

Impact Of Crossing The Boundary Of Native Land In Bharati Mukherjee's Novels- *Wife And Jasmine*

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ABSTRACT: *At the age of globalization immigration becomes a common trend. In earlier times the main purpose of immigration of the third world people were only depend on their vocational problems. But in the present time people's vocational problem mingles with the desire of avocation for the purpose of crossing the boundaries of native land. Now a day to live in abroad is a prestigious issue for common people . But they never think much about the predicaments to adjust in a different social, religious, economic and political milieu. Despite the progress and development at the external level some where people forget to take need of their inner self. In cases where cultural dissimilarities are much sharper in terms of racial, linguistic and religious determinates, the issue gets hopelessly complex for the immigrant to cope with. As an immigrant Bharati Mukherjee also experienced difficulties to adjust to the traditions, society and culture in abroad which she depicts through the lives of two protagonists Dimple and Jasmine. This study concerned with the problems that arise in the lives of Dimple and Jasmine due to their attempt to cross the boundary of their native land. It also exposes their attempt reactions and the degree of adaptability, assimilation and the outcome considering their innate personality as portrait by the novelist, Bharati Mukherjee.*

KEY WORD: *Impact, Boundary, Crossing, Native Land.*

I. INTRODUCTION:

Mukherjee's second novel *Wife* is published in the year 1975. Through this novel Mukherjee expresses the difficulties of a newly married Bengali house wife, Dimple Das Gupta, who migrated to New York to lead better life. The novel is also a superb description of marginal confusions concerning American culture and Dimple's sufferings to become sandwiched between personal liberty on one hand and the conjugal bondage on the other. Dimple is a very romantic girl and always lives in the world of fantasy. She is thrilling enough of her dream marriage rather than of her study. Dimple weds Amit thinking: "Marriage would bring her freedom, Cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, fund-raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love" (P.3). For her, migration and marriage are one and the same with each other. The author points out that migration for some are migration from reality. In alien land immigrants adopt themselves and assimilates the foreign culture at a varied degree that purely individualistic. Bharati Mukherjee succeeds to narrate in details the impact of crossing the boundaries encountered by her protagonists throughout the course of her writings. Mukherjee created her protagonist Dimple as a representative of those simple young women who cross the boundary of native land to an alien ground with their husbands to fulfill their unaccomplished desires and consequently has to face troubles of immigration in foreign land. Through the life of Dimple the novelist shows the predicament of crossing the boundary which leaves a deep negative impression on her phobic situation at the end of the novel.

After her marriage she enters as a newly married bride in Amit's house at Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road, Calcutta. In Amit's small and unattractive house, she feels suffocated and also faces some problems to adjust with her mother –in –law and sister-in-law. To get rid of this unromantic life she always dreams to cross the boundary of her mother land and to enter in the dream land of U.S.A. Finally one day the opportunity comes and her joy becomes limitless. She becomes happy by thinking that at last she is going to live a life of her dream. According to Dimple-"real happiness was just in the movies or in the West". She migrates with her husband from Calcutta to U.S.A. to live a life of her dream. In U.S.A. initially they have to stay with Jyoti (Amit's former friend) and Meena Sen for some financial problems. Dimple surprised to see that even in America, Sens are very consciously maintaining their identity as Indian by keeping them aloof from the influences of foreign cultures. The interior decoration of Sens apartment was purely traditional .They hanged a framed batik wall hanging that showed the characters of *Ramayana* –" King Ram and his court in splendid array". Sens love for native culture irritates Dimple. She wants to come out from their house as the extra possessiveness as their native culture becomes a hindrance for her to assimilate with the new land.

In Bijoy Mullick's (another immigrant) party Dimple meets Ina, wife of Bijoy Mullick. She smokes, drinks, used to go night clubs. Not only that she also flirts with other male Americans and "wears pants and mascara". Dimple is highly influenced by her Americanness. In the party Ina offers drink to Dimple. Dimple is also interested to take it but Amit restrains her by saying Ina that "She does not like alcoholic beverages". Amit's behavior makes Dimple annoyed and she realizes that Amit will never give her permission to adopt the Western culture. She also thinks that her aspiration to live a free life is hampered by Amit's dominating nature. Like Calcutta she feels lonely and becomes frustrated even in her dream land America. Through Ina Dimple meets Milt Glasser as a friend. His tall and lanky personality fascinated her very much. She also attracted by Milt's generous manners which she finds lack in the behaviour of her husband towards her. The growing mental gap between Amit and Dimple and her loneliness increases her interest towards Milt. To assimilate herself with new atmosphere and to enjoy a bondage free life she starts to meet Ina's American friends regularly. She used to go out with Milt and Ina wearing Marsha's (another Indian immigrant in America) western outfit and sunglasses. According to Janet M. Powers, "The purple-tinted sunglasses are perhaps the most typical index of American culture. For Dimple, they are a disguise, borrowed from the west, just like Marsha's clothes and the apartment in which she is living." She develops an extra marital affair with Milt and keeps it as a secret from her husband Amit. This secret brings guiltiness in her mind and she is haunted with the feeling that she has violated the codes of a traditional Hindu wife. She becomes sleepless and confines herself inside the four walls of the house that makes her quite abnormal.

Dimple's abnormality deepens day by day. She feels: "Her life was slow, full of miscalculations". Amit never tries to find out the reason of her mental changes. He thinks it as a result of cross-cultural dilemma. Asnani also agrees with the same opinion of Amit and aptly says: "Dimple is entrapped in a dilemma of tensions between American culture and society and the traditional constraints surrounding an Indian wife, between a feminist desire to be assertive and independent and the Indian need to be submissive and self-effacing." As a result of her abnormality she stabs her husband and ultimately commits suicides. The novel *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee is a story of a Punjabi rural girl Jyoti. In this novel Mukherjee portrays her protagonist Jyoti more powerfully and mentally strong than the protagonist of her previous novel *Wife*. Jyoti belongs to feudalistic village, Hasnapur where girls are treated – "like cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go". From her childhood she is bold, intelligent and against fate, superstitions of traditional culture and the norms of male dominating society where women are treated as subjects. She shows her rebellious spirit against the astrologer's superstitious prophecy of her future "widowhood and exile" by saying- "You are a crazy old man. You don't know what my future holds! (P. 3).

She marries Prakash Vihj, a modern man against the wishes of her family. After marriage Prakash gives her a new name 'Jasmine' and says her- "You'll quicken the whole world with your perfume" (P.77). Prakash is murdered shortly before their migration to the United States to take admission for his study of engineering by a terrorist bomb blast. Her husband's death leads her journey from the city Jullhundhar to Florida. The actual battle of her life starts now in an entirely new land. Jasmine is brutally raped by Half-Face, the captain of the ship on which she is travelling. After this unfortunate incident she decides to suicide. But when she remembers that her mission (to visit the institute where her husband wished to get admission and to perform the ritual Sati) is not completed she murders the rapist. About the murder of Half-Face Samir Dayal comments: "she experiences an epistemic violence that is also a life-affirming transformation." She realizes that as she has lost her most valuable thing of her life that is her chastity once then there is nothing to lose again. So she becomes more daring and decides to utilize every opportunity to assimilate with the Occidental culture.

In Queens, New York Jasmine takes her shelter in the house of her husband's former teacher, Devinder Vadhera. Vadheras confine themselves in their native traditional culture even in America. Jasmine surprised to see their artificial effort to maintain their Indian identity. She is staying there as a caretaker of Mr. Vedhera's old parents. She has to live there the life of a typical widow. They never sees her yearns to absorb in occidental culture free mindedly. They like to see her as a helpless widow in a familiar white sari. It is very difficult for freedom loving Jasmine to adjust with conservative Vedheras. So she leaves them in search of free life.

In Manhattan she again starts her life as a caregiver of Duff, adopted daughter of Taylor and Wylie Hayes. She gets here ample opportunities to come contacts with Occidental culture. Taylor gives her a new name 'Jase'. This new 'Jase' is totally differs from old Jasmine who lived for the future but Jase lives for today. She starts to wear Western clothes and used to go movies. She falls in love with Taylor when Wylie leaves him for another man. Her life as an immigrant is going happily with Taylor and Duff and she is going to get her new identity as Taylor's wife in the new land. But eventually she encounters the murderer of her husband and she is

forced to run to Iowa for life. In Iowa Jase transforms her identity into Jane and starts to live with Bud without marrying him and becomes pregnant. Though she is with Bud to attain only a permanent identity from the identity of an immigrant but never forgets Taylor. So when Taylor comes to take her again she accepts his proposal and sets her final adventure for life. As an immigrant Jasmine lives several lives in a single life-time. She starts her journey as a simple village girl and ends it becoming a modern American lady in New York City.

Thus it may be concluded that both Dimple in *Wife* and Jasmine in the novel *Jasmine* crossed the boundary of their native land but with different motives. Dimple's aim was to live a free and better life out of traditional norms. While Jasmine wanted to cross it to fulfill the desire of her late husband. As immigrants they face the same problems to adjust in new cultural milieu. Their struggle for adjustment and for a new identity in an alien land leads their lives into two directions. Dimple because of her lack of inner strength and weak mentality was not able to cope with the changing situations and became a murderer of her husband. On the other hand, Jasmine by her tremendous mental strength and power of adaptability fights with odd situations and assimilates with the culture of new land and comes out as a winner of life. So crossing the boundary leaves a contradictory impact in the life of the two protagonists. It drags Dimple to the worse end of her life whereas it totally changes Jasmine's life by awarding her an American identity. Actually it is the attitude of the protagonists which projects one as looser and another as a winner of new life built across the boundary.

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