

Transnational Identity of Assimilation and Assertion in Bharati Mukherjee Miss New India



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Abstract

This paper attempts to show the identity of Assimilation and Assertion of the female protagonist in Bharati Mukherjee's latest novel *Miss New India*. Bharati Mukherjee is making a statement about her own experiences and observations on the issues faced as a woman in traditional Indian and foreign country by the medium of her female characters. The main purpose of this study is to focus on Assimilation and Assertion of the female character Anjali Bose, is in constant search of ways to escape the conservative environment of Gauripur, a small town in Bihar. It also discusses the women protagonist Anjali Bose is psychologically suppressed in the male-dominated society. While the male characters of her novels have received, more or less, enough attention the female characters seem to be marginalized by the critics who have discussed the female characters more in terms of their relation to the story's male characters and analyzing the facets of oppression like sexuality, motherhood, mothering, and domestic labour. And it also discusses the number of questions related to trauma survivor and quest for Identity of the female characters who struggle to come out of the Attitude of Assimilation and Assertion.

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1. Introduction

Bharati Mukherjee (1940), an India born Canadian/American novelist, has made a deep impression on the literary canvass. She was one of the most leading novelists in Indian diasporic literature and also in postcolonial literary studies. She has written eight novels like *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971), *wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989), *Holder of the world* (1993), *Leave it to me* (1997), *Desairable Duaghters* (2002), *Tree Bride* (2004) and *Miss New India* (2011) and some of the short stories. Bharati Mukherjee raises a feminist voice throughout the speaking women characters of her novels

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sharing their difficulties of gender variation and strictly defined gendered individuality. She has written themes like socio-cultural awareness, uprooting, nostalgia, noesis, alienation, assimilation, diasporic consciousness, multiculturalism and memoirs and so on. Her memorable works speak of her own experience, and changing shape of American society. She is an investigative pioneer--of innovative terrains, practices, and literatures-co-existent with her wide-ranging mission to discover new worlds. Her novels, honestly, depict the issues of her own cultural location in West Bengal in India, her displacement and alienation from her land of origin to Canada where she was simultaneously invisible as a writer and overexposed as a racial minority and her final re-location and assimilation to the United States of America as a naturalized citizen. The female protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee's novels are characterized by their sense of rootlessness and restlessness and their attempts to be rooted. Mukherjee has herself undergone the traumatic process of acculturation. She comments:

We immigrants have experienced rapid changes in the history of the nations in which we lived. When we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb 200 years of American history and learn to adapt to American society. Our lives are remarkable, often heroic [...] although they (the fictional immigrant characters) are often hurt or depressed by setbacks in their new lives and occupations, they do not give up. They take risks they wouldn't have taken in their old comfortable worlds to solve their problems. As they change citizenship, they are reborn.

Mukherjee's heroines are either Indians living abroad or vice versa. Being an immigrant herself, Mukherjee tries to show the darker side of immigration. Her experiences first in Canada then the U.S. serve as subjects of her novels. Her writings proceed in an evolutionary manner. She says: "My themes are larger, my strategies more complex I have put together my aesthetic manifesto: Multiculturalism, diversity is the keywords". (76)

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Acculturation and Westernization

Bharati Mukherjee's latest novel *Miss New India* (2011), portrays modern India. The female protagonist of the novel is a young woman, Anjali Bose, who is in constant search of ways to escape the conservative environment of Gauripur, a small town in Bihar. The author has pictured the restlessness of a young woman who is in pursuit of happiness. She is not like the other Gauripur girls who would allow others to write her destiny. She had high aspirations in life. Although she is born in a conservative middle-class family she wants a Westernized lifestyle. Her quest for freedom makes her rebellious. The following lines exhibit her quest to be independent: "She liked the idea of not having to go right back home to her father's bullying and her mother's tearful silence. They were obsessed with finding a respectable son-in-law who would overlook negatives such as green eyes, a stubborn personality, and a nominal dowry" (*MNI* 12).

Anjali Bose is a lovely young lady of nineteen. She is the second girl of a Bengali Railway representative. She is tall, lovely and alluring. She has finished B.Com. Through Anjali Bose, Mukherjee follows the life of a young lady in India's new innovatively situated society. Indians give more significance to society, family, and customs. In Mukherjee's words, Family weddings and funerals are the incontestable duties and rituals of Indian Life. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the hero's mom's point in life is to locate an appropriate accomplice for her little girls. Here, in *Miss New India*, the whole family prays for a suitable boy for Anjali Bose. Subodh Mitra is a suitor chose for Anjali by her dad. Be that as it may, he has assaulted her before marriage. Surendra, U., & Parthasarathy, S. S. (2014), Tandon, S. (2004), this is extremely stunning in Indian culture. Be that as it may, for Subodh it is nothing large as he is accomplished from America and has the impact of the Western degenerate culture.

Anjali being stunned by this occurrence chooses to abandon her home to accomplish something energetic in her vocation. With the assistance of his educator, Peter Champion she leaves Gauripur and achieves Bangalore. At first, Bangalore energized her, but it cleared out her depressed. To Anjali, a vocation is a way to joy. She figures that work brings regard and power. Cash brings change. Acharya, (2010), Bhabha, H. K. (2012), Chang, H. (2017), cash changes a young lady from Gauripur into a lady from Bangalore. Her point is to win a place in Usha Desai's preparation focus and discover work. In Bagehot house, she understands that it is troublesome for her to escape from the family customs. She understands you could flee from home, yet not from the customs of family. In Bangalore, she sees the adjustments throughout her life. Her dad loathes Muslim and a Christian. Be that as it may, now she imparts a restroom to a Muslim and a Christian. Keeping a boyfriend is a different thing for Anjali. When her girlfriend, Tookie, advises Anjali to keep two boyfriends: one for the workplace offering, convenient rides and innocent companionship and the second one for

a fun time boyfriend, Anjali is shocked. In Bagehot house, Bangalore, she realized that her native is Gauripur. She also remembers her roots;

I have no roots anyplace yet in India. My predecessors were loathed and abused by everybody except themselves. I comprehend Sonali –di, even Baba. (*MNI* 136)

On hearing the death of her father, she feels sorry for him, her mother, and herself. She feels that she alone is responsible for her father's death:

At some point, her inclination is changed. She looks at her life in Gauripur and Bangalore. She says I didn't have an existence in Gauripur. I am here to direct the terms of joy. (*Miss New India* 83)

Her desire in Bangalore is to be a call focus operator. She considers it as her job. In the wake of getting two weeks preparing from CCI, she feels that the preparation itself is an arrangement for the new life she pointed. That is an autonomous vocation lady. Mukherjee advances the diverse identities of Anjali. She says:

I am a lady now; she said to herself I'm a significant lady. I'm hot as indicated by Tookie. Undercover and very secretive, as per Hussein. Sherbets cool, Sherbet-reviving, According to Moni. Furthermore, amusing and entrancing, in case I'm reading Mr.GG.correctly. (*Miss New India* 227)

2.2 Immigrant Journey

At the point when the terrible time comes, she conceives that her folks were correct. They have advised her that everybody on the planet is degenerate and there are such a large number of schemes wherever on the planet. In Gauripur, she doesn't have any severe experience. She was protected with her folks. In any case, in Bangalore, subsequent to going such a variety of trials, she understands what life is. She says, my fresh start is here. Yet, not the same as Baba's and Ma's era. [Chrisman, L., & Williams, P. \(2015\)](#), [Hall, S. \(1990\)](#), they needed to battle the British; their huge battle was to build up an Independent India and make an uncommitted world. Theirs was a battle - lost, for Baba's situation against communalism and casteism and neediness and superstition and an excessive amount of religion:

They were fortunate. Their battles were difficult, yet less complex and clearer than mine...Poverty alarmed Baba. In any case, I 'm alarmed, enticed and adulterated by the implantation of immeasurable aggregates of new capital. (*Miss New India* 304)

In the wake of experiencing such a variety of trials and challenges in life, she accomplishes what she points. Here, in this novel, her adventure is from Gauripur to Bangalore as well as from dimness to light, numbness to the universe of insight. Through her trip of life, she increases self - certainty, accomplishment, and achievement.

Anjali's domineering parents did not allow her to mingle with boys due to the fear of people in Gauripur, who were supposed to be very orthodox and old fashioned. [Koraa, R. A. \(2016\)](#), [Kumar, N. \(2001\)](#), [Mandal, S. \(2017\)](#), their anxiety to find a suitable bridegroom for their daughter baffled Anjali. Bharati Mukherjee has depicted the frustration in her protagonist which makes her defiant towards her parents. She was not bothered about following the norms of the conservative society in which she lived. This can be seen in her following statement:

When the word got out, as it inevitably would, that Anjali Bose, daughter of Railways Bose of Indian Railways, sister of working woman divorcee, was riding off in plain sight' with her arms around the stomach of a foreigner, her parents would find it harder to make a proper-caste Bengali matrimonial match for her". (*Miss New India* 13)

3. Results and Discussions

Mukherjee has depicted the agony which a young girl of marriageable age goes through in an Indian society where only arranged marriages are accepted: "She lacked accomplishments such as singing, dancing, and sewing, traditionally expected of bridal candidates. She was also stubborn, headstrong and impulsive and by middle-class Gauripur standards, inappropriately outgoing" (*Miss New India* 20). Anjali's English teacher, Mr. Champion recognizes her talent and advises her to write her own destiny rather than allowing her destiny to be written by others without her consent. Mr. Champion boosts her self-esteem and inspires her to rebel against arranged marriage which was

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predestined for her. She wanted to be Angie, a modern girl in front of her English Teacher. This is evident from the following lines:

“She was about to lift her arm and signal, but no, she could not, not in a sari, with jingling gold bracelets. Angie- in- sari was Anjali, a stranger to her student self” (*Miss New India* 32).

Despite trying very hard, Anjali could not prevent her father to stop the search for a bridegroom. Her parents were very conservative and in spite of facing a setback in their elder daughter’s marriage, continued with the same approach for finding a match for their younger daughter. Anjali, with her modern outlook and thinking, was dead against these old conventional ideas;

“She was part of bold new India, an equal to anywhere, a land poised for takeoff. Her parents were irremediably alien, part of a suspicious, impoverished, humiliated India” (*Miss New India* 23).

A horrible experience took place in the marriage market. A sadistic person is chosen by her father as a prospective bridegroom behaved in an atrocious manner forcing Anjali to move out of her cocoon into the streets of Bangalore. [Koraa, R. A. \(2016\)](#), [Kumar, N. \(2001\)](#), [Mandal, S. \(2017\)](#), at the point when the catastrophe happens in her life, she believes that her folks were correct. They advised her that everybody on the planet is fake and there are such a large number of schemes wherever in the hard world. In Gauripur, she doesn't have any unforgiving background. She is protected with her folks. Be that as it may, in Bangalore, in the wake of experiencing such a large number of hardships, she understands what life is. She says:

My fresh start is here. Be that as it may, not the same as Baba's and Ma's era. They needed to battle the British; their huge battle was to build up an Independent India and make a neutral world. Theirs was a battle - lost, for Baba's situation against communalism and casteism and neediness and superstition and an excessive amount of religion. They were fortunate. Their battles were difficult; however less difficult and clearer than mine....Poverty startled Baba. However, I'm panicked, enticed and debased by the implantation of limitless aggregates of new capital. (*Miss New India* 304)

Bharati Mukherjee has shown that in her female protagonist’s journey from traditional to the modern world, she had encountered a variety of male characters and her experience with them had been bitter most of the times. The lines given below reveal her opinion about male folk:

Anjali Bose decided she had already encountered at least one version of every likely male she would ever meet. Not every man was befuddled as Nirmal Gupta or a bully like her father, or a rapist like Subodh Mitra, or a lying cheat like Sonali’s ex-husband or an exploiter like Sonali’s current boss or a brutish John like the truck driver of Nizambagh. (*Miss New India* 98)

However, a clash between contemporary and traditional India takes place when the female protagonist of the novel moves to Bangalore, the Silicon Valley of the Asian subcontinent. The novel attempts to capture modern India through Anjali’s journey in the 21st century India’s city of hopes and dreams. In Bangalore the identities are fluid and they keep evolving with the passage of time.

If Anjali’s determination to become a call center worker might seem a limited ambition, work in any area of IT is a relatively privileged position in India; as Smitha Radhakrishnan puts it:

Indian IT professionals are privileged through their ability to imagine and live out personal and professional lives in multiple places . . . This privilege stems from their dominant position in the global economy as well as their material and symbolic privilege within India. The privilege of India’s new transnational class is embedded in national/domestic hierarchies, global capitalism, and Indian class structure. (Radhakrishnan 25)

Here one who fines inhabitants with complex identities like American expatriates, Indian repatriates, NRI’s and native-born Indians from all parts of the country. In Bangalore, Anjali is one among the huge crowd who aspires to be a call center employee. These employees are trained to speak English in an American accent and are given American names. It is a city in which people come from all over the world to enjoy more independence and free themselves from conventions.

Mukherjee criticizes the customary philosophies about the training of women in which occupation or self-improvement is not much significant but rather to build marriage showcase esteem as that B.Com degree would expand her stock in the marriage market. [Nelson, E. S. \(2017\)](#), [Nitonde, R. \(2014\)](#), [Philips, D. \(2015\)](#), again it is centered on the preservationist considerations of individuals in which a minor ride of young women with an outsider would make some inconvenience in marriage advertise, as:

Anjali Bose, the little girl of railroad Bose of Indian railroad, sister of a working lady divorced person, was riding off on display with her arms around the stomach of an outsider, her folks would discover it her harder to make an appropriate cast Bengali marital match for her... mind full parental fury if she somehow managed to profit home for the back of a man's bicycle. (*Miss New India* 11-12)

Bharati Mukherjee choreographs her protagonists struggle in Bangalore. She is perplexed about her own identity- She is called Anjali, Angie, and Anjoli. She ponders over it. In Bagehot house, when confronted by Minnie Bagehot she reacted to show her Indianness. "I am an Indian, she thought. I am Indian in ways no one else in this house is Indian, except maybe poor little Sunita Sampath. I have no roots anywhere but in India" (*Miss New India* 138).

Mukherjee has portrayed the change that India is experiencing through the protagonist of the novel. She has sketched Anjali's adventures in Bangalore, an IT hub of modern India. This is a city where call centers have created a new culture, where Indians from small towns look for job opportunities which promise them a lucrative pay package. Anjali's visit to Bangalore was sponsored by her English teacher, Peter Champion. She was asked to find accommodation at Bagehot House which was an old mansion of the British colonial era.

There Anjali tries to adapt herself to American lifestyle like other girls living in that mansion. This is the kind of life she had aspired for. She tried to be professional but could not resist the temptation to explore the young, wild world. In Bangalore she was totally confused about her identity as a young girl who hailed from a very conservative family: "Bangalore was not about global economics. It was an emotional and moral Tsunami; it washed away old beliefs and traditions, the comforting ones together with the crippling and if you survived, you knew you had the spunk and grit to rebuild" (*Miss New India* 165).

Initially, Anjali felt that she has succeeded in her mission of redefining her identity in this great city of opportunities. She is full of confidence and enthusiasm. This is evident from the following statement which she makes to Girish Gujral, a wealthy industrialist whom she meets in Bangalore: "I have been in Bangalore only three weeks. I have no job, no paycheck, and no family here. But I have seen more and learned more in Bangalore than I have from twenty years in Gauripur. Here I feel I can do anything. I feel I can change my life if that's what I want" (*Miss New India* 166). Anjali is an epitome in the novel. The author has portrayed her as an iconic figure. In the novel Parvati has made this gloomy observation about her; "The best I can come up with is you are like a reflecting pool. You give back wavy clues to what we are or what we are going to be" (*Miss New India* 190).

In Bangalore, she works at a call center. In her Journey, she meets dynamic young entrepreneurs and feels happy with the opportunities being created all around her. She encounters a lot of hardships but ultimately she succeeds in gaining a new identity which she had always longed for. The author's description of Anjali's cultural dislocation is characterized by a keen psychological insight. The author has defined the "New India" as a bewildering mix of the old and the new. Bharati Mukherjee's expatriate sensibility has overpowered the feminine issues which she is not unaware of. Her psyche has a high degree of Indianness but she has avoided getting into the controversies of the stigma attached to feminine issues by the Indian society. Shackleton, M. (Ed.). (2009), Shukla, S., & Banerji, N. (2014), she has portrayed her protagonists as docile and submissive females who struggle hard to find solutions for their problems without dominating their male counterparts. Her characters keep experimenting with various options and thus sometimes appear abnormal. They have an innate desire to live life on their own terms and conditions. In spite of her association with traditional American writers, her fiction is untouched by obscenity which clearly defines her Indian roots. As critics rightly point S. Sujaritha and N.Chandra rightly say, A reading of Mukherjee's works chronologically reveals the transformations she underwent and her experiences in the new land. [145]. Like Bharati Mukherjee, her heroine, Anjali Bose had a variety of experiences both sweet and bitter.

4. Conclusion

Women in India are gotten amongst custom and innovation on entering the occupation identifying with technology innovation. Innovative headway opens new open doors for individuals in India that have as of now existed in the western partners for quite a long time. In the quest for adjusting to the new world, she turns into a prey to the naughty men who abuse her circumstance. The change of place requests a change of personality which Anjali promptly makes and changes her life. Women from white-collar class families develop as representatives supporting their families when all is said in done. In spite of the fact that the young women youngster from town foundation has not regularly been profited from the rudimentary training of an exceptionally primitive kind, young women from towns and urban communities make a check in instruction up to the higher auxiliary level. Anjali is currently a cutting-edge city young

woman and has finish flexibility. Individuals from working-class families likewise get to be attracted by the beautiful world to fulfill the self-keeping pace with their scholastic capabilities. The new Indian woman begins scanning for new roads, where she could appreciate much freedom and opportunity. The new woman confronts battle so as to make due on the planet that is loaded with interest. After freedom, women have profited from present-day instruction surprisingly. A white-collar class young woman rapidly settles on occupations with least capabilities. Here Bharathi Mukherjee records the battle of Indian young women, this time moving inside India from a residential area to a major city. She ends up in the organization of youthful and exceedingly eager adolescents, who talk the American slang to secure call focus employments and acquire a living through the character of Anjali Bose.

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Statement of authorship

The author(s) have a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The author(s) have approved the final article.



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