Abstract

Bharati Mukherjee is one of the major novelists of Indian diaspora who has achieved inevitable position on the map of Indian diasporic literature. The present study aims at exploring various cross-cultural relations reflected in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee respectively, *The Tiger’s Daughter* (1972), *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989), *Leave it to Me* (1997), and *Desirable Daughters* (2002). An attempt is made to compare and contrast various cross-cultural relations based on mutual cultural understandings and misunderstandings. The study focuses on the various reasons of cultural differences and possible causes of cultural conflicts.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters:

**The first** chapter deals with the theoretical background of the study. It encompasses literary background, brief review of Indian diasporic literature and Bharati Mukherjee’s brief biographical sketch. The chapter includes significance and purpose of the study, aims and objectives, hypothesis, review of literature, scope and limitations and methodology.

**The second** chapter presents cross-cultural relations as noticed in *The Tiger’s Daughter* (1972). The novel reflects the confrontation between illusion and reality. The protagonist Tara was sent to America by her father at an early age of fifteen. She finds cultural discrimination in an alien land. She compares and contrasts Eastern and Western cultures. Her husband David Cartright questions about Indian customs and traditions. Tara feels completely insecure in an alien atmosphere and receives many cultural shocks. She returns to India, but her experience there is not what she had expected it to be. Through a series of adventures, Tara arrives at a final self-realization and reconciles with cultural differences.

In her transition from the Eastern culture of India to the Western culture of America, the phase of alienation occurs. Slowly, Tara gets alienated from the native culture. This separation gradually makes her alienated from her origin.
Tara's encounters with Western culture has made her feel to be an outsider and this is the phase of alienation which is an inevitable phase of transformation of an individual in the context of cross-cultural relations and cross-cultural contacts. Finally, Tara gets assimilated with the Western culture and life-style. In the present context, the assimilation with the Western culture is the target to be achieved. Tara's rational perspective makes her assimilated with the culture of the West. Tara's concern for David and David's concern for Tara indicate the way both of them have merged as persons and as representatives of their native cultures. The cross-cultural relations are thus shown through the reflection of the culture of the Orient and the Occident.

The third Chapter brings out cross-cultural relations as observed in Bharati Mukherjee’s second novel *Wife* (1975). The protagonist Dimple DasGupta is a product of middle class family in Calcutta. The class as a whole indoctrinates the values of obedience and submissiveness in women. Dimple has quite romantic illusions but considers her marriage to be a blessing in disguise. She dreams that her marriage will bring her freedom, fortune and happiness. What she experiences is far from what she cherishes. She wants to eliminate the taboos and becomes an escapist. She has to face cultural shocks in an alien land. The blurring of facts and dreams finally brings the catastrophe.

The novel has three parts, and in these three parts, four phases of cross cultural encounters are presented. In Calcutta, Dimple moves from her parents’ house to her mother-in-law’s place. The reflections of Indian culture abound in the first part of the novel. The mirroring of the life in the West is noticed in the second part of the novel. Her residence in Jyoti and Meena Sen’s apartment has made her aware of the ways of the western life style. Jyoti Sen has characterized American life as consisting of violence, rape and murder. The material comforts and the physical facilities of the land of money, honey and prosperity are noticed by Dimple in this phase. The phase of alienation from the Indian culture of the East is presented in the third part. Dimple gets Americanized totally and her assimilation with the American culture of the west is complete through Ina Mullick and Milt Glasser.
The fourth chapter is devoted to cross-cultural relations in *Jasmine* (1989). The protagonist Jyoti undergoes different transformations as she leaves India and goes to America. She has a strong will power to fight against all odds and obstacles in her target of getting Americanized as her husband Prakash Vijh desired her to be. She oscillates between the claims of Indian tradition and the claims of survival in contemporary America as an independent woman. In spite of differences and contradictory claims of the two cultures, Jasmine is capable of forging the composite culture of the East and the West. Her imaginative insight enables her to adjust with an alien country like the US.

The traditional values of the East and the common features of the land, the people, their traditions and customs are reflected in Jasmine’s life prior to her departure to America. The mirroring of the West is highlighted through the sections that present the scenes of material glory in the western culture. The facilities that are available in America make it a land of plenty of money and honey, prosperity and happiness. The western life-style is mirrored in the novel. The phase of alienation shows how Jasmine steadily moves out of the shadow of the impact of the Eastern Indian culture. The slackening of the dominance of the eastern culture indicates how Jasmine got alienated slowly from the clutches of the Oriental tradition.

The fifth chapter explores cross-cultural relations reflected in *Leave it to Me* (1997). Debbie Devi is the protagonist of the novel. She is an orphan. She is adopted by a family in New York. She desires to search for her bio-mom. The search for bio-parents begins on account of the namelessness of her parents. The novel narrates how a child discarded in India has no identity of its own. She has neither a proper birth certificate nor mother’s or father’s name. This blankness leads to the loss of her identity. Identification marks are important in every culture. Her search for self-exploration and self-identity takes her to San Francisco. What she discovers about her bio-mom shocks her but through the tensions of the real and the imagined world; the protagonist faces the cross-cultural tensions courageously.
The sixth chapter deals with the cross-cultural relations reflected in *Desirable Daughters* (2002). The novel depicts a true story of three sisters residing in an orthodox family. Tara abandons her own culture and adapts alien culture. She even maintains her live-in relationship. Her elder sister has also boldly adapted alien culture. But Tara’s experiences make her long for the country of her birth and her roots. The reflection of the culture of the East of India is noticed. The other culture—the culture of the modern world of technology, individual liberty and equality of opportunities in America is mirrored. Padma and Tara both get assimilated in the American culture. The stages of alienation from the native culture and the stages of getting assimilated in the other culture have been presented. The traditional bonds of the old culture are broken. There is a constant departure from the native culture and there is continuous moving into the modern culture. The physical and psychological transition from the past to the present is highlighted in the novel.

The seventh chapter concludes with major findings. The present study weaves a pattern of various cross-cultural situations and relations. It reflects the cultural diversity in America and in the East in India. It deals with the reflection of Indian culture and past and present encounters with the Indian setting and the culture of the East. The culture of the Orient differs from the culture of the West, the reflection of the changes in the life of the protagonist have the protagonist’s experiences of cross-cultural relations. The cross cultural encounters are presented through mirroring of the Western culture. It also brings out the sense of alienation with a desire to find out the cultural roots. The process of acculturation is completed with the phase of assimilation with the target culture. The phase of assimilation goes on both the ways that is from the East to the West and from the West to the East.

The cross-cultural relations depend on the recognition of uncertainty and unfamiliarity of interactions with others that belong to another cultural set-up. In case of mirroring of multiple cultures, the most appropriate illustrations are to be found in what is branded as diasporic literature. The diasporic writers like Bharati...
Mukherjee present the turn of events in the lives of the characters who are often immigrants from the homeland to the adapted land. The stages of adaptation are noticed in the journey of the protagonist. She is required to undertake from the centre to the periphery and then again from the periphery to the centre. The sense of alienation, the phase of adaptation, the stage of reconciliation, the process of assimilation and the destination of acculturation are the progressive steps which end in the cross-cultural shift. Bharati Mukharjee desires that the cross-cultural encounters should not lead to violence or corruption. It is necessary to move beyond the frontiers of race, religion, class and nationality to understand the significance of cross-cultural relationships. It is essential to adapt a view that will embrace global proportions. The promotion of the positive global view is necessary to promote cross-cultural relations.