

Saarth

E-Journal of Research

ISSN NO: 2395-339X

BHARTI MUKHERJEE AND CULTURAL CONFLICTS: IN THE CONTEXT OF NOVEL “JASMINE”

Ms. Priyankabehen Jashubhai Kharadi, Dr. B. C. Rathod*

ABSTRACT

As a writer, Bharti Mukherjee's literary agenda begins by acknowledging that America has transformed her. It does not end until she shows that the hundreds of thousands of recent immigrants like her are minute by minute transforming America. Identity is an important issue in cultural conflict literature. Identity should not be thought of as an accomplished fact, but should be seen as a production which is never complete. This view problematizes the authenticity of the term cultural identity which is defined and explained. There are at least two different ways of thinking about cultural identity: the first position different cultural identity in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective one true self hiding inside the many other more superficial or artificially imposed selves which people with shared history and ancestry hold in common. Cultural identity in this second sense is a matter of becoming as well as of being. It belongs to the future as to the past. It is not something which already exists transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere have histories, but like everything which is historical they undergo constant transformation.

KEY WORDS: Culture, History, Identity, Ancestry, Position

INTRODUCTION

What is so important in this dialectics is the question of identity? In this twenty-first century, the fast increasing rate of international mobility and rapid communication, transgression of border/s and relocation in new cultural spaces are becoming more common experiences, and therefore, the issue of identity negotiation and cultural conflicts requires urgent attention. The inevitable relationship between identity and culture points at another cognate relation between spatial and temporal locations. Identity as a sense of the self is always conditioned by a sense of cultural belonging. The issue of identity and cultural conflicts is highly dependent on 'a sense of personal location' and 'social relationships', both of which 'have become ever more complex and confusing' in this age of globalization. In the present age as stability is always challenged by mobility, the issue of identity & cultural conflicts has become a seminal one. As a keyword in contemporary politics it has taken on so many different connotations that sometimes it is obvious that people are not even talking about the same thing. One thing at least is clear—cultural conflicts only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty.

*Ms. Priyankabehen Jashubhai Kharadi, PhD Scholar, Gujarat University.
Dr. B. C. Rathod, Saraspur Arts and Commerce College, Ahmedabad

Saarth

E-Journal of Research

ISSN NO: 2395-339X

This concept of identity & cultural conflicts has been used by scholars mainly in the modern period and it certainly lays more emphasis on the dialogic nature of the relationship between the individual and the society than the previous type of identity & culture. It depends on a process of identification & acceptance of the culture and thus helps to align the individual's subjective feelings with the objective reality of the socio-cultural spaces. The notion of the 'postmodern subject' "as having no fixed, essential, or permanent identity" affirms that identity & cultural conflicts has by far become a "moveable feast" formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us. It is historically, not biologically, defined.

Individual identity is a problematic site of constant change and flux, incompleteness and multiplicity and thus is the reason of the cultural conflicts. By birth an individual shares two primary determinants of identity with his / her community, namely nationality and religion. Gender is a biological attribute and more personal kind of identity, but also obliquely sanctioned by the individual's community. All other determinants of individual identity could be seen as more flexible and are more easily negotiated as per requirement. If the formation of identity as a socio-cultural construct across the familiar cultural space (outside the community-specific cultural paradigm of one's belonging) is seen as a process, then the first step is that of the individual stepping out of the cultural space of origin—which I see as 'dislocation'. Every dislocation is accompanied by a sense of loss of the familiar and is followed by a simultaneous relocation in the new cultural space which converts into the cultural conflicts. Relocation and its accompanying *emotion of anxiety* may be seen as the *automatic beginning* of the second phase of that process. In the third stage, as the individual feels an urge for inclusion / participation in the new reality, one attempts an acculturation through an active and steady negotiation with the aspects of cultural difference. In the fourth stage, one learns to accommodate necessary modifications within his/her self and thus becomes a cultural hybrid with multiple consciousnesses. The fifth and final stage, as I find it, is the production of a new identity which is quite cosmopolitan, endowed with a wider worldview and a more tolerant attitude to multicultural diversity of human existence. Now I would attempt a little more detailed analysis of each stage of this process of identity formation of the dislocated individual. The theoretical framework of my research has been guided by some key concepts like dislocation, notions of home and belonging, cultural space, border, cultural difference, transnationalism, negotiation, acculturation, cultural hybridity, identity formation, globalization and cosmopolitanism. Cultural conflict identities constantly produce and reproduce themselves through transformation and difference. 'Hybridist' also opens cultural conflict subjectivity to a luminal, dialogic space wherein identity is negotiated. The word hybrid has biological and botanical origins. In Latin it means the offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar. In the nineteenth century, 'hybridist' was used to refer to a physiological phenomenon. In the twentieth century the cultural meaning has been reactivated in language, the term 'hybridist' delineates the way in which language, even within a single sentence can be double-voiced, double accented and double-styled. 'Hybridist' describes the condition of the language's fundamental ability to be simultaneously the same but different. Colonial authority loses its discourse & univocal grip by its original meaning and finds itself open to the trace of the language of the other enabling the critic to trace complex movements of disarming lateritic in the colonial. The 'hybridist' as a "problematic of colonial

Saarth

E-Journal of Research

ISSN NO: 2395-339X

representation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledge's enter upon the dominant disavowal, and estrange the basis of authority". 'Hybridist' describes a process in which the single voice of colonial authority undermines the operation of colonial power by inscribing and disclosing the trace of the other so that it reveals itself as double-voiced.

Another issue that is of relevance is Home / Homeland. There are multiple versions of the same reality. What we mean by 'Indian' is different for the same reality. What we mean by 'Indian' is different for the first generation settlers and second generation Indian -Americans. The first generation Diasporas fall back on their idealized version of India as a way of dealing with the crisis of fragmentation. It indicates a psychological projection of their needs and in fact, it has little to do with reality. By virtue of its authenticity and appeal, Diaspora literature has become a genre in itself. It invariably deals with themes like nostalgia for a home that exists only in memory, failed quests and thwarted dreams, conditions of dislocations and loneliness, the utter loss of a support system and futile attempts to forge a new support system, the identity crisis, painful quest for the lost 'self intergenerational conflict between the 'expatriate' first generation parents and the 'immigrant' assimilated second generation children, marital conflicts as spouses adapt to the new culture differently, misreading of cultural codes, the experience of racism in all its manifestations.

CONCLUSION

Never has a writer, no matter how great a stature, been spared criticism, and as such Bharti Mukherjee's *Jasmine* has also been subjected to controversy. Some discerning critics, working in US universities, are vocal in their dissent regarding the merits of the book and any criticism emanating from the intelligentsia cannot but be heeded. They interrogate some of the key aesthetics, the ideological assumptions of Bharti Mukherjee's works. Amindyo Roy defines the aesthetics of postcolonial exile that Mukharjee identifies as her artistic credo in her autobiographical *Days and Night in Calcutta* (1977), and then proceeds to examine the specific ways in which she deploys these aesthetics in her novel *Jasmine*. He seeks to demonstrate how the author's representation and production of the aesthetics of exile as a transnational and cosmopolitan 'epic theme' elides the deep contradictions built within the space of post-colonialism. The discursive basis of post-colonial cultural conflict writing appears to be inextricably tied to those aesthetic projections that are utilized to fabricate and authorize an 'epic' truth about the immigrant experience. This experience, feels the critic, is made possible as a fictive construct by circumventing and suppressing the historical exigencies of Third World immigration. In *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, Mukharjee claims that her aesthetic must accommodate a decidedly Hindu imagination with an American craft of fiction.

REFERENCES

- Banerjee, Surendernath. *A Nation in Making*. Oxford University Press, Madras, 1925.
Chandra, Bipan. *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*. Orient Longman Ltd., New Delhi, 1979.
Cowaşjee, Saros. *So Many Freedoms*. New Delhi; Oxford University Press 1977.

Saarth

E-Journal of Research

ISSN NO: 2395-339X

A Review of Kiran Desai's Novel, The Inheritance of Loss 2007.
www.santanu.wordpress.com

An Interview with Kiran Desai for Bold type, India Star: A Literary - Art Magazine, 2000.
www.telegraphindia.com.