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**ISSN 2278-9529**

**Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal**  
[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

## **New Feministic Vision in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Tree Bride***

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**Article History:** Submitted-30/03/2019, Revised-25/04/2019, Accepted-26/04/2019, Published-25/05/2019.

### **Abstract:**

Bharati Mukherjee's novel *The Tree Bride* is a sequel to her another work *Desirable Daughter* reflecting feministic approach in the light of modern world. The basic relationship in the society namely woman to nature and man to woman are sources of sustenance. Tara Lata being a protagonist embraces nature by marrying with a tree after faces ill fate when husband got killed on her wedding night. She made her young age worthwhile and has been compared with women like Hellen Keller, Annie Sullivan and Joan of Arc. Tara Lata follows Gandhian ideals of not discriminating on the basis of caste, creed, religion and sex. Thus she becomes one of the great women with new modern morality through breaking chains attached to orthodox system. Tara Lata Gangooly is the awakening and upbringing to modern women so that they may not suffer a lot during their lifetime. The Tree Bride is just an example that if a woman being tired of social system or male domination she can live her life far better. She opens the new gate of women's freedom without disturbing the nature considering man and woman are important human beings on earth.

**Keywords:** *Sustenance-Survival, Embraces-Accept, Fate-Luck, Chains-Boundations.*

### **Introduction:**

Human being commonly transforms nature's face into cultural and historical life. The historical development of man and nature has different stages to perform. There is complete dependence of man over nature even it may be destructive and damaging. Sometime nature remains hostile to man just like forest which is something wild and menacing even though people tried to retreat it in the name of civilization. Man tries to become independent but the direct and indirect bond with nature never breaks. It is getting very difficult to satisfy the needs of human beings and society even for little substance like fresh water. Similarly man-woman is the basic of all human relationships for existence. In the beginning of the universe Adam and

Eve are the first who make relationship as husband and wife so far Christian mythology is concerned. Since then man and woman lived together, produce children and take care of them. If we look beyond, man and woman are no less than an animal so far as procreation is connected but the care and attachment to one another makes them a unique on the surface of earth.

*The Tree Bride*(2004) is the latest novel written by Bharati Mukherjee which is a sequel to *Desirable Daughters*(2002). Tara Lata, the youngest sister of Padma and Parvati was unorthodox in the family. She says "*Sister three are we...as like as blossoms on a tree. But we are not.*"(DD-21) Tara's marriage is arranged by her parents keeping in view with ancient tradition. She lives in San Francisco give divorce to an Indian Silicon Valley dotcom millionaire Bish Chatterjee, an ideal Indian immigrant. She said "*She could break up marriages with a snap of her fingers. But really, of course, she's a very moral woman with a strong sense of virtue.*"(DD-176) She made her relationship with Hungarian lover, an ex- biker and Buddhist Zen Retrifier. The young teenage of her son Rabi also accompanies to San Francisco. The new change in Tara makes her difficult to think about where she was brought up. Seven years staying in America has made Tara Americanized. Tara's quest for happy home life is disturbed by the appearance of Christopher Dey, the self appraised nephew of Tara. He claims to be illegal son of her sister Padma and her one time lover Ronald Dey. In the beginning Padma denies all the charges of having being mothered but Tara has some strong evidence in the form of hand written letters from Ronald Dey. Because of happy family and success career in the media, Padma doesn't want to ruin it all for a mistake committed in her youth.

Desirable Daughters is a young educated urban mother who is more like a friend to her son than mother. One can observe the difference in her psyche of traditional mothers than modern. The traditional mother was disciplined who expect from children to follow without raising any question. The children in the previous era were more obedient and were groomed in such an environment to who questions the authority of elders was considered as disrespectful. With the coming of modern age socialization crept arrange marriages all over world. Shakespeare romantic imagination with dark lady is one such which provide new way to start physical path. He clearly rejects arrange marriage by and large on the basis of free loving as well as hearty consent of the partners. Tara does the same by divorcing her husband as she knows that relationship should be based on love, affection, infatuation, lust and possessiveness. A woman

expect from man to pay attention and sympathy towards her. But men are mostly practical that is the reason they start working out the solution of the problems. *Women need to feel love and man need to feel needed will be perfect balance between the two for their relationship.* (Brown and Shotgun) Tara introduces her sister Padma's world reflecting royalty so far as dress and jewellery is concerned but Tara doesn't know that Padma lives under the shade of her husband. Though Tara keeps on calculating her budget and does not know the objective behind Padma's kindness which proves set back to Tara. Even Tara and her second sister Parvati lives in the same country but she has not met her for a long time. At last Parvati met Tara and discloses the secret of their family makes her distrust her own faiths. Parvati advises Tara not to become too much Americanized in her ways.

During the colonial rule, the British trained the upper class Brahmins to imitate their ways so that they will be adjusted in their administration. Tara belongs to such elite society so she does not feel marginalized from any angle. The marginalized one is her sister Padma rather than Tara. She puts her Brahminic identity aside and embraces Indian after mixing with other Indians. A similar story we find is the Nigel Coughlin who visited Tara Ma at Mist Mahal with a letter of introduction written in chaste Bengali which declared her passionate attraction to Bengal. Tara Lata lit the lamp of protection and felt that she had not met any eventuality or sadistic note than British rule. Now Bharati Mukherjee presents Tara as a new women running out of old and laborious days give bright light to those who faces during her life time. She is not criticizing the women faced in the system but to provide way out for all the women still facing trouble in this modern and materialistic world. The Tree Bride is direct attack on colonial rule where women suffered a lot either family in general or individual in particular. Women feels same slavery during the colonial period throughout the world and after the Indian independence they faces economic, political, social discrimination in the hands of man. Even today woman has change a lot, earn name and fame still faces harassment either physically or sexually. Bharati Mukherjee keeping in view the different scenes and situation of different places she provides a realistic vision to women that they must be freed from such things. She provides an opportunity to women for liberating themselves from the clutches of unequal mind set.

Tara is intensely disturbed by the attitude of terrorist and returns to India so as to give preference to her own Hindu tradition. Desirable Daughters is steep to home land and against

foreign feministic perspectives. Tara finds comfort in Andy's arm but still goes to her husband for emotional fulfillments. Though she was dependent on Andy for physical nurturing leaves her when Tara goes against her by wearing New Jersey to search out the identity of her sister's son Rabi so called as illegitimate. Tara Lata's life is the romantification of past and revitalization to present. She feels that woman must project the ideas through which they can enjoy her life just as Asha Rani in *Starry Nights* who lives for her own pleasure but she does not know the moral codes. She is the symbol of encouragement for women's freedom and libration. As a protest she broke moral code and starts extra-marital affairs so that conjugal atmosphere will prevail to the coming generation of women against men. According to him a woman like man is to be born free but every where she is in chains of husband and society.

The protagonist of the novel Jasmine run away from the life of a widow and starts her journey towards self-realization and freedom. She turns into a chameleon to adjust herself in American culture even though faces rapes and terrorism related to women. Half-Face rapes her when she was gone to America and he sleeps after promising sexual pleasure to her. Jasmine takes shower and cleans her body. She prays the god before she kills herself. She thinks her body is defiled by evil monster so she wants to balance her defilement by killing herself. When she is ready to slice her throat with knife, suddenly she remembers about her unfinished mission. She thinks she has a plenty of time to kill herself after completing her mission. So she kills evil monster to set an example that women in western countries are not safe but to protect her on its own. She slices her tongue and takes an image of the goddess Kali to give punishment to monster. She is a survivor, fighter and rebellious from the beginning of her life. She revolts against gender biased society and creates her own path. Jasmine revolts against this prevalent system of the society. Wylie leaves Taylor for Stuart and tells Jasmine about her love. Jasmine cannot imagine because in Indian society it is impossible for women to leave her husband for another man and learns hardest lesson in lesson in life. Even widow remarriage is also unthinkable crime. If the woman becomes widow in the young age, she cannot marry again and starts her new life. In Indian society rules are different for the man and the woman. The man can marry again after the death of his wife but the woman cannot marry again after the death of her husband.

The Tree Bride is the latest novel written by Bharati Mukherjee in which same protagonist Tara Lata Gangooly is the namesake of Tara Bishwapriya who has married to a tree at the age of five. Tara Lata is her great grandmother who weird a ritual marriage with a tree in order to retain the mark of a married woman. She stays her father's house and become a crusader a healer and freedom fighter. Her actual wedding night bridegroom was died because of snake bite. Tara didn't take it as misfortune rather she decided to make best out of it which became a source of inspiration for all her people living in the village. Tara, the grand daughter is shown searching for her ancestral grandmother as a kind of protest to child marriage giving boost to feminism. She explained "*This is all very strange, Haji. No one knew I was coming, yet you were waiting for me. You about me you know about the Tree Bride.*"(TB-65) Thus The Tree Bride is a very complex and enigmatic plot shuffling between cultures and traditions. She stayed in her father's house for all her life. She never goes anywhere until she faces her death except three occasions. She devoted her entire life in the service of poor and actively participated in the freedom struggle of India. There seems to be no common denominator between the woman who belongs to late nineteenth century and mid twentieth century. Of course, their courage and desire to break the conventional mould of Indian womanhood may bring them together. "*A woman such as yourself should find no lack of women friends.*"(TB-92) Her house remained open to all unless she was arrested by the British authorities and declared dead in police custody. Her death serves as an example for the people of Mishtigunj where she lived all her life. Thus Bharati Mukherjee here tries to give more preference to a tree than to marry again as most of the modern men are corrupt, materialistic and hypocritical. The narration of The Tree Bride is against colonial rule over India and its freedom. "*She'd seen it as moral struggle, a way of strengthening the resistance of the Bengali people.*"(TB-272) It narrates many parallel stories of diasporic individuals who are from different culture and nationality.

Tara hears this story from her mother and she realizes a strange association to it. Tara Bhattacharjee marries and has a son, goes all over the world but find herself unable to change it. Through this character Mukherjee tries to present a feministic revision of such blunt custom and tradition. So she admitted her marriage with a tree and put the demand of husband and family a side. She plays the role of redemptive that is why she changes her name from unlucky Tree Bride to Tara Ma. Tara hugged the American ideas of libration and thinks American women struggling even today. "*The Tree Bride, I know, is one of the dangerous ones. Did you know that Mackenzie*

*hanged me in a jail cell?"(TB-280)* She reads American magazine which shows women problems of libration in different areas. Bharati Mukherjee highlights the challenges of two cultures and hindrance of female immigration face by them.

Even during the post modern period the readers are in dilemma to distinguish between woman and a lady. Different critic defined it in various ways, some says women are powerful and gentle than lady but other opines that lady has a refined behavior and speech whereas woman lacks the same quality. Since the dawn of gender revolution women's are insulted to be called as 'ladies' suggests inferiority, hypocrisy. Children usually seem to call all women ladies and Hollywood celebrities call lady to his girlfriend or wife. Bharati Mukherjee here looks close resemblance with the lady rather than a woman because she expresses the heroic deeds done by her during her life time whether it may be Tara Lata in *Desirable Daughters* or Tara Gangooly in *The Tree Bride*. In order to represent women during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Mukherjee brings Tara in front of the world as a classy women who changes herself at different occasions dresses properly, speaks and acts successfully to every situation she encounters. The aim of the distinguishing lady and woman doesn't means that one is superior and another is inferior but to express the situation of different women. The writer would like to propagate the idea that woman or a lady must be ready every time to fight for her social, Political and economic right where ever situation arises.

### **Conclusion:**

Bharati Mukherjee being feminist immigrant writer opens a new gate for women in the midst of alienation and racial discrimination. *The Tree Bride* as a sequel to *Desirable Daughters* where Tara in the beginning experiences her arranged marriage Ronald Dey and later on goes to Andy for emotional fulfillment. But Tara Bhattacharya in *Tree Bride* was just five years when she married to a tree ridiculing all the male members who are responsible for female domination. On the one hand Bharati Mukherjee proves that child marriages in India is setback for the female counterpart while on the other hand males in western countries are equally responsible for committing rapes, economic exploitation and disturbing marriage institution. "*A proxy-soul for proxy bride*"(TB-293) Even a child of western mind couple does not know one of the parent member either it may be her father or mother. Thus it can be said that well furnished environment for the coming generation is degrading day by day in our society and mostly

females are being forced to become a public property. So in order to realize the ground situation of women in the world Bharati Mukherjee writes *The Tree Bride* bridging gap between male and female. Tara married to a tree rather than to face harsh realities in India, pushes herself into nature for caring her parents and poor people. Bharati Mukherjee explores that history will help us to convert the life of individual from old to new. Freedom means to start a new life bisecting the earlier tradition and custom throughout the world. The diasporic environment creates rich possibilities for understanding various torturing histories resulting change in culture, tradition and directing women psychological transformation in displaced society.

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