

## HYPHENATED IDENTITY: IMMIGRANT MINDSCAPE IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S *TIGER'S DAUGHTER*

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### Abstract

Separation from home and nation, culture-shock, problems of alienation and assimilation form the matrix of immigrant writing. The degree of estrangement, essentially individualistic, depends on various factors like education, background, nation and culture of the immigrant as well as the receptive capacity of the host country. Failure to forge new ties instead of the severed ones leads cultural transplants to remain as eternal aliens. In *The Tiger's Daughter* Bharati Mukherjee recreates the complexities confronting an immigrant who is suspended between two worlds, two homes and two cultures.

**Keywords:** home, host, alienation, nowhere, assimilation

Spatial complexities in postcolonial literature related to locale, dislocation and relocation transcend the mere geographical terrain to project a disturbed or distorted mindscape of the people involved. The history of removal, either enforced or voluntary, from the place of origin is as old as human history. The Bible begins with and chronicles episodes of exile: Abraham, the father of believers, is regarded as the prototype of the alienated man, John Keats has romanticised the agony of a culturally dislocated individual through the homesick Ruth in an alien soil, and Psalm 137 articulates the nostalgia of Israelites for Zion. Global interaction and technological development have made immigration more universal and pertinent. In the contemporary literary scenario, as Meenakshi Mukherjee observes, "biculturalism has become more than a theme: it has become a mode of perception" (Mukherjee, 1978).

The history of immigration is a history of alienation and its repercussions. The effect of the transfer from the land of origin to an alien domain will leave indelible marks on the individual rather than on the society they enter. It transports people from traditional environments and transplants them into strange grounds where strange customs and climate prevail. The customary modes of behaviour become inadequate to confront the challenges of the new atmosphere. With the duress to readjust and redefine themselves, men face "the enormous compulsion of working out new relationships, new

meanings to their lives often under harsh and hostile circumstances" (Handlin, 1952). In transplantation, between the snapping of old ties and the establishment of new moorings, the immigrant exists in an extreme situation, the shock of which sometimes reaches down to generations. The immigrant, like an uprooted and replanted plant, sometimes faces an instant death in an uncongenial soil, or withers away, or has a hollow or bare existence while a few survive and rejuvenate getting firmly rooted.

Uprooting and transplantation to a new locale place the person amidst shifting images of the self, between a yesterday which is always alive within and a today in a new country and culture which is now termed as the host society. Each immigrant, regardless of sex and nationality, passes through a traumatic transitional stage. Loneliness, despair, estrangement, nowhere, and an existential angst haunt the migrants.

Kernel to all the terms related to displacement is the basic idea and experience of home. The word *home* has more connotations than just a dwelling place: it is where one belongs to. It is his national, cultural and spiritual identity, the soil that nurtures him, his language, his security and part of his consciousness. Home is above all, "that ambience in which one's childhood has flowered and matured into youth" (Joshi, 1994).

While exile or expatriate writing is more immersed in the situation at home rather than the

relationship with the host society, immigrant writing indicates a forward looking attitude. Bharati Mukherjee, an exponent of immigrant sensibility, exemplifies the ambivalences caused by the sudden transplantation from the familiar to the exotic. Drawing a distinction between expatriate and immigrant, Mukherjee opines that an expatriate works hard to hang on to his past while immigration is a process of transformation and net gain. Her life itself is a transformation from the “aloofness of expatriation” as the coloured wife of Clark Blaise in Canada to “the exuberance of immigration” (Mukherjee, 1985) in America.

Migratory experience, though a common contemporary phenomenon, varies from individual to individual depending on his background, education and nationality. It is not a mere physical or geographical journey from one land to another shore, but a severing of the “spiritual and symbiotic ties with his mother country” (Kirpal, 1989). Moving from one culture to another he often finds it hard to relocate him in relation to the centre. The quest to belong to a space to which one can relate emotionally is indeed an excruciating endeavour. The transition from the familiar frame of reference and relationship to an exotic environment demands a break up with the past. The uprooting and absorption is a continuing process passing through various stages of rootlessness, enchantment, bewilderment and nostalgia. Immigration is an involvement with the present though one cannot shed his past completely nor can he be nurtured solely by it.

Commenting on the theme of expatriation Viney Kirpal strikes a difference between Third World émigrés and their western counterparts (Kirpal, 1989) Originating from societies where bonds with family, community and religion are strong, the Third World émigré carries his ethnic roots with him. Migration from a developed country to another is different from a colonised or once colonised country to the land of the colonised. The feeling of nostalgia is intensified in the coloured immigrant because of marginality emanating from his visibility of colour, race and religion. The theme of identity atrophy in Kamala Markandaya’s *Nowhere Man* stems from transplantation of Srinivas from the colonised country to the land of the coloniser and his position as an outcast or unaccommodated alien.

The three factors that collectively determine expatriate adjustment in the host country, according to Kirpal, are the immigrant’s reason for migration, his own ability to adapt to the new environment, and his experience in the host country. The merger

becomes complex for the host often fails or refuses to understand the problems of an expatriate. Yet the immigrant nurtures hopes of assimilating with the host culture as in a melting pot. Maya of Mukherjee’s “A Woman’s Story” voices the awkwardness an Indian feels in his pre-assimilation period: “First you don’t exist. Then you’re invisible. Then you’re funny. Then you are disgusting. Insult, my American friends tell me is a kind of acceptance. No instant dignity here” (Mukherjee, 1988).

The customary thematic core of expatriate writing, the conflict between the native and the alien, the self and the other, has acquired luxuriance and complexity in the fictional landscape of Mukherjee owing to her “singular dovetailing of the narrative line with diverse perspectives: Indian, feminine and immigrant” (Padma, 1993). The immigrant perspective may involve an increased awareness of the mores of one’s mother country and culture besides a critique of the same which the experience of alienation may bring. Affiliation to the culture they have come to “alienates from that which they had left” (Handlin, 1952). Through Tara Catright Banerjee, the protagonist of *The Tiger’s Daughter*, Mukherjee powerfully portrays a fascinating study of a displaced person in native as well as alien soil.

Cultural dislocation impacts significantly on the immigrant’s psyche. Culture comprises a prescribed value system or behaviour pattern including rituals and customs. A person’s cultural base becomes virtually a second nature to him which bestows on him an identity. Identity is defined as “a quality that is partly given to us by others, through their affection, respect and feedback concerning the behaviour in which we engage (Brislin & Kenneth, 1986). Confrontation with another social mores and the compulsion to assimilate into an alien culture sharpen one’s hitherto dormant attitude to his own culture and it stands as a hindrance to his assimilation.

The immigrant sensibility is always torn between the two differing socio-cultural environments. Like every other immigrant Tara too finds it difficult to adapt to the new culture for confrontation with another society demands the process of de-structuring and restructuring of the self. Faced with two heterogeneous environments which are conditioned by the intrinsic value systems of the East and West, Tara sent to Vassar at the age of fourteen for higher education, experiences the initial restlessness. The third section of the novel is devoted to Tara’s early experiences in America and the gradual acculturation leading to a “foreign” marriage. She stumbles into

her alien life with doubts, homesickness, fears and a sense of discrimination. The picture of young Tara clutching to the unopened suitcase as her only anchor conveys the bewilderment of the immigrant. Estranged from the familiar moorings of her comfort zone, the Tiger's daughter "longed for Camac Street" (Mukherjee, 1971). To her Vassar had been an almost unsalvageable mistake which makes her think of her father's decision to send his only daughter abroad as ruthlessness. Yet the status of a Banerjee and her training under the Belgian nuns to remain composed and lady like prevent her from a return home in shame. She finds no way to confide in her parents the new pains. Stretched beyond her limits Tara fails to relate to her dorm-mates. She is forced to defend her country before the Americans. None of her pre-journey examinations had prepared Tara for this. Alienated and withdrawn, Tara seeks the help of Kali to provide her strength not to break down.

When external pressures become unbearable the immigrant, in order to overcome psychological crisis of his identity, often clings to his past, to his community. With no one to alleviate her tension Tara clings to her India when the extraordinary nature of New York drives her to despair: "On days when she had thought that she could not possibly survive, she had shaken out all her silk scarves, ironed them and hung them to make the apartment more Indian" (Mukherjee, 1971). Her later metamorphosis to a pseudo intellectual is only an offshoot of her attempt at overcoming the mounting sense of estrangement and inferiority. To prove her modernity she attempts at discussing population control methods though refrains from any discussion on the harsh realities of life.

America introduces her to novel experiences: the milk cartons and the food vending machines, instead of enchanting her, only create ripples of terror. Mukherjee skillfully compares Tara's initial embarrassments in America to the panic of the Australian visitors in India during Tara's childhood when they were asked to use water instead of toilet paper. The sight of beggars in the streets, which is contrary to her expectation of a foreign country, makes her physically sick. Her sickness can be attributed to signs of depression indicating a sense of insecurity at Vassar alone during the vacation. Life in New York intensifies her fears and drives her to despair. The xenophobia which an Asian feels abroad is experienced by Tara in her loneliness for she has heard of girls like her being knifed in elevators. With no wish to get acculturated Tara desperately seeks to

preserve her ethnic identity.

In immigrant fiction the recurring motif of assimilation as an ideal is represented as the marriage of two cultures: the coloured immigrant and the white partner (Kirpal, 1989). The socially, emotionally and spatially disturbed psyche caught between the pulls of different polarities harbours all hopes on marriage. But the deliberate attempt of appropriation of a new space does not totally annihilate the cultural difference. Essential difference emanating from their inner territory cannot be soothed by a fluidity of texture. Despite a love marriage Tara fails to function as a bridge between the two worlds, for she is incapable of communicating the finer nuances of her culture, family and life in Calcutta to David. Further, marriage does not mitigate her feeling of insecurity: "Madison Square was unbearable and her husband was after all a foreigner" (Mukherjee, 1971). The ideal relationship does not endure because what begins as great passion dwindles to disaffection and estrangement.

With the passage of time, the memory of the mother country becomes increasingly romanticised and idealised. Oscar Handlin opines that as the passing years widen the distance, the land the immigrant leaves acquire charm and beauty (Mukherjee, 1971). Tara too envies her more stable, more predictable pre-American life. She places all her hopes on her long preplanned trip back to India to ease all hesitations and shadowy fears of time abroad. But returning to the country after a gap of years only accentuates the feeling of rootlessness as the difference and distance between the westernised Tara and her people and country dawn on her. The immigrant remains rootless despite having experienced two cultures, two countries, two homes and two men.

Ideally though the expatriate should be able to write objectively and accurately about both countries, Mukherjee often becomes satiric in her portrayal of Tara. Juxtaposition is a technique that is adopted by the novelist to bring the two countries together. "The idea of the *home* country becomes split from the *experience* of returning home" (McLeod, 2000). Tara's response to the same Indian sight both before and after her exposure to the West shows the attitudinal change in her. Seven years ago she was full of admiration for everything Indian. The real India on her return becomes discontinuous with the illusionary India imprinted in her mind. The journey back home becomes an occasion for registering the sliding of identities experienced by the expatriate

According to F. A. Inamdar, “Tara’s efforts to adapt to American society are measured by her rejection and revulsion of Indian modes of life” (Inamdar, 1986, ). Her supercilious attitude in the air-conditioned train compartment to Calcutta makes her critically and ironically observe the companions as ruiners of her journey. The thought of her husband and America at such moments reflects the alien culture which has become almost a second self to her. The alien land has become more of a home to her that she fails to realise which her real home is.

Westernisation has made Tara a critic of India. Her first stepping on the native land fills her with disappointment. The deteriorating social changes coupled with her own attitude to poverty and filth aggravates her discomfort. The corrosive hours on the Marine drive and the inexorable train journey make her “an embittered woman she now thought, old and cynical at twenty two and quick to take offence” (Mukherjee, 1971). Even the scenery outside becomes alien and hostile. Tara’s experience in Calcutta is no less discomforting. The squalour and confusion of the Howrah station outrages her. Surrounded by the army of relatives who profess to love her, vendors ringing bells, beggars pulling at sleeves and children coughing on tracks Tara feels completely disoriented.

Mukherjee analyses the anatomy of change in the city of Calcutta to comment on Tara’s “search of an Indian dream” (Shinde, 1994). Seven years have changed Calcutta from an oasis of peace to the centre of political turmoil. Her earlier experience with strikes, which definitely lacked the melodrama of the present, does not equip Tara in any way to get in tune with the violent demonstrations. Instead of the much longed for “Satyajit Ray film like Bengal” she confronts a drab, dirty, disturbed city. The romanticised notions of the émigré about his native land gradually wane when confronted with reality.

In the process of assimilation and recreation of a new personality demanded by the new culture, the immigrant often becomes alien to his native culture. The institution, rituals and even language becomes strange, meaningless and obscure. Tara’s sense of alienation is deepened by her inability to participate in the religious ceremonies at home. The fact that she cannot remember the next step of the ritual is considered as her severance from the cultural heritage: the inherited racial, religious and cultural practices. Caught in the void between two contrastive worlds Tara feels a spiritual death: “It was not a simple loss, Tara feared, this forgetting of the prescribed action, it was like a little death, a hardening of the heart, a

cracking of axis and center” (Mukherjee, 1971). An invisible spirit or darkness has altered her. Yet the term darkness for American culture hints a deep yearning to be an Indian despite the restructured self. Marriage has made her an intruder into the puja-room for she sees herself as the unwelcomed Australian who had been successfully prevented entry into that room during her unadulterated stage.

The culture shock that Tara experiences as a westernised Indian woman is influenced by her gradual disillusionment with the Calcutta of her early youth. Mukherjee leads her protagonist, with the precision of a newspaper reporter, “through a series of adventures and misadventures” (Shinde, 1994) in her homeland. Her sudden resolve to leave Calcutta is determined by four interlinked incidents: the visit to the burning Ghats with Joyonto Roy Chowdhari, the picnic to the factory, the unpleasant experience at the summer resort in Darjeeling and finally seduction by Tuntunwala. The trip to the funeral ghats shows her inability to adjust with the unfamiliar. The depression which fails to be immersed in the delicacies of the Kapur’s restaurant is only amplified by the trip to the factory. It augments her awareness of segregation. Even her tongue has got conditioned to the taste of the West. Because of her hypersensitivity the picnic arranged to boost her spirit turns to be disastrous.

The visit to a *bustee* in the company of Joyonto reiterates the hiatus between home envisioned “in fragments and fissures, full of gaps and breaches” (McLeod, 2000) and the tormenting reality. The encounter with the leper girl who almost touches her takes away all her carefully trained discipline of mind and body. The summer journey to Darjeeling further intensifies her misery because of the rude and impudent attack on her by some Bengali tourists who make advances to her with obscene remarks. Unaccustomed to such violence, the incident marks her holiday dismal despite the magnificence of the mountains. The seduction at the hands of Tuntunwala at the Nayapur Guest House hits the last decisive nail to her decision.

That “Tara’s mind is constantly at conflict with the two personalities - one of an Indian and the other of an American” (Barat, 1996) is witnessed by her constant comparison between the native and the host country. At home she finds herself harbouring mutually contradictory emotions of love, sympathy and hatred seeing people like Aunt Jhana who attempts miracle-healing for her child. The ambivalent attitude to the city of Calcutta itself signals her double attitude. Calcutta offers a solidity and consolation that she has

never been able to receive anywhere. In the light of her old city, New York is seen as a gruesome nightmare. While it is hard after the warm reception by parents and friends to think of the 120th street apartment as home, witnessing the riot-driven Calcutta she wishes she had not come without her husband.

The double-mindedness gets precipitated in her attitude to religion also. While Tara complained in New York she could not pray, she clung to Kali for protection. The same Tara who feels a heathen at the ancestral house is able to share piety with her mother at Darjeeling. Among the crowd of vulgar worshippers of Kanabala Mata she finds it easy to love anyone. The pious atmosphere removes all her instinctive suspicions, fears of misunderstanding, her guardedness and atrophy. The growing antipathy towards Antonio Whitehead and her congeniality towards the Indians imply the gradual ascendancy of the old repressed self. The rising tension between Antonio and her mother helps Tara to objectively analyse her own behaviour. To her friends at Catelli she must have been as naive, dangerous and provocative as a foreigner. Yet the effort to strike roots remains unsuccessful for the violence of Tuntunwala. It instills only a bitterness which determines her decision to leave India, the India of rioters and molesters.

Shyam M. Asnami states that the strength of the modern literary imagination "lies in its evocation of the individual's predicament in terms of alienation, immigration, expatriation, exile and his quest for identity" (Asnami, 1998). Homecoming aids Tara for self-assessment. She realises that it is "impossible to be as bridge for anyone" (Mukherjee, 1971). Her attempt to pose as a link between the Afro-American visitor Washington Mc Dowel and Camac Street fail because the visitor fails to relate to her as an equal. The facts of an apartment on the fringes of Harlem, an American passport, and an American husband do not assist in equating her to the young American. While it is easier for a casual visitor like McDowell to gain acceptance to an Indian family, Tara finds herself a misfit in both the communities. The visit to the Belgian nuns at the St. Blaises where she was "taught to inject the right degree of venom into words like 'common' and 'vulgar'" (Mukherjee, 1971) confirms that while she has become less Indian, they have become more Indian in colour and accent.

It is her nostalgic quest for roots that takes Tara back to India. But the gap between the years of exit and re-entry has created too wide a gulf to bridge. Tara is a victim of biculturalism. She has decentred herself, but has not moored to another centre. The

strain of high-rope walking tells on her psyche. Her changed citizenship and antitraditional ways have not made her accomplish anything. Through Tara, Mukherjee shows different phases of restlessness, repression of the earlier self and overt acceptance of the present. The compartmentalisation of life into "now" and "then" results only a fractured self. She has not matured to respond to the demands of the two countries: one of origin and the other of habitation. Hence she remains a hyphenated identity, an Indian-American "suspended between two worlds and rooted in neither" (Padma, 1993). Torn between the newly adorned American spirit and the old unseverable Indian self she remains a split-psyche. Always troubled by the life she left behind Tara remains a permanent alien.

That marriage to a foreigner does not necessarily broaden the prospects of an immigrant is witnessed by the life of Tara. Cultural disparity hinders a proper understanding of each other. In a land of uncertain relationships, "the security of a traditional Bengali marriage could not be explained, not to David Cartwright, not by Tara Banerjee" (Mukherjee, 1971). The two names suggest the cultural difference and the distance they have to cover to reach a union. Hence Tara finds it hard to explain many aspects of her self and family to David despite her professions of love. As Mukherjee does not explore on their life together, except for some occasional reminiscences of Tara mostly provoked by some unpleasant Indian experiences, one fails to gauge the depth of the inter-caste, inter-continental relationship. The David of the letters seems even to his wife like a shadowy figure or a foreigner with an accent who appears on the screen. Back in India she can get him only in bits and pieces and there is no clue whether she has ever known him completely. Each aerogramme creates a momentary panic of trust betrayed or unadmitted mistakes. With fifteen thousand miles in between it becomes hard for her to visualise him. Surrounded by the Bengal Tiger's luxury it is difficult for her to tell a foreigner that she loves him very much. The feeling that David is levelled to a mere stranger adds to the misery. Though Tara never seems to regret her choice, the foreign nature of the marriage troubles her smooth homecoming.

Communication gap emanating from their differing roots is evident when she deftly manages to hide her feelings, failings and fears from him. Since one belongs to a single parent family and the other to a family rooted and spread like a banyan tree, the husband misunderstands her affection to the family

as over dependence. His hostility to genealogies also springs from the same root. To Tara a husband is a creature from whom one hides one's most precious secrets. Hence she "had been dutifully devious in her marriage. She had not divulged her fears of mlecha men" (Mukherjee, 1971). The Indian's fears about westerns habits of physical cleanliness and beef-eating remain undiscussed despite sharing the same house and bed.

While the Indian is rooted in tradition the Westerner is grounded on reason and practicality. Tara is forced to hide a part of her personality from her husband who expects everything to be meaningful. Seeing India as an intellectual outsider David finds many Indian customs and habits foolish. Outraged by the class and caste differences in India he objectively analyses her class as steeped in superstitions and callousness. While David's analysis of India, coloured by the attitude of the coloniser, concentrates on the squalour and poverty of India, accustomed to the opulence of her class and family Tara has seen only the glamorous side of it. Hence on her return, for the first time, Tara looks at the familiar through the eyes of an outsider.

Marriage saves Tara from the unromantic Indian alliance arranged after much bargaining and discontent "where the groom takes his bride, a total stranger, and rapes her on a brand new flower-decked bed" (Mukherjee, 1971). Yet her attitude to David suggests that she has not discarded the traditional concept of an Indian marriage. The unwritten and rewritten letters to David bear eloquent witness to her eagerness to be moulded in the image of David. She refashions herself to the likes and dislikes of her husband. But all her heroic efforts to transform to an ideal wife go unrecognised by a powerfully western husband who has only complaints about her placidity and Indianness. Back at home whatever is perceived by Tara is geared in her mind by the probable oddity of how her husband may assess it.

David's letters, inspite of the concern expressed for her safety in Calcutta, intensifies her depression. The disclosure that he has bought books to understand India exposes her own failure as an ambassador. She is convinced that if he has not understood India through her, then probably he has not understood her either. The final decision to return to England is not a positive realisation of her deep rooted love for him, "instead an escape from the present" (Nityanandan, 2000). Her marriage itself can be understood as an adaptive strategy. It can be seen as a gesture of emancipation, rebellion against traditional arranged-

marriages or her own necessity to get moored. But marriage instead of instilling security and solidity only augments the feelings of alienation. Hence what begins as an act of assertion "peters out to a life of darkness and ordinariness" (Mukherjee, 1971). The alliance does not lead to assimilation since the East and the West fail to meet.

Tara on her return home finds herself a misfit in every way. Immigration has altered her attitude to friends and relatives. Her alienation is deepened by the address "American Wali" and the rude reference to David as a mlecha. Her relatives at Bombay attribute her improprieties to westernisation. In Calcutta her genuine concern for the invalid child of Aunt Jhana is misinterpreted as the hunk of American money. Tara is dismayed that she does not fit into the old life of Calcutta. In the first stage of homecoming her friends seemed to offer a peaceful oasis amidst Calcutta's commotion. But after the initial excitement over the parties thrown in honour of Tara wears off, the celebrations start frightening. She is startled by their tremendous capacities for surfaces. Eager to know only of the paraphernalia about her life abroad they avoid listening to the adjustments she had to make which she badly wants to communicate. Married to a foreigner and exposed to Western life, though not unpatriotic, Tara fails to share their passion. Their desire to share only the glamour of Calcutta, and not the reality of the ghettos makes the communication void. Seven years ago she had played with them, but now she fears their tone, omissions and their aristocratic oneness. Hotel Catelli Continental, described as the navel of the universal, now symbolizes a rootlessness, a symbol of Tara's expatriate sensibility.

David and the American experience isolate Tara from Indian life and culture. Her friends blame her marriage and life abroad for the erosion of all the finesse and sensitivity of Bengali culture. The fact that the "racial purists" approve foreign manners and fashions, but not foreign marriage thrusts a wedge in their relationship. Contrary to her expectation of admiration from friends, marriage only forfeits her confidence of unmarried friends like Nilima. At Darjeeling Tara is hurt to sense that she is an eccentric and impudent creature whose marriage has barred her from sharing the full credence of the St. Blaise friends. Though Tara is always in the midst of company, none of them is able to extend a rapport to the atrophied mind of Tara as they never probe deep. Without any crutches Tara hops to her uncertain future all alone. Tara's friends fail to detect the fears and uncertainties which she successfully hides from her parents as well.

Marriage has alienated Taramoni from her dear parents though they never admit it. Her return is flawed from the beginning for the difficulty of communication becomes evident in the familial context itself. Despite the absence of any hint from him, the sense of guilt issuing from untraditional love marriage makes her feel that the Bengal Tiger is slightly disappointed in her. Disturbed by the authentic religious spirit of the mother she feels like a *mlecha*. Both "mother and daughter grew nervous, their nervousness visible like monsoon mildew" (Mukherjee, 1971). Tara realises sadly that her marriage has done her parents little good except to increase their fortitude in defence of the foreign son-in-law. Neither the loving parents who want to retain their Taramoni with them nor the friends with all their clamour and concern are supportive enough to instill encouragement to enable her to cope with alien status in her two worlds.

The pervasive violence that hovers over Calcutta too incapacitates Tara to merge with her native soil. Her sensitivity to the poverty, squalour and violence of Calcutta shows clearly how the sheltered Banerjee life has alienated her from the real world. It is this upperclass drawback that repulses her from similar sights during her stay abroad. But far from violence afar it is that at home which takes her to the verge of a breakdown. Apart from the violent incidents at Joyonto'sbustee it is what she witnesses from the Catelli Continental that affects her badly. In the early part of the summer when she sees rioters only from the roof of the Catelli-Continental she could see it as a succession of exciting confrontations. But now after the bomb at the pavilion of the club she realises the magnitude of it. The day of Washington Mc Dowell's visit to Calcutta also coincides with a minor citywide riot from which they are saved by the stature of Mc Dowell. It is violence in the city that throws Tara to the protection of the doubtful Tuntunwala which culminates in her seduction at his hands. The last section of the novel which concentrates on Tara's determination to go back reeks with violence. As the mob outside the Catelli loses all control the friends take the refuge of Sanjay's car.

Tara is not tormented by any sense of guilt or regret for her seduction by Tuntunwala. It only fills her with bitterness. Her first confrontation with him occurs on her train journey to Calcutta which has been bound to be a disaster from the beginning. The Marwari reminds her of a circus animal and later an impassive and calculating spider. With all her St. Blaise training she fails to save herself from the

forceful companionship of the corporate giant later at the fair. The commotion at the club and the violence of the city once again take her to the dubious Marwari. Slow learners like her fall as victims to bulldozers like the Tuntunwala. Alone at the Guest House, excepting her maid, Tara unsuspectingly walks into his trap. The incident remains only one of the superficial factors that harden her determination to return to England. She realises that she cannot share the knowledge of Tuntunwala with anyone in a land where "a friendly smile, an accidental brush of the fingers can ignite rumours - even lawsuits" (Mukherjee, 1971).

Separation from home, culture-shock, problems of alienation and assimilation form the matrix of immigrant writing. The degree of estrangement, essentially individualistic, depends on various factors like the education, background, nation and culture of the immigrant as well as the receptive capacity of the host country. Failure to forge new ties instead of the severed ones leads cultural transplants to remain as eternal aliens. "Mukherjee has deliberately avoided the immigrant writer's temptation to fall in the trap of glorifying his native country and to belittle and degrade the adopted country. She has presented a fascinating study of the problem of a displaced person in America as well as India" (Shinde, 1994). In *The Tiger's Daughter* Mukherjee posits the complexities of having an identity, a home, a desh. Despite western education, upper-class living and a western husband Tara fails to assimilate to the exposed culture because her sheltered background failed to equip her to confront the casualties. Hence she remains rootless both at home and abroad, suspended between Cartwright and Banerjee as in Tara Cartwright Banerjee, a nowhere woman, a hyphenated identity.

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