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The Critical Study of Ambitious Protagonist in Bharati Mukherjee's *Miss New India*

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Abstract:

This study is an attempt to evaluate yearning for achievements in the protagonist of Bharati Mukherjee's *Miss New India*. The India that is today is evolving and shining like a star in the high sky but even today, in this same India girls have to fight with the whole society and a coterie to fulfil their dreams. In this paper we are emphasizing the story of the young Indian girl Anjali Bose, the protagonist of Bharati Mukherjee's *Miss New India*, who underwent multiple transformations during her psychological and cerebral journey from a small village Gauripur to megacity Bangalore. This paper shows how the desire to do something inside a person brings them to such a path where they have seen such days of their life which traumatised them but finally lead them to become a good true person. This research paper tries to find out how a girl fights for her dreams, for her desires from the societal set norms and her family. And how she reaches the points where she wants to.

Keywords: Ambition, Outsider, Matchmaking, Women consciousness, Cerebral journey.

Bharati Mukherjee is one of the renowned writers of the Indian Diaspora who has gained a covetable place in a significantly below ingenious period. She was born on 21 July 1940 and belongs to the Bengali Brahmin upper-class family in Kolkata. She was brought up in a handful environment of love and support from her family. Her parents shaped her career and gave her higher education that supported her interest in writing. Her mother Bina Mukherjee never wanted her daughters to be snared in old traditions and marriages, she wanted them to be confident and wanted an independent life for them. She plays a vital role in fashioning Bharati Mukherjee's Manuscript. In her interview Bharati Mukherjee said about her mother "My mother is one of those exceptional Third World women who "burned" all her

life for an education which was denied to well-brought up women of her generation. She made sure that my sisters and I never suffered the same wants" (4).

Her writings are mirrored of her own life. The way she was brought up and had an enthusiasm for life, she wants her protagonists in the same fashion. Her writing also depicts her hardship in a new land. Her fictional world deals with her own experiences as an expatriate in Canada and the US. Even after marrying a white husband, she went through the feeling of "other" among white people in their community, she was considered as an outsider and not welcomed by them and suffered from racial discrimination. She wants herself to be considered as an American writer instead of an Indian expatriate writer. In one of her interviews with Ameena Meer she emphasizes:

"I totally consider myself an American writer, and that has been my big battle: to get to realize that my roots as a writer are no longer, if they ever were, among Indian writers, but that I am writing about the territory about the feelings, of a new kind of pioneer here in America. I'm the first among Asian immigrants to be making this distinction between immigrant writing and expatriate writing. Most Indian writers prior to this, have still thought of themselves as Indians, and their literary inspiration, has come from India. India has been the source, and home. Whereas I'm saying, those are wonderful roots, but now my roots are here and my emotions are here in North America."

Bharati Mukherjee is the woman writer writing for women from women's perspective, their lives and their journey. It is congruous to say that her protagonists are Indian women and her stories revolve only around them. Indira Nithyanandam rightly conveys that, "Though Bharati Mukherjee considers her novels to be similar to Miniature paintings where both background and foreground are equally important; her novel revolves only around the lives of Protagonists." (78).

Though she was an Indian born American writer, she was familiar with the set norms of Indian society and Indian values which help her to carve Indianness in her novels. She beautifully threaded the cultural identity, multiculturalism, alienation, patriarchal dominance, self-discovery and immigrant experiences in her novels. Her novels deal out with her own experience which she underwent during her journey in an alien land, unlike her she grooms the personality of her heroines in a similar way having sweet candied and poignant experiences.

As the advent of this post-modern age people want to run at the forefront of the race of life and in this race, they forget that they have forgotten to live the life which is the most

beautiful offering given by this nature. The longing to run in the vanguard of life has been very well depicted by Bharati Mukherjee through her novel. This paper gives us deep insight into the protagonist's life journey. Her novel *Miss New India* is the fine manifestation of contemporary India. *Miss New India* is of different taste, it narrates the story of nineteen-year-old village girl Anjali Bose who didn't cross the boundary of India but within her own country, she underwent the experience of Expatriate. This is the journey of a girl who tries to chase her dreams, dream to be independent, living life in her own conditions but she finds herself preoccupied in two conflicting cultures. The story is based on the outline of multiculturalism which confers Indian practice and the enhancement of modern Indian women. This is the story of an Indian girl Anjali Bose. She was born in a middle class Bengali brahmin conservative family. Anjali's parents had kept their children tied to the shackles of society's traditions. Her sister Sonali was married at an early age of life whom her father has chosen for her from the matrimonial column of a Bangla-language local newspaper. People of India give more importance to ritual and society over one's life.

"Family weddings and funerals are the incontestable duties and rituals of Indian Life." (Miss New India 7).

Indian parents are pressurised under the burden of society to find perfect matches for their daughters, for them dreams of their daughters are nothing, the only thing which matters most is the reputation of the family and if needed it can cost someone's life as well. Anjali's father says: "It's not a question of happiness, yours or ours. It's about our name, our family reputation". (Miss New India 7).

And not only in India but in the West also we find the same scenario of parenting. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* Mrs. Bennet's only aim in life is to find a suitable match for her daughters. This novel commemorates the keen projection of Indianness through her protagonist by Bharati Mukherjee. Bharati Mukherjee condemns the early marriage system in India which crushes the dreams of young girls and destroys their future and sometimes their lives also. She also condemns the social dogma which creates hurdles in the path of success of the brightest future of Indian women. Anjali is not like other girls of Gauripur, she's a bold, beautiful, opinionated, head strong modern girl. Anjali holds that strong and sharp personality that her dreams could not be held under the manacles of traditions.

Like Anjali, many girls want to be doctors, teachers, and engineers but don't get the opportunity and their family eagerly waits for when they can find a Bridegroom for them. Their Dreams are crushed under the wheel of so-called tradition. Even today in this twenty-first century this is a reality of many Anjalis. Many women in this dogma of false culture

have suffered a lot we can also see Virginia Woolf's concept of *Rooms of One's Own* in the reference where women do not have their personal room for their mental or intellectual sight and cannot wing their dreams and remain trapped under the burden of firm societal set norms. It's been difficult for Indian women to breathe in suffocating stiff convictions and against the old canon and belief.

Anjali Bose knew that she was not rich or modern but unlike others, she was not a selfish, citified materialistic girl. She has seen in movies and magazine American teenager's life, who live their life in their terms and conditions unlike them Anjali also want to approach to her parents fearlessly and tell them world is changing and life isn't like that what they think. Like any other American teenager, Anjali wants to rule her life by her own. She was so fascinated with the modern culture and city life that she told Subodh Mitra (whom her father handpicked for her) that she doesn't want to go Kolkata after marriage and ask him which city a modern girl should choose. This was new and refreshing to ears that a girl from a small village like Gauripur could dream like that. Anjali wants to escape from the male dominant and conservative milieu. She is not like other girls who let others write their destiny even though she was a village girl but her aspiration is high in life. She was tired of her family's continuing lifestyle; she was fatigued by the same meal served in the same manner every day and all the same talks and rumours with the same questions and the answers. Ever since she regained consciousness, she finds everything meaningless.

Her beautiful hazel green eyes have seen many big dreams to be in a megacity, having a luxurious lifestyle and a big name but simultaneously she also knows that this couldn't be possible if she stays here because her parents believes that in this male-dominated society, women should follow the same pace of the men. Anjali's parents started searching for a suitable Bengali brahmin boy for her although she doesn't want to marry but for the happiness of the family, she gets involved in all the programs conducted by her father. Bharati Mukherjee married against her family wishes to a white man, her parents wanted her to marry an Indian guy. She said about her marriage: "the relationship between husband and wife based on the mutual understanding. Both should sacrifice for something at some point. how much we know about the adjustment that remains the true relationship, it done so matter that the patterns belong from which place whether he is from foreigner or at local place." (30).

Anjali is presented as a headstrong new modern woman with individual voice. She believes that neither society nor any culture teaches us to bear mental, emotional and physical violence. After being humiliated and raped by her fiancé she decides not to marry him and

run away from home. She was not a girl who relinquish upon her dreams. Anjali evolved as a postcolonial woman who knows how to fight for her rights. She believed her teacher Peter Champion and takes his suggestions because he's the only person who has seen passion in her eyes and he motivates Anjali for her dreams. He was the same man who gave flight to her dreams by visualising the life of Bangalore. Bangalore is the capital of IT hub and there are millions of opportunities for the faces like Anjali who work hard to make their dreams come true.

Bharati Mukherjee projected her protagonist as a wigwag between old and new India. In Bangalore Anjali is like a “third world” woman in her own country. She shuffled her identity as Anjali and Angie like a chameleon to sounds more appealing and cooler according to the present scenario. Anjali was an internal migrant in Bangalore. She finds nothing helpful or relevant from the past life that could guide her in that alien land. She was completely in a different place where she didn't know anything which belongs to her. Neither she knows Kannad nor could she speak Tamil. She was in the dilemma of how she was going to communicate with the people around her.

Bharati Mukherjee was at her best in portraying cultural pluralism between East and West mainly to psychological conflict of her heroines. She stuck between the abeyance of new life and her old tradition. She is not able to fit in existing society nor can she go back to her roots which she left behind. Her journey portrays the cruel realities of migrants in the alien land and how she confronts the challenging scenario of understanding new cultures. This is more painful for her that she will never again belong to the culture which she left for the sake of charm of the new world. She went through various identity transformation in her search for freedom, happiness and self- empowerment. Anjali came to Bangalore with lots of dreams, but she sees a different seismic world and culture in Bangalore. She tries every hook or crook to assimilate into the Bangalorean culture: “I have been in Bangalore only three weeks, I have no jobs, and no family here. But I have seen more and learned more in Bangalore than I have from twenty years in Gauripur. Here I have felt I can do anything. I feel I can change my life that's what I want” (Miss New India 63).

Anjali was jealous of that every person who is more financially stable than her, she dreamed to be one of them to have a luxurious life and called herself a Bangalorean. She envied even those people who were blessed with two mother tongues. She desires for a cell phone, nice and neat place to live and a boyfriend who could meet her needs. She tries to copy American slang but didn't succeed. It's very hard for those people to survive in an alien

land as an outsider who comes from a different religion, way of living and geographical landscape. Who could know this better than Bharati Mukherjee?

Society of India doesn't build around professional and meaningful contact rather building emotional and love bonds. Anjali thinks this is the secret of the fast-growing cities like Mumbai or Bangalore, for whom talent is the identity of ones and had no interest in knowing the community from where they belong. Bangalore is a megacity and called a replica of America where everybody has their car and apartment. Thousands of cars are running on the road there is the huge car parking and in Gauripur, there is not a single slot for a vehicle to park. Anjali thinks soon she will be twenty and started earning more than her father and fulfil all her wants, desires and dreams.

My new beginning is here. But different from baba's and ma's generation. They had to fight the British; their big fight is to establish an independent India and create a nonaligned world. There was a struggle...religion. They were lucky, their fight was not easy, but simpler and clearer than mine...poverty terrified baba. But, I'm terrified, tempted and corrupted by the infusion of vast sums of new capital. (Miss New India 304).

She thinks when India is shining so much and also allowing a woman to fly high then why does she stay behind, this hunger of wants makes Anjali different from the other girls of Gauripur. In a column of a city newspaper "Bang Galore" the editor has written, "In Bangalore, crores are the new lakhs" (Miss New India 97).

Anjali's big step toward her bright future was joining the coaching institute which was owned by Mrs. Desai and Parvati Banerjee. Where she learns to work as a call centre agent, with all her confidence she adopts the modern way of life. To look like one of the rich Bangalorean Anjali borrowed a western dress from Hussiena, her roomie to wear at a dinner party in Bagehot Mansion. In Bangalore, Anjali finds so many huge shopping malls, IT companies and a well-planned systematized apartment. She sees so many restaurants with different cuisines. She recalls her place, what's there in her Gauripur? Just an Alph palace where there is only a vegetarian restaurant. She comes to conclude that this is the reason why Gauripur is freezing and cities like Mumbai or Bangalore is on fire.

Anjali has an appetite to fulfil her dream of luxurious lifestyle, to look modern and rich and for that, she tries to copy other girls. Hussiena gave her a big room full of all luxurious things and a fancy wardrobe. For a moment, she felt her dreams come true. She encounters a drastic downfall in her life when she was suspected as a terrorist because of Husseina's expensive stuff and her pseudo-identity. She was conspired by her friend. She was

harassed mentally, emotionally and physically in jail. Her excessive wants ruined her life and left scars on her spirit. She missed her parents in jail and remembered their words that the world is brutal and there is conspiracy everywhere. "I have no roots anywhere but in India. My ancestors were hated and persecuted by everyone but themselves. I understand Sonali – di, even Baba." (Miss New India 136).

Life is like a kite one will cut strings of another to fly high and Anjali's string was lacerated she was in deep agony and her confidence was slashed. She failed in her pursuit. For what she came to Bangalore and what she becomes. During her journey, she underwent multiple transformations due to which she gained a new outlook toward the world. Even after seeing such a bad time in her life, Mukherjee doesn't let her protagonist wobble. Bharati Mukherjee's protagonists were brought up in such an environment where they ingrain courage in their veins. Her heroines are assertive, they have the potential to stay firm in the storm of life to gain what they want from life.

When Anjali get a marriage proposal from a rich reputed man Mr.GG, she proudly refuses. She steps out of Photoshop modern life and gets succeed in gaining new womanhood for herself. In the end, the protagonist perceives what she wants from her life, for which she had fought with society, family and with her destiny. She has gained treasure in her life as an inestimable experience which cosmos has taught her.

Anjali is such a strong girl even though she comes from a village but she succeeds in assimilating and survives in an alien land because her morale is unshaken and she does not stop unlike her elder sister Sonali and her mother who compromises with their destiny. Bharati Mukherjee through this novel shows the condition of women in society, how the suffering of a woman doesn't end from her birth to her death and the marriage system which becomes a hurdle in the bright future of the women. Through this novel, she explores twenty-first-century India where western culture has a dominant impact on the young generation of India.

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