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Tradition Versus Modernity in Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*

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Letter of Recommendation

Amar Bahadur Khatri has completed his thesis entitled “Tradition Versus Modernity in Bharati Mukherjee *Desirable Daughters*” under my supervision. he carried out this research from December 2021 to March 2022. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for the final *viva voce*.

Mr. Dinesh Kumar Bhandari

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Amar Bahadur Khatri

Tradition versus Modernity in Bharati Mukherjee *Desirable Daughters*

Abstract

This research studies and analyzes the transitional state of Indian society in Bharati Mukherjee's novel Desirable Daughters. The tussle between tradition and modernity, represented in the novel can be viewed against the influence of western culture that has taken place in the twenty-first century in the lives of Indian people. The conflict between old and new generations in terms of the issues of marriage, education, family, and technological innovations. Padma, the eldest daughter, falls in love with Ronald Dey has a sexual relationship, and gives birth to a male child before her marriage. Tara moves to America with her husband Bish, gives birth to a male child. After that, she joins the college as well as the Indian-American women group, reads American magazines, makes a boyfriend that entices her toward individual freedom which she could not exercise being a wife of an Indian man. She divorces him and starts to live alone where she can exercise her feelings and emotions. Motilal moves from Faridpur to Calcutta city, takes the degree of Ph.D. and installs mega machines, and establishes Industry which transforms him from an agrarian society to an industrial world. Viewed from Hibernation's theory of tradition to modernity, all the characters are transforming themselves from classical antiquity to technological development. Hence, this research concludes that through Desirable Daughter, Bharati Mukherjee tries to show the changing scenario of Indian social norms and values where women have also started to take stand for their right and individualism.

Keywords: Tradition, Modernity, Science and Technology, Classical Antiquity, Identity, Discovery.

This research project explores and analyzes the novel from the lens of tradition versus modernity between the old and new generations in Bharati Mukherjee's

Desirable Daughters. In this novel, Bharati Mukherjee shows the traditional orthodoxy of Indian people which gradually changes to modern ideas and perceptions due to the intervention of science and technology which plays an important role to create such types of ideas in the lives of Indian people. In transforming Indian society, there seems a generation gap, old generation orthodoxy regarding family structure, living style, marriage system is not viable to a new generation. The new generation is different as they are guided by the Western way of life and freedom. They want to create and settle life in their way whereas, the old generation's thinking is a blockade to the new generation's ideas and strategies. Hence, there comes a conflicting situation between the new and old generations in terms of social norms and values. Therefore, here comes a tension between old and new generation people in the novel *Desirable Daughters*. Though, Bharati Mukherjee is no longer materially in this world, her literary works have made her immortal among us. Her works have given a glimpse of how society slowly and gradually is being transformed. Her literary works have raised the issue of post-colonialism, multi-culturalism, autobiographical writing and the notion of female domination in terms of cultural orthodoxies. *Desirable Daughters* is her sixth novel published in 2002 where she implements the steps towards seeking the true self of Indian women from Hindu traditional traits to individuality and freedom. Mukherjee in this novel intentionally intertwines the tussle between the old and new generations. Her claim in this novel is that Indian women have to use their reason for their own lives instead guided by traditional norms and values. Women in an Indian high-class Bengali Brahmin society are not allowed to cross the demarcation line because they are taken as a matter of social prestige of the family. The woman in an Indian traditional society who tries to decisions decide on her own, is taken as a matter of social stigma because in an Indian socio-political arena women are taken as

submissive and indecisive Patriarchal society has assigned certain roles for women which they must adhere otherwise they are attributed as sluggish, misguided, worthless, and a matter of social scandal. But in the novel *Desirable Daughters*, Tara and Padma are ready to cross all the boundaries perpetuated by Hindu traditional orthodoxy at the cost of their self-identity and freedom because they want to break down all the cultural tutelages that are responsible for their freedom to live their lives in their way.

The novel is descriptive, as it describes the traditional culture, norms, and values of an Indian Hindu family. There are several examples of a tussle between and among the family members, due to their perceptions as they are guided. In the novel, Padma and Tara's parents represent the traditional way of life. They expect their daughters should be responsible for their cultural norms and values and follow the way of their parental ethos. But the daughters do not fulfill their hopes and expectations rather they cross all the boundaries in their way lead their lives. They seem to be different as they are guided by modernity and the city and want to create their future on it, whereas the old generation is a blockade to new generation's ideas and strategies consequently there occurs a tussle between old and new generation in terms of the issues of marriage, education, family and religious practices.

The novel *Desirable Daughters* deals with the issue of familial tension that encompasses between old and new generations their social norms and values in the society. This novel portrays the story of an Indian Brahmin family in South India where traditional norms and values are strictly followed. Novelist being the daughter of India makes its people aware of the modern traits in the world where people are starting to live their lives in their own way. Hence, Bharati Mukherjee knowingly interwoven the story that how Indian traditional norms and values are being

debunked. They debunk the traditional practices such as marriage system, education, family and religious practices in terms of their happiness and search for self-identity.

The novel *Desirable Daughters* incorporates the story of high class Bengali Brahminian society where different types of taboos are created for Padma, Parvati and Tara. Bhattarjee family head keeps deep faith in fate. Motilal Bhattacharjee is the strict Hindu devotee who worships God and believes on the old traditional system, but these three daughters of the Bhattacharjee family do have a strong desire for modernity. All of them are well educated and they are well known for the old tradition but the Indian High-class Brahmin family does not allow them to move ahead according to their will. They are taught in order to fulfill the requirement of “daughterhood” which is politeness, obedience, and beauty which is an essential component for women in Indian traditional society. They are strongly restricted to crossing four walls of the house for the sake of family respect, but all these three daughters cross all the traditional social norms and values which proves their craze for modernity.

'Modern' means not believing in traditional norms and values as Arjun Appadurai says, "Modern moment-that by its appearance creates a dramatic and unprecedented break between past and present" (3). Hence, modernity refers to a powerful set of cultural, political, economic, and spatial twist between relationships that fundamentally influencing the way of social life. Padma, daughter of a traditional Bengali Hindu family, where daughter looking at another's face is also considered a sin; she falls in love with Ronald Dey a lower caste boy. Ronald Dey is a brother of Padma's college friend. She brings change in their marital way of social system. Padma and Ronald Dey are close friends of their college. Padma gets pregnant and gives birth to a male child. Padma takes a great stance, because she was well aware about the traditional norms and values that is s prevailed in her society. Knowing all

these things, her stance is due to the transition from tradition to modernity. She is an educated girl and she knows that all the social taboos are useless. Hence, she makes love affair with the person who is lower than her caste. Similarly, Tara also gets married with Bishwapriya Chatterjee according to the Hindu norms and values. They flew towards America where she gives birth to a male child. She does her best there in America but as the time passes, she also changes herself. Finally, she gives divorces to her husband and lives her life in her own way.

The novel *Desirable Daughters* raises the issue of conflict between tradition and modernity. Indian Hindu society still faiths in tradition whereas the new generation such as Padma and Tara believe on modernity. Chatterjee and Bhattacharjee families are still on the way to Indian Hindu traditional social norms and values whereas new generations such as Tara and Padma is in favor of modernity. Motilal manages the car, driver as well as guards to these girls while going to college, but "Ron Dey slipped under the most refined radar system in the world: Hindu Virgin Protection. So many eyes were watching, so many precautions were taken. . ." (Mukherjee 32). Hence, through this novel *Desirable Daughters*, Bharati Mukherjee wants to show the Indian Hindu societal norms and values are in transition from tradition to modernity. The tussle between father and daughters is no more than that of old and new social norms and values. Father and mother are quite unhappy with the way their daughter adopt, but daughters are happy and living their lives happily. Occasionally they contact and visit their parents but don't culturally assimilate with them. In this way, *Desirable Daughters* primarily revolves around the family tussle, but in particular it is the clash of perception between old traditional values and new modern thinking.

After the independence, Indian society tries to adopt modernity in the real sense bringing changes in the life of the people. Gradually, the new generation leaves the age-old traditional norms and values and starts to follow modern values in their daily life. In course of transformation, they face different kinds of challenges. Though, modernity has a great impact on the lives of the new generation the transformation through the process of transition, where tradition and modernity go side by side in the Indian context.

eldest daughter of the Bhattarchjee, Padma, family admitted to a college where she takes a university level education. Being a level level college-level student, she better knows how to deal with her life. Her love affair with Ronald Dey is her advances toward modernity although she is well known for hisfamily trait. She involves with him in physical relationship and be pregnant too. Before marriage a girl falls on love affair and impregnates knowingly that her family as well as society would not let her that privilege. As she is well educated, she takes the root cause of loss of female identity, hence she challenges the cultural orthodoxy adopting the new way of life.

In the same way, the sister of Padma, namely Tara also guided by the norms and values aimed by modernity and city. As she reaches America, she is also takes admission to a college. Where she learns the way of life and tries to dilute herself in that very atmosphere. She remembers her life under the control of her husband which she finds quite pathetic and traditional. She also decides to break all her relationships to her husband. As soon as she gets permission to stay in America, she also makes her boyfriend there. She feels freedom in giving divorce to her husband. Finally, she takes the way that provides her self-identity and freedom..

Mukherjee's novel *Desirable Daughters* after its publication, many critics have reviewed it, appreciating for the issues raised by the novel regarding its style, story, and the plot of the urban Indian middle-class family. The novel has been reviewed from different perspectives by many critics in different research journals. Sweta Chauhan claims that the novel to be a document of Indian-American people who are suffering due to diasporic feelings. She writes, "Their experiences of transplantation, uprootedness, nostalgia, alienation, and assimilation lie at the core of their hearts and memory" (24). At this point, critic Shweta Chauhan takes this novel as a diasporic text. In her literary article she highlights the novel as being a realistic story of the Indian diaspora in the contact zone. She says, "The feeling of estrangement and identity crisis find expression in their works. Such representations offer them a soothing outlet to the pain and agony they suffered" (24). In these lines, Shweta Chauhan assumes the book is about the Indian diaspora where they remember their country. In order to uproot their lives, Padma and Tara move towards America where they face cultural confrontation that creates alienation to them. They always remember India as Indian cultural norms and values are rooted in inner core of their heart and memory.

Similarly, another critic Rajib Bhaumik sees as the novel as manifestation of "subaltern voice that raises the issue of immigrants' pain and pangs towards their origin. Bhaumik further writes, "The nostalgia of Tara for her past, her protective existence in India, her helplessness to assimilate in the glamorous life of the USA has become a voice of all these immigrants who lead a life of 'subaltern' in the highly mechanical, progressive and prosperous society of America" (102). The main protagonist Tara moves toward the USA in search of prosperity and progress but she in the American land could not assimilate herself. American quite mechanical lifestyle

could not provide her solace. Consequently, she slowly and gradually becomes frustrated in the land of her destination. Tara's nostalgic situation towards origin is due to her longing for root culture.

In the same way, M. F. Patel sees the novel as the manifestation of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism connotes an ideal society where several groups can co-exist harmoniously. The USA is that very land where people from different countries go there in search of better opportunities and prosperity. Hence, Patel says that "*Desirable Daughters* is a journey of three sisters Padma, Parvati, and Tara who are brought up in a traditional Brahmin Hindu family in West Bengal" (1). In these lines, Patel takes three sisters' journey toward America is itself a multicultural practice. He further opines:

Tara, the protagonist, marries Bishwapriya Chatterjee and they settle down in Atherton. Padma, the eldest one settles down in New Jersey, while Parvati settles in Bombay with her rich businessman husband. Mukherjee addresses the issues of immigration from the cultural perspective. The fragile and fluid identity of Indian immigrants is the theme of the novel. They try to find a niche in the new cultural landscape . . . whether or not the characters succeed in assimilating themselves in a multicultural society of America. (1)

Padma and Tara left their motherland India and move to America. America for them is quite a new place in terms of socio-cultural codes and conducts. The main issue of Bharati Mukherjee in this novel is to exhibit how these two sisters assimilate in American multicultural society. Including these two sisters, the Indian immigrants move towards America in search of better future endeavors where they have to assimilate into this modern world.

Likewise, Shailja Chhabra also makes comments on *Desirable Daughters* as the novel of identity crisis. According to her the characters on the novel are suffering from identity crisis. Chhabra writes:

The novel unfolds the story of three sisters, who are settled in different countries, and are suffering to find out their own identities as they come to realize their marginal position as well as substitute role in family and society. The quest of its protagonist Tara for a separate identity in the traditional bound society leads her place to place, but wherever she moves, she finds the spaces of tradition and a fixed sense of identity as an Indian immigrant. Displacement not only leads to separation but also leads to alienation and rebirth in a new country, new culture, new society, and new adjustments in an alien land. (230)

The novel *Desirable Daughters* is about the suffering of three girls namely Padma, Tara, and Parvati who dwell in different parts of the world. These three sisters are brought up in Indian society as they move towards America, they face different types of pains and sufferings due to the cultural belongingness. While they were in India, they were counted in numbers but after moving to America, they were left behind, which created an identity crisis for them.

Though the critics have analyzed the novel from different perspectives, none of the critics has explored the issue of tension between tradition and modernity, which proves the innovative issue of the research. Thus, this research tries to explore the tension of transition from traditional to modern society in the Indian context.

Bharati Mukherjee in her novel *Desirable Daughter* shows the tussle between the old generation and the new generation throughout the novel. The story is about the Indian middle-class urban society. Indian patriarchal society wants to control daughters whereas daughters are not ready to follow the footpaths showing cultural

orthodoxy. Time has been changed and daughters are ready to cross the cultural boundary of Indian society which is their transition from tradition to modernity in a true sense. Modernity is the way to change the ethos or capture the experience of time.

Modernity refers to the transitional process from cultural orthodoxy to rationality. Walter Benjamin regarding modernity talks about changing ethos or capturing the experience of time. He talks about the changing way or pattern in respect to time. It is a tradition that changes with the wave of time. It is what Benjamin puts forth about modernity that it is inevitable with the time period. He further argues, "the tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable" (229). Tradition by nature is changeable that takes turns within the passage of time. Likewise, Jurgen Habermas supports the Benjamin's talks about industrialization which brings changes in the lives of people. Certainly, there comes a kind of tussle between the old and new generation regarding the cultural norms and values which can be seen in the novel *Desirable Daughters* too. In this regard, Jurgen Habermas, in his essay "Modernity - An Incomplete Project" opines, ". . . modernity repeatedly articulates the consciousness of an era that refers back to the past of classical antiquity precisely in order to comprehend itself as the result of a transition from the old to the new" (282). Therefore, modernity seeks to perceive new parameters of thinking and the changing perception of people's life. Regarding the issue of modernity, Immanuel Kant, an enlightenment philosopher focuses on rationality and emancipation. He argues that the shifting process from classical to modernity comes through reason. For Kant "the enlightenment comes after the release from a self-incurred tutelage" (5). According to Kant, enlightenment is possible when a person tried to come out from traditional orthodoxies.

Similarly, another theorist Marshal Berman takes modernity as an "overall socially progressive trend of thought and affirms the power of human beings to create improve and reshape their environment with the aid of practical experimentation, scientific knowledge, or technology" (2). Berman talks about the changing nature of society within its changing paradigm. Science and technology have brought a change in human thinking and their way of life, which brings social tussle between generations. Likewise, Anthony Giddens takes "modernity as an expression encapsulates the progress of societies from primitive civilization to more advance ones" (26). Critic Nelson H.H. Garburn perceives tradition as an original concept descended from a central period which gets a change in the span of time. According to him, "just as life has death as its opposite, so tradition is often said to be opposite to innovation" (6). Garburn is positive towards the social change as life has death, tradition has modernity. Social change is inevitable as life has to end in death.

Jurgen Habermas claims, "Modernity revolts against the normalizing function of tradition, modernity lives on the experience of rebelling against all that is normative" (5). For him revolt against the tradition and experience of it is known as modernity. During the certain period of time person questions on the existing tradition due to rational thinking. The result of it on personal level is that he starts to revolt against the existing tradition. Habermas argues that: "Modern again and again express the consciousness of an epoch that relates itself to the past of antiquity, in order to view itself as the result of a transition from old to new" (3). He argues modernity as a transformation from old to new social structure. Tara feels her identitylessness in America. She has to perform all the duties and feminine role there too. Her husband tells her as a "well-trained upper-class Ballygunge girl . . . had become a good cook and what an attentive wife and daughter-in-law" (Mukherjee 82) which deeply

wounded Tara's psychology. Although she is remaining in America, she has to perform all the feminine duties by Indian patriarchal society. That's why she tries to transform herself from traditional norms and values as claimed by Hebermas. Her longing for modernity starts rights from the point where she decides to give divorce Bish and live her independent life.

Modernity is achieved through the modernization process where every attempt is directed towards logical justification and collective happiness. Modernity assures everyone with better life and it focus on rationality, which is the subjective potential of an individual to achieve emancipation through the power of logic and reasoning. This is the concept develop by Immanuel Kant who focus on rationality for emancipation. According to Kant, "Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another" (1). Kant focuses on personal rationality which guides the person to be modern. The shifting process from tradition to modern comes through reason. Michel Foucault defines modernity as an attitude of people that comes on him/her. As opinion by Foucault such attitude appears on different characters is a transformation from tradition to modernity. Foucault further states, "Modernity rather an attitude than a period of history. And by "attitude." I mean a mode of relating to contemporary reality, a voluntary choice made by certain people, in the end, a way of thinking and feeling, a way, too of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task" (39). In these lines Foucault perceives modernity as experience and exploration of one's innovative self-practice with contemporary thinking, act and behavior and relates it with present reality. The certain behavior, thinking and acting of the person on his/her own choices leads towards the modernity. During the time expansion, certain types of change are

inevitable and drastic change takes places gradually and slowly. He further states, "I prefer the very specific transformations that have to be possible in the last twenty years in a certain number of areas that concern our ways of being and thinking" (46). In these lines, Foucault perception is that drastic change is not possible but gradually changes come in the behavior of the people.

Modernity is a term used to describe the condition of being related to modernism. Since the term 'modern' is used to describe a wide range of periods, modernity must be understood in its context, the industrial age of the 19th century, and its role in sociology which since its beginning in that era examined the leap from pre-industrial to industrial society. In the same way, Motilal takes leap from agrarian society to industrial society by installing tea factory in Calcutta. Regarding this instance, Chris Barker defines the term modernity on the basis of historical context as:

Modern can mean all of post-medieval European history, in the context of dividing history into three large epochs: Ancient History, the middle Ages, and Modern Times. In the context of contemporary history, politics and other subjects, it is also applied specifically to the period beginning somewhere between 1870 and 1910, through the present, and even more specifically to the early 20th century, though the late modern times would be marked by the late 18th century. (231)

Modernity is a different term from modern times; it is derived from Modernism, a movement in art based on the consciousness that through the mechanical age of industrialism, humankind has evolved into something very new - what that would be, would have to be explored by art, and all previous concepts questioned. Darwin's *Origin of Species* and Lyell's *Principles of Geology* revolutionized the perception of time and race, and that of "mankind" in particular.

Modernity is a shorthand term for modern society or industrial civilization. In this regard, Anthony Giddens states:

Portrayed in more detail, it is associated with (1) a certain set of attitudes towards the world, the idea of the world as an open transformation by human intervention; (2) a complex of economic institutions, especially industrial production and a market economy; (3) a certain range of political institutions, including the nation-state and mass democracy. Largely as a result of these characteristics, modernity is vastly more dynamic than any previous type of social order. It is a society - more technically, a complex of institutions - which unlike any proceeding cultures lives in the future rather than the past.

(29)

Modernity may serve as a broad synonym for capitalism, or industrialization, or whatever institutional and ideological features are held to mark off the modern West from other, traditional societies. In the novel *Motilal* also leads towards modernity as he installs mega machines and establishes tea industry where many workers work under his kind control. He accumulates surplus value from them and proves himself as an industrialist.

Modernism is observed from the perspective of anthropology it creates a landscape which is challenging the traditional life style of human being as well as brings new values in life. With circumference of time, there seems changing scenario in the mind of characters. There is different level of understanding between three generation i.e. Motilal; parents, Motilal and her daughters. Regarding the anthropological leap, Leppert asserts his idea regarding the socio-anthropological change in terms modernity. Leppert states:

Modernity is related with multiple dimensions, as bureaucracy , disenchantment of the world, rationalization, secularization, alienation, commoditization, de-contextualization, individualism, subjectivism, linear progression, objectivism, universalism, reductionism, chaos, mass society, industrial society, homogenization, unification, hybridization, diversification, democratization, centralization, hierarchical organization, mechanization, totalitarianism, and so on. Modernity may be considered marked and defined by an obsession with evidence of visibility. (19)

Modernity is gradually changing process which is occurred in the society in contemporary time. It extends reason and concept that can adequately capture diverse realities of societies of various historical contexts, especially non-European ones, let alone a three-stage model of social evolution from pre-modernity to post-modernity. However, in terms of social structure, many of the defining events and characteristics listed above stem from a transition to relatively isolated local communities to a more integrated large-scale society. Modernization might be a general, abstract process which can be found in many different parts of histories, rather than a unique event in Europe. In general, large-scale integration involves.

The modernity project envisioned by Kant, the spokesperson of the enlightenment, puts forward the project of emancipation of human beings with the help of the subjective reasoning. Kant gives Europe a method to reach maturity from the immature state of mindset of eighteenth-century Europe. On the other hand, Foucault perceives modernity as a way to relate oneself to the contemporary reality. In fact, the latter focuses more on the present. Hence, Patrick Mchugh writes: “Rather, as Foucault himself says, his position marks an ‘ethos of modernity; a way of thinking, feeling and acting, a mode of relating to contemporary reality’” (92). The

understanding of modernity thus turns out to be the perception of the present as the vantage that enables the subject to view both the past and future.

Modernity is related with reason which has been started since renaissance time. It flourishes during the time of nineteenth century and fall in crisis on twentieth century. Modernity is related with centre or power and dominates the marginal culture and human identities which is related with myth, religion, culture. In the novel *Desirable Daughters*, Mukherjee knowingly deviates her female characters from root Indian culture to western way of life. Bharati Mukherjee presents new way of writing which is based on stream of consciousness because this novel seems more subjective and explorative also which is one of the features of modern writers.

Bharati Mukherjee in *Desirable Daughter* tries to show how modernity has entered into the lives of Indian people created different types of familial tensions. As East India company ruled over Indian continent for long time, its people slowly and gradually started to perceive and guided by the western way of lives. Motilal Bhattarjee moves towards Calcutta city from rural and agrarian society Faridpur in search of better opportunity than that of "a provincial town called Faridpur" (Mukherjee 33). He provides western way of education to his daughters in order to compete them in world market. A traditional boy comes from an agrarian society and involves himself in Industrial innovation which is his affinity to modernity as Wagner claims, "Those sciences, including the social sciences, were seen as overspecialized and fragmented while at the same time highly successful in generating new insights and in transforming the world through science-based technology" (15). Science and technology are those menaces equally responsible for fragmentation of human lives as well as transforming into new insights. As claimed by Wagner, Motilal installs mega mechnes and established Tea Industry which is his great success and transformation

from old, religious doctrines, myths, culture, norms and values. The following lines are worthy to quote here:

A trained engineer (B.E. Calcutta, M.E., PhD reading) who turned his skills and training to business, investing in a tea estate . . . what began as a kind of gentleman's farm became (with his engineering mind) a model of efficiency. Tea was the refined centrepiece of Calcutta's prosperity, the respectable underwriter of Calcutta's standing on the world stage. (32)

In these lines, Motilal Bhattarchjee is knowingly or unknowingly guided by the ethos and pathos of industrialization which is the product of west. Motilal changes himself from agrarian society to a successful industrialist. His connection with White people is due to his debut in industry. He has erected a successful businessman in the arena of world market. Supporting this idea, Wagner argues:

. . . modernity is said to begin with the market revolution and the Industrial Revolution, and political modernity has its take-off with the revolutions in America and France in the late eighteenth century. Scientific and philosophical revolutions towards modernity can be variously dated along this temporal line –from Cartesian rationalism and experimental method. (6)

The concept of Industrialization was developed by western countries like America and France in the late eighteenth century. They introduce logical reasoning; science gets established in order to assist the labour force in the mode of production. The pre-industrial societies in Europe were employed muscular forces as the soul of production but the industrial era was herald with the beginning of technology in the form of complex machines. Motilal also delves himself in the field of the industrial sector which is his affinity towards modernity and the city. His business reaches him towards the summit of success. The journey from provincial town Faridapur to

Calcutta is his transition from tradition to modernity. He establishes himself "on the world stage" (32) as a successful business person.

Due to the ideological conflict, Bhattacharjee's family is also the victim of Ideological tension between modern and Indian orthodoxical ways of life. On the one hand, this family itself has crossed a long journey from the village of India to a metropolitan city, but quite contradictorily the same family is not ready to accept the western way of life. Padma, Parvati and Tara are three daughters of Motilal Bhattacharjee, who were born and grew up in Calcutta city. They are close affinity to the western way of life but his family does not let them roam in the street freely. Tara shares "our father couldn't let either of my sisters out on the street. Our car was equipped with window shades. We had a driver, and the driver had a guard" (29). In these lines, Tara is quite dissatisfied with the trait of her father who underestimates her daughter and banishes them from their human rights. His daughter wants to be free from the patriarchal ideology and live their own life. But quite an oppressive tussle between family members seems due to the intermingling ideology of tradition and modernity. Motilal Bhattacharjee wants to restrict his daughter from the western way of thinking and wants to make them follow the Indian traditional way of life which is quite impossible as he himself has been involved in modern culture. Berman Marshall defines modernity as the process of cultural change: "Certainly, this is not the only way to interpret modern culture or culture in general. But it makes sense if we want the culture to be a source of nourishment for ongoing life, rather than a cult of the dead" (6). In these lines, Berman claims that the basic and fundamental law of social and cultural norms and values is its nature of changeability.

As Marshall claims, Motilal also changes himself with time and venue. He prefers her daughters' marriage with the man who has owned an American green card.

The politics behind his preference for his daughter's marriage with the person who lives in America is his longing for the metropolitan city. As society is changeable, he also knowingly or unknowingly changes in his ethos and pathos. Being a successful businessman, he travels far and wide in European landscapes. He is quite fascinated by the lifestyle of Europeans. Therefore, he wants to marry his daughter to the person who lives in America namely Bishwapriya Chatterjee whom his American friends call 'Bish'. He is economically strong: "Bish kept the large house behind the gates in Atherton, in one of the first development to grow up with Silicon Valley. He was and probably still is, wealthy beyond counting, or caring. So am I; money is no longer the point, if it ever was" (23). In these lines, it can be seen that Tara's father is going to marry his daughter to the person who lives in America, owns his own house there. After marriage, his daughter will also be there in a metropolitan city. After all, his hidden desire leads towards a longing for modernity and the city. Modernity refers to the overall societal process by which Motilal's previously agrarian and contemporary societies, the way of thinking has become developed. He gives preference to industrialization. Changes on him from agrarian town Fridpur to Calcutta and finally towards America is seen as the result of an increasing longing for modernity.

Motilal's lifestyle is quite different from that of the Indian orthodoxical way of life. His journey from tradition to modernity has made him a professional Businessman. Since he perceives totally different western cultural values so as to "overall socially progressive trend of thought and affirm the power of human beings to create improve and reshape their environment with the aid of practical experimentation, scientific knowledge or technology" (Berman 2). Marshal opines that science and technology are responsible factors to widen the horizon of the cultural environment. Motilal as claims Marshal undergoes different stages in order to

reshape the cultural environment. He conducts world-class parties in Calcutta. His affinity and success in terms of economic prosperity is due to the "invested in a tea estate offered at a bargain rate by an English man" (32). He generally conducts parties in the "nineteenth-century Raj-style fortress of a home on Ballygunk Park Road" (32-33). This Raj style fortress consists of "glass shards, and the long yard with its landscaped garden" (33) were "fabulous parties during the winter "social season" (33). Although the British colonization has been finished in India, but most of the guests of Motilal are old Britishers. Tara remembers, "We sisters performed, old Britishers from the last days of the Raj returned in ever-dwindling numbers for the round of parties, and I have never been happier than the nights Parvati and I would dress in our specially tailored "English frocks" and carry hors d'oeuvre trays from drunken cluster to tipsy cluster, listening to their praise" (33). In these lines, it clearly seems that Motilal also residing in Calcutta, organizes parties where liquors are deliberately served. Socio-cultural transformation in this party towards the western way of life can be seen with bare eyes. Every member delves into the norms and values that are essentially guided by the western way of social life. At this party, the Britishers are also invited. The things, dress, and behaviour of the people are quite modern and fabulous.

Motilal, as he runs after his business, he could not provide good guidance to his daughters. His tea industry gets success in a good manner. He expands his business to European countries as he "bargain rate by an English man" (32) shows his connection with those traders from western land. Most of the guests of his party's used to be westerner. He organizes such type of party in his own house where his girls also take part. Slowly and gradually they also adopt the western way of life because Motilal could not provide the Indian way of life. The perversion of cultural

transformation comes on her daughters also. Motilal fails to provide Indian culture to his daughters. Regarding the cultural perversion, Simmer expresses his viewpoint as, "The self-preservation of very young associations requires the establishment of strict boundaries and a centripetal unity. Therefore, they cannot allow the individual freedom and unique inner and outer development" (229). Simmel means if people given proper guidance s/he would not out track, but in modernity, it is impossible to do so. Therefore, parents of Padma get fail to proper care to her, it results on familial tension.

Padma, the eldest daughter of Motilal, is a student of college level. She falls in love with Ronald Dey who is good looking, wealthy, American studied a medical doctor belongs to a Christian family. Padma a college level girl is able to decide what is right and what wrong. She decides to marry with him. Tara remembers their relationship as: "When the liaison between Ron and Didi began, I, of course will never know. What she was thinking of, what future together they imagined, what plans they made, I can barely imagine. Where they even did it, under all those eyes, is unimaginable" (31). In these lines it is clearly seen that Padma loves with Ronald Dey who is Christian by religious faith. In an Indian traditional Indian society, no one can even think to marry with the person from different religious faith. In Hindu society, generally people believe in arrange marriage in the same social strata. But in the novel Mukherjee presents the social debunk though her fictitious character Padma. It means Mukherjee tries to convey the message that Indian society is slowly and gradually questioning the social status quo. Regarding the status quo, Louis Tyson theorizes that social status quo is the traditional gender rule and its aim to preserve the patriarchal status quo. Lois Tyson says, "Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive, they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing

and submissive" (85). Tyson in these lines defines traditional roles are those discourses in order to make women feeble and frazil. In an Indian society too, as Tyson claims, there are innumerable social codes and conducts to as to make them limited. Motilal, being an Industrialist who has travelled far and wide, wants to restrict her daughters within the periphery of the status quo that has been descended since last many decades. He could not let either of my sisters out on the street. Our car was equipped with windows shades. We had a driver, and the driver had a guard" (Mukherjee, 29). As Tyson stresses, the woman does not have any access to lead her life as her own, these three daughters are not allowed to move outside the house. While going to college, their father has managed a special project. Their car's windows are shaded, driver as a guard is there to report their father.

The eldest daughter Padma putting question such status quo, takes the way of innovation and challenging convention. She deliberately engages with Ronald Dey not paying any attention towards the traditional way of Indian society. "Motilal Bhattacharjee's oldest daughter, . . . that any violation of the codes, any breath of scandal, was unthinkable" (32) but Padma, eldest daughter gives birth to a male child before her marriage in Switzerland. As Padma is guided by modern thinking, she thinks differently than that of other people. She opposes Indian tradition becomes mother before her marriage as "she rejects the conventions of her mother's world as empty forms, she grasps and embraces the spirit that underlies these forms: a spirit of active dedication and commitment, a spirit that has the moral courage to give up everything, even life, out of faith in its deepest and dearest beliefs" (Marshall 58). Padma dares to oppose the traditional gender role that was descended on her mother. She rejects all the tutelage taught to her. The cause behind debunking social norms

and values because she was guided by modernist ideas. Being an educated women she wants to choose her life partner with whom she can happily celebrate her life.

Tara married off to Bish Chatterjee. She remembers, "I married a man I had never met, whose picture and biography and bloodlines I approved of because my father told me it was time to get married and this was the best husband on the market" (26) and moves towards America with him. As she moves towards America, she gradually transforms herself from tradition to modernity as she moves towards America with her husband. Regarding the transformation of social norms and values that how it takes place. Tradition being a live entity it always tries to reform itself. Anthony Giddens takes "modernity as an expression encapsulates the progress of societies from primitive civilization to more advance ones" (26). Giddens takes social transformation as an inevitable task that encapsulates in the course of time. In case of Tara, when she was within the grip of her parents, she was totally innocent as Indian Hindu social norms and values were havoc on her. As she moves towards America, the horizon of her social taboo scatters and breaks down. The cultural collision takes place in her life. A traditional Hindu married women moves to America, joins college and tries to dissect how Indian women in the name of tradition are deeply rooted.

Tara moves towards America. She exhibits the behavior of the paradigmatic Indian wife. She is subservient to her husband and well experienced in domestic duties. She is "serving pakoras and freshening drinks when Bish and Chester watching a Sunday football game on a new 52-inch screen" (24). Tara serves her husband as an obedient servant. She serves his each and every demand in a good manner. The relationship between husband and wife is just like master and slaves as Indian Hindu traditional norms and values imagine. He does not even hesitate to pride upon his wife that her parents have sent a well-trained servant in order to provide him

with each and every need. Bish takes great pride in showing his friends and says, "How well trained this upper-class Ballygunge girl had become, what a good cook, what an attentive wife and daughter-in-law" (82). Bish is proud of her wife as he has got traditional Indian woman who devoted herself for each and every happiness of husband keeping suppressed her personal necessities, emotions and desires. He assumes her that she would serve delicious food stuffs and secure his lineage by rearing and caring his son. He plays a good trick that if there were not their son; he would certainly send her to community college. He is well known about the fact that if she goes to the college, she would know about how she has remaining in an Indian traditional society. There is danger of her revolt against traditionalism and her advancement towards modernity.

Bish's fear comes true when Tara joins community college. Her advancement starts towards modernity from this college where she understands the modern way of life. She curses Indian tradition that made her quite dogmatic and submissive. Tara goes flashback and exclaims "How could I have been put in charge of a man like that? How can I admit that I knew so little, that Ballygunge Park Road had left me so unprepared?" (84). In these lines, Tara seems quite tension as she sees her past under Indian tradition culture. She accuses bitterly Indian tradition culture as it kept her traditional tutelage. Regarding the issue of modernity, Immanuel Kant focuses on rationality and emancipation. He argues that shifting process from classical to modern comes through reason. For Kant "the enlightenment comes after the release from self-incurred tutelage" (5). These lines also advocate for the change which brings emancipation from socially constructed traditional orthodoxies. As Kant claims, Tara breaks all the tutelage perpetuated by Indian orthodoxy after her college enrollment in America. As she enrolls in college, she nearly observes and under goes in American

way of life. She feels quite comfortable and freedom in modern culture than that of Indian traditional culture. She well develops and accustoms herself in the modern world. The American modernity and city run in each and every vein of her body. She engages with Andy, her boyfriend and slowly and gradually all the belongings to her husbands. Tara accepts, "In the months after I left Bish, one by one, nearly all of his oldest friends, those boys who had sat in the Stanford student pub with us" (188). Finally, Tara as she dilutes herself in western modernity, she divorces her own husband for the sake of her own happiness and freedom. While exercise American modernity, she also deviates from her Indian tradition, she leaves her husband, house and everything else for Andy.

Modernity refers to the transitional process from cultural orthodoxy to rationality. Tara transforms herself from Indian tradition to modern culture. Walter Benjamin regarding the modernity talks about changing ethos or capturing the experience of time. He talks about the changing way or pattern in respect to time. It is tradition that changes with the wave of time. It is what Benjamin puts forth about modernity that it is inevitable with time period. He further argues that, "the tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable" (229). Tradition by nature is changeable that takes turn within the passage of time. As time is changeable, she also deals with the demand of time.

Tara after divorce Bish, she has started her American life. Individual freedom and success are prime objective of her. After taking divorce, her son Rabi turns burden in her life. She says, "Poor Rabi, I am not worthy to raise a son" (84). A woman frankly accepts that she is not any interest to provide care to him because she has transforms her from traditional woman to modern American woman. She is quite

thankful to her parents that they chose Bish like a man who brought her in America.

She owes her deep gratitude to her parents as:

This is the life I've been waiting for, I thought, the liberating promise of marriage and travel and the wider world. Bless Daddy and Mummy, they found me the only man in the world who could transport me from the enchanted garden of Ballygunge to Stanford University in the early 1980s, which has to count as one of the intellectual wonders of the modern world. (81)

The above excerpt reveals that she uses marriage as a means of the ladder of transformation. She is thankful to her parents who contributed their best in order to transform herself from an Indian tradition to the American modern world where she lives now freely. There is no one to control her. She has got liberated from the traditional Indian society to the American modern world, where she lives only for her. Science and technology has great contribution in order to make her transform from tradition to modernity. Tara joins "a group of young Indian wives with children in playschool, one of whom Meena Melwani, a Sindhi from Bombay" (82). She "had a car and no domestic resistance to using it" (82). The group members always gather together and discuss about their lives. They compare and contrast their situation in India and America. They don't want to follow being Indian traditional wives' way of life. As they are living in modernity, they have the access on science and technology, internet, books, magazines are available in their lives. They manipulate the means of the modern world in order to make themselves aware. Books, Magazines are the true sources as a tool to transition from tradition to modernity. Tara says, "Meena read the American magazines, and she would quiz us as we are: Does your husband know how to satisfy you? . . . Are you his breakfast, his snack, the main course – or the desert? .

. . . These American magazines and American marriages were not geared to the lives we led. Do women marry the best lovers they ever had?" (83). In these lines, it clearly reveals that women gather in America as they are aware of their traditional way of life where their condition was miserable. In the traditional way of lives, there is no liberation privilege for women. As they are living in American continent, they are guided by modernist ethos. They are questioning traditional way of life in order to defy and dismantle. The sources of their knowledge in the course of transition from tradition to modernity are American magazines as Peter Wagner thinks that "like schools and universities—or could be built—like parties and unions. Neither does the necessary means of unrestricted communication, that is, a public sphere in the emphatic sense, exist, in and through which the open communication over new communities could be led" (193). Wagner insists that schools, universities or union are more reliable places in order to overcome tradition to modernity. As claimed by Wagner, Indian-American women in America frequently reads educational capsules and make judgement their lives in terms of tradition and modernity. Tara says:

Those magazines encouraged women to talk over their problems, to share their disappointments, to experiment with hair colour, sexual positions, and pointedly meaningless one-night stands. We read them with the same guilty pleasure as we'd read movie magazines, in our bedrooms, under the fans, back in India. In America, it seemed to us, every woman was expected to create her own scandal, be the centre of her own tangled love nest. (83)

In the above lines, modern means of encouragement i.e. magazines are the responsible factor for their release from traditional orthodoxies. In an Indian culture, women are not granted to read those documents related to their emancipation, therefore they are not able to seek their positions in the society but quite contradictorily women in

American landscape, they freely read the magazines, books, articles and joins college which boost up their knowledge. Therefore, they seek their position and try to exercise their human rights equal to male members of the society as Jurgen Habermas argues, "Modernity revolts against the normalizing function of tradition, modernity lives on the experience of rebelling against all that is normative" (5). For Habermas revolt against the tradition and experience of it is known as modernity. During a certain period of time person questions the existing tradition due to rational thinking. In the same way, Tara and other women raise the question against the traditional roles assigned in Indian society. Hence, Tara, her elder sister Padma are not satisfied with the roles assigned to them by Indian society. Therefore, Tara leaves Rabi in America, Padma gives birth to a male child before her marriage in Switzerland. Later she also moves from Switzerland to America. These two sisters' revolt against traditional norms and values, which is indeed their way to transition from tradition to modernity.

Modernity always seeks for scientific proof because it believes in rationality. Freedom and democracy are the fundamental elements of modernism. In the novel *Desirable Daughters*, Tara and Padma are also loving for their freedom and democracy as they want to transform themselves from Indian tradition modernism. They challenge Indian tradition way of life as "The modern condition, it is often held, is characterized by freedom and democracy" (Wagner xii). In an Indian traditional society, there is no privilege for women to think about their future, rather they are destined to rely upon her husband. Motilal Bhattacharjee traces, "Bishwapriya Chatterjee, a first son from an outstanding family"(23) as a capable person who would provide good guardianship to her daughter Tara. According to their tradition, marriage ceremony completed. Tara moves towards America with her husband Bish. She gives birth to a boy there. Although, she is remaining in American, she performs

all the tasks according to the Indian tradition. As time the passes she slowly accustomed with the western way of life. She visited Indian-America women's group her thirst of tradition to modernity widens as a tradition by nature is changeable that takes turn within the passage of time.

During the course of time, Tara prolongs for the modern way of life. She provides whole credit to American women's magazines. Because they were the first sources of modernity. By reading such magazines she has developed herself as a decisive woman. She says, "I was avid to learn but not in school, and the women's magazines were my first great sources of forbidden knowledge" (43). In these lines, Tara accepts that she has transformed herself from tradition to modernity by reading such magazines. She remembers:

In India, we didn't have outside influences like the media, or lax schooling, or cars and dating and drugs. We did not know family breakdown. Our families existed inside an impenetrable bubble. Anyone entering or exiting was carefully monitored. We honored the proprieties. There was not rebellion, no seeking after individual identity. Why would there be? We three sisters were treated with absolute equality, and we responded in total unanimity. (43-44)

In these lines, Tara accepts that in an Indian traditional society, there is no chance for women to know outer world. Media, cars, dating, drugs are beyond their imaginations. Girls have to follow the rules and regulation perpetuated by society as well as family. They are taken as the issue of prestige in the society. In an Indian society, if a girl crosses social taboo, it turns to be the issue of stigma. The *Desirable Daughters* is deal with issue of tradition to modernity. Its characters especially transit from such cultural orthodoxy to western democratic landscape.

Tara's a decade long marital life with Bish ends into divorce because of the influence of the modern condition and democracy. "The modern condition, it is often held, is characterized by freedom and democracy, and it is safeguarded by institutions that are based on the same principle of free aggregation" (Wagner xii). As she lives in America, she is aware of her life and the consciousness of equality that emerges on her leads her towards the protest against his domination. Bish treats her as if she is a helper and second-class citizen as Indian tradition aims. Bish says, "how well-trained this upper-class Ballygunge girl had become, what a good cook, what an attentive wife and daughter-in-law. What a bright and obedient boy she was raising. I wanted to take courses in the local community college, but we had a child at home" (82). These lines, clearly exhibit that traditional Indian culture undermines women's identity. They are taken loving wives and nurturing their children in order to prolong husbands' lineage. Women in traditional society are taken as maternity vessels. They have to sacrifice their personal lives.

Tara in the very beginning seems submissive and nurturing as imagined in traditional society, but when she joins college. There comes change in thinking, doing and feeling. She says:

When I left Bish (let us be clear on this) after a decade of marriage, it was because the promise of life as an American wife was not being fulfilled. I wanted to drive, but where would I go? I wanted to work, but would people think Bish Chatterjee couldn't support his wife? . . . In his Atherton years, as he became better known on the American scene . . . He was spending fifteen hours a day in the office, sometimes longer. (82)

In these lines Tara accepts that she leaves her husband because her desires, necessities and emotions were not fulfilled by him. Tara, as she is living in American continent,

she is no more ready to wait her husband to fulfill her desires and necessities as in an Indian traditional culture. She leaves Bish Chatterjee so as to be a master of her own.

After leaving Bish, she celebrates her life in a quite modern way. She visits malls and coffee shops frequently as there was no one to restrict her. Tara further says, "I wasn't Bish's wife. I was a mall siren. One time Meena Melwani and I were perched on bar stools at a coffee shop, sipping cappuccinos and entertaining each other" (84). Tara is no more under control of her husband because she herself has transformed from tradition to modernity. She deliberately visits bars and malls and tries to do her best showing boldest. Her boldness and hotness work as a siren of the mall where different types of people gathered. "An American woman- a very stylish woman in all black, . . . jet black hair, black tee, black suit, blackish-purple lipstick" comes to them and purposes Tara if she is interested to act in a movie that is going to make. Tara does not lose such chance to act in such movie that provides "seventy-five dollars was the figure" (85). As Tara interest, she "handed her card" (85). This is modern world where the way of life of people is quite different than that of traditional world. Tara's journey from Indian traditional society to American modern world is due to the changing nature of tradition which Benjami Walter takes "the tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable" (229). Tradition by nature is changeable that takes turn within the passage of time.

This research analyzes the people's transformation from tradition to modernity which is a closely related task to human behaviour with respect to the social reality they belong to. Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughter* exposes the transitional scenario of the Indian way of life in terms of their longing for modernism. As modernism is the wave of thinking behaviour of human beings, each and every character deployed in this fiction are on the way of transformation in terms of their

social reality. Indian cultural norms and values are taken in this fiction as classical, but with the time circumference, it has been taken changing day by day.

The given fiction deals with the issue of the agrarian society of Faridpur where Motilal migrates towards the city of Calcutta which is his longing for modernity. His parents in Faridpur have completely deployed themselves in an agrarian society where people depend on agricultural activities for their livelihood. Motilal moves Calcutta in search of a better life where he installs machines and establishes himself as an industrial person which is his transformation from tradition to modernity as Berman Marshall traces practical experimentation, scientific knowledge or technology as the modernist ideas that changes human behaviour and social settings.

The manifestation of Kantian philosophy in the lives of females is another instance of transformation from tradition to modernity. The eldest daughter of Motilal Padma challenges the Indian way of life where women are taken as the entity of prestige of the family. Generally, Indian orthodoxy has maintained the discourse of identity where women are imagined as helpless, coward, dependent and a matter of stigma. There are certain rituals that have to be completely followed by the female members of the society. If such rituals are not completely followed by the women, she turns out to be the source of social stigma. Padma, a college-level student, is well known about the social setting of the society, but she knowingly breaks those social discourses especially imagined for female members of the society. Being an educated person, she was quite aware of the caste, marriage, social hierarchy, and so many traditional discourses but she knowingly breaks all these things as she wants to transfer her from tradition to modernity.

In the same way, Tara, a college-level student gets married to Bishyapriya Chatterjee without her consent. The family members and relatives in India make an

agreement on this marriage. After marriage, she moves towards America, where she serves her husband as an obedient wife. The relationship between them seems master and slave. Her transformation starts when she enrolls herself in a college. Her college life in America helps her to overcome self-inquired tutelage as Immanuel Kant imagines. She joins an Indian-American women group where they frequently discussed their personal problems due to the Indian traditional way of life. They read American magazines which boost their knowledge regarding modernity. She finds herself conquering within the confinement of Indian traditional orthodoxy. Tara was totally unaware of the way of life. She could not differentiate the body of male and female and questioned her husband what was the thing like broomstick that he had used in their first night. From such a situation, she erects herself as a decisive and bold woman who finally divorces her husband and lives her life in the American landscape which is her transformation from tradition to modernity.

To sum up, the present dissertation has analyzed the struggle of women to escape from the patriarchy. Their struggle eventually leads them to modernity from tradition. Modernity is the rejection, leap and change of the past traditions, which are based on superstitions, blind faith and false belief. Person challenges, rejects and resists over the tradition, culture, norms and values which are against the spirit of modern society. Padma and Tara challenge, reject and resist the age old tradition. Padma choose her life partner Ronald Dey and gives birth to his child. Tara gives divorce to Bish and lives her free life in America. In this way, Mukherjee's novel *Desirable Daughters* shows the impact of modernity in the lives of Indian people. Their rejection to tradition and adopting of modernity is due search for self-identity and enjoy personal freedom that modernity insures in the society, helps to increase gender equality.

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