



A Comparative Study of Bharati Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Jasmine* with special reference to Naxalite and Khalistani Movement

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Abstract

The present paper deals with the crucial moment of Indian history and through the consciousness of the central characters in the novel we are offered the writer's extraordinary capacity to capture the moment which has attracted the attention of men of letters across the world. The tiger's, Mukherjee's *Daughter*, first novel is a replica of the political movements. The protagonist of the novel is highly influenced with the Naxalite movement which forces the novelist to provide the novel a matrix in which historical and political events can be re-enacted fictionally, historically and politically in the real sense of the term. The narrative of the novel takes us to 1879 to trace the family history of Tara, the female protagonist of the novel. Her friend Joyonto Roy Chaudhari has twin role in the novel On the one hand, he represents the degraded aristocratic class of Calcutta and on the other he is an observer and commentator regarding the changes that he feels in Calcutta. He is often led to compare the past and present of the city.

The Naxalite movement has been presented in the novel as the vision and mission of those who bear the burnt of the movement . In *The Tiger's Daughter* it is depicted as more destructive than revolutionary. In *Jasmine*, we find the depiction of the extremist organization Khalsa Lions which affects Jyoti's life in particular and villagers of Hasnapur in general.

On the whole, Mukherjee's two novels having opposite ideology brings our hidden features of her presentation. Mukherjee does not regard political unrest in India as a necessary. Step for the fortification of a newly independent nation.

Key words: Aristocratic, Crucial, Degraded, Fortification, Protagonist , Naxalite movement, Khalistani movement.

Introduction:

Bharati Mukharjee is a novelist with a posterior vision and mission having two crucial moments of Indian history. The novelist is pre-occupied with the migrant Indians in the process of self – realization and self- actualization in alien land which poses a threat of self identity to her characters in the novels. The novels of our present study- *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Jasmine*-belong to two different phases in Mukherjee's literary career. Yet there is some similarity in then as the novels deals with two crucial moments of Indian history. *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Jasmine* depict historical and political events but the former novel has no tinge and touch of political movement. The novel fictionalizes the favourit theme of Mukherjee- the migrant Indian on the

look out for a place in the adopted land. The central character Tara of the novel 'The Tiger's Daughter' experience in America is mainly referred to whereas the main plot of the novel takes up the theme of how she feels and reacts to the Indian reality when she returned to India after the lapse of seven years. In a non – linear narrative mode, the novel opens with a description of the Catelli-Continental which is introduced as 'the novel of the universe' . It is about an Indian woman who returns to India after many years in America and visualizes her native place being alien to it. The poverty, hunger and dirt in the country now cloud the memory of the elite class life style of her childhood and youth. This situation leads her to inner conflict which constitutes the crux of the novel.

2 . Objectives:

The objectives of the paper are following:

- i) To study the problem of self-identity in foreign country.
- ii) To study the cross cultural conflict in the context of Bharati Mukherjee's The Tiger's Daughter and Jasmine
- iii) To study multicultural presentation of America
- iv) To study the impact of Naxalite and Khalistani movement on th life of the commoners.
- v)

3. Materials and Methods:

Books, internet, sources from reference books, research articles from journals have been used to assess the objectives. Qualitative research methodology is applied to this present paper . It aims at gathering in-depth understanding of human behavior and character.

4. Result

Tara visits back to Calcutta is presented and depicted at a time when the Naxalite unrest was plaguing Bengal. This also coincided with the influx of a large numbers of refugees from across the border who were encroaching into any unprotected place. The situation of anarchy has been depicted in section 4 of the novel." Calcutta was losing its memories in a bonfire of effigies, buses, and trams." Tara realizes the chaotic situation first time when she goes to meet her friends at the Catelli – continental. but even before that the Naxalite movement and its attendant disorder are hinted at through the reaction of the elderly Joyonto Roy Chaudhary to the changes Calcutta has undergone in recent times. Joyonto plays a role of minute observer and commentator in the novel who gives his own opinion regarding elite people as well as commoners. To him, the youth of Calcutta do not understand the worth and significance of the city. Joyonto says, The real Calcutta, the thick laughter of brutal men open dustbins, warm and dark, where Carcasses were sometimes discarded, did not exist . He knew Calcutta would not be as kind to them as it had been to him" (TD 41).He has two roles to play- one of participation and the other of detachment-lead him to invent his own very peculiar phrases and expression.

Not only Joyonto but also Pronob also reacts regarding the Naxalite movement when he says, “Calcutta is going to the dogs. No question about it. It is going to the left of leftists. It is going communist” (TD44). In the presence of history, She realizes that this is not the same Calcutta . She had left seven years ago. Movement by workers did not mean the use of abusive language. But the things go on happening before her eyes and . She reacts to those with the indifferent detachment. She learns everything and in the final action of the novel does see with her own eyes a manifestation of violence perpetrated by the Naxalites . The mob manhandles Joyonto and in an attempt to rescue him Pronob sustains severe injuries at the hands of mob and finally succumbs to the injuries But Tara remains unaffected from all these things . She does not feel the turmoil as an Indian . Even at this moment of tension and anxiety , She thinks neither of Joyonto nor of Pronob seriously, but of escaping from Calcutta.

The Naxalite Movement has been portoyaed in the Tiger’s Daughter as a source of destruction Bharatu Mukherjee has undermined the ideology and revolutionary tenor of the movement that rocked Calcutta in the Sixties and early part of the seventeenth century. She puts stress on the loss and destruction . The whole movement is presented through the eyes of those who either personally have been at the receiving end during the upheaval or more generally have felt intimidated as a class . The main perpetrators of the movement are nowhere in the picture. The Character who raise their voice against the movement belong to single class.

5. Discussion :

Mukherjee makes no attempt to foreground the Naxalite movement from the perspective of those participating in it or of those who have internalized the ideals of the movement. The uniform negative presentation of the movement in the novel can not be justified. The fracturing effects of the movement resonate throughout the novel . She appears much more interested in the ‘threatened’ section and sees the Naxalite as the immediate menace, the ostensible agents of the imminent extinction of this section. She is very apathetic to the participators of the revolution because she considers the Naxalites as a destroyer of sociopolitical structure and as a creator of the fear among commoners.

When we go through ‘Jasmine’, we find that Jasmine is the enactment of the encounter of two cultures, one ancient, the other modern. In this novel , Mukherjee once again takes up her favourite theme of an Indian immigrant’s encounter with the New world but the progression of the narrative here is almost the opposite to that of The Tiger’s Daughter. Further , the action of The Tiger’s Daughter is mainly concerned with the feeling of an Indian when she returns home from abroad. But the heroine of Jasmine is deeply rooted to her own culture even after going abroad. It is different matter that she imbibes the new culture of abroad with the passage of time. In The Tiger’s Daughter Naxalite movement was a focal point for Tara but in Jasmine Khalistani movement plays a very vital role. It is to be noted here that the novelist does not explore any ideology or political agenda behind this Khalistani movement like The Tiger’s Daughter. She denigrates the whole Khalistani movement , as it were. As it is

clear from the novel , these extremists have no ideological base and only indulge in spreading violence. They are introduced to us thus:

There was a new Sikh gang, the Khalsa Lions, who liked action . Khalsa means pure. As lions of purity , the gang dressed in white shirts and pajamas and indigo turbans, and all of them heavy kirpans on bondoliers . They had money to zigzag through the bazaar on scooters,---- we assumed the money for scooters came from smuggling liquor and guns in and out of Pakistan (Jasmine 49)

In fact, they had nothing to do with scruples when they engaged themselves in anti –social activities because the purity was confined to their dress. They had no hesitation in hurling tomatoes on the Masterji whom they consider to be a soft – sikh.

“The khalsa lions had taken to hurling stones and fruits from their scooters (Jasmine 49). To Jasmine’s father there fellows are ‘Hooligans’ and mesterjee, though agreeing, wants patience for, “-----where there is a rising there is also a falling. Hooligans who soar must also come down”(Jasmine 50). Sukhwinder, one of the khalsa boys does not think that he would hesitate to kill the non – Sikhs of his own village. He gravely outlines their plan:

“The khalsa, the pure bodied and the pure Hearted, must have their sovereign state. Khalistan, the land of pure. the impure must be eliminated”(Jasmine 65): but the fellows like sukkhi have been so systematically tutored that they are not ready to apply their common sense and vengeance against the Hindus comes to the front in these lines:

If they were cruel to Sikhs, it is because of Hindu influence on them. Many of them had Hindu mothers and Hindu concubines who taught them to kill Sikhs. Pakistanis were Hindus who saw the light of true Gold and converted. So were Sikhs. Only bloodsucker banyas and untouchable monkeys remained Hindu (Jasmine 66).

Thus, it is clear that in the midst of such an atmosphere of racial hatred, the social fabric is bound to crumble. And it begins with the teacher who was in the hope of a change. The teaches is humiliated in front of his students and finally they murder the teacher in an act of violence in the school premises:

In front of the students they first knocked his turban off. The called him insulting names -----while one boy barbered the teacher, chopping at the hair in great clumps, another held a machine gun over the children -----then they shot, emptying thirty bullets in him (Jasmine 85-6).

It is not just the murder but the extreme disrespect in handling the teacher and the atmosphere of terror from which even Jasmine does not remain untouched. The miscreants turn their heed to Jyoti who has become Jasmine because her husband had given her that name. In their eyes, she is no better than a whore. The miscreants attack the couple. When they were shopping in the market one April evening prior to

prakash's leaving for the U. S. A. Their target was Jasmine and they tried to kill her by detonating a transistor bomb. but fortunately Jasmine sees the miscreants in the mirror of the shop:

Two lines, one of them carrying a music box, lounged on the door way. And then behind them something moved, slight man on a motor scooter----- The Lions had left the music box just inside the door ----- I am screaming. My hands touch a red wet cheek, my eyes are closed, Prakash and I stumble together -- ----- I failed you. I did not get there soon enough. The bomb was meant for me, Prostitute, whore (jasmine 93).

Conclusion:

Thus, a movement is summed up in the novel as just perpetrating one murder after another. Like the portrayal of the Naxalite movement in *The Tiger's Daughter*, The Khalistani movement in this novel has been presented as a mere destructive force committing heinous crimes and creating havoc in the lives of the individuals as well as in the national life. This is mere trivialization of a political movement without contextualizing it. Uma Parmeshwaran is particularly critical of Mukherjee's dilution of the political movement in this novel:

The novel is particularly shallow and ill-researched. Her trivialization of the Khalistan issue, her haphazard injection of stereotypical characters and symbols, her general carelessness regarding historical facts and peasant and urban realities of Punjab, her flippant disregard of the strength of familial relationships-----and weak charactersization -----all reveal a rather contemptuous attitude towards the intelligence of the reader (Prameshwaran 13) .

The study of the two novels by Bharati Mukherjee shows that the heroins of above mentioned novels display an unbelievable ability to hate everything connected with the former existence, Even the novelist also reveals her 'foreignness of spirit' to explain histo-political reality to trivialize crucial historical moments for legitimizing the escape from native place in the real sense of the term.

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