. She recalled that in the US, an Asian woman could stay in hostels and not be handled out of elevators but "it is one that my years in Canada, and specially my two years in Toronto have made me grateful for..."

I know Canadians all too well, which of us has not been harassed at customs? On a summers night. Which of us can walk down 'Yonge Street' without cartloads of stone youths shouting out insults?

Spite of this, she still remains a Canadian citizen, with dual Citizenship (US and Canadian). In sharp contrast to this. US stimulated a different reaction.

"The US was violent. Mindlessly. Macho, 'conformist: 'lawless if I am not exempt from victimization here, neither are Clark or my sons and neither am I exempt from redress. I am less shocked, less outraged and shaken to the core by a purse-snatching in New York City in which I lost all my dowry gold —than I was by a simple question asked of me in the summer of 1978 by three high school boys in Toronto. "Why don't you go back to Africa?". It hurt because of its calculation. Its calm, ignorant satisfaction. Its bland assumption of the right to break into I was violated my privacy. In New York. Because of my suspected affluence and my obviously foreign, needless. Non-defensiveness.

The Canadians do not feel shy in their rhetoric. Bharati Mukherjee while talking about immigrants discovered that in polite company she was an "East Indian" (the opposite presumably of a West Indian) and in impolite company she was 'a Paki', a British slur Unknown in America. In an official Green paper on immigration and population she was called "a visible minority" from a non-traditional area of immigration who calls into question the "absorptive capacity" of Canada. Asian Canadians were assumed not to exist and not to have a legitimate opinion to offer. Most Indians were faced violence, physical assaults. The spitting the name calling bricks through the windows. Pushing and 'Shoving on the subways' the government gave implied consent to racism expressing deep agony. The author said:

I cannot describe the agony and the betrayal one feels. Hearing one spoken of by one's own country as being somehow exotic to its nature a burden. A cause for the serious concern, It may have been satirically softened. It may have been academic in tone, but in feeling it was Nuremberg. In that ill-tempered debate, the government itself appropriated the language, the reasoning, the motivation that had belonged to disreputable fringe grounds.

Mukherjee came to Canada in the late 1960s with the desire to be accepted as a Canadian writer. There were practical reasons for choosing Canada too. Blaise had roots in Montreal and Mukherjee got an offer to teach at McGill University.

In Montreal everything was perfect in the ways that young academic experts think to be. Clark and I both had good jobs, a nice house, Children in private school. Guess we were yuppies before the word was thought up. Multicultural yuppies of that. But the nice house and the job security marked Bharati Mukherjee's growing concerns about her future in Canada. Even after having published two novels "The Tiger's Daughter" and "Wife", she Still felt an Outsider on the Canadian literary scene. She was insulted by Canada, Council letters to Mrs. Bharati Blaise. The conclusion that she drew was:

"If you don't have a family compact nature. Forget about joining us. If you don't have a Canadian content, forget about publishing here ---ACBC television interviewer was rude point blank: How can you call yourself a Canadian writer if you did not play in snow as a child.... How do you justify taking grants and then not writing about Canada?"

Bharati Mukherjee feels that Indian writers had not yet achieved the ease that would permit them to write of the self and the expanding consciousness. She insists that should be read as the nominal setting in Calcutta and New York City. But in the mind of the heroine, it was always Toronto. In the United States she was not considered a grubby. Dishonest, Smelly, baby- breeding, job-snatching, and unassimilable malcontent.

She believes, America trusts confrontation, its rough sense of justice derives from slugging it out. It that seem in retrospect, tolerates contradiction that seem in retrospect, monstrous. Perhaps it trusts to the constitution and the knowledge that somehow, someday, that document will resolve all difficulties.

Bharati Mukherjee admits that if ever there was a City that she should have been happy in, it was Toronto. But she said: *"When you are part of the Canadian and Toronto underbelly, invisible obvious. You can't afford a white man's delusions."*

Bharati Mukherjee, Therefore, had no regrets about her decision to immigrate to the United States. "Canada and the US have very different ways of treating newcomers. Very different to the responses threat of Europeanization. "She told Sybil Steinberg. "Here diversity is accepted. The melting pot helps the newcomers to feel more welcome." And she proudly announces. "After all am the melting pot lady." Yet in spite of the primary realities of Canada space and cold made and continue to make impression on the writers. The cold unfriendliness of a foreign land is not going to drive the immigrants away. They are determined to endure hardships until they are accepted. Until. In fact. Canada is no longer a white country.