

**THE NEW WOMAN TARA: A STUDY OF BHARATIMUKHERJEE'S  
"DESIRABLE DAUGHTERS"**

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The women novelists of the globalized era focus their attention on the existential predicament and the travails of the subdued women of a Patriarchal society governed by rigid principles and restrictions. These writers being women dive deep into the inner mind of the repressed women by virtue of their feminine sensibility and psychological insight and bring to light their issues which are the outcome of Indian women's psychological and emotional imbalances. Most of the women living in orthodox Indian families are unable to raise their voices against their suppression owing to their rigid code of conduct imposed on them by dominant patriarchal society. The suppressed women's desires, emotions and ambitions are faithfully expressed in the novels of the women novelists. Their novels show how these women in spite of their education are still suffering due to inferiority complex and deep sense of inhibitions.

Feminism is a post-colonial perspective. Post colonial feminism wishes to bring to light the typical problems of women of the third world nations. The post colonial writers work for the betterment in the lives of the women of postcolonial origin. Feminism is a fabulous field of study across the world. Young Points out some key issues of post colonial feminism: "Post colonial feminism has never operated as a separate entity from post-colonialism rather it has directly inspired the forms and the force of post-colonial politics. Where its feminist focus is foregrounded, it comprises non western feminisms which negotiate the political demands of nationalism, socialist feminism, liberalism and eco feminism alongside the social challenge of everyday patriarchy typically supported by its institutional and legal discrimination of domestic violence sexual abuse rape honour killings dowry deaths female feticides, child abuse. Feminism in a post-colonial frame begins with the situation of the ordinary woman in a particular place, while also thinking her situation of the ordinary woman in a particular place while also thinking her situation though in relation to broader issues to give her the more powerful basis of collectivity. It will highlight the degree to which women are still working against a colonial legacy that was itself powerfully patriarchal, institutional, economical political and ideological." Long history of prejudices and inhuman remarks against females prevailed over countless social and cultural texts ultimately led to the emergence of feminism during the late 60s and early 70s of twentieth century in the west. Since then feminists set their mind to re-examine issues of sex, gender and even language in literary and cultural discourses. Some of the post colonial feminists are Gayatri Spivak, UmaNarayan, Sara Suleri, Lata Mani and Kumkum Sangari. These Postcolonial feminists are closely associated with black feminists

such as Alice Walker and Angela Davis as both the group strive for recognition not only by men in their own culture but also by western feminists. Gayatri Spivak raises her voice for the suppressed female in her most popular essay "Can the subaltern speak?"[1988]. In this essay she explores possibilities to recover the long silenced voices of the subaltern women. "Spivak's well known and controversial argument is that the subaltern cannot speak for himself/herself because the very structure of colonialism prevents this speaking. However, Spivak argues that the intellectual project must try to make visible the position of the marginalized. The subaltern must be spoken for (that is represented) but not romanticized" says Pramod K. Nayar. Spivak argues that by speaking and reclaiming collective cultural identity subalterns will in fact re-inscribe their subordinate position in society. Though the Post-colonial women remain passive to bear male oppressive environments they seek to emancipate themselves through education, struggle and hard work. India is a distinctively Post-Colonial country. In multi-cultural countries feminist approach looks highly fragmented and multi-valent. The forms and colors of feminism in Indian context are unique and surprising. Since India is the seat of cultures, feminine complexes are too much. In India all four kinds of feminisms do exist and they are respectively, first world, second world, third world and fourth world [Dalit feminism]. The Indian women honour their tradition and culture with traditional feminine colour.

The South Asian women diaspora literature is categorized as women's writing because it draws our attention to women writers as agents, who in a process of self definition create keen and cogent cultural critiques. Parvati, Raghuram observes "There are striking similarities in these writers. Most notably the authors shared pre-occupation with the female subjects struggle to negotiate a path between the exigencies of her two very different homes: the diasporic home and the homeland. The theme of the displaced heroines efforts to integrate her cultural identity is prominent in these works". The women represented in the women's writing are not constructed by patriarchy but are self-constructed within and in opposition cultural formations. Women's writing is writing by women on women but certainly not only for women. They write the problems experienced by women to appeal for the whole world.

Bharati Mukherjee is one of the prominent writers of Indian Diaspora. Being an immigrant she feels very comfortable in handling the themes of the sufferings of Diasporic women. The novels of Bharati Mukherjee transport us to the complex realm of the culturally displaced and alienated characters who migrate to countries like America and consequently face the tensions of alienation, adaptation and assimilation. She writes in her own perspective the problems faced by diasporic Indian women to get assimilated into the western society. She exemplifies the ambivalences caused by the sudden transplantation from the familiar to the exotic. O'Neill rightly puts "Mukherjee's fiction considers the additional complexities of being a woman caught between cultures and between radically different definitions of femininity. In Mukherjee's fiction the transformation of the protagonist does not come easily. They have to face the struggles and confusions of being

an alien who seek to define themselves in both their new and old homes. When the women in Mukherjee's fiction immigrate to America, they encounter feminism and American representations of Indian women as seductive, wise, and all knowing. The women must therefore struggle with their gender and define themselves in new territory". Mukherjee's plots move across culture, immigrants leave their homes usually Calcutta to take up residence in the United States. She portrays paradoxically the eastern culture where the heroine was born and bred and the western culture in which she experiences a new life. The immigrants carry the original cultures with them and simultaneously must change to survive in the new world.

One of her latest novel is "The Desirable Daughters", which is a tale of immigrants and their attitude to the situations they face in the new land. It is the story of three sisters, Padma, Parvati and Tara, who are a blend of traditional and modern outlook. "Desirable Daughters" is a tale of immigrants and the attitude of three sisters and their ways of dealing with situations. "Desirable Daughters" as the title suggests, are such daughters, for whom every parent would crave for. The three sisters, who are the daughters of Motilal Bhattacharya and the great-grand-daughters of Jai Krishna Gangooli, belong to a traditional Bengali Brahmin family. Padma, Parvathi and Tara are symbolic names of Shakti (Goddess).. Padma and Parvathi do not regret their choices, the former marries an immigrant of ethnic origin in New Jersey, and the latter is married to a boy of her own choice and settled in the plush locality of Bombay with an encourage of servants to attend on her. Tara, the narrator of the novel goes on an arranged marriage with Bishwapriya Chatterjee, a big shot of the Silicon Valley. Tara begins the narration with the mythical character Tara-Lata who was one of her great grand-mother with whom Tara feels an attachment for her name-sake. The mythical Tara Lata had never left her home in her days. But the narrator Tara had to leave her father's home both physically and emotionally. Tara lata of the colonial period was a bold lady who had the boldness to help the colonial fighters. This Tara lata almost became a widow on the same night of her wedding as her boy groom died of a snake bite. But her father who did not want to see her a widow got her married to a tree. In those days it was a practice to get newly widowed girls to a tree so that she can at least enjoy the attributes of a married woman. There after Tara Lata resided at her father's home till the British Police took her away finally for her act of helping the colonial fighters. The story of her great granny had always enchanted Tara. Yet she led a complete contrasted life from that of her.

Tara was married to a multi millionaire, Indian Silicon valley Icon Bishwa Priya Chatterjee. She married Bish simply because her father told her to get married. She says, "I married a man I had never met, whose picture and biography and blood lines I approved of because my father told me it was time to get married and this was the best husband on the market" (26). After marriage Tara lived in Atheron with her husband in a gated community. Being a successful businessman and excellent provider Bish did not allow Tara to engage in any kind of activity. Bish wanted Tara to "look like a Princess and live like a Queen". When

Tara first came to America as a newly wedded wife to Bish, she was deeply rooted in Indian tradition and culture. She was too submissive to her husband and was well versed in domestic duties. She wanted to pursue with her higher studies but had to stay at home to take care of her son just like all the other Indian wives in Atherton, California. Tara comes to California to fulfill the role of a traditional Indian wife but instead realizes that she is not the fittest to play that role "... When I left Bish after a decade of marriage, it was because the promise of life as an American wife was not being fulfilled. I wanted to drive, but where would I go? I wanted to work but would people think that Bish Chatterjee couldn't support his wife? In his Atherton years as he became better known on the American scene - a player, an adviser, a pundit- he also became, at home more a traditional Indian". (82) So she asks for a divorce. Tara's decision to divorce Bish represents a new consciousness in Tara where the regulations of Indian traditions and culture no more binds her actions. After the divorce Tara becomes more independent and more Americanized. She had ceased to be a good Hindu wife and good Hindu mother. As Padma Rangasamy puts it "The only way for many of Mukherjees heroines is to discard the past totally and irrevocably and embrace total Americanization".

Tara could be called a new woman in all sense. She is a divorcee, who works as a volunteer at a pre-school unmindful of her husband's high position in the social ladder. She is a single parent of a teen-age boy who reveals him to be gay and has a live in lover Andy who is an ex-biker, Buddhist, Hungarian. She has also unmindfully indulged in the mystery of an unknown boy, Chris Dey. The Protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee successfully overcome their deep-rooted traditional rules and regulations by enjoying sexual freedom. Bose, Brinda opines, "In Mukherjee's fiction a woman's sexual freedom often functions as a measure of her increasing detachment from traditional sexual mores and correspondingly of her assimilation in the new world through her rapid westernization/ Americanization". Tara's smooth life turns into a chaos on the entry of a stranger who introduces himself to be her sisters illegitimate son Chris Dey. She tries to discover the truth behind the stranger which becomes Taras catharsis and nemesis. When she realizes the stranger is liar she complains to the police and he in anger retaliates by bombing her house when her ex-husband and son were at the home.

Tara as a new woman travels into the new world with full energy and vitality. Mukherjee seems to portray the how for the first generation protagonist getting assimilated into the American melting pot is difficult. Tara faces many social restrictions directly and indirectly. It is rather very strange that a woman who was brought up in a rigid principled society like that of India could absorb the modern trends and accept such things like her sons gay sexuality and her own live in relationship. So it could be concluded that Tara is a new woman in true sense.

**References**

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