

A British Became an Indian Assimilated view in BaratiMukerjee's novel :*The Tree Bride*

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Abstract

The Tree Bride is one of the famous novels of Bharati Mukherjee. She is an Indian-born American novelist and Diaspora writer. Her most of the novels deal with Diasporic and immigrant concept. Jasmine, Wife and Leave it to me are the best example of diasporic and immigrant experience. The Tree Bride is sequel to Desirable Daughters and it revolves around the story of British India and its colonizer. Tara Lata is the protagonist of The Tree Bride as well as the other two novels of BharatiMukerjee. John Mist is an important character in this novel, an immigrant from England to India, later he has assimilated into Indian. He is completely submissive to Indian culture, tradition, clothing, language. Tara Chatterjee is the narrator and protagonist of the novel, enquired about her ancestor Tara Ganguly and found the life of John Mist through his diary. John Mist has come to India as the British ruler later he has been changed into Indian. This paper revolves around, how a British ruler John Mist has changed and fought for Indians. He sacrificed his life for Mistigunj. It is named after him. John Mist is completely dislocated from his native.

The aim of the paper is to analyze Tara Lata, the heroine of the novel, who got assimilated in her own country itself. Being Tree Bride of Mistigunj supposes to be at home only, but she is the women of more power and brave and participated in Indian freedom movement. The valuable jewels of Tara have been buried in the forest for many years, later she gave it to Gandhian non-violence movement. It visualizes the transformation of orthodoxed Brahmin woman(tree bride) into freedom fighter.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper finds the assimilated characters and their transformation from immigrant into Indian. India is the country of always giving welcome to each and every one from all over the world. There is a famous proverb on India is "Unity in Diversity". It always opens its entrance for the people from all over the world. East India Company one among that who came to India for the trade purpose but slowly they dominated our country. Bharati Mukherjee brings this story of The Tree Bride from colonial and post colonial period of India. We know the tyrant and strict officers of British, but here we are going to find a British ruler fights for Indians, lived his life for Bengal and sacrificed his verve for the same.

BharatiMukerjee portrays some other characters in this novel related with the theme of assimilation they are Vertie Tread Well, Tara Lata, and Caughlin .Tara is the heroine of The Tree Bride and Desirable Daughters and the narrator of the second one.This novel starts with the bomb blast and it provides the detail of Tara Lata her ancestral great great aunt. This research is done by the method of analytical study and proper guidance is made to do the research well.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

BaratiMukerjee is an Indian- born American diasporic novelist and short story writer. Her most of the novels deal with the theme of self identity,

immigrant, assimilation, dislocation and displacement. she is the winner of national book critic circle award. The Tree Bride is the historical novel based on colonial and post colonial period. It weaves the history of Tara Gangooly and her life in Mistigunj. Tigers Daughters, Desirable Daughters and The Tree Bride are the trilogy of Bharati Mukherjee. Tara is the protagonist of The Tree Bride as well as Desirable daughters. It is incomprehensive without knowing the story of desirable daughters because the story of The Tree bride starts with the bomb blast in California house where BishChaterjee, Tara and Rabi live where as Desirable Daughters ends with the bomb blast while TaraChaterjee reconciled with him. Tara Chaterjee enquires the reason for bomb blast, later she came to know about her great-great aunt Tara Ma. She has acknowledged some papers, scripts and other letters from her new gynecologist Dr.VictoriaKanna which is given by her grand fatherVetri Treadwell. Victoria's husband YashKanna is computer master of Tara's husband BishChaterjee. Bish has great respect and gratitude on YashKanna the husband of Dr.Victoria. BharatiMukerjee connects Victoria with Tara by the name of Mistigunj apart from Doctor and patient relation ship. Vetri Tread Well is the grandfather of Victoria Khanna and appointed as a collector of Calcutta and had been there for more than fifty yearsThe Tree Bride initiates with the story of Bomb blast where BishChaterjee is severely wounded and crippled on wheel chair. Tara Chaterjee has gone to Rishikesh with Bish and her son Rabi to find her great-great-aunt Tara Ma. She is called as Tree Bride of Mistigunj and later as 'Tara Ma' and the goddesses of Mistigunj. She is married to Sundari trees at the age of five after her bridegroom is dead by snake bite.

"Tree Bride was my mother's collateral great aunt, meaning that she was one of many dozen children from at least ten wives kept by my great grandfather, Jai Krishna gangly".(28)

III. DISPLACEMENT IN TREE BRIDE

Displacement means People move from one place to another place to improve their life or any other purpose whereas they have to leave their original or native and enter into the new place, culture, tradition, attitudes, language and the different ways of life.

Vetri Treadwell is the character presented by Mukerjee as the best paradigm of displacement. It involves the life of a person who is entirely changed from a particular place to another new place and he or she forgets his or her own native.

"A man like Vertie lived without women, Victoria says it is a pathology of misogyny. They lived without love. It is the tragedy of the Raj."(160)

Vetri Tread Well almost spent ninety percent of his life in India and he had been there as District commissioner of Bengal from 1930 to 1947. He was born and brought up in India and both the parents were buried here. He had been as district collector for Mistigunj and has participated in many of India's greatest movements. Tara Chatterjee knows many interesting things about Vertie Tread Well by the papers which are given by Victoria Kanna.

"I am one of the Indian-born. Fully ninety percent of my life has been spent in India than Mr.Nehru has, and certainly more than the late Mr.Gandhi has."(201)

He fought against the colonial rulers whenever he feels inconvenient. He hates Indians by the name sectarianism because he thought that there is no tolerance between those people. Vetri Tread Well is not willing to come back to his native country even after India got freedom. Tread Well-liked to do morning ride, and fond of the environment in Calcutta he wanted to live his remaining life until he got a letter from the British government. The places where ever he was working he tried to introduce moral values, virtues, healthy competition, respect for rulers, gentle acceptance of defeat, modesty in victory. He received a letter from London.

Gentlemen, the British Raj is ended. You will vacate your offices and surrender keys to your subordinate native staff. Respect the men who replace you. It is understandable that bonds of affection and nostalgia might impede the smooth transfer of power. We Trust you to exercise more than normal restraint. Bear in mind you are officers of the crown, not of the republic of India or Pakistan, and are expected to behave such. (173)

According to Vetri Treadwell, India is a permanent place and he never thinks about his return to own country. He felt the shame of going to his home country it can be seen from the following lines

“It’s this blasted footpath,” he cried out. Look at it! It is a bloody shame. I could have been killed.”(178)

Vertie Treadwell was called the lion by his own rulers because he is a multi-talented and skilled person, he knew climbing, swimming, hunting acted according to the situation. He had been there and thought that India is the permanent place and refused to leave it in the beginning. There is a drastic change in his behavior, once he left India he forget it completely. Vetri Treadwell once left India never thinks about it again and never has the idea of coming to India.

“Vertie Tread well as a tiger. He hunted alone. No herds of prey paraded in front of him. He was an excellent absolute master of his territory, tolerating no other males, and he could personally manage any leopards and hyenas that impinged.”(181)

IV. VIEW OF ASSIMILATION

Cultural assimilation involves a gradual change depending on the circumstances of the group or individual. Whether it is desirable for a given group to assimilate is often disputed by both the members of a group and those of the dominant group.

John Mist is an immigrant from England and introduced in the middle of the story of *The Tree Bride* by Barati Mukerjee. He is the best illustration of assimilation. He is an orphan and came to India as

a young boy. He has a chance of coming out to sea voyage with other colonial rulers Tom Crabb, Queen of Victoria, Olivia Todd, sea Captain Patridge. Olivia Todd is would be of Todd Nugent who is eagerly waiting for her arrival. Unfortunately, the ship met with a pirates attack. Captain Patridge and Olivia Todd is missing and declared as dead. John Mist is the only survivor of that ship and familiar with Olivia Todd. John Mist was invited to identify the missing would be of Todd Nugent among the group of ladies. Todd Nugent is eagerly waiting to know about her from the mouth of John Mist. The reply made by Mist is the disappointment to him. Todd Nugent is angry with him and John Mist was sent to Hickey Home for orphans to learn a useful trade. His probation period is three years and it is the second time in his life admitted to an orphanage. After some year John mist is appointed as an officer in Mistigunj its name is called after the name of john Mist. He is the reason for the creation of Mistigunj it is one of the beautiful villages surrounds by rivers, schools, and thick green forests.

Jack Snow is the youngest in that group became known as John Mist. The travelers were going to reach Calcutta, unexpectedly they met with pirates attack. Three months later Jack snow came to know that Todd-Nugent the would-be of Olivia, one of the travelers in the group brought charges against the survivors of that attack jack Snow the young innocent boy died that night, a charming young man John Mist was born on that same day. Readers come to know about Mist through his Mist Nama, which is written in Bengali and later translated into English.

“Mist-nama was no less flamboyant; the mini-epic of a poor English boy’s life.”(66)

John Mist’s assimilation happens from dislocation to relocation. Usually, assimilation happens from East to West, but Bharati Mukherjee gives it in a different way. Normally British rulers were strict and rude towards Indian but this John Mist is entirely different because he is always thinking about the welfare of Indians.

“Many Britishers came to India and became more Indian than natives, learning the languages, practicing religions, eating the food and fathering half Indian children from a virtual of bibles” (63)

Mist determined that a well-run society should have a professional class teacher, physician a newspaper and reporter to write in English, Bengali, Persian and of course lawyers. He did many things for the development of Mistigunj. John Mist completely dislocated from his native. Dislocation means immigrants undergo changes in their lives geographical as well as cultural. A dislocation happens twice in the life of John Mist first one is during his three-month voyage then His arrival to MistiGunj. His life slowly changed from dislocation to assimilation.

“Mistigunj is the story of John Mist”(65)

The life history of John Mist is written as “Mist nama”. It is no less flamboyant; the mini-epic of a poor English boy’s life. John Mist was taken for Indian as the British ruler and he never behaved like a tyrant ruler, always worked for the benefit of Mistigunj and its development. He is never suspected as Britisher because he made Bengal his home and changed his language from English to Bengali. (Mukherjee)

“Such a man was John Mist and the village he created is that magical word in my native language, my desk, my unseen home”(55)

John Mist is the person who always resolves the opposition between Hindu and Muslim of India. He served the best to the Indians, at last, he sacrificed his soul for Indians. The mist was hanged by the British, where Tara Ma was killed. Mist’s assimilation gives the best gift of death later he was considered as the martyr of Mistigunj.

“Mist decided that a well-run society needed a professional class: teachers; doctors; a newspaper and journalist to write in English, Bengali, and Persian; and, of course, lawyers.”(63)

John Mist created such a village that has all facilities with a beautiful environment, a better landscape and has a thick forest at the backdrop. He respects all the religions and people of Mistigunj. Once the British rulers extract Indian goods and squeezed the labor's work Mist was holding his hand for Indians.

“John Mist simply counted his fortune in a different way. He spoke of a legacy, not of profits.”(64)

John Mist is not directly appeared in this novel, we come to know about him through Hajji an aged man in Mist Gunj who lived in the lifetime of TaraLata and John Mist and knew all the problems faced by both.

Coughlin admits about his Indianness:

Coughlin is another character in Tree Bride is born and brought up as British but later has been changed into Indian. Caughlin

"I am of the church of England in India. I am a devotee of the goddess Durga. All of my life I have been looking for a suitable faith, and I (Placeholder1)

His assimilation into the Indian culture is depicted in not only his tiring Indian clothes but also in his stay in India even after 1947. He wanted to spend his remaining life in India and he adapted the customs, mannerisms, tradition, culture, and everything. He accustomed to Indian. language, clothing, people, food and the environment.

"Nigel Coughlin had managed to stay on and even to become an Indian citizen, one of the first ex-Britishers to fully Indianize in 1947 (273).

Bharati Mukherjee also refers to many British planters for whom:

Calcutta was the only place in the world that treated them the way they saw themselves, like devoted royalty returning from exile. Their good old days became our good old days. Their nostalgia became ours, their irony and cynicism a mark of our own worldliness (24).

CONCLUSION

Bharati Mukherjee has portrayed these characters with the assimilated point of view at a great level. Usually, writers express the native people became changed into other country people. Here the characters are presented with reversal order. One can find the real cultural and traditional value through this novel. Tara Lata, TaraGangoolly, John Mist, Vetri Treadwell Coughlin are characters of assimilation. All of them entirely changed and accepted new culture, traditions, rituals, language and behavior, and customs. Bharati Mukherjee created all the characters, situations, actions and settings perfectly suitable to the mentioned theme. She shows in characters who are British Immigrants in India and how they have completely assimilated into Indian culture.

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