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A Journey of the Mind- in the Holder of the World by Bharathi Mukherjee

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ABSTRACT

Mind plays a major role in determining the course of life of an individual. Bharati Mukherjee's works significantly portray some of those important aspects which have determined the life of those migrants or immigrants who have been subjected to the predicaments offered by expatriation. This particular paper is an attempt to analyse the ideas captured by the novelist in this particular novel *The Holder of the World*, an in-depth analysis of the life of the protagonist would throw lights on all those important aspects which have contributed to the theme of expatriation, and psychic-conditions of an expatriate.

The Bharati Mukherjee was born in Calcutta, India, in July 1940. Her childhood days were spent in Germany, London and Switzerland. From her early stage, Bharati Mukherjee had a special interest in the field of writing. When she was in London, Mukherjee started a novel based on life of English children. While in Loreto Convent she started to write in a school periodical. During her days in college, she certainly desired to become a writer, a choice her father cheered. Bharati Mukherjee is considered as an Asian-American, Indian diasporic, Indo-American author, author of immigrant fiction and non-fiction and distinctive American writer. She is one of the remarkable women

writers of twenty first century. She spent most of the life in India, Canada and then in the United States and her works dealt with the theme of expatriation as she herself experienced the same in the host land. Mukherjee shows the life of the North American immigrants, their judgments and sorrows, and their excitement for survival, desire for thoughtfulness and innocent means of self-refashioning as well. As a novelist, she is recognised as a writer in the popularizing field of Indian fiction in English. In addition to it, she attaches numerous ethos, blending history, legend, ethics and philosophies with inflexible social criticism.

The Holder of the World (1993) is one of the excellent novels where the low sound of history touches the story. The novel is a faultless combination of the older and the contemporary where the writer is seen describing the plot of Hannah Easton, a New Englander. She was sooner or later to add up as the woman kept for Mogul emperor, who is known as the holder of the world. This is a novel of Bharati Mukherjee that deals with changes in geographic and ethnic cosmos - from America to England to India, and as an outcome of which the individual changes with a new female understanding. *The Holder of the World*’, strengthens expatriation as a trip of the human mind. In this novel alone, the expatriation takes place from eastward to westward. It obviously displays the voyage of the womanlike hero who not only leads to examining of the self but also identifies herself. She comes back to her homeland, not as a rehabilitated American but as an unorthodox person living on the outer edge of the public. The difficulties and conflicts between the eastern and western world are shown in a better way.

Bharati Mukherjee clearly portrays the difference between the life in the homeland and host land. In this novel, Hannah Easton, the protagonist, emigrates from the United States to India in the seventeenth century, she considers her host land as her second homeland yet she undergoes some sort of expatriate feelings at the later stage. The protagonist maintains a constant touch with the host land and the homeland. *The Holder of the world* seems to be very different because in all the other novels, the central character moves from East to West, but in this she moves from west to east. The main focus is towards time-travelling. One can understand this from the introductory quotes, “I live Eastern, Central and Pacific. I mean the past, the present and the future” (HW 1). The story takes place in the seventeenth century and during this time; India was under the control of Mughals. Sandhya Rao Mehta feels that the novel reinforces exile as the voyage of a man’s thoughts.

Like Jasmine who travels westward, Hannah Easton’s voyage to the orient is . . . ambitions of the protagonist. Hannah, like Jasmine, becomes an expatriate as a result of a quest of a vital life of feeling and emotions (194)

The novel energetically crosses over the ancient as well as the modern ethos of the U.S.A and also India by means of the traditional colonial U.S.A. Post-colonial histories which link the pasts of Christian America and expatriate India play a repositioning of ethnic blend where numerous cultures encounter. This story travels past in its manifold coatings of transcultural places, and immigration is decorated by means of a significant piece which kindles

connections of transnational community. Thus, the author expands a historical tale of diaspora and widens the possibility for historical redrafting. Here, we witness not likely as well as fascinating gathering of two spheres, the seventeenth and also the eighteenth century, the world of America annoying to derive to relationships by means of the Mughal understanding of the life of India. Shakuntala Bharvani says,

the themes of transformation and migration are presented in this novel in a totally new and unique garb. She attempts to give colour and interest to the kind of novel which has had its day-early history of the Sahibs and memsahibs in India (189).

The protagonist of the novel, Hannah, all over her life noiselessly serves as a chatterbox to the suffocating recollections of this occasion. She is an orphan and brought to Salem by Robert and Susannah Fitch, who with affection and fondness bring her up under Puritanical limitations. A voyage of the protagonist is not considered as unintentional or instinctive. Her life is in the form of an additional discharge after the rule-surrounded, suffocating inspiration in the World of the Puritan. Her initial lifetime opinions are the greatest and vigorously a captivation aimed at desire and sensation, that she intertwines addicted to her multi-coloured, cheerful embroideries, “the embroidery is the embodiment of desire a desire to escape from the dull, grey of Puritan outpost (44). Her embroidery even shows her hidden and imaginary world, which the narrator describes as on a field of light blue, Hannah created furthestmost shoreline. Yet once more Mukherjee states, “A twelve-year old puritan orphan who had never been out of Massachusetts imagined an ocean, palm trees,. . . a ghostly white building- it could even be the Taj Mahal is rising” (44).

During Hannah’s journey, she infinitely speaks about the lifetime and humanity in India. She was told about caste system coromandel. Either one was Hindu or a Muslim categorised, either as Shia or Sunni. They entirely spoke diverse vernaculars, with their outstanding loyalty in the direction of dissimilar rulers and they pray to diverse spirits as their descendants had originated from diverse realms. It was all nightmarish for her. The massive mixture was pleasant and exhilarating but this one had been unimaginable to a Christian soul like Hannah’s. Her world is not so varied and not so diverse. So, she wondered that they were not unbiased Pagans and Mohammedans, nevertheless dissimilar supernatural beings and not the same means of praying to the identical work.

From the very beginning when Hannah sets her feet on Indian soil she is conscious of the circumstances she has been placed into and considers people of this country as her members. She has nothing to do with the race of those Britishers who have come here for stolen goods in order to lead a life of ease, lechery and accessibility. Hannah’s engagement with Raja specifies an association grounded completely on Indian, Eastern standards and ethics with slight situation to the life left behind. He bids Hannah a life of boundless opportunities and luxurious wishes undreamed of in English biosphere. The knowledge of existence stunned in affection, of existence controlled in the direction of opinion of interruption that Hannah holds by means of the whole of

her life and slight ethical thought. When she was in Massachusetts Bay, life had been very firm, the summer was tiny, the curiosities of countryside had given fewer chances to develop and there was no ease to flourish. But India unlocks new opportunities in her life. She identifies herself completely with her Indian lover. She cannot hide her uncertainty concerning the Eastern faith.

Hannah's voyage to India is anxious with descriptions of quest, achievement and hunger. She proceeds to Salem as an unorthodox person existing on the borders of the social order. Hema Nair in "A Puritan in a Mughal court" admits that: "Hannah is a stunning creation, a bold mind striving for identity in strange surroundings, a timeless creature trying to survive in a rigid, in exorable defined society" (106). Her journey is psychological and internal rather than physical. She changes on or after Salem to Stephney. "In one rainy season, Hannah Legge had gone from Woolen clad married woman on the Coromandel Coast to pregnant 'sari-wearing bibi of raja; a murderer, a widow. . . She want Hannah . . . Mukta, Bhagmati's word for 'pearl' (271).

As Hannah journeys to numerous places of the sphere, she states that life in the Indian sub-continent is completely diverse. Her responses are thus described below as a traveller, "Salem, and watching her life being transformed, that was the pleasure. She did not hold India up to inspection by the lamp of England, or of Christianity". (104) In Hannah's life, she entombs her puritan personality and appears as a rebel. The affection from Jaidev Singh who creates the courage in her and that makes her challenges the owner of the realm, the Alamgir, Aurangzeb with courage and confidence. Remarking on the cross-cultural connectedness, Laxmi Parasuram says, "The Holing the Colliding walls: Cross-cultural perception in The Holder of the World" observes: "Hannah's difference from others lay in her ability for establishing connectedness across cultural boundaries." (118-119)

In this novel, the novelist clearly presents the past and present condition of India and America. Mukherjee accepts India has continuously remained a dwelling-land that certifies the differences of customs and habits. The story concludes by means of Hannah's return voyage to Salem where she finds her own mother with psychological problems but under safety. She carries her 'black' offspring Pearl Singh in addition courageously breaks into Salem completely with her mother's five half Nipmuc children, and Beigh Master's chasing the most faultless precious stone in the biosphere, which is named as the Emperor's Tear. V. C. Sudheer in "History and the Past Reality in The Holder of the World" comments that the,

novel is a bridge between the past and the present; one could say that the novel is a formal 'computerized history'. The author has cleverly and deftly juxtaposed the apparently . . . present. The search for the precious diamond "Emperor's Tear" seems to a search for the glorious past (213).

Conclusion

Thus, The novel, *The Holder of the World* rediscovers the exile as a voyage of the human concentration. . From a deep study of the novel, one is able to have a clear knowledge of Mukherjee's triumph further and further in co-ordination by her surroundings as well as also beholding intended for a wish to arise back

towards her origins. Hannah undergoes a new feel in the alien land and she too considers neither India nor America as her homeland. She is in the in-between situation from the beginning to the end of the novel. She experiences the predicaments of expatriation such as cultural Conflicts, identity crisis, difference in the race, colour way of behaviour and isolation. This novel has dealt with the conventional subject of the diaspora of outcast as well as expatriation.

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