

ALIENATION IN DESIRABLE DAUGHTERS BY BHARATI MUKHERJEE**R. Vijayalakshmi***Ph. D, Research Scholar, Department of English, National College, (Autonomous, Trichy-620001*

The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person. He, like the others, is experienced as things are experienced; with the senses and with common sense, but at the same time without being related to oneself and to the world outside positively.

- Erich Fromm

Tara, the protagonist of *Desirable Daughters* is married to Bish Chatterjee. He is the “posterboy of Indian entrepreneurship” (p.26). He is very accommodative. His desire to visit America forces them to land at Strafford as young married couple. Bish Chatterjee does not like her wife to be idle at home. He expects her to work and joins in the library. There she has to work with non - Indians who are known for their “sheer brilliance” (p.81), which kindles her leam of knowledge. In fact, her visit to America is expressed in the following lines “This is the life I’ve been waiting for, I thought, the liberating promise of marriage and travel and the wider world” (p.81).

The reason for her visit to America is due to the liberating tendencies among women in America. Through magazines she has learnt that it is a land where women can take over their problems and to share their disappointments. Also, they are expected to create centre of their own with their own “tangled love nest” (p.82).

Her forward march to America proves to be froward. Unexpectedly, when she senses “their marginality is rooted in a deep and profound ownership that I will never know” (p.79) it is clear that she has a feeling of an unfamiliar solidarity with the American community. She feels abandoned among “unusual squatters, pasted - out drunks, cart - pushers, shopkeepers on smoke break and camera - loaded gawkers” (p.80). It is a kind of shock with shame coupled with rage. She laments: “I didn’t know what I felt, what I should have felt” (p.80).

In America, she has an inner feeling that she may be forced to have messy confrontation with others. Also, her married life is not like *gaudeamus igitur*, when her husband has left her after a decade because the promise of life as an American wife is not fulfilled. In such scenario, she does not know where to go but pushes her life with a drive. She feels the people of America is selfish and self involved. Also, they are predators. She finds it very difficult to explain India to Americans. This forces her to feel as an alien. She has a sense of paranoia. Life has become a sort of hallucination. She wants to say: “help me compute the effect on you of our non - quite belonging” (p.88).

There she cries silently and no one is ready to follow her. This situation is similar to Monisha in *Voices in the City* by Anita Desai. She observes her existence in the following manner in the text:

I grow smaller everyday, shrink and lose more and more of my weight, my appurtenances, the symbol of my existence that used to establish me in the eyes of this world. I am already too small to be regarded much by anyone. I will be invisible yet

Whether it is Monisha or Tara, they sense the world around is collapsing them. Especially, Tara feels saddened that no one is to save her or to care her in alienated land. She is longing for companionship in San Francisco in the form of friends. "The Atherton wives treated her as a pariah" (p.109). She has a chance to meet a gentleman called Chris Day. He has filled her days and nights to be a nightmare. To her, he is a kind of malignant whom she dreads all the time. In the land of America, she senses 'earthquake'. Sometimes it seems steady and on the other it is falling down on her without warning. Even her sister Didi, who is also in America, expects her to be an American in order to survive. It means she has to be self - engrossed. This kind of advice is dismissed as hypocritic or scheming. Also, being American seems to be a cowardly way. She has a longing to be an Indian rather than American because "change is a sort of corruption" (p.134). She is ready to take what America can give. At the same time, she does not let it tarnish her in any way. It is pathetic that the fantasies of dark keep returning to her when she is alone in her home.

People like Chris are viewed as evil force outside. Also, these people are there enough to hurt others. This kind of tendencies on the part of Americans forces her to rediscover her roots. Otherwise, she has a feeling that they may strangle her. What she wants to survive in an alienated land is 'cool logic'. The people of America never afraid to humiliate others. This can be seen when she makes her way through courts and lawyers, which she has never had it in India. Tara laments that people of America never do legitimate business. They resort to 'visa fraud, marriage rackets, prostitution, pick - pockets and burglars'. Modern calamities, loses and disappointments are treated as minor problems. What the people of America is lack spiritual quest. They never look into others heart and their soul. They are weakened by moral fiber. They have become grown up without family or tradition. She knows pretty well that she has to survive in an under - structured environment. Out of structure and out of order life of America creates chaos in her life. Characters like Rabi moves clueless about what is going on in his life. This is seen when he expresses "I wanted some sympathy, I wanted my own counselor... For me. For me" (p.162). Tara hears ambient noises aloud in America. With it, she finds it very difficult to hear her own self. She wants to explain it to others and unfortunately no one is ready to understand or to hear it.

Pathetically, she does not know how to behave with the nearest, closest male in America. Even a taxi driver seems to be a sinister, who stares at her through rearview mirror. She comes across only silent conspirators in her altered world of America. In San

Francisco, she barely knows any Indians especially traditional Bengali. All the time, she has to be vigilant and has to resort to adjustment to American life. In all its perverse temptations, she does not want to be a “perfectly preserved bug in amber” (p.184). She tries very hard to come out with a compromise when she utters the following lines:

My complications are mine, my messes are of my making. I don't blame Daddy and I don't blame Bish and Calcutta, and the nuns might not have equipped me for San Francisco but they're all gone, that world is gone, we're here, we have to stop pretending, we have to stop living in a place that's changed on us while we've been away. I don't want to be a perfectly preserved bug trapped in amber (p.184).

Work Cited

1. Desai, Anita. *Voices in the City*, Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1965.
2. Mukherjee, Bharati. *Desirable Daughters*, Rupa Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2002