

CULTURAL IDENTITY, DIASPORA, AND IDENTITY CRISIS IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S *DESIRABLE DAUGHTERS*

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ABSTRACT

Women Immigrants endeavor to leave their countries to achieve freedom, equality, and a better life and opportunity in a new country. They face unanticipated conditions of diaspora and culture shock. People have to be willing to endure or sacrifice a part of their past so that they can step into better stamina. Bharati Mukherjee examines her protagonists through a long process from the first space (Indian) to the third space (American). The protagonists face the dilemma of the modern world when they are involved with American life. Two of the three sisters change from an Indian desirable daughter to a free Indian-American woman. They are caught between past and present, tradition and modernity. They can break several traditional norms and codes, however, they do not separate themselves from Indian norms. This study scrutinizes each female protagonist through the lens of the post-colonial transcultural theories primarily by Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha. The female's attitudes and actions are examined through the key concepts of Ambivalence and Difference, Hybridity, and Third Space. The three sisters have different ways of thinking, behavior, and decision-making which direct their futures, therefore, the writer offers two options: rejection or hybrid identity. Parvati rejects the new culture, and Padma and Tara accept both, the new culture(American) and the old one (Indian), but at different levels.

KEYWORDS: *Ambivalence, Bharati Mukherjee, Cultural Identity, Diaspora, Difference, Hybridity, Postcolonial, Third Space.*

INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates the diasporic subjectivity and cultural identity crisis represented in Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*. The novel unravels the story of three sisters who are settled in different countries. They withstand to discover their identities and endeavour to change their future as they realize their marginal situation and transfer roles in society and family. Both sisters, Tara and Padma, do their best to harmonize with the new culture. On the contrary, Parvati is not willing to adapt to the U.S.A; she feels uneasy and worried while losing her adopted home in the host land.

The protagonist Tara, the narrator of the novel, carries the readers deep into the difficulties of the new land and seems to drift rootless with time. Tara's fluid identity testifies not only to her own but also to the fluidity of the immigrants. Despite her conventional upbringing, she carries pride in moving forward. The portrait of her valuable family shapes a safety fence around her that disguises the hazardous vulnerable self. Tara's quest through the process of displacement and migration results in a hybrid identity; that is to say, she is neither here nor there, neither present nor absent. Still, wherever she moves, she exposes different spaces, a space of loss and space of past, a space of self and space of other. Disparity not only leads to separation but also leads to alienation and rebirth in a new land, new culture, new society and adaptation in a

foreign land.

Mukherjee concentrates on the alternative manners to pertain to cultural hybridity and the 'third space of enunciation' sign of multicultural significance and the post-colonial condition (Bhabha, 1994, p.54). Clifford claims that the patriarchies and traditional ambiguous pasts and futures can catch diasporic women. They connect and disconnect, forget and remember, in complex, strategic ways (Clifford, 1999, p.227). Likewise, Tara finds herself caught between the traditional and patriarchal histories of her past home and the legends created by her husband in the amassed home. She cuts short the story by giving up and, in turn, gets sluggish in a relationship of retrofitting with a man who leaves her alone in her necessities. Avtar Brah argues that the identity of an imagined diasporic society is far from fixed or pre-existing. One can differentiate diasporas, diversity, and challenged spaces, even though one may entangle them in forming a public (Lazure, 2006, pp. 94-97).

Bharati Mukherjee intertwines past and present, old and new, transforming and recreating the objective of cultural magnitude. Tara strives to reconfigure her purpose as a transcultural and transnational subject and efforts to penetrate the narrative upon her experience as a diasporic shuttle. She is a frustrated woman decreasing the alternative survival norms within times, places, and identity negotiations through the process of migration. Tara seeks hard to remain in the translational space after substantial dislocations and ruptures.

II. DIFFERENCE AND AMBIVALENCE

In the context of the Oedipus complex, Freud acknowledges the parental status as both love objects and objects of pursuit; thereby, he settles ambivalence into the very centre of the process. 'Identification is, in fact, ambivalent from the very start (Freud, 1921/1991, p. 134). Identity is not an essentialist. However, it is a strategic and positional matter. That is to say, literally opposite to what seems to be its fixed semantic career. That idea of identity does not sound like the stable body of the self, unravelling from beginning to end through all the unexpected events of the past without modification; the little of the self which often stays similar, identical to itself across time (Hall, 1990, p.3). On the contrary, one can construct their identities through difference and only through the relation to the other; through the relation to it is not, to specifically it lacks, it is the exterior and 'positive' meaning of any term: and accordingly, they can construct their self-integrities (Derrida, 1981; Laclau, 1990; Butler, 1993).

The central contention progressed is that 'difference' is a matter because it is crucial to creating meaning: without 'difference', implying could not withstand. Saussure argues that the purpose of the binary opposition such as white/black is apparent, not because there is some smell of 'blackness' but because one can differentiate it from its white opposite. Saussure believed that meaning is relational. The difference between the binary oppositions signifies and carries the meaning" (Hall, 1997, p. 234).

Bharati Mukherjee depicts India as a different land with peace, spiritual integrity, and a diversity of traditions and languages that the American population would never be able to appreciate. Therefore, Tara faced alienation and separation, especially from the beginning of the process of immigration and diaspora. Tara asserts: 'I am tired of explaining India to Americans. I am sick of feeling like an alien.' (p. 87).

Now in an alien land and culture, Tara starts to understand her limitations and struggle against the firm roots of culture and tradition. The differences between the two cultures and societies place Tara in a problematic and ambivalent

situation. On one side, she tries to forgo; on the other, she does not understand the condition. She fails to communicate her loneliness and discomfort to those around her. Like any other emigrant in America, Tara also has to go through estrangement and loneliness. At times she feels as if she is not one with her surroundings and those around her are distinct, and she cannot associate with the milieu. Tara says:

"I felt as though I was lost inside a Salman Rushdie novel, a once firm identity smashed by hammer blows, melted down and re-emerging as something wondrous, or grotesque" (p. 195).

All three sisters take immense pride in being Indians, and any outrageous American act is unacceptable to them. However, Tara and Padma cannot let go of their habits and tastes picked up in India. Even after twenty-five years of living in America, Padma still wears a sari and a bun. She runs a community channel with a typical soap opera for the Bengalis in America, which again is an attempt to keep the Indian culture alive. A fear constantly lurks in Padma's mind regarding her sister becoming an American.

Americans do not realize the group differences and deal with all Asians as a uniform group. Difference provokes Tara to feel a sense of estrangement, uncertainty, and confusion; she says: "Nafisa's mother and I don't speak the same dialect. We don't even speak the same language. I am tired of explaining India to Americans; "I am sick of feeling an alien" (p. 87).

That subtracts her anguish and mental difficulties as she realizes hard to find peace in the alien climate and feels nervous and isolated. Now she is behaved as a pariah by the Atherton wives. Initially deceived by the glamour, Tara is currently irrigated with too much Westernization and moans about losing ethical and spiritual integrity. Tara finds herself caught between ritual and the pull of contemporary life. She performs many things which are incompatible with her native culture. Tara separates from her husband after a decade of marriage, volunteers as a teacher in a preschool, and starts with Andy, a Hungarian Buddhist. That bestows a feeling that she has smoothly understood American life. However, many of her efforts seem to be contradictory. She is shocked at her sister's sceptical affair, finds herself powerless to slap her son, being an Indian mother, and calls her ex-husband by his name after divorce. Yet, she is pretty relaxed while remembering her lovers and prefers Western clothing and food.

All these acts show how she feels arrested between the two cultures and does not recognize where she belongs. She finds herself a total outsider and a lost spirit. Tara learns that she is now neither Indian nor genuinely American. She cannot fully accept the adopted country's culture due to the chaos arising from settling the two communities. The fatherland culture has already shaped her personality, modes, and identity, which are challenging to let pass. For example, Tara's traditional Bengali culture does not let her withstand the uncouth sight of some girls' lighting up cigarettes from a man in the U.S. The recall of this event prepares her to reminisce, " in Calcutta, a man brushing up against a woman in a rush-hour bus or tram might cause a riot" (p. 80). Tara breaks tradition in many ways but remains tied to her native country.

"I'm feeling just a little alien and uncomfortable, a tinge of not belonging, amid such welcoming comfort" Thus, loneliness brings more excellent isolation in their life of Tara, and she feels alienated in American society. She seeks solace outside the traditional world of austerity and self-preservation. In India, the details of religion, caste, sub-caste, mother tongue, place of birth are all integral parts of a man's personality, and one cannot dare to go beyond them.

Through the life of her two sisters, Parvati and Padma, and other characters, Tara observes her problem of self-recognition as an immigrant. She repeatedly asserts her intention to seek consolation in her born traditions. In Tara's realization, the novel discloses the spaces of ritual, self-recollections, places, lifestyles, modernity and rituals. She relinquishes in the nostalgic romanticism of the past, the inverted story of mobility, existential misery, hybrid subjectivity and the prevalence of Tara's psychic and physical dividedness. In Mukherjee's diaspora poetics, denial of the nativity and ineptitude to deal with the new circumstance make the theme of cultural identity more influential and poignant in mainstream American life.

In its opening epigraph, Mukherjee evokes tradition as challenging to follow and as a felt necessity. The epigraph to the novel, a Sanskrit verse approved by Octavio Paz, contributes insight into an emigrant's quest for identity and authenticity. Tara has lost herself; she feels lonely and ambivalent; she, however, still endeavours to find her way: 'No one behind, no one ahead. The path the ancients cleared has closed. And the other path, everyone's path, Easy and wide, goes nowhere. I am lone and find my way.'

Neither the Indian tradition nor the American convention can drive happiness unless one discovers their way of living, which is inescapably a pursuit of the strategic setting of culture. Globalization has created a 'Third space' to dissipate beyond the known 'location' and 'space.' The third space is a condition of 'enunciative split' to take from each other's lineage and fasten it together into one's ancestry in the location of their culture (Bhabha, 1994, p. 53). Tara languishes to produce the sense of belonging she desperately strives for in America. She fails to be consumed beyond 'base-superstructure division' (p. 316) and stays unrepresented in the 'transnational totality.' Far from the 'enunciative split' situation, her Americanization remains tricky, despite all her endeavours at assimilation. At the end of the story, Tara appears to understand that there is no simple explanation for her pursuit. Tara's story is that of a completely untraditional Bengali -American who has revolted against the life of an Indian woman with her affairs with Andy and several other men in multi-ethnic neighborhoods practically compatible with rebellion.

What Tara has conveyed is that American people look at Indian immigrants differently. She said that her American friends always considered her Indianness amusing and appalling. Moreover, her being South Asian turns out to be invisible in the eye of the white people. Thus, it unconsciously influences how Tara sees the world. Being different in the middle of the homogeneity makes her inferior. That inferiority grows insecurity in Tara's self.

Tara does not define herself as an Asian; she claims to be all things or does not want to belong. Tara's potentiality leads her to hide her identity as an Indian (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 78); because she feels insecure about her identity. The situation makes Tara pretend as if she is another one. In the following pages, Tara confirms that "she is sick of being invisible; nobody pays attention to me other than to ask for spare change or press a handbill into my closed fist. I am tired of explaining India to Americans. I am sick of feeling an alien" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 79). On one hand, she is insecure about being 'The Other'; on the other hand, she tries to overcome it by making herself over to become someone else. She is someone with a progressive character in the novel, even though she feels anxious. Tara needs transformation and progress, and she does everything which is—she thinks—is right and good for her.

The first point she wants to convey is that the Americans do not consider her there. She feels that everybody is ignorant of her just because she is Indian. The second point is that she thinks she is an alien. Every time she meets Americans, she has to explain India to them like India is not a part of the world. Thus, it makes her feel like an alien and

sick of it. Being The Other, for Tara, means either being invisible or strange. Once she wants to be herself by looking like an Indian wearing a sari and gold, she feels the most alien (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 194).

She tries to cope with American custom, which in this case is by calling her husband "Bish" as what Americans do, which means "poison" in India. Moreover, the vermilion that Indian people wear in their heads represents someone who is married, but Tara does not wear it even though she is married to Bish. In addition, she also does not wear a sari, which Indians usually wear despite being abroad. That is the first time Tara wears a sari in America when she visits Padma in New Jersey (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 194). Those are the very Indian things, but Tara keeps them away and declares her progressive personality thrives well in America. Moreover, she cannot resist that she cannot preserve Indianness any longer. She further confessed, "I loved my family and culture but had walked away from the struggle to preserve them. In San Francisco, I barely knew any Indians" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 180)

Seeing how Americans treat her—giving evil eyes and cursing—makes her insecurity comes up. She said she would be under pressure to be a commuter who must feel like an alien twice a day. Moreover, now she said she belonged to California; before, Tara said she did not want to belong. She will define herself as American when she is afraid of being alien. It clearly shows her insecurity about being 'the other'. She knows she has walked away from keeping her family and culture on her radar. Furthermore, based on the story, the most progressive thing Tara has done is divorce. Her divorce is because Tara's promise of life as an American wife is not fulfilled (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 82).

Padma also thinks that Tara becomes Americanized because of liberty. Divorce is very taboo in Indian society. It is because they consider marriage a lifetime engagement. Marriage is also considered the embodiment of obedience toward their Gods. Nonetheless, Tara does not hedge herself from doing it as long as she gets as much freedom. Therefore, one of the motivations she is being progressive is to enjoy her independence as a human. Besides, Tara decides to enrol her son in the school he likes, which is a liberal arts school. This kind of school contrasts with Indian schools, which mainly focus on students' academic sciences. This decision is hard for the Indian mother, but Tara keeps on her track to cope with the American culture.

III. THE THIRD SPACE

Mukherjee integrates near and far, traditional and modern, which transforms and rebuilds the meaning of cultural space. In the story, Tara attempts to reconfigure her purpose as a transnational and transcultural subject and centre the narrative upon her self-experiences as a diasporic shuttle. Tara is a frustrated woman waning menacingly in the alternative models of survival between territories, migrations and mediations. Like Mukherjee's diasporic characters, Tara struggles hard to occupy the translational space after multiple dislocations and ruptures (Sharma, 2017.p.18).

Tara fluctuates between the first and the third spaces, near and far, traditional and modern, which transform and indicate the importance of cultural freedom. She attempts to reconfigure her meaning as a transnational and transcultural subject and to centre the narrative upon her individual experience as a diasporic spacecraft. She is a frustrated woman transforming into an alternative survival model between territories, migrations and mediations. Like Mukherjee's diasporic characters, Tara struggles hard to occupy the translational space after multiple dislocations and ruptures. Most of her fiction stems from the same division of growing up in two cultures as it is woven into Tara's trajectory from one location to another. Tara experiences the recurrence of this split and constitutes the centre of the most critical demographic dislocations of modern times. It now represents a significant and captivating force in multiculturalism. Men's physical

estrangements from India almost inevitably mean that they are unable to restore the fortified past. They create fictions, not actual cities, villages, hidden places, and imaginary fatherlands of their minds' (Rushdie, 2010. P. 10).

While writing about the two variables of the transnational conditions- exile and homeland, Mukherjee captures the temporal and spatial dynamics of emigrant existence lost between space and home. The estranging consciousness of relocation is troubled by a feeling of expense, an urge to recover or to glance back at the transgressive territory of the past. Maya Sharma claims that In her fiction, Mukherjee deals with Western subjects and locations and characters who are Westernized or bicultural. Yet she is forced to acknowledge that the exact configuration of her imagination is almost Hindu and ethical (Bose, 1993. pp. 49-60).

The writer understands that a fluid society can characterize her stories as a society in flux and a constant flow of migrants, anxiety, chaos, the flow of exterritorial power structure, and even the crossing of geographical boundaries. For instance, when Tara wants to search for her roots remembers her ancestral ties with Tara-Lata, the 'Tree-Bride'. She makes an effort to redefine the importance of her culture through space and time. Nostalgia plays a significant role in Tara's formation of her identity (p. 184).

Bharati Mukherjee affirms that in the process of splitting and cultural dislocation, the woman seems to lose her significance and motive in life. In the cycle of migration, the settlers can neither adopt alien culture nor flee their native culture, and finally, a new hybrid culture comes to flourish. As a married and divorced woman, Tara has lost her feelings and thinking between the first and third spaces, belonging and not belonging, comfortable and uncomfortable, old life and new life. They make her forfeited and reborn with a new identity, a hybrid integration (p.75).

Mukherjee provokes tradition as challenging to pursue and as a requirement. The epigraph to the story, a Sanskrit verse embraced by Octavio Paz provides an insight into an immigrant's quest for identity and authenticity oneself: "No one behind, no one ahead. The path the ancients cleared has closed. And the other path, everyone's path, Easy and comprehensive, goes nowhere. I am alone and find my way" (Avtar, 1996. pp.182-183).

Tara's nostalgia continuously affects her present that the past life is practical, and its foundation in the present life can throw into unrest constantly in the continuum. The difficulty caused her to feel that their past life was excellent. As she says: "The past is nice, this place is nice; its' nice to visit the past now and then, just don't live there" (p. 76). Tara, however, has been rudely shocked into the awareness that the past is not an unbiased 'place' that one can attend barely and then preterm. She has comprehended that the past is an emotional intimation in the present and cannot be rejected, remarkably. Tara finds herself thrown into an insensible space where she has no door to voice her role's anxiety (pp. 96-97).

The capital of India in West Bengal is Calcutta, where she lived with her family. American people are not the exception in speaking their minds about Calcutta. Tara has found it wretched and confirms that her homeland is known as a poor, cruel, and abject place in the world. Tara says: "My American friends in California say: God, Tara, and Calcutta! Although to suggest I have returned to earth after a journey to one of the outer planets. It's one of those cities in the world with negative cachet, a city to escape, one of those hellholes made famous by Mother Theresa and mindless comparison in the American press: Dirtier than Calcutta, crueler than Calcutta; poorer than Calcutta. I grew up in a city that never pitied itself, that deflected all the abuse. (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 21).

Meanwhile, as India's antithesis, America has a more flexible rule. There is no such caste which separates its citizens. Americans have the freedom to choose their identity. Tara further describes that America is a free land where nobody can ever clamp her down for doing everything she wants. She conveys that "Jackson Heights is a landscape of potentialities that had been denied in India [...] No caste or regional or familial strings to pull, no favors to trade" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 200)

For Tara, Jackson Heights is a place where Indian people can dig their potential because there is no caste or regional or familial bond, which can hinder them from getting opportunities. Jackson Heights, located in New York City, is a multicultural place where South Asian micro-neighborhoods sow their capital to trade, hoping they will become more affluent and prosperous. She reckons that America represents a good destination as it opens up a big chance for Indian people to build up their businesses without considering that a person has a higher or lower social class. It, therefore, makes America superior to India because it even gives the Indian people freedom.

On the contrary, the first space culture sticks to the patriarchal system where men gain more privilege than women. Moreover, deifying men as God's proxy on earth is considered loyal. Tara once said; "The 'boy' they are always 'boys' to jumpstart my life, to be worshipped as a god according to scripture, was (and is) Bishwapriya Chatterjee, the first son from an outstanding family" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 23). She uses the word "worshipped" to equate a man and her God, enough to show that it is a patriarchal system. The worship starts from the dowry when a girl is married off to a boy chosen by her parents. The dowry for the groom has burdened Tara.

Besides, the burden comes from the dowry and some bad luck in their marriage. It is because the unfortunate will always link to women. In the story of Tara Lata the Tree Bride, The traditional Indian society blames Tara: "The one who was blamed is she whose fate is becoming a forever widow because her husband-to-be was bitten by a snake" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 8).

Moreover, the girl is doomed for all her life when her husband dies because of the snakebite. Indian people believe that women bring a negative aura. Thus rituals must be gone through. For a Bengali Hindu woman, being a widow means being a misfortune woman, which means being must avoid person by society. Society dumped her and did not let anyone marry her because of her cursed state. How much suffering a woman does experience because of her deeds? Such rules and punishments make women only revolve around men and obedient to their commands, whether like it or not, to pursue a heavenly safe life. It requires women to be respectful and spend their lifetime in confinement.

Unlike India, the third space "America" gives women all the freedom to be themselves. Working, driving, studying, and even making scandals are not the sins women must bear. She confirms that 'in America, it seemed to us; every woman was expected to create her scandal, be the centre of her own tangled love nest' (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 83). In America, women can be the centre instead of men. Still, Tara confirms that modern American women "have passed through at least one unarranged marriage and are raising at least one child with or without the bottom line of child support" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 27). Therefore, it implies that a divorcee in America is considered a modern woman who represents the liberation of women in America.

This value is what differs between India and America. Mukherjee illustrates America as Individualist rather than collectivist/holistic. Americans mostly do not make any effort to pay attention to other people's stuff. Furthermore, Tara's divorce becomes the point, and Jack Sidhu's statement makes it sharper. "I know that. The State of California knows that,

but that doesn't matter. 'In the eye of Brahma...' isn't that what Hindus say? Under California law, five years is a long time; people move on with their lives. But in the eyes of Indians, you'll always be linked (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 143).

The bandits are becoming pros in finding everyone's private information, meaning everyone must be insecure about getting to know new people (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 62). That is so dangerous that Parvati is told by her husband not to trust anyone in Bombay. Some people warned when the case of Urmila-bai happened in her neighbourhood, Parvati almost became the victim of that treacherous housekeeper. Urmila-bai, Parvati's live-in maid, became the culprit of the robbery and murder, and Mr and Mrs Sen were the victims. Parvati said, "There was a robbery-murder in our building! Can you imagine that? I know it happens all the time in Delhi, but in our building? Just four floors from us?" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 56). One can see that robbery-murder is a common thing that happens in India, especially in Delhi. Now it also stands a chance to happen even in an apartment in Bombay, which security officers typically guard. There is a social gap between the poor and the rich, which leads people to commit crimes. Furthermore, being poor, smugglers have smuggled many Indians who came to America to earn money by committing fraud as they knew the victims must be Indian capitalists.

On the contrary, America is known for its high safety rate. In addition, the whole story does not show the poorness of America. Moreover, the characters believe that America is far safer than India. Furthermore, Auro, Parvati's husband, scolded Rabi when Rabi went outside the apartment. He yelled, "That's an outrageous idea!" Auro exploded when he got wind of Rabi's pleas. "Doesn't the boy understand he's not in San Francisco?" (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 65). He cannot believe that Rabi does not understand Indian places' dangers. A bunch of crooks hang around the streets, waiting for their prey. He also implies that Rabi can go everywhere in San Francisco without fear. One can observe that India represents as having a high rate of poverty. Based on the binary opposition above, the high poverty rate influences the crime rate in India, thus positioning India as an unsafe place compared to America, with a high rate of safety.

Indian people are seen as conventional since they firmly hold to their culture and religion, which are the opposite of modernity, of which technology and science are their footholds. One may see the image of tradition in the way Indian people crave to be modern people. Indian people look at modern as being westernized. Tara complains; your parents, Tara, get a grip! What do they know of the needs of a modern woman? The simple answer could never satisfy them: I wasn't, and perhaps I'll never be, a modern woman (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 27).

She infers that her parents are traditional; indeed, they were not that progressive in following fast-changing India, unlike Tara. She thinks; 'I thought this is the life I'd been waiting for, the liberating promise of marriage and travel and the wider world. But, bless Daddy and Mummy; they found me the only man in the world who could transport me from the enchanted garden of Ballygunge to Stanford University in the early 1980s, which has to count as one of the intellectual wonders of the modern world' (Mukherjee, 2002, p. 81).

For Tara, being modern means the liberating promise of marriage, travel, and everything, based on the liberation of self-love and the stream of modernity. She used the metaphor "enchanted garden" to illustrate India, while "the intellectual wonders of the modern world" to represent America. It is crystal clear India, or an enchanted garden, is where people appreciate nature as much as God's grace. As explained above, Indian people are firmly obedient to their deities and hold onto their culture. On the other hand, America, the intellectual wonder of the modern world, is where people praise science and technology and set aside God's intervention.

IV. HYBRIDITY

Diasporic experiences, fluidity, and assimilation constitute hybrid forms of identity. Such identity shapes differ from the fundamental belief of national and racial identity. It also investigates numerous belongings that enable humans to simultaneously occupy more than one space. Under such circumstances, in the absence of a prominent code, culture is becoming an individualistic investment, in which people formulate their superstructure and super culture, becoming their 'cultural programmers' (Nayak, 2010, pp.130-135). Tara is a fictional rendering of such cultural hybridity. Tara's assertion that she is both an Indian and an American helps her gain the same third space of enunciation (Bhabha, 1994, pp.1-2).

The novel starts with the past of Tara Lata, narrating the sluggish concern of the time. The dilemma between the inscrutable ancestral path and the reasonable journey for location and space constitutes the explanation of the interpersonal world: Tuberculosis is everywhere. The air, the water, and the soil are septic. Thirty-five years is a long life. Smog obscures the moon and dims the man-made light to faintness deeper than the stars'. In such darkness, perspective disappears. It is a two-dimensional world impossible to penetrate (p. 3).

Cultural identity is a matter of becoming and of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere and have accounts. But, like everything historical, they undergo constant transformation. So far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous play of history, culture, and power" (Hall, 1996, p. 225)

In such a condition, the identity of a person becomes hybridized. The gaining of new cultural practices makes the identity dual and keeps the immigrants in a state of in-betweenness. In the form of hegemonic construction of knowledge, there seems to be a cultural confrontation in the present and absentia of culture. Diasporic experiences and dual designation constitute hybrid configurations of identity. Such identity structures differ from the basic notion of national and racial essence. It also investigates numerous belongings that enable humans to simultaneously occupy more than one space. , In the absence of a dominant code, and under such conditions, culture is becoming an individualistic investment where species formulate their superstructure and super culture (Nayak, 2010, pp. 127-136). Tara, thus, is an imagined rendering of such cultural hybridity. Moreover, individuals' instability in a two-dimensional world enables them to achieve the 'third space of enunciation (Bhabha, 1994, pp.1-2). Stuart Hall, therefore, believed that situations or mediations give opportunities for rewriting histories (DaCosta, 2018, p. 271).

The novelist concentrates on cultural hybridity and the 'Third-Space of Enunciation', which portray the characteristics of post-colonialism and multicultural values. Similarly, Tara finds herself between her past patriarchal accounts and the legends her husband created in the acquired home. She rekindles the code by walking out and gets stagnant in a relationship of retrofitting with a man who leaves her alone in her need. Stuart Hall asserts that identity is placed within specific discursive areas that implicate power inequality. Such an essentialized identity paradigm is a means of objectifying collective significances and formulating culture and conventions because identity also always involves the claims of genuineness for several demanding cultural symbols (Clifford, 2000). Cultural identities are accountable to the eternal nature of the semiosis of understandings and the infinite supplementarity within those understandings (Hall, 1996, p. 228). Through originality, individuals realize the interplay between cultural and historical contexts and personal experiences. Identity broadly implicates belongingness through which the community share stabilized and collective categories with others.

Bharati Mukherjee enunciates: 'Through my fiction, I make mainstream readers see the new Americans as

complex human beings, not as just 'The Other'. Bharati Mukherjee concentrates on the alternative direction to belong to the cultural hybridity and the 'third space of enunciation. They are characteristics of the postcolonial condition of existence (Carabs, 1994, pp. 55-60). Clifford argues that the mysterious pasts and futures can catch the diasporic identities. They attach, detach, forget, and recall in complicated, strategic ways (Jeyashree, 2008, pp. 132-135). Likewise, Tara finds herself between Patriarchal and traditional accounts of her past home and stories created by her husband in the amassed house. She cuts short the story by giving up and, in turn, gets sluggish in a relationship retrofitting with a man who leaves her lonely in her critical situations. Finally, Avtar Brah claims that the identity of an imagined diasporic society is far from stabilized or pre-given. As such, all diasporas are distinguished, heterogeneous, contested areas, even though they are involved in forming a common goal (Lazure, 2006, pp. 90-99).

In her endeavour to explain the diasporic condition in the unstable temporality, Mukherjee is conscious of the mechanics of splits and doubles in making the third location of culture. She thus, not only highlights the longing of immigrants for Indian cultural heritage but also expresses her disgust at the changing scenario within India itself and the shifting dynamics of American culture. In both situations, the sense of loss is intense. However, Tara's diasporic torment is relational; she cannot affirm an authentic Indian self or assimilate totally into American culture. She had divorced her wealthy, handsome husband as she felt stifled in her marriage. Tara, in direct contrast to Padma, had embraced the American notions of freedom and self-fulfilment as being of primary significance in her life, seeking refuge in this discourse as a reprieve from the orthodoxies of the Bengali Brahmin culture:"The gap between the youngest and oldest, the disparity of our marriages and the paths our immigration have made us strangers. Her reaction to my divorce (that I had brought shame to the Bhattacharjee family had been her refrain) had hurt" (p. 94).

Bharati Mukherjee has struck a balance between the past and present through a skilful blending of tradition and modernity. She achieves this through the character of Tara, who has outwardly severed her links with practice but remains tied to her native country; she is influenced by ancient customs and traditions but very much into multicultural America's glitziness and modernism. Moreover, she is caringly conscious of her existential predicament. Tara 's tentative steps towards seeking her true self require her to carefully navigate between prescriptive Hindu traditions and American notions of individuality and freedom.

Bhabha insists that such modification directs humans beyond. The beyond is neither a new boundary nor a fleeing behind the past. Instead, humans find themselves in the moment of transit where time and space cross to stimulate complicated figures of disparity and personality, past and present, inclusion and exclusion, inside and outside (Bhabha, 1994, p. 1). Thus, the beyond signify spatial range marks advancement, and guarantees the future, opening new chances and potentialities (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4).

Culture relies on giving things meaning by appointing them to different stances within a classificatory structure. The marking of 'difference' is the source of that symbolic injunction that one can call culture (Hall, 1997, p. 236). According to Tara being American means being self-engrossed, and an Indian woman should model herself on the virtuous wives of Hindu myths. She condemns Tara for performing any American act. She expresses her fear and urges, and Padma warns Tara:"Please, please, don't become that Americanized [...] Take what America can give, but don't let it tarnish you in any way" (pp. 105-134).

The differentiation between the motherland and the new land, the two persons (Tara and Padma), and between the

spaces generates a meaningful purpose. Bakhtin contended that meaning does not pertain to any one speaker. It occurs in the give-and-take between different speakers. The statement in the language is half someone else's. It becomes one's own only when the speaker appropriates the word, adapting it to his meaningful semantic intent. Before this, the term does not occur in neutral or impartial speech; instead, it appears in other people's mouths, fulfilling other people's intentions; one can seize the word and bring about it on one's own (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 293-294).

Discussing and acting towards an opinion through language generate a discourse; involving someone in an address means that they place themselves as the topic of the discourse (Hall, 1996, p. 202). Usually, power and knowledge are entangled; simultaneously, culture and expertise state the world's situation and stimulate political attitudes and integrity (Hall, 1996, p. 203). When culture is the subject of difference, it remains alive. As Hall called 'social intelligibility', images and signs involve the conflictual discourse. On the contrary, if they withdraw them from the conflict, it becomes part of the granted organization between symbols and meanings and then produces an ideology (Hall 1982, p. 77).

On the other side, Padma dedicates herself to favoring Bengali life and culture despite her immigration and emotional mood to life. After uncovering her past, Padma infers that a true Bengali family cannot even be wholly westernized. However, hybrid identity is necessarily apparent, 'our family westernization was superficial, confined to a convent school, metro cinema and movie magazines, which overlaid a profound and orthodox Hinduism.' (p. 316). Bhabha's effort to clarify this mystery in the following expression: Globality of culture is figured in the in-between spaces of double frames: its historical originality marked by cognitive obscurity; its decentered 'subject' signified in the nervous temporality of the transitional or the emergent provisionally of the 'present' (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 1-2).

However, Tara's diasporic torment is relational; she cannot affirm an authentic Indian self or assimilate wholly into the American community. She had separated from her prosperous and elegant husband as Tara felt strangled in her marriage. Nevertheless, Tara is successfully changing her identity and reconstructing a flux one. Her notions of freedom and self-fulfilment as being of primary significance in her life, striving to shelter in this discourse as a rescue from the Bengali Brahmin culture: 'The gap between the oldest and youngest, the difference in our marriages and the ways our immigration has made us strangers. Her reaction to my divorce (that I had brought shame to the Bhattacharjee family had been her refrain) had hurt' (p. 94).

In her making out of cultural mutation, Bharati Mukherjee captures the rigid and inflexible binaries between orient and occident, man and woman. Her way of life stands for new cultural fusionism. Tara is an American and an Indian at the same time. In the trans-Cultural global situation, she experiences both native and alien problems. There is fusion and translational polemics of culture. In her Americanized status, Tara has a philosophical quest in the web of dualism. That disentangles her entirely in an indifferent city where she neither can surrender her personality nor can accept a new giant identity in the crisis of her life. She lives a nomadic life in the cultural desert of America due to her psychological invalidity

Parvati's conventional lifestyle is more predictable because there are no sudden surprises and surprises. So there are times when Tara envies Parvati's clarity and confidence as she thinks that Parvati seems to be in control of things happening around her. She does not tolerate anything that questions the tradition of the family or the community. When Tara asks Parvati about the liaison between Padma and Ron Dey, she reacts:

'I cannot fathom what is going on in your life to force you to make such a bizarre request. Do you have any idea

how mad you sound? Maybe you have lost touch with the way things work here, in which case, I think you need a good long Indian vacation away from all those crazy soap operas that keep putting bad ideas into susceptible minds. [...] Have you become so American that you don't realize how absurd your request is?' (pp. 96-97).

The readers can see the changes in India, mainly although the fast changes have not reflected a global transformation. For example, Parvati needs Tara's help to obtain a desirable Bengali Brahmin girl settled in California for Aunt Bandana's son. To Parvati, being or becoming an American is getting mongrelized. As a traditionalist, Parvati accepts the pretensions and less direct relationships, even between husband and wife, as the cultural norm of Indian society.

Tara's divorce, likewise, is not split out to her parents. Auro does not know about Tara's relationship with Andy, the 'live-in-lover.' In Parvati's version of India, however, there is always a self-protective mechanism at work. Accordingly, Parvati's personality becomes 'less assertive and more pliant' (p. 43). She has selected a way of life where she seeks;

"It is to please rather than confront. She has fashioned her life around the whims and fancies of Auro and defends her lifestyle emphatically. She says: "We Indians don't run to psychiatrists for every problem, come to think of it; I don't know a single psychiatrist" (p. 104).

In India's strict society, women come second, and men treat the oppressed as 'Other'. The relationship between males and females in India; is based on oppositional terms. Man's society distinguishes women's world, but the relation to him is not considered an autonomous being. She is determined and differentiated regarding man, while he is not to her; he is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the subject; he is the Absolute. She is the other (de Beauvoir, p. 26).

In a society where the individual's identity is predetermined, like the Indian society, a woman will no doubt be the absolute other. Therefore, women must always be obedient daughters and wives expected by the patriarchal society in which they live. Mukherjee writes in one of her essays: "I was born into a religion that placed me, a Brahmin, at the top of its hierarchy while condemning me, as a woman, to a role of subservience" (Mukherjee, 1991, p. 24).

Even though she comes from a high class, she is bound to a secondary role as a woman, which is also the case of Tara in *Desirable Daughters*. The way the novel begins is a good example of female oppression in India encounter. The narrator, Tara, recounts the story of the tree bride, Tara Lata, whom she was named after. 'Tara's great-grandfather, Jai Krishna, wanted to marry off his daughter. Tara, at a very young age since his, "were placid and obedient daughters who would make loving and obedient wives. Tara Lata, his favourite, would be no exception" (p. 10).

However, the groom gets bitten by a snake, a favourite, and Tara is responsible for his death. The bridegroom's father tells Jai Krishna, "Your happiness-wrecking daughter is responsible: may she die as horrible a death" (p. 11). To protect her from a fate worse than death, Jai Krishna married her to a tree to keep her from being a virgin forever, something that is looked down upon by traditional Indian society: The Indian tradition had transformed the poor child from the envied bride about to be married to a suitable husband into the second-worst thing in her community. Tara was now not entirely a widow, it would be the most cursed state for Bengali Hindu women, but a woman who brings her family misfortune and death. She was a person to be avoided. Tara Lata had become an unmarriageable woman in a community that was intolerant of unmarried women. (p. 12).

This quotation does not only highlight the issue of child marriage in India but also the amount of gender oppression that Indian women suffer from because of the rules of the marriage institution. Hindu society lays the blame on

women who constantly have to look up to their husbands as God-like figures. Without a man, a woman is nothing. For example, staying without marriage is not acceptable, as seen in the case of Tara Lata, an Indian widow. She is regarded as a source of evil and, therefore, is cursed by her society. A bride whose groom dies before marriage is a source of death and is deprived of marriage for the rest of her life. On the other side, a man can get married as many times as he wants to, "since a woman could attain nirvana only through worship of a husband and a Brahmin was permitted as many wives as he could support, his excesses could be interpreted as a form of noblesse oblige" (p. 19).

That reveals the amount of oppression Indian women experience due to marriage. However, despite the pressure Tara Lata encounters, she becomes a national fighter and a leading figure in India's independence movement against Britain. That foreshadows that the later Tara, named after her, will lead a similar path of displacement to find her true identity. In other words, the old Tara Lata's oppression led her to become a fighter, and the modern Tara is a fighter in a different sense as she defies the Indian notion of female identity.

The modern Tara disapproves of child marriage and she starts recounting the story by saying, "[a] Bengali girl's happiest night is about to become her lifetime imprisoned seems all the sorrow of history, all that is unjust in society and cruel in religion has settled on her, 'even constructing it from the merest scraps of family memory fills me with rage and bitterness" (p. 4). She condemns Indian society for marrying off a child and punishing the poor girl for a crime she has not committed. Therefore, from the novel's beginning, Tara's disapproval of some Indian traditions and practices is clear. That emphasizes that she does not entirely embrace her Indian identity, paving the way for the identity change she will withstand in the US.

In India, people consider women to be the object of family prestige, so their behaviour should be suitable and satisfactory (Gupta, 2015, p. 1-4). In other words, the novel title suggests that women must be obedient daughters and wives to be 'Desirable Daughters'. To be 'desirable' according to Indian society is to follow the rules by the book since breaking them becomes scandalous. For instance, Tara clarifies how the Indian community looks down upon love marriages and how a younger sister should not get married before her older one. "[w]e had an older sister, and custom dictated that the first-born had to be the first married, even if she had not expressed interest. Otherwise, we were sending a message to all the families in Calcutta with eligible sons that Dr Bhattacharjee could not control his daughters" (p. 51)

Therefore, living in Calcutta implies abiding by social norms and family rules. Tara believes it is impossible to defy her family, "our families existed inside an impenetrable believe. Anyone entering or exiting was carefully monitored. We honored the proprieties. There was no rebel honour our seeking individual identity" (pp. 43-44). Her familial life back in Calcutta was not easy; she and her sisters were taken extra care of and watched all the time. Her family rules could not be violated under any circumstances. That destroyed her identity. Tara leads a life that she does not want to; she must adopt a specific identity to become a desirable daughter to her family and society regardless of her desires.

CONCLUSIONS

Migrations and transcultural phenomena eliminate and reinscribe belonging to being and becoming; they promote an individual with significant and partial identification and self-designation, simultaneously individualized and community-oriented. Therefore, Mukherjee strengthens a space of disparity and cultural isolation, a hybrid residence of resentment and friendship, continuous suspicion, unrest, and confusion. Without displacement and international experience, man contains a physical output of one local culture and summarized senses. A cultural sub-text of an international event contributes to the

interweaving strings of the diasporic subjectivity of Mukherjee. Then, she starts by drawing the structures of her transited personality in constant negotiation and transformation because of the discussion and interchange between past and present. Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* reflects individual cultural identity through the process of diaspora. She expresses that process via critical figures such as difference and ambivalence, difference and gender, hybridity, and the third space of enunciation.

Tara represents physical displacement from the homeland. She thinks that to assimilate into America, she has to detach herself from her land and overcome her Indianness completely. With time, she discovers that she cannot do that and that her identity is a combination of the Indian and American cultures. Her eventual recovery to India substantiates that she will always be tied to land native land and that she must mediate with her past.

On the one hand, Tara is representative of the modern type of diaspora, that of immigration. America provides Tara with the opportunity to discover new aspects of her identity and examine Collins' axis of oppression, race, class and gender, in a different light. Her experience of displacement enables her to embark on a journey of self-discovery informing her identity, and making her come to terms with its hybrid nature. Tara's journey of self-discovery reflects Mukherjee's perception of diaspora as a quest for the self.

Tara represents physical displacement from the homeland. She thinks that to assimilate into America, she has to detach herself from her land and overcome her Indianness completely. With time, Tara discovers that her identity combines Indian and American cultures. Her eventual recovery to India substantiates that she will always be tied to land native land and must mediate with her past.

The diasporic spectrum investigates various situations, manners of transformation and experiences. Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* presents three female characters that face displacement and diaspora experiences differently. Tara's process of change through diasporic negotiations is apparent, while Padma sets a middle ground between the two. The three characters are brought together in the diasporic identity to bridge the apparent gap between the characters by focusing on 'difference, ambivalence, third space, and hybridity'. Each of those characteristics may appear differently after the character's displacement resulting in a different mode of adaptation and, consequently, an additional identity growth. Tara, Padma and Parvati have several similarities and differences in their diasporic situations to analyze their different representations of cultural identity and diasporic subjectivity.

On the one hand, Tara represents the modern type of diaspora, that of immigration. On the other hand, America allows Tara to discover new aspects of her identity and examine and challenge all the obstacles. Her experience of displacement enables her to embark on a journey of self-discovery; informing her identity and making her come to terms with its hybrid nature through transcultural negotiations. Tara's journey of self-discovery evaluates Mukherjee's awareness of diaspora as an exploration of the self.

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