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THEMES OF DISPLACEMENTS AND ALIENATION OF INDIAN DIASPORA IN THE WORKS OF JHUMPA LAHIRI AND BHARTI MUKHERJEE

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Abstract

Bharti Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri, both are Indian born American writer. They raise their voice for the rights of migrated Indian women and highlight their sufferings faced in abroad. The main aim of present paper is to depict the effect of displacement on Indian women and how much they feel alienated outside their native country. The picture that emerges from the study of the novels are not only those of women being alienated and depressed due to the circumstances but also those of women coming out as bold character to overcome the challenges those come in their lives. The present paper throws light on social and cultural issues through the mouth of protagonist who gets success in bringing about social and cultural change by presenting her condition in society. Both these writers present feministic perspective and also create an image of oppressed woman due to displacement and alienation. Displacement not only leads to separation but it also leads to alienation and rebirth in a new country, new culture, new society and new adjustments in an alien land. The protagonists of their novels look back to their native country with pain and nostalgia but after all these sufferings they are not ready to look back.

Keywords: Themes, Displacements, Alienation Of Indian Diaspora, Jhumpa Lahiri ,Bharti Mukherjee

1.INTRODUCTION

Both Bharti Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri have discussed the problems and experiences faced by the Indian immigrants in United States or the Western world. These two writers are one of the most significant contemporary novelists and short story writers whose writings have received world-wide recognition. The novelists depict how the immigrants try to adapt to western society and how they feel rootless. In the present age of diaspora one's

biological identity cannot be one's real identity because due to immigration both physical and psychological changes come.

In the novel *The Tiger's Daughter*, the heroine of the novel Tara Banerjee comes back to India, her native land after seven years to meet her relatives and friends. But when she reaches, she finds the condition of India has been changed and she does not feel comfortable herself in such situation. She realizes that her ways of thinking and living are changed and she is no more an Indian now. She even does not remember about the rituals and Indian festivals. She also realizes that the attitude of her relatives, her friends and even her mother has been changed. Due to these conditions, she feels alienated even on her native land. This situation appears because of her displacement to USA from India. She does not feel happy while her journey in a train and now for her America is a dream land. When she first time goes to America for higher studies, she is afraid of unknown and unfamiliar ways of American culture but now for her Indian ways are also unfamiliar. First she feels isolated and alienated in America, now she has same feeling for India. She realizes that she is now neither Indian and nor American and due to these circumstances, she is totally confused and lost in the world. Sometimes she also thinks that she is going to be mad.

Bharti Mukherjee's second novel *Wife* is the psychological study of Dimple Das Gupta, a middle class Bengali wife who accompanies her husband to New York from Calcutta. The novel develops in three parts, the first part taking place in Calcutta, the second in America, the third part develops in Manhattan where Amit and Dimple are subletting an apartment. Here the writer focuses on cultural displacement and dislocation causes new identities. Through the protagonist the novelist expresses and highlights the challenges of multicultural society of an immigrant. Dimple, the heroine of the novel emigrates from her native land India to the United States and suffers under the pain caused by a different society. She separates herself from others. She spends her most of the time in watching TV and sleeping. She also does not feel happy when she comes to know about her pregnancy and finally she gets success to abort her child by skipping. As she thinks that her child will be the reminder of the past, India and the old world. In that environment because of dislocation and alienation she becomes a patient of insomnia and even after this her husband, Amit does not take it seriously. At the end of the story, she becomes totally frustrated and out of fear and personal instability she ultimately murders her husband and eventually commits suicide.

In her next novel *Jasmine*, the writer discusses about the life of Jyoti, heroine of the novel. Later her name is changed by her husband and he calls her Jasmine instead of Jyoti. By changing anyone's name means changing her identity. In the same way when Jyoti was a child an astrologer told her about her widowhood. This thing comes true when she was of seventeen years, her husband died in a bomb attack. After this incident, she migrates to the United States of America. But her sufferings do not end here. She comes into contact with a brutal ship captain and he rapes with Jasmine. After this cruel incident Jasmine does not lose her heart and decides to take revenge and finally kills that beast. Due to dislocation she is changed. She acts like a person that is not according to her personality. Even after this she faces everything very strongly. Jasmine passes through one situation to another and one country to another. Whatever happens in novel that relates to Jasmine, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly. Jasmine experiences not only physical but mental violence also and this influences her life and forces her to reborn as a different person. Through her character the novelists reflects the psychological pain that comes with the changes of culture and life.

Her another novel *Desirable Daughters* belongs to the genre of American literature which deals with the issues of immigrant life, cultural assimilation and alienation. It presents the conflict arising from native and foreign culture. The novel presents the life of three Brahmin daughters Tara, Padma and Parvati. Here the novelist illustrates the situations faced by diasporic women. Tara's journey as a daughter, as a wife, as a mother and as a woman is well represented by Bharti Mukherjee. Tara Lata was first married to a tree, as a measure to mitigate the malefic aspects of her horoscope. Tara migrates to America with her husband, Bishwapriya Chatterjee. When she reaches America she feels gap between tradition and freedom. She tries to find herself in the new system.

Like Bharti Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri also discusses the problems of displacement and alienation. In her first novel, *The Namesake*, the main protagonist Ashima Ganguli, a Bengali woman moves to Cambridge Massachusetts, with her husband and is about to give birth. Later she gives birth to a baby boy and she mourns the fact that her grandparents, her family and her friends do not surround her and her baby. When she comes back from the hospital, Ashima says to Ashoke, "I don't want to raise Gogol alone in the country. It's not right. I want to go back." Ashima feels lonely and alienated in such a condition. Later her son, Gogol also feels alienated, especially when he realizes that "no one he knows in the world in Russia or India or America or anywhere, shares his name. not even the source of his namesake." Ashima lives alone in the house on Pemberton Road. She tries to adjust and settle herself to her surroundings but all in vain. She totally fails and feels strange and lost in this country. She spends hours thinking about her parents and family, and rereads the same five Bengali novels. The theme of alienation also appears in Moushumi's life. She tells Gogol how she rejected all Indian with whom her parents tried to match her up. She tells him, "She was convinced in her bones that there would be no one at all. Sometimes she wondered if it was her horror of being married to someone she didn't love that has caused her, subconsciously, to shut herself off." Gogol also feels alienated sometimes in his marriage to Moushumi.

In *Interpreter of Maladies*, Lahiri points out that communication is necessary, both for individuals and societies. Lack of communication and miscommunication lead her character to isolation and cultural displacement. Immigrants feel divided between the customs of their native land and adopted society. Mr. Sen does not feel comfortable in American life and her separation from her family also derives her to isolation. Her alienation increases because she is even unable to communicate successfully with her husband. Her husband does not understand her feeling of isolation. After the accident, she becomes more isolated. In the same way, Eliot's mother is also incapable in communication. Eliot's mother's isolation comes into light through her failure to cook.

Through their works Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri mention the desires, wishes and expectations of immigrant women who want to live their native culture in abroad. Above discussed works of both the writers are related to the diasporic situation of the lives of Indians and Indians-Americans. It also discusses the theme of cultural transformation. Both the writers show how these female characters keep hold on their native cultures and also create their new identity in foreign cultures. But the fact is that, relationships, language, rituals and religion all help these characters to maintain their culture in new surroundings. Migrated women are isolated from their families, parents, home, culture, relatives, friends and the communities also in which they live. The lives of such women in above discussed novels and short stories end with a sense of loss. All the time they feel that they are missing something important in their lives and this feeling defines them.

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