
THE INFLUENCE OF THE PAST ON THE PRESENT IN *DESIRABLE DAUGHTERS* BY BHARATI MUKHERJEE

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Article Received: 12/09/2025

Article Accepted: 10/10/2025

Published Online: 12/10/2025

DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2025.7.10.221

Abstract:

In "Desirable Daughters," Bharati Mukherjee explores the profound impact of cultural heritage and personal history on contemporary identity. The novel follows the lives of three Indian sisters navigating the complexities of their immigrant experience in America. Through their stories, Mukherjee illustrates how past traumas, familial expectations, and cultural traditions shape their choices and relationships in the present. The narrative delves into themes of assimilation, the quest for self-identity, and the tension between tradition and modernity, ultimately revealing how the characters' pasts inform their understanding of desire, autonomy, and belonging. The interplay between memory and present-day reality underscores the ongoing influence of history on personal and collective identity.

Key words: Memory, Self-identity, Desire, Belonging, Trauma, Choices, Relationship

Introduction

The presentation is titled as The Influence of the Past on the Present in *Desirable Daughters*," in which Bharati Mukherjee intricately weaves the themes of identity, culture, and the immigrant experience. In this discussion, we will explore how the characters' past experiences significantly shape their present identities and decisions. Mukherjee's work offers a profound insight into the struggles of navigating dual cultural identities, highlighting the tensions that arise from familial expectations and personal aspirations.

Bharati Mukherjee, a celebrated author and immigrant, often draws on her own experiences in her writing. Born in India and later moving to the United States, her works frequently explore themes of immigration, identity, and the cultural conflicts faced by those straddling multiple worlds. In *Desirable Daughters*, Mukherjee delves into the lives of Indian-American women, examining how their cultural heritage influences their choices and shapes their identities in contemporary society.

Desirable Daughters centres on Tara, a first-generation Indian-American woman who grapples with her dual identity as she navigates life in America while being tethered to her Indian roots. The novel captures Tara's journey, emphasizing her relationships with her family and their traditional values. As she confronts the expectations placed upon her, readers witness her internal struggle to reconcile her past with her present, leading to significant personal transformations.

Family plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative, with traditional values and cultural expectations exerting a strong influence on Tara's decisions. Her relationship with her parents, particularly their experiences and beliefs, serves as a backdrop for her own journey of self-discovery. The tension between familial loyalty and individual desires is palpable, illustrating how the weight of tradition can shape personal identity and choices. The novel addresses several key themes, including the complex interplay of identity, memory, and change. Tara's experiences reveal how the past profoundly influences her present actions and beliefs. The narrative explores the generational differences in coping with cultural heritage, highlighting the challenges faced by immigrants and their descendants. Mukherjee deftly illustrates the struggle between honouring tradition and embracing modernity, making the theme of identity a central pillar of the story.

Literature Survey

Bharati Mukherjee focuses on the central characters' families, mental states and sense of belonging. Usually, the desirable daughters are a form of daughters that parents would be proud of and for whom every parent would desire. These three sisters are the great-granddaughters of Jai Krishna Gangooli and the daughters of Motilal Bhattacharjee, who belong to a standard Bengali Brahmin family. The second generation and their values within the homeland and straightforward acceptance by the primary generation, recognition of the original and new and the values affected by the American Culture are many themes focused on within the novel. *Desirable Daughters* is a story of immigrants and thus the sentiments and thoughts of three sisters and their methods of managing with circumstances. Mukherjee examines the oppositions of modernity and custom, permission versus descent, through the microcosm of female bonding. According to Wikipedia, female bonding forms a close personal relationship and patterns of friendship, attachment, and cooperation in females. Mukherjee utilizes the dynamics of a group of three sisters to investigate how a tale is claimed, denied and conveyed, how even in the apparent homogeneity of three about identical sisters different roles are found, and what the political effects are of a place in a sibship. These all are imagined as a fictional and social model mainly replacing 'Perpendicular' lines of descent. The three sisters, Tara, Parvati and Padma, and its members adapt to different milieus, as family stories and worldwide plots jockey for status as precedence narratives. In the novel, the *Desirable Daughters*, Tara, Parvati and Padma are hilariously part of a destined social group.

Middle daughters are less assertive and more plaint than their older Padmas or younger Taras. They feel Padmas or younger Taras. They feel less confident of their father's love. Even if they are the more favoured in beauty on intelligence, they are less confident.

Tara

frequently talks with her parents and sisters, but no one brings up bad feelings and arguments among them. Their sons are always acing experiments, gifts received are attractive, and all are doing the everyday things yearly. When a young comes to Tara's home looking for her sister, Padma, whom he asserts is his mother, Tara refuses to consider him. The young man is unrelenting, and Tara is forced to discover the truth behind the frontage raised by her family long ago.

The middle daughter, Parvati, met her Indian husband at college in Boston. There is a love match and a cause for concern within the family. Padma leaves for New York as a young woman. Her family knows very small about her life. No one of her sisters will talk about the family humiliation with Tara, who cannot understand theirs following the old ways.

Both sisters are self-empowered and question their individuality. Tara questions her existence as her sister attempts to expose the family secret a saving her psyche and spirit. She attempts to reconnect with the past to provide genuineness to her current survival. Debbie's enthusiasm originates from her being as she creates chaos around her by avenging her wrongdoers. She embraces life without any doubts. Tara's life takes a real twist when faced with the actualities, and her values are up for questioning. She questions her sister who is happy in her South Asian American States.

Observations

Moreover, she concludes that the fraud cannot be a relative. She utilizes self-rejection to soothe her troubling soul. Avoidance of facts thought, is not her approach. Instead of seething inwardly and keeping the self-respect of the high class good Bengali family, she chooses to bring forth the wrath of her sister. The six years between the two sisters, Padma and Tara, appeared as a yawning break in the progressiveness towards the daughter within the Bengali family. The extent of Padma's surrender to sustain family prestige seems impossible to Tara, who divorced her husband because their approaches to life had deviated. The restricted, confined life imposed on the sister in their youth may have determined Padma to rebel. However, she chooses in her adulthood, the USA, somewhat paradoxically, to relapse to a necessary description of the Indian wife. Tara introduces to her sister's world where she considers a royalty any has her chuck and relationships or affairs, when she goes to meet her sister Padma. Her husband lives under Padma's shade.

She runs various types of business with her friend Danny Jagtiani and others. Tara is asked to have a renovation. She is sleepy and looks fatigued and old by Padma's standard and physically. Padma overlooks the point why Tara is looking tired. Tara's conflict with the imposter leaves her tired. She surrenders to her sister's demands. She is treated like a model, where she is made to swathe a luxurious fashionable sari and wear weighty gold jewellery to the party planned by her sister. Tara is introduced to the south Asian immigrant society and the regular at these parties.

The satire of the condition is that Tara does not recognize the objective behind Padma's kindness. She keeps on calculating her budget: if she would be capable to pay for the

jewellery and sari, little understanding that she is being utilized like a model on demonstrate for people to look and purchase the product. The detached manner and approach of Padma is a setback for Tara. She has been taken to a corner and asked to take out the set because it is sold. She feels bereft, undressed and thankful that she has not been asked to take out her sari. All these episodes happen in good excitement. Tara, the protagonist meets the new personality of her sister who is away from acknowledgment. The two sisters and their specific lifestyles signify the two boundaries of the immigrant vision. Padma's husband, Harish Mehta has a doubtful profession as a counsellor. Their house and way of life is representative of the fighting immigrants who flee from the conventions of India, only to struggle on the fringes of American society.

As in other feministic novels by female writers, *Desirable Daughters* is a complaint against the boundaries imposed on females' lives in conventional societies. The three sisters – Tara, Parvati and Padma- stay alive by breaking these behaviour codes. Padma tries to tackle her adolescent love issue. Parvati's rebelliousness is limited to falling in love with Aurobindo Banerjee. However, her actions do not have any caste taboo as her husband is a Bengali, although he was not known that the gorgeous and clever Parvati could have commanded more in the marriage market of Calcutta. Tara seems at first to be the most agreeable, submitting to an arranged marriage. She also disobeys the Hindu patriarchal system by separating from her luminous software tycoon husband when she finds herself muffled by the life that requires a wealthy wife. Thus, the oppositional forces exercised by life in the USA that the characters in *Desirable Daughters* must be observed. It is in conditions of the limits forced on women within the patriarchal Hindu family. To conclude, despite their limitations and vulnerability, the three women in the novel face the social reality boldly, thanks to their strong bonding.

Conclusion

Desirable Daughters effectively underscores the importance of understanding one's past to navigate the present. Bharati Mukherjee's portrayal of the complexities of identity within a multicultural context resonates deeply, revealing the ongoing negotiation of cultural heritage and personal identity. This exploration invites further discussion on how past experiences shape contemporary lives and the broader implications of such narratives in understanding the immigrant experience.

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