

# TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S THE TIGER'S DAUGHTER

**Dr. Neha Arora**

Assistant Professor of English

Central University of Rajasthan, India

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## Abstract

*Mukherjee transports the divergence and skirmish of two cultures and speaks that the two are harmonizing to each other. She epitomizes a cross – section of women who live in a perpetual dilemma, finding no port to be her neither the world she belongs to nor the world she aspires for. She is beautiful, talented and graceful, yet the man to whom she is married is unmindful of her. In the beginning, Indians reacted with suspicion and hesitation towards learning English, but gradually they grasped the reasonableness, need and benefits of English. There is a minor elaboration of the modern exodus as its theme. The themes are not complicated but they have been incorporated into a single story. The themes are not complicated but they have been incorporated into a single story. The writer is acutely aware of the awakened feminine sensibility in a constantly changing traditional Indian society. She is also aware of the double pulls that the Indian woman is subject to; between tradition and modernity, between Indian and Western ways of living and values. Mukherjee emphasizes on the datum that traditions play a vivacious role in individual's progress and the development of society because it decides the path and pace of the progress of society.*

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In the beginning, Indians reacted with suspicion and hesitation towards learning English, but gradually they grasped the reasonableness, need and benefits of English. Her themes and disquiets are distinctive. The tannery is the sign of modernity and the protagonist's outmoded village is on the other lateral. There is a minor elaboration of the modern exodus as its theme. The themes are not complicated but they have been incorporated into a single story. The writer is acutely aware of the awakened feminine sensibility in a constantly changing traditional Indian society. She is also aware of the double pulls that the Indian woman is subject to; between tradition and modernity, between Indian and Western ways of living and values. Indian writers too started to express their views about the status of a woman in society.

Overall, Tara is a kind of woman who is caught in the web which life has offered to her to remain in between her choice and social constrains. She has woven up various cultural fabrics in her novels. Her courage to expose the hypocritical Indian society is remarkable. She has the guts to raise her voice of protest against the gradual decay of the individual, groups and other units of family and society. Thought and emotion constitute the basic part of her plot. The novel peeps into the lives of the Indian society with its rites

and customs, and the tradition and patriarchal domination. The women in her novels neither asserts their lives nor do they aspire for renewed and vigorous lives.

In the novel *The Tiger's Daughter* Tara's love with an American and her subsequent love marriage initially makes her devious as she could not communicate her innate feeling about India and her rich and traditional culture. Her husband asks many questions about Indian customs and traditions. This makes her feel insecure in an alien atmosphere. Tara attempts to find solace and comfort through her trip to India after a gap of seven years. Tara's trauma has started earlier even in America. She dreams of her return to India to fill in the space that she felt in the Americanized life. Being the only daughter of the Bengal tiger, a tobacco Potentate, she cannot question her father's decision to send her to the United States for studies at the young age of fifteen. A frail, sensitive girl of India traveling to the sensational atmosphere of America puts Tara in a restless and lonely situation. This is an 'unsalvageable mistake' (TTD 10).

Tara's home is not her home now. Her hometown is not hers. Tara's notion of identity is very chaotic in an immigrant perspective. She feels her uprooted condition. She experiences bitterness through her immigration. Her attention towards studies and her marriage with an American do not provide relief for her homesickness.

Marriage begins the journey of life, not the decisive end of the scrap of life. Therefore, each must have the necessary knowledge, courage and determination to face the waves of the sea of marriage. Married life is a combination of pleasure and pain. If an individual succumbs to a sense of fear when faced with problems and if he becomes disheartened when confronted with difficulties he is reduced to the position of a coward. Pleasure and pain are inherent in this kind of bond. But only intelligent and discerning persons have the patience and skill to treat the family bonds as their means of happiness. To the ignorant, these bonds bring misery and unhappiness as they bind them hard. Therefore, one has to conclude that it is only the wife and husband who are capable of making their married life happy. It is sheer stupidity to think that married life can be a sojourn in Paradise from the very moment of marriage. Both the partners have to use all the talents to make it a success. Sacrifices have to be made. Each has to understand the mental make-up of the other. Tolerance, patience, capacity to adjust and a spirit of harmony are essential. At first, they must have a clear appreciation of their circumstances. If such wisdom is to arise, they must seek the knowledge of the world. Tara's distance from her home is the primary reason for her depression. Her longing to return home and her expectations to visit places of her past culture are the burning quests which make Tara plan a visit to India.

Tara in *Tiger's Daughter* marries David precipitately and a precipitate choice many a time proves to be a problematic one. Likewise, Tara finds doubt, fear, suspicion, and misunderstanding in her relationship with David. Tara, as a young wife is unable to adjust herself to the demands of marriage in the host culture. She is a sensitive soul oppressed by the foreign atmosphere. She finds herself dispossessed in her married life. A dispossessed psyche leads to a depressed psyche. Immigration, alienation, loneliness, despair, loss of identity in America again put her in a position to decide impulsively. This time also the impulsive decision proves to be traumatic and problematic. Tara hovers between two cultures. She fails to participate actively in the new environment. Though it might not be so very easy to get involved, one has to lose inhabitations and get more involved in the surroundings. Tara's loss of identity is due to her lack of ability to preserve, cosset and love the inherited culture. Her rigidity of coveting Indian culture puts her in an unfavorable condition. She is very determined in not mingling her Indian thoughts with American reality. The stubborn decision of Tara to return home is the outburst of the suppression in her mind that holds nostalgic memories of India.

In a family with many children, the man will have no problems other than the financial. But the woman has several problems. She loses her health. She has to spend a lot of time in rearing children. She has to suffer the indignities and insults hurled by her annoyed husband. As a mother, she is much more affected by the illness of the undernourished and enfeebled children. The woman works from morn to eve to run the home and to rear the children. Man's labour is counted. Her labour is not taken into account. But then, a working woman's lot is much more difficult. She returns home tired after heavy work in her office or factory or field, yet she is forced to assume domestic duties at once. Running the home is her job and not her husband's, even if he were unemployed. Thus, a working woman bears the burden double in magnitude to that of man. Modernity, scientific outlook, rationalistic view, philosophical thought is conspicuous by their absence among women. Literature of the later days has given prominence to social reforms. Present-day Literature represents socialist and egalitarian thought.

Tara experiences a hyphenated existence in New York. The ironical aspect of the novel is that Tara experiences the same hyphenated existence in India too. This leads Tara to experience broken identities. This experience of broken identity leads Tara to experience the trauma in her journey of immigration. The novel is raised round the persistent model of the forfeiture of identity; precise distressing events of being an outsider in her own country, repetition of multiple events of painful and fearful exposure of home country makes Tara a traumatized character. Tara undergoes a dormant antique of postmodern

ordeal and is thus unable to return to the origin. *The Tiger's Daughter* fits literary and life story models of traumatic representation. Tara suffers as one who has been traumatized.

Traditionally it was believed that women were speckled in character from men. This was a proper stipulation because it was continued, they were here on earth for a special motive than a man. A woman's knack to scrap back is her major strength. Today's woman has not only traversed the so-called card of a housewife in fact has become a household manager. Mukherjee in her novel depicts no woman is less than a man in provisos of managerial skills. Women in Mukherjee's novels show how psychosomatic alteration and personal bureau that subsist beyond political and social repercussion. She has depicted the important influences in her life of the images and ideas of her childhood in India and the experiences of the great traditions of the Indian Mythology and literature. Her awareness of these experiences and influences enriches her stories and novels. The writer's extreme knowledge about Indian Miniature art is best revealed in her characterization of female characters.

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