

Search for Values in Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction.

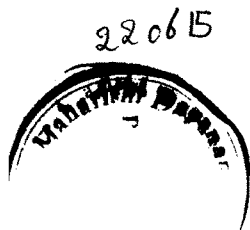
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BHARATI MUKHERJEE
(Born 27th July, 1940..)

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CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

Chapter-I

Introduction

Bharati Mukherjee is one of the major novelists of Indian diaspora who have achieved enviable positions within a comparatively short creative span. She is an Indian born American novelist, who has been widely acknowledged as a 'voice' of expatriate-immigrant's sensibility. She was born on 27th July, 1940, in a Bengali Brahmin family of Calcutta. Her father Sudhir Lal Mukherjee was a Pharmaceutical chemist and her mother Bina Banerjee Mukherjee joined the English speaking Loreto Convent School, run by Irish nun. Her family was a modern family which provided her every essential need of day to day life.

In view of her privileged childhood, Mukherjee and her sister were chauffeured to the convent school. Where she became interested in western culture. As a status symbol the rich Bengali's were inclined to western culture. They valued English education and literature, philosophy and social principles got transmitted through the language. However, in more intimate convictions, the family observed Hindu practices and beliefs.

In 1958, Mukherjee's father lost his partnership in the factory and moved his family to Baroda. In the meantime, Bharati Mukherjee completed her B.A. (Honours) in English at the University of Calcutta in 1959. She took her M.A. Degree in English from the University of Baroda in 1961.

Sensing his daughter's aptitude for creative work, Mr. Mukherjee encouraged her to join creative writing programme in the United States. She went to the University of Iowa's writers workshop with a P.E.O. International Peace Scholarship where she obtained an MFA in creative writing in 1963 and Ph.D. in English and comparative literature in 1969. It was during her stint at the University of Iowa that Mukherjee met Clark Blaise, the Canadian novelist, Professor and journalist and married him in North American style one lunch hour in September 1963. In 1966 the couple moved to Canada and lived there as Canadian citizens till 1980, first in Toronto, then in Montreal, a period that Mukherjee looks back with pain and anger. However, the couple took a bold decision to move to the U.S.A in 1980 and since then they have been living there as U.S. citizen.

After moving to Canada and before settling down finally at the University of California, Berkeley, where presently she is a professor of English. Mukherjee had worked on several teaching assignments. Her creative oeuvre comprises five novels- The Tigers Daughter (1972) Wife (1975), Jasmine (1989), The Holder of the World (1993) and Leave it to Me (1997) and two collections of short - stories- Darkness (1985) and The Middleman and Other Stories (1988). She has also co-authored with her husband two non- fictional works- Days and Nights in Calcutta and The Sorrow and Terror: The Haunting Legacy of Air India Tragedy.

Bharati Mukherjee's academic and professional career won her many a laurel. Twice she availed herself grants from McGill University in 1968 and 1970 besides winning Arts Council grant from the Canadian government twice in the years 1973-74 and 1977. She was also awarded the prestigious Shastri- Indo-Canadian Institute Grant during the year 1976-77. She also won the first prize from Periodical Distribution Association in 1980 for her short story "Isolated Incidents". Mukherjee has also been honoured with the National Book Critics Circle award, for her short stories collection, The Middleman and Other Stories in 1989.

Bharati Mukharjee's novels have drawn repeated critical attention both in India and abroad. There have been full length studies on her works, analyzing the thematic patterns she traces in her works more or less consistently. There have also been a number of articles on individual novels by her, taking up specific situations /characters from a micro-perspective. In this vein, there have been articles on her works.

Bharati Mukherjee has lived in various cultural milieus with disorienting rapidity. During her odyssey as a writer for almost three decades her creative sensibility has under gone many changes. There has been an on - going quest from expatriation to immigration in her writings. ✓

Before discussing Bharati Mukherjee's tryst with the problems of expatriation and immigration it is of foremost importance to linger a while on certain terms closely associated with expatriate sensibility. While the main thrust of expatriation is on the native country and traditions left behind, immigration lays all emphasis on the cultural life of the host country. The expatriate dwells on his "ex" status of the past, while the immigrant celebrates his present in the new country.

Expatriation is a quite world wide phenomenon in this century. Chrestine Gomez gives a perceptive definition of the term 'expatriation'-

Expatriation is actually a complex state of mind and emotion which includes a wistful longing for the past, often symbolised by the ancestral home, the pain of exile and homelessness, the struggle to maintain the difference between oneself and the new, unfriendly surroundings, an assumption of moral and cultural superiority over the host country and a refusal to accept the identity forced on one by the environment. The expatriate builds a cocoon around herself/himself as a refuse from cultural dilemmas and from the experienced hostility or unfriendliness in the new country.¹

Bharati Mukherjee's fictional works can be divided into three well marked stages as the phase of expatriation (from 1972 to 1979), the phase of Transition (from 1980 to 1988), and the phase of Immigration (from 1989 onwards).

The first phase comprises her two early novels The Tiger's Daughter (1972) and Wife (1975) which were written during her stay in Canada. During her second phase two stories collection Darkness (1985) and The Middleman and Other Stories (1988) were published. This was the transitional state of her career when she moved to the United States in the beginning of 80's where she settled down in a new social milieu. The third and the recent phase is her most prolific in terms of fictional output. The three novels- Jasmine (1989), The Holder of the World (1993) and Leave It to Me (1997) that were brought out during this period betray the resolution of earlier cultural tensions since Mukherjee has experienced complete immigration in the American set up.

The Tiger's Daughter (1972), the first novel of Bharati Mukherjee deals with the problems faced by the expatriates. It is truly an immigrant novel. The immigration and all its associated problems have been analyzed with great insight by Oscar Handlin in his The Uprooted. Handlin has said that new immigrants come from a society where they had been a part of the whole- the whole being the community. Everything was knotted into a firm relationship with every other thing. And all things had meanings in terms related to the whole community.

Back home they had done everything together- grief, celebrations, festivals no person had even partaken on any of these alone. Relationship with relatives and neighbours and friends had regulated very aspect of their lives. But now they are really alone. Even while standing in a crowd of hundred thousand people, such a person feels isolated, alienated and totally alone. "The immigrant leaves his mother land by choice or by compulsion to the land- the Promised Land, the land of golden opportunity where getting rich's easy"².

Here he is an separate identity. He has to deal with the people essentially different from himself; he has to learn and understand alien ways and languages. He has to walk and talk like them. He has to face many problems. In brief he has to survive in the foreign environment. As Oscar Handlin says, "you long, of course, for the safety. You cherish still the ideals of the west. But the danger and in severity are other words for freedom and opportunity. You are alone in a society without order; you miss the support of a community, the assurance of a defined rank."³

She clearly shows the dual cultural shock. The migration or cultural transplant leads to the crisis of identity and a final reconciliation to the choice.

The author clearly depicts the political, economic, social and cultural conditions prevailing at that time. She narrates the pen picture of Calcutta, where riots break out in the city, while buses burn and workers burn warehouses. Bharati Mukherjee has claimed :

We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate. Many of us have lived in newly independent or emerging countries which are placed by the civil and religious conflicts... when we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb 200 years of American history and learn to adapt to American society. ... I attempt to illustrate this in my novels and short stories. My aim is to expose Americans to the energetic voices of new settlers in this country⁴.

There is today a considerable body of fiction in English written by Indians. In the last two decades, two women writers, Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee, have won world wide recognition. There are other writers like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver

Jhabawala, Nayantra Sahgal and Shashi Deshpande who have made great strides but the kind of critical attentions that has been given to Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee is unparalleled. Cry, the Peacock by Anita Desai and Wife by Bharati Mukherjee fell in the category of modern novels. In a Sebastian Dravyan Pillai's view, fiction, primarily exploiting the elements of popular culture, like science fiction and pornographic element constitute a sizeable section of post-modern literature. The literature unfortunately, register the dissolution of the traditional literary values. It is said:

Our is indeed a world of altered human relationship, of epistemological scepticism, of high technology and strange and distorted history of an anarchic and revolutionary subjectivism and a disoriented sense of human purpose. Many a contemporary artists, therefore, feel that there is no point in creating fiction that gives an illusion of life when life it self seems so illusory⁵.

This is what happens in post modernist fiction to-day. We find

the similar situations when one reads novelist like Bharati Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy, Gita Hariharan, or Shobha De. Bharati Mukherjee herself says:

In my fiction, and in my Canadian experience, "immigrants" were lost souls, put upon and pathetic. Expatriates, on the other hand, knew all too well who and what they were, and what foul fate had befallen them⁶.

Kirtee Agrawal remarks:

Her entire corpus is replete with uneasy troubled stories about expatriates who find themselves adrift in an alien world wondering if they will even feel a sense of belonging. But apart from delineating the painful feeling of alienation and loss of identity, Bharati Mukherjee brings a unique feminist perspective to the immigrant experience. ✓

She exposes a brand new facet of life, which had been hitherto overshadowed by phallogentric compositions. Decentring dominant patriarchal perspective, Mukherjee reveals in exploring, verbalising and celebrating women's experiences no longer as mute but as seen from within⁷.

Mukherjee's novel Wife (1975) a tragic restive tale by a woman about a woman and seen through the perspective of a woman, invites a feminist approach because of its subject matter. In this novel, Mukherjee depicts the psychological traumas of frustrated house-wife who cannot adopt herself to the cross cultural world of American situation in which she finds herself. This novel deals with marriage, one of the most important institution of society. Success of a marriage depends on a proper communication between the husband and the wife. In this novel, the problem between Dimple and her husband Amit Basu is one of communication, and inability to come to terms with reality.

In Bharati Mukherjee's Wife Dimple wants to break through the traditional taboos of a wife. She wants an independent identity rather than to be known only as Amit Das

Gupta's wife. Dimple's vision of Sita's docility, sacrifice and responsibility is a flay with many messages. She aspires for freedom and love in marriage. But this brings her indignation, grief, resentment, peevishness, spite and sterile anger. Dimple Das Gupta, a young Bengali wife who is sensitive enough to feel the pain, but not intelligent enough to make sense out of her situation and breaks out in marriage. Marriage brings her indignation, grief, resentment, peevishness, spite and sterile anger. Wife takes the psychology and geography of displacement in its terse pursuit of disaster. Dimple is entrapped in a dilemma of tensions between American culture and society and the traditional constraints surrounding an Indian wife, between a feminist desire to be assertive and independent and the Indian need to be submissive and self-effacing.

clash
with
Indian
values

Dimple, however, cannot adjust herself to the American ways of life. She feels that she has lost her balance, and that...."a creature with serpentine curls and heaving bosom that would erupt indiscreetly through one of Dimple's orifices. "(p.156) Her T.V. world merges with the world of imagination and consequently leaves her in confusion "between what she has seen in TV: and what she had imagined."(p.157) The idea of murdering Amit ironically makes Dimple "feel very American

somehow, almost like a character in a TV series" (195). And her American frenzy accomplishes her wish. Dimple has not been able to adjust to the familial circumstances. She is alienated from her husband who, as a careerist, is hankering after lucrative jobs.

Tara and Dimple are faced with the problem of rootlessness. They represent the dilemma faced by expatriates. Shiva Rama Krishna says about Tara and Dimple that the retention of their identity as Indian is constant tension with the need for its renunciation if they have to acquire a new identity as immigrants.

Bharati Mukherjee's short story collection The Middleman and Other Stories won the 1988 National Book Critics Circle Award. It consists of eleven interesting short-stories- "The Middleman", "A wife's story", "Loose- ends", "Orbiting", "Fighting for the Rebound", "The Tenant", "Fathering", "Jasmine", "Danny's Girls", "Buried Lives" and "The Management of Grief". These stories depict the problems of the emigration to America and the dream of the new life which tempts them to go there. The characters hail from the different countries of the world- India, China, Italy, Hungary, Iraq, Trinidad, Pakistan, Srilanka, Germany, Philippines,

Vietnam and Afganistan. What connect most of these characters in the stories is merely sex which proves to be an ephemeral bond. These stories evoke the feeling of pathos and concentrate on the nature of individual experience when two culturally divergent characters confront each other to establish a rapport. ✓

These immigrants from the Third World countries undergo considerable suffering. Ultimately the emigration to America is achieved at a heavy price through middleman who claim a lot of money for arranging their visas, passports, transports and jobs etc. They consider America as their ultimate destination. They face numerous hardships and humiliations to achieve their aim in life in all these eleven short stories. There is a social mission to go to America. They want a permanent settlement there. They take up even the menial jobs in the new country of their dreams to earn their livelihood and survival. However, they hope that ultimately they will get permanent settlement and they will tide over the present situations somehow or the other.

In The Middleman and Other Stories Mukherjee is straight forward and unsentimental. One finds a remarkable change in her writing style. She writes some stories from a very authoritative third person point of view; with others she uses an intimate, textured style and a first person point of view.

These stories indicate that she has assimilated American culture and ethos. She says that she was nostalgic about India but has no regrets. She proudly declares that she is an American citizen.

Mukherjee is at her best in the depiction of cross-cultural conflicts and how her heroines take control over their destinies. They endeavour for self realisation. Mukherjee does not offer ready-made solutions to the problems facing the immigrants Asian women. She prefers showing them acquiring the power in order to control their fates at times they offer role models for several immigrant women. Fakrul Alam writes:

Once literature begins to serve as a forum illuminating female experience, it can assist in the humanizing and equilibrating the culture, value system, which has served predominantly male interests. A literary work is capable of providing role models, instill a positive sense of feminine identity by portraying women who are self actualizing, whose identities are not dependent on men⁸.

Almost all the narratives of The Middleman and Other Stories are woven around wives, Asian immigrants and even Mukherjee's immigration from the third world, America is a metaphor for the process of uprooting and rerooting or what her husband Clark Blaise in his book Resident Alien calls, "Unhousement and Rehousement". ✓

These stories reveal female experience of women who want to achieve their self identity but clash of values stand in their way for their quest of self realisation. They find themselves caught in the net of tradition and modernity. Neither they can completely detach themselves from the past and nor do they have any certitude in the future, the one world is difficult to give up and the other is difficult to born. They revolt against male domination. They escape danger of depersonalization and self destruction. There is a consistent quest for identity in all these stories. As Malashri Lal points out that Mukherjee's protagonists are..."confident, sophisticated, poised who will not melt into American mainstream but visibly expand the margins."⁹

Mukherjee creates her model of the fighters, women who have to adapt and struggle for their own survival. The writer highlights the problem of gender, ethnicity, migration and transformation etc. of the women of the Third World immigrating to America. "In Mukherjee's stories- of the making imagining of the immigrant identities in America- female subjectivity forms the primary site of dislocation. The writer assumes the standpoint from where there is always a celebration of assimilation and little nostalgia for roots and authentic belonging."¹⁰

After publication of Wife (1975) Bharati Mukherjee took fourteen years to bring out the next novel, her magnum-opus, Jasmine (1989). This interval was devoted to the writing of two dozen short-stories each dealing with some touching aspects of rootless identity. This period was very significant from the point of view of the happenings in Bharati Mukherjee's personal life as well. In the beginning of the eighties she left Canada with her husband Clark Blaise owing to racial discrimination. She moved to New York to settle permanently in America. ✓

The Canadian experience left its own scar and scratches on her creative personality. Through the women protagonists of her short stories, quite a few of them offer her own self. She depicts the unbearable miseries faced by the expatriates. These stories are collected in two volumes, Darkness (1985) and The Middleman and Other Stories(1988).

The story collection called Darkness epitomizes her sense of obliteration in Canada. The themes of these stories amply illustrates Mukherjee's claim to the status of an American-Asian writer in contradiction to that of an expatriate writer. While it is true that she does not give up her interest in the Asian - Indian-expatriates and immigrants-Mukherjee comments on these stories in her Introduction; " The purely canadian stories in this collection were difficult to write and more painful to live through. They are uneasy stories of expatriation."(p.2) Quite a few of these stories of Darkness record Mukherjee's painful experience as Canadian citizen: "In Canada , I was frequently taken for a prostitute or shiplifter, frequently assumed to be a domestic, praised by astonished auditors that I didn't have a "sing-song" accent."(p.2) This collection, which contains stories written in Canada and the U.S.A illustrates the transition from expatriation to immigration.

Darkness is a collection of twelve short stories- "Angela", "The Lady From Lucknow", "The World According to HSU", "A Father", "Isolated Incidents", "Nostalgia", "Tamburlane", "Hindus", "Saints", "Visitors", "The Imaginary Assassion", and "Courtly Vision", that unfold the fates of those who have suffered among other things, racial discrimination in Canada.

Out of these stories four were written in Canada, in Montreal and Toronto.. They are " The World According to HSU", " Isolated Incidents". "Hindu" and "Courtly Vision". While the remaining eight were written, in a three month burst of energy in the spring of 1984, at Atlanta, Georgia while I was a writer-in-resident at " Emory University"(p-1). She explains in her lucid and frank introduction that until Atlanta, she had thought of herself in spite of a white husband and two assimilated sons as an expatriate.

Bharati Mukherjee says "If you have to wonder, if you keep looking for signs, if you wait- surrendering little bits of a reluctant self every year, clutching the souvenirs of an ever retreating past-you'll never belong, any where."(p.2) She further adds:

For me, it is a movement away from the aloofness of expatriation, to the exuberance of immigration...". I see my "immigrant" story replicated in dozen American cities, and instead of seeing my Indianness as a fragile identity to be preserved against obliteration (or worse, a "visible" disfigurement to be hidden), I see it now as a set of fluid identities to be celebrated.... I see myself as an American writer in the tradition of other American writers whose parents or grandparents had passed through Ellis Island. Indianness is now a metaphor, a particular way of partially comprehending the world. Though the characters in these stories are, or were, "Indian", I see most of the these as stories of broken identities and discarded languages, and the will to bond oneself to a new community, against the ever present fear of failure and betrayal. The book I dream of updating is no longer A Passage to India- It's Call It Sleep.(p.3)

Jasmine unlike Bharati Mukherjee's story of the same title is not based on a Caribbean female character, but on a migrate Indian one. Mukherjee's magnum opus Jasmine is the story of a village girl from Hasnapur (Jullundher) who crosses one hurdle after other and never submits to the onslaught of circumstances. Even in the most tiring movement of sexual assault by Half Face. She exhibits a rare inner strength, keeps her poise and finally kills a wrong doer. Trapped in a situation of alarming proportions she moves ahead with extraordinary confidence and conviction. Jasmine emerges not as a tragic character but as one who is determined to change her destiny and explore infinite possibilities.

In this novel, the novelist portrays the modern concept of feminism. It is the latest trend in the modern times which emphatically states the values concerning the female orchestra. It stands for liberty, equality and empowerment of women in all walks of life. Jasmine, the heroine of novel, undertakes her journey from Punjab to Florida, New York and Iowa. She bore a lot of hardships and humiliations in her journey. Her struggle symbolises her quest for identity in America so that she may fulfil her desired goal.

The story opens with the village astrologer under his Banyan tree foretelling, Jasmine's "widowhood" and "exile". Jasmine is a self-willed woman who is a survivor, a fighter and an adapter. Jasmine's journey through life leads her through many transformations- Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane. At every step Jasmine revolts against fate, traditions, and obstacles which come in her way. She rejects the traditional marriage and marries Prakash, the husband of her choice.

But a terrorist named Sukhi killed him and after becoming a widow her brothers managed her to immigrate to America on forged papers. In a motel in Florida she is raped by Half-Face. In such an odd situation she realizes: "I could not let my personal dishonour disrupt my mission"¹¹. She sees the virtues and vices prevailing in the American society. She realises in America "nothing is for ever, nothing is so terrible, or so wonderful, that it won't disintegrate." (181) However, she is not unmindful of the positive side of American culture. She appreciates Americans for their democracy and their sense of respect even for those doing menial work. The western civilization has a "work culture" and in this set up every body is discharging his duty without any complex.

Jasmine believes in the dictum that the past is dead and gone but future is alive. In leaving Bud and choosing Taylor Jasmine does not exchange between men but she changes her whole world. As she herself confides: " I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the promise of America and old world-dutifulness "(240). She does not repent on her decisions:

It isn't guilt that I feel, it's relief I realize that I have already stopped thinking of myself as Jane. Adventure risk, transformation: The frontier is pushing in dooors through uncaulked windows. Watch me reposition the stars. I whisper to the astrologer who floats, cross legged above my kitchen stove. "Ready" Taylor Grins , I cry into Taylor's shoulder. Cry through all the lives. I've given birth to, cry for all my dead. Then there is nothing I can do. Time will tell if I'm a tornado, rubble maker, rising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud.

I'm out the door and in the potholed and
 rutted drive way, scrambling ahead of
 Taylor, greedy with wants and reckless
 from hope. (P:240-241)

Jasmine has been warmly received as a creative work of rare imaginative potential, through her protagonist, Mukherjee traces the significant mile stones of an Immigrant's final absorption in an adopted cultural milieu.

Mukherjee shows a rare gift of fictionalising history ✓
The Holder of the World where two divergently opposed cultures meet and for a correspondence between each other. "In a world of rootlessness and uncertainties of immigrant citizenship, history offers a stable base on which to search for one's past identity and perhaps that is what Bharati Mukherjee is lookingfor in The Holder of the World. "The novel is a bridge bewteen the past and the present. One could say the novel is a form of 'computerized history'. The author has cleverly and deftly juxtaposed the apparently conflicting worlds of luxuriant past and the mechanized present. The search for the precious diamond 'Emperor's Tear' seems to be a search for the glorious past."¹²

V.C.Sudheer acclaims the novel for its research and artistic recapturing of past reality, not the retrieval of information. The history of Hannah is built through diaries, memories, various articles, journals, entries in books, Salem Bibi series of paintings in Salem's museum of Maritimetrade. The Holder of the World is a historical novel in the true sense of the term. "The Holder of the World" is a historical novel with a science fiction tinge which stretches the making of America and its ancestors back to the glorious Mughal times."¹³

Sakuntala Bharvani in the article, (The Holder of the World" points out that once again the two major themes of Bharati Mukherjee are transformation and migration. Seeing a miniature painting titled. "An European woman in Aurangzeb's court" at the auction of Southeby in New York makes Mukherjee start writing on this novel. Whatever money my husband and I save is spent on Indian miniature painting and my aesthetics for the novel evolves out of my love for Indian miniature painting."¹⁴

Pardeep Trikha in his article, "Feminist and Cross Cultural Overview", says that the novel can be interpareted as feminist / novel as well as a historical novel.

It shows the gap of the socio-cultural experiences of the character in India and America in seventeenth century and the mid-twentieth century. In The Holder of the World, the author suggests two adventure of women liberation :One, it allows them to realize their potential as individuals in a wider society and, two,it is the only way by which they could they can, they should achieve personal recognition and identity.

The inspiration behind this "fantastic" story as an ordinary incident on an ordinary day. In an interview Bharati Mukherjee recalled:" The novel get started because I was at on the auction of Southby in New York...whatever money my husband and I save is spent on Indian Miniature painting and my aesthetics for the novel evolves out of my love for my Indian miniature painting. It was here that she saw a miniature titled." A European woman in Aurangzeb's Court". A Caucasian woman stood resplendent in full Mughal dress" suddenly realized that I was looking at a woman who three hundred years back had taken a lot of risks and transformed herself:¹⁵. The story has two narrators one is Hannah Easton second is the Beigh Masters.

The novel, The Holder of the World, begins with the words of the narrator, "I live in three time zones simultaneously, and I do not mean eastern, central and pacific. I mean the past, the present and the future"¹⁶. In The Holder of the World the past and present are intertwined in a beautiful way as to present the glories of the past to the curious eyes of the present computerized world-primarily a western one. From American to Indian world collide with one another. "Moreover the tide is reversed, the so called American dream lies in the orient and American seeks it.(p.5) In the seventeenth century there was cut throat competition among France, Great Britain, Portugal etc.for expanding their commerce and to snatch the political power in India. The Britishers hated the French in their struggle for power. As the novelist points out, " The French were more hated enemy than the Dutch or the Danes. Capitulation to the Compagnie Royale was tantamount to personally handling William III's head on a platter to Louis XIV." (p.185)

The novelist forecasts tremendous use and utility of computer and Technology in the modern times. As she says, "In the long run, the technology will enable any of us to insert ourselves anywhere and anytime on the time-space continuum for as long as the grid can hold."(p.6)

With the help of computer and technology the world will be closer and it would be very easier to forecast happenings. "With a thousand possible answer we can create an infinity of possible characters. And so we contain a thousand variables, and history is a billion separate information bytes. Mathematically the permutations do begin to resemble the randomness of life. Time will become as famous as place."(p.7)

A number of anthologies of such essays edited by different scholars have also made their appearance. However, all such studies have largely focused on predictable areas within which the novelist has been seen as articulating her voice, viz, the East-the West interaction, the chronicling of the declining the West, the spectacle of waywardness in the cultural realm etc. Such studies because of their limited focus do not present a holistic view of Bharati Mukherjee's artistic accomplishment both in the realm of theme and technique.

In particular the novelist's carving out a clear road for the enlightenment of her readers has gone by default. There has been no systematic critical endeavour to focus on the quest for the values in diverse fields of human activity undertaken in her fictional universe by characters pitted inevitably and hopelessly between two worlds - poles apart in their cultural,

spiritual and inter personal configurations. It is this that is sought to be attempted in the present work the following chapters seek to seize on the cultural and social values, the norms governing the interpersonal, specially man-woman relationships; the spiritual and the religious values and finally the all-embracing search for roots, as defined and delimited in her novels through dramatic action. What has also been taken up, through necessarily at a later stage, the narrative strategies followed by the novelist in her artistic rendering. This systematic appraisal has been preceded by an introductory note pertaining to the formative influences which shaped the novelist. It is at the final stage that the whole scrutiny has been wound up, taking not of the distinctive philosophy and artistic achievement of the novelist.

ENDNOTES

- 1.Christine Gomez, "The On-Going Quest of Bharati Mukherjee from Expatriation to Immigration" in R.K. Dhawan, ed. Indian Women Novelists(New Delhi :Prestige, 1995) Vol.III , P. 30.
- 2.Bharati Mukherjee, The Tiger's Daughter (New Delhi : Penguin Books,1987), p.16
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- 3.Oscar Handlin, The Times of India, 10 Oct.1989.
- 4.Interview in The Times of India, 1 Oct. 1989.
- 5.Malikarjun Patil, "Bharati Mukherjee, Wife : A Post Modernist Novel " in Monika Gupta, ed. Women's Writers in The Twentieth Century Literature (New Delhi : Atlantic Publishers, 2000), pp.196-197.
- Bharati Mukherjee, Darkness (Ontario : Penguin Books, 1985), p.1.
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7. Kirtee Agrawal, "Female Iconography in Bharati Mukherjee's Wife" in Rangrao Bhongle, ed. Contemporary American literature (Delhi : Atlantic Publishers, 2000), p. 59.
8. Dr. Pradeep Trikha, "Quest for Self and The Immigrant Experience in Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction" in Monika Gupta, Women's Writers in The Twentieth Century Literature (New Delhi : Atlantic Publishers, 2000), p. 153.
9. Maleshri Lal,
: The Law of the Threshold (Shimla Indian Institute of Advance Studies, 1993), p. 149.
10. Sandra Ponzanesi, Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine "The Exuberance of Immigration, Feminist Strategies and Multicultural Negotiations" in M. K. Bhatnagar, ed. Encyclopaedia Of Literature In English, (New Delhi : Atlantic Publishers, 2001) vol V, p. 1350.
11. Bharati Mukherjee, Jasmine (New Delhi : Penguin Books, 1990), p. 118.
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- 12.V.C. Sudheer, "History and the Past Reality in The Holder of the World" in R.K. Dhawan, ed.The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee-A Critical Symposium (New Delhi : Prestige Books, 1996), p.213.
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CHAPTER - II
CULTURAL &
SOCIAL VALUES

Chapter-II

Cultural and Social Values

Bharati Mukherjee, herself an immigrant, has not merely felt on her pulse the physical, emotional and psychological stress and trauma of endeavouring to transplant herself in an atmosphere markedly different from her native environs, she has also succeeded eminently in transmuting the personal into an artistic amalgam of perennial significance. We have seen in the preceding chapter the first part of this proposition, viz., her personal circumstances and accomplishments which make her potential for artistic manifestation of her concerns obvious, what is proposed here is a detailed exam of the manner where in she undertakes the quest for one facet of the set of values which set out demonstrably in the struggle of her characters for self- definition, self - fulfilment and self-realization in the demanding circumstances in which they are placed.

Before making an attempt to find out values in Bharati Mukherjee's novels and short stories it will be essential and convenient to define 'value':

Value may be defined as a conception or standard , cultural or merely personal , by which things are compared and approved or disapproved relative to one another held to be relatively desirable or undesirable , more meritorious or less , more or less correct¹.

There is a consensus about values. They involve emotions. Values vary from society to society. They are social standards. They are important from the view point of social welfare and needs. C.M. Case classifies values in four categories such as organic values , cultural values, social values and specific values. Prof. C.I. Lewis classifies values as intrinsic or inherent and extrinsic or instrumental. Sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers differ about the value system as it prevails in the East and the West. This is so not withstanding the fact that the East and the West are subjective terms interpreted differently by different writers. Even the term 'culture' needs to be elaborated:

Culture is the expression of our nature
 in our modes of living and thinking
 in our every day intercourse in art, in literature
 in religion in recreation and
 in enjoyment.³

Culture is a term used in many varied ways. Two anthropologists namely Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn studied 164 definitions of culture and wrote a book about the varying definitions. They concluded that it is not possible to find a complete and satisfactory definition that applies to all usages. However, a most comprehensive interpretation comes from T.S. Eliot. In his treatise 'Notes Towards the Definition of Culture', he obviously seizes on the word 'culture'. For him, "Culture may even be described simply as that which makes life worth living."⁴

Cultural clash between the East and the West, old and new, ancient and modern is a world wide phenomenon because social, political, economical, cultural and ethnical conditions differ from society to society, nation to nation, man to man, religion to religion and race to race. The tremendous difference between the two ways of life leads a person to a feeling of depression and frustration. This could be called cultural shock.

When a person leaves his own cultural realm and enters another the old values come into conflict with the new ones coming to the specific situation as delineated in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee one gets the impression that the immigrant leaves his motherland by choice or by compulsion to the new land, the Promised Land, the land of golden opportunity where getting rich is easy. The author being a woman writer highlights social and other problems, love, marriage dowry, double standards of the people, caste, prejudice, fatalism, worship of various deities, social and communal differences and a host of other incidental and related issues which crop up as vital. One of the significant themes of modern literature is the depiction of cross cultural crisis, a subject which has assumed a great significance in the present world of globalization. Bharati Mukherjee is a penetrating answer of the ramifications of this conflict of cross cultural crisis in her novels and collection of short stories.

Bharati Mukherjee's stay in an environment, removed from her country of origin has transformed her into an exponent of expatriate writing. She narrates the life of the Indian immigrants in the U.S.A. as the subject matter of most of her novels.

She tries to clarify the image of those women who have tried to assimilate the alien culture and have tried to accept the changed identity on throwing the Indian cultural heritage in which they saw the dawn of their birth. There is a constant clash between the eastern and the western values in their psyche. They try to over-throw their old values and adjust themselves with changed environment. The psyche of an immigrant is tragic as a result of the tension in the mind between the two sociocultural environments, between the feeling of rootlessness and nostalgia. When a person leaves his country and enters the unknown land, he is a outsider in a unfamiliar land and there he has to struggle a lot for his survival. He acquires a new personality and abandons the emotional ties of his native land. In order to have a new identity he relegates to the background the norms and values of his own culture.

In The Tiger's Daughter, the protagonist Tara is disillusioned in her Indian dream as well as in her western dream. They are just like opposite poles which never come together. Tara finds herself a misfit wherever she goes. In The Tiger's Daughter Tara Banerjee is a Bengali Brahmin of Calcutta and daughter of an industrial magnet, the owner of Thomas (Tobacco) company Ltd., known as Bengal Tiger.

She is married to a writer named David Cartwright. After marriage Tara became Tara Banerjee Cartwright. After staying in America, Tara makes a trip back to India, she finds her acquired Western culture constantly clashing with the culture of her native soil. The clash is deeply felt in the psyche of Tara who encounters difficulties in adjusting with her friends and relatives as well as the traditions of her own family. The greatest irony of her return is that she feels loneliness in her own native soil. Her new self is definitely responsible for this disruption of her pleasure. But the deteriorating social changes and her perspective towards the poverty and squalor in India aggravate her discomfort, frustration and disgust. Tara had expected that her return to India would remove her displeasure of staying abroad which is described in the following lines:

For year she had dreamed of this return to India. She had believed that all hesitation all shadowy fears of the time abroad would be erased quite magically if she could just return home to Calcutta. But so far the return had bought only wounds. First the corrosive hours on marine drive then the deformed begger in the railway

station and now the inexorable train ride steadily undid what strength she had held in reserve. She was an embittered woman she now thought, old and cynical at twenty-two and quick to take offence^s.

Tara's arrival at Bombay fills her with disappointment Bombay is the same but her attitude has changed. To her Bombay station "was more like a hospital, there were so many sick and deformed men sitting listlessly on bundles and trunks". (p.19) Her sickness at the present situations makes her think about her husband David. The thought of her husband symbolically suggests the second self-the Western half developed in her. She repents having come to India without her husband and she is unable to keep him off her mind. The following lines show the mood of repentance in Tara:

After years of air planes and grey bound buses Tara felt she should be thrilled to travel in an Indian train. Her mother's brother worked with diesel locomotives and so she had been trained since child hood to

think well of Indian Railways. But this time the train ride depressed her. She fretted about David as she sat in the hostile compartment, Perhaps I was stupid to come without him, she thought, even with him rewriting his novel during the vacation. Perhaps I was too impulsive, confusing my fear of New York with homesickness. Or perhaps I was going mad. (p.21)

She felt annoyed in the company of a Marwari, Nepali and Mr. Tuntunwala. She felt bored due to their activities, behaviour and conversation. Tara's journey from Bombay to Calcutta was an equally disgusting experience for her:

Hawrah station look Tara by surprise. The airport in Bombay had atleast been clean. The squalor and confusion of Hawrah station outraged her. Coolies in the red shirts broke in to the compartment and almost knocked her down in an effort to carry her suit case. The attendant sneezed on her rain coat and offered to wipe up the mess with his dusting rag.(p.27)

In Calcutta too she finds everything changed and deteriorated. Calcutta seemed to her in the grip of violence due to riots, caused by the confrontation between different classes of society." When people are dying on the streets of Calcutta, how can I be so callous." (p.130) "Our Calcutta has gone to hell." (p.179) Her changed personality makes her unfit in the company of friends and relatives and makes her unable to participate in the ritual functions of home.

Everything was contrary to the expectations of Tara. She feels that her mother's attitude towards her. The novelist conveys the whole mood in a very artistic manner by recording Tara's mood thus :

perhaps her mother, sitting serenely before God on a tiny tug, so longer loved her either. After all Tara had wilfully abandoned her caste by marrying a foreigner. Perhaps her mother was offended that she is no longer a real Brahman, was constantly in and out of this sacred room, dipping like a crow.(p.50)

The most important cause aggravating her discomfort and unease is her marriage which hangs on her mind as a burdon.

In India she felt that she was not married to a person but to a foreigner, and this foreigner was a burdon. It was hard for her to talk about marriage responsibilities in Camac Street; her friends were curious only about the adjustment she had made.(p.62)

Tara's mind is constantly at conflict with two world's poles apart from each other-the Indian and the American world and what they stand for. During such movements she feels tempted to go back to her husband David because she feels ✓ that she would be more at ease there. She repent having come to India on an impulse as she herself confess, "She wished she had not come to India without her husband". (p.64) Tara is caught in the gulf between the two contrasting Worlds. She feels that she has forgotten many of her Hindu rituals of worshiping icons which she had seen her mother performing since her childhood.

Tara's negative reaction at the changed social situations and the deterioration of Calcutta makes her friend Reena comment about her that she has become too self centered and European. The psyche of Tara rolls like a stone gathering no stabilizing moss. She is forced to look at her inner world and there by confront two cultures and the two different ideologies. Realizing that the reconciliation is impossible, Tara feels inclined to go back to David. She gets consolation and peace neither in the picnic with the members of her family and friends nor in her trip to Darjeeling Everything appears terrible and horrible to her.

Tara's journey to India, her native land, proves futile and fatal to her. Nothing happened to her in a foreign land. Her desire to find a place to belong to and the security which she missed in New York, ends ironically in frustration. It is an irony that Tara feels greater love and security in the arms of her American husband and thinks about him at a time when her end is approaching. The immigrant's return to her own country proves frustrated both physically and metaphorically. The trip to India by Tara after seven years shattered like a dream. She believed that her trip to India would be blissful.

Bharati Mukherjee leads her heroine through a series of adventures and misadventures to a final self realization and reconciliation. Tara's homesick eyes noticed many changes in the city of Calcutta :

She longed for the Bengal of Satyajit Ray, children running through cool green spaces, aristocrat despairing in music rooms of empty palaces. She hated Calcutta because it had given her kids eating yough hurts off dirty side walks.(p.106) What confronted her was that Calcutta was losing its memories in a bonfire of effigies, buses and trains. Tragedy was not uncommon in Calcutta. The newspapers were full of epidemics, collusions, fatal quarrels and starvation, stretching before here was the union of modern India. (p.117)

The same note of shocked awareness of reality one comes across in the experiences rendered in the later novels. The opening sentence of the novel The Holder of the World begins thus : “I live in three time zones simultaneously, and I don’t mean Eastern, Central and Pacific, I mean the past, the present and the future”⁶. As the writer herself says, the probe into the history of three hundred year’s old period, its people, their experience is like “uniting people and possessions. It’s like matching orphaned shocks, through time”.(p.5) Bharati Mukherjee’s The Holder of the World reflects her embattlement with ethos, cultures and people of the land of her birth (India) and the land of her migration . The story of Hannah is a metaphor for the process of uprooting and rerooting. In his article “An Indian Woman in the U.S.A. The Holder of the World”, Shayam S. Agarwalls poses the question:

Could it be a semi autobiography
of Mukherjee’s dressed in American
clothes to visit the exotic Mughal India?
He feels that Mughal India of the time
of Auranzeb is now modern U.S.A of
Carter and Bush and the colonial India
of Mukherjee’s is the colonial America

of Hannah. He further points out that the story of the novel is also a meeting place of three cultures-Christian, Muslim and Hindu. Unfortunately, by their nature, birth and nourishment, three cultures do not coalesce⁷.

Subash Chandra in his article on The Holder of the World calls the novel "an anti-war novel in which Hannah Easton is made a visionary who strives for peace in the strife torn, tortured and unhappy world realizing that it is more important to rule over the hearts of the people than become a disputed ruler of the vast territories"⁸. In Bharati Mukherjee's words "She had a vision, the life inside compelled it, she would offer her life, if necessary to end the war"⁹.

Hannah Easton, the heroine of the novel, like Jasmine in the novel named after her becomes an expatriate as a result of her quest for a vital life of feeling and emotions. Like other women in Bharati Mukherjee's fiction Hannah and Jasmine are women of energy of boundless hope to pursue a new dream of happiness. The escape from the old world is largely the result of positive values but an attempt to escape from the limitations and claustrophobic influence of the native world.

When Hannah kills Murad Farah and saves the wounded Jadav Singh's life and brings him back to Panpur, she decides to offer her life to end the war and goes as a missionary to the emperor but she is taken as a hostage by him. She disdains the emperor :

Duty! Duty, judgement! I have heard enough of duty and of judgement. You cloak your lust for vengeance and for gold and diamonds in the noble words of duty and judgement and protection and sacrifice. But it is the weakest and the poorest and the innocent who suffer, who sacrifice, whose every minute of everyday is obedience to duty? (p.269)

It is the same search for positive values which the protagonist in The Holder of the World stands for. When Aurangzeb comes to her she is reminded of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka in a Muslim disguise. "You despot! You tyrant !" she screamed. "You may have made me your prisoner, but I am not your play thing". (p-264) "We are here on a mission, then we shall leave, If you detain us, or dishonor us we shall die." (p.265)

Hannah's journey to India is full of adventures, passions and emotions. She returns to her native land with her daughter, Black Pearl. Like Jasmine, Hannah finds contentment and joy in the adopted land and it is the morality of this land Hannah carries within her. It is thus that a comparative perspective of the reigning faiths has been presented.

The idea of Hinduism was vaguely frightening and even more alluring to Hannah. The English attitude saw Islam as a shallow kind of sophistication, Hinduism a profound form of primitivism. Muslims might be cruel, but true obscenity attached itself to Hindus, whose superstitions and wanton disregard of their own kind-burning young widows, denying humanity to those whom they called untouchables excited contempt. Muslims had restrictions, which were noble and manly ; Hindus had taboos which were superstitious and cowardly.(p.219)

Another sequence in the novel is equally revealing. Hannah, a Christian, says to Aurangzeb, the Alamgir:

They are not Devgarh people or Roopconda people, not Hindu people or Muslim people, not Sunni or Shia, priests or untouchables, servants or kings. If all is equal in the eyes of Brahma as the Hindus say, if Allah is all-seeing and all merciful as you say then who has committed atrocities on the children, the women the old people? Who has poisoned the hearts of men? "The blame belongs with the rat of Devgad," came the response. The blame lies with anyone who confuses protection with power.(p.268)



Bharati Mukherjee seems totally engaged in the book to explore and discover how Hannah could cross the cultural barriers and hold together the colliding worlds in which she found herself :“Wherever she stayed, I am convinced she would have changed history, for she was one of those extraordinary lives through which history runs a four-lane for highway.”(p.189)

It is authentically said that Hannah believed in all human values of life. Hannah Easton is inquisitive, vital and awake to her own possibilities. She is of the opinion that love begets love and hate begets hate. It is in the interest of humanity if we all cherish the eastern values like love, sympathy, tolerance, altruism, non-violence, kindness as followed by her. Beigh Masters is of the opinion that she finds herself drawn into the most intimate and spell binding fabric of that remote life, conforming her belief that with sufficient passion and intelligence, we can deconstruct the barriers of time and geography.

Bharati Mukherjee's describes The Holder of the world ✓ as : "post modern historical novel" but at its most basic level it is a novel of expatriation of a quest and a journey not only to geographically diverse land but to cultural societies which help to question and abandon conventional moral and social values Hannah's life succeeds in questioning and discovering new ways of defining reality in a world which was essentially orthodox.

Another significant dimension of Bharati Mukherjee's novels related to the quest for values undertaken by her pertains to her examination of the whole ambience of gender-related ✓ issues, especially in the Indian society. Bharati Mukherjee deals very deftly with woman's conditions in all her books. Woman is nowhere safe, even in her mother's womb. Women have repeatedly become victims of human rage in patriarchal society. Women are the worst victims. A woman suffers on all planes : physical, mental, emotional and marital etc. In Jasmine the protagonist Jasmine points out:

If I had been a boy, my birth in a bountiful year would have marked me as lucky, a child with a special destiny to fulfill . But daughter were curses. A daughter had to be married off before she could enter heaven, and dowries beggared families for generations. God with infinite memories visited girl children on women who needed to be punished for sins committed in other incarnations.¹⁰

She further adds that she was the fifth daughter, the seventh of ninth children. God is cruel, my mother complained, to waste brains on a girl. And God shall more cruel, she said, to make a fifth daughter beautiful instead of the first. (p.40)

Jasmine also criticizes the prevailing tradition related to girls that "Village girls are like cattle, whichever way to lead them, that is the way they will go." (46) She criticizes the view and asserts, "I know what I don't want to become." (p.5) It shows her resolves to become what she knows she must. Jasmine says; "I remember suddenly the screams of a baby thrown down a well in Hasnapur, her cries for two days being taken as prowling Jakals across the nullah." (p.233)

Jasmine was married to Prakash at the age of fourteen and Prakash is killed by a terrorist Sukhi, leaving behind a seventeen year old wife Jasmine, When her friend Vimla's husband died Vimla committed suicide by burning herself with a kitchen stove. It is an agonizing demonstration of the unbearable conditions of the widows in the Indian society. Even her mother had tried to commit suicide when her father had died. For Jasmine there was hardly any choice.

She can not live in the village with her widowed mother cut off from the normal way of living nor can she think of committing suicide as Vimla had done. She decides to carry her dream of going to an American University but only to burn her self as a belated Sati. Her grand mother cries on her father's death. "A house full of widows, that's what my son's house has become ! She wailed house of sorrows ! A house of ill fortune."(p.48) In The Holder of the World also Bharati Mukherjee describes the terrible conditions of Women. "The Women wrapped themselves in silken winding sheets and because of their soft, compliant souls, they yielded their lives to flame upon their husband's death."(p.67)

In " The Management of Grief," a story from The Middleman and Other Stories, the writer depicts the gender discrimination imposed on widows. Mrs. Bhave says, " My grand mother, spoiled daughter of a rich zamindar, shaved her head with rusty razer blades when she was widowed at sixteen. My grand father died of childhood diabetes when he was nineteen and she saw herself as the harbinger of bad luck." (p.165) Widowers must marry. It is the duty of man to look after a wife : the new wife will be endowed with children, destitute but of good family. They will make loving wives but

man will shun them. No one thinks of arranging a husband for an unlucky widow. In the seventeenth century women had to face a lot of miseries and injustice. As the writer points out, "Hannah shrieked, though, she did not know until she heard the shriek herself. This is an incident chronicled in the Memoirs. The hand reraised. The face twisted tight in anticipation of pain . The woman's tormented shriek. She is witnessing an unnatural vanishing of justice, an unspeakable new face of violence"(p.116) In Jasmine Prakash says to Jasmine, "only in feudal societies is the woman still a vassal."(p.77)

Early marriage was common in old days which led to various miseries. A Mazbimaid daughter who had been married off at eleven already had a miscarriage. Jasmine was a sixth class drop out and her father called her mad when she wished to become a doctor, it shows gender discrimination in education. The old folk's complaints were familiar ones. "In India the groom's mother was absolute tyrant of the household. The young bride would quiver under her commands. But in New York, with the working wife, the mother-in-law was denied her the enormous authority."(p.147)

The novelist also shows the common bent of Indian wives who never eat before their husband and what should they know is the husband's taste in food and submerge her identity in her husband and his family. The novelist discards old traditions and orthodoxy. When Jasmine, the protagonist, marries with Prakash against the wishes of her father and grand mother. Prakash is an engineer student of modern out look and he begins to change Jasmine's life . He is a man of liberal and noble ideas, who discards dogmatic traditions. Their marriage was not traditional. Jasmine says, "ours was a no dowry, no guest Registry Office wedding in a town a 250 rupee taxi ride south of Hasnapur."(p.75) He moved to a rented house in Amritsar instead of moving to his uncle's house in Jullunder. Even the so called modern people prefer male child in comparison to female child .The male-female ratio is falling day by day in India.

In The Tiger's Daughter, Amit Basu "an engineer" husband of Dimple desires a male child, knowing the pregnancy of Dimple, " It will be a boy" Amit said, "he will be a doctor and mint money."(p.33) When Dimple terminates her pregnancy, Amit says, "It was going to be a boy I was going to teach him cricket. This must be a bad omen."(pp.42-43)

In Wife and Darkness the author draws our attention to the miserable condition of women particularly of the barren woman. The story of the woman runs like this.

She was in utter distress because she had been thrown out of door and rendered rootless by her husband, deprived of respect and property on account of her infertility. So far, she has managed her barren body and soul together by begging and other such humiliating activities. Who knows, this woman could, out of sheer despair, turn to worse things like real sin¹¹.

In "Nostalgia", a collection from Darkness while in a restaurant the Maitred said, "But I am knowing and you are doctor sahib that no Indian lady is happy without having children to bring up."(p.109) It shows the Indian conviction that a woman is incomplete till she gets motherhood.

The novelist in Wife adds that in the present day society old persons particularly women are not properly looked after. "Who cares about an old woman like me?" Mrs, Basu said one morning from her bed, under the mosquito netting.

"Who cares for anyone these days."(p.25) Amit and Dimple were not particular about her health. "No one cares, "sighed Mrs. Basu, "I know they are waiting for me to die so they can go off to a foreign country."(p.25) Dimple had forced her to eat so she would not fall ill and complicate Amit's plan. Fortynine years old, almost fifty and with just a boy and servant!Who cares about old people these days?"(p.44)

In Darkness the story entitled, "The Lady from Lucknow" the novelist points out that even in a patriarchal society a woman suffers on account of communal disharmony between Hindus and Muslims resulting the partition of India into Hindustan and Pakistan. Nafessa Hafeez is the narrator and heroine of the story. She is the daughter of an army doctor. When she was four she saw with her own eyes how a Muslim girl named Husseina was beaten with leather sandals to death by her father because she loved a Hindu boy. In another instance the heroine of the story is married at the age of seventeen. She has been brought up in puritinal Muslim society in which women face a lot of social taboos . She craves for romantic and sexual fulfilment.

In America, Nafeesa tries a life of passion by loving a 65 year old white man, James Beamish. Nafeesa points about the jealousy of his husband when she says : "Iqbal owns no fire arms. Jealousy would inflame him."¹² She further adds "Iqbal and I are sensual people, but secretive. The openness of James Beamish's advanced surprised me."(p.29) "Wives who want to be found out will be found out. Indiscretions are deliberate. The women caught in mid-shame is a woman who wants to get out."(p.25) She feels herself lucky in winning the love of a white man. But her romance crumbles when she is discovered in bed unexpectedly by Kate, James's wife. Here we see that Nafeesa changes nothing by her passion and has no desire to die either. One recalls that woman's adultery can be severely punished by the old Islamic laws of the Lucknow lady's origin. Here the writer contrasts the two sets of values. In Atlanta there is no anger , no violence, no vengeance as it happens in a traditional Muslim society. The author comments on the patriarchal nature of the society. As Nafeesa says, "What has begun as an adventure had become shabby and complex."(p.33)

In "Hindu", a story from Darkness , Leela Lihari, the narrator of the story, is well aware of the fact that daughters are an extra responsibility of the parents. In India to settle the arranged marriages for their daughters is tough task. She says that Indian prefer arranged marriage. She marries a white man and leaves her at her will while a typical Hindu woman can never even think of separation from her husband.

Panna, the protagonist of "A Wife's Story" in The Middleman and Other Stories also sets a banner of revolt against the miserable conditions and exploitation of women. Panna says, "my mother was beaten by her mother-in-law, my grand mother, when she'd registered for French lessons at the Alliance Francaise . My grandmother, the eldest daughter of a rich zamindar , was illiterate"¹³.(p.27) But she is against the maltreatment of women and advocates their freedom and righteous position in society . Bharati Mukherjee adheres to the reader's attention about social evils related to woman's position in the feudal times. In Indian patriarchal society even security for a woman is a close boundry . In The Holder of the World Beigh masters tells Venn, her Indian born husband, "He grew in a world so secure , I can't imagine it, where for us

security is another kind of trap, something to be discarded as dramatically as Rebacca stepped out of dog - blooded widow's weeds into a life of sin and certitudes."(p.31) Women are not independent . They are caged in customs and traditions. In Wife the cage is an important symbol . It stands for comfortable but restricted existence, for isolation and denial of freedom. The freedom is the essence of life. Where there is no freedom, there is no life.

The novelist advocates many facets of women encompassing agitation for equal opportunity, sexual autonomy and the right of self determination . She feels that the limitations forced on women result in profound destructive effects. Bharati Mukherjee emphasizes through her characters that a survivor is one who improves not one who follows the rules. Her characters Dimple in Wife, Jasmine in Jasmine and Rebacca, Hannah and Bhagmati in The Holder of the World continuously face estrangement in the society they live in and reject the old traditions and develop the life of their own. The more they learn about themselves, the more individualistic they become like Hannah. All are self possessed, intelligent and desirable, irrespective of their time and place.

Dimple is perturbed and her migration to U.S.A proves disastrous to her psyche. She remains unadaptable to her new environment and kills her dutiful husband Amit. Jasmine is initially unable to adopt American culture, but later adapts herself. "Watch my reposition of the stars."(p.240) Suggest that as a modern woman she has indeed realised her self in America. Hannah now was in a totally Hindu world, perhaps she was about to become one. The writer says, " In other words, at the age of thirty, Hannah was a pure product of her time and place, her marriage and her training, exposed to a range of experience that would be extreme even in today's world but none of it, consciously had, sunk in or affected her outer behaviour." (p.220) The author suggests two advantages of women's liberation : one it allows them to realize their potential as individuals in a wider society and two, it is the only way by which they could , they can and they should achieve personal recognition and identity.

In Jasmine, the protagonist Jyoti nee, Jasmine nee, Jase nee, Jane rebels very strongly and successfully against the established traditional socio-cultural ethos based on superstitions and fatalism but also effects a proper balance between tradition and modernity.

This novel celebrates the strength of woman, not her weakness. In a language of emotion and meticulous metaphor using images provided by the woman protagonist the novelist has articulated the many sided pathos and rebellion of contemporary Indian women not only in India but also in the world. Mukherjee sketches her protagonist's gradual transformation but there is conflict between Jasmine's two selves, the one still holding fast to traditional Indian values of life and the other as an adventurer in a capitalistic culture. She remarks: "for every Jasmine the reliable care giver, there is Jase the profligate adventurer. I thrilled to the tug of opposing forces." (pp.176-177) Since Jase is still shackled to Indian ethos when she tells stories of Nachiketa and Yama to Duff. She is not prepared to imbibe pseudo modernity. That is why she is shocked when Wylie walks on Taylor and the protagonist comment's:

In America nothing lasts. I can say that now it doesn't shock me, but I think it was the hardest lesson to learn, we arrive so eager to earn, to adjust, to participate only to find the monuments are plastic agreements are annulled. Nothing is so terrible that it won't disintegrate. (p.181)

The synthesis between tradition and modernity gives her true perspective to realize her identity in America. The novelist hints that social order needs to be changed for it has gone untouched for thousand of years. And finally she stays with Bud Ripplemeyer where she acts as a catalyst for the divorce between the husband and wife Karin. She is the life companion of Bud. She refuses to marry Bud for whom she feels pity but not love and finally goes with Taylor and Duff. Now she is a liberated and powerful immigrant woman who was once a rustic Punjabi girl. She now comes to realize, “ I’m not choosing between men, I’m caught between the promise of America and the old-world of dutifulness.”(p.240)

The novelist synthesizes in the protagonist the essence of two cultures Indian and American. William Gordon, gives her shelter and helps her and advises her, “ Let the past make you wary, by all means, But do not let it deform you.”(p.131)

Now remember, if you walk and talk like American, they will think you were born here. Most Americans can’t imagine anything else... You’re a very special case, my dear, I’ve written to my daughter, so don’t hesitate to call her.(pp.134-135)

By adjusting to American culture Jasmine says, "I have had a husband for each of the women, I have been Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane. Half Face for Kali." (p.197) She stays at Manhattan with Taylor and Wylie at Manhattan as a 'care giver' to their adopted daughter ,Duff. She becomes the caregiver and was treated as a member of the family and not just as a maid servant. Here she is called Jase. At the very first meeting, she falls in love with Taylor:

I began to fall in love, I mean, I fell in love with what he represented to me, a professor who served biscuits to a servant, smiled at her and admitted her to the broad democracy of his joking, even when she didn't understand it. It seemed entirely American. I was curious about his life, not repulsed. (p.167)

Mukherjee firmly believes in multi-culturalism of the U.S.A. In order to position Mukherjee's discourse of assimilation within American Multi-culturalism. It is useful to refer to - Peter McLaren's article, "White terror and oppositional Agency : Towards a critical culturalism." "It refers ✓

to the ways in which race and ethnicity are mapped out in the cultural construction of difference or sameness."¹⁴ The first form is defined by McLaren as, "Conservative Multi Culturalism" It relates to people who do not question their whiteness as ethnic category but position other ethnicities and minority groups on a lower ladder of civilization. William Gordon tells Jasmine, "You're a very special case, my dear?"(p.135) Jasmine shows the capacity to transform and adapt in order to survive and to acquiesce to the role already written for her.

I wanted to become the person
they thought they saw: humorous,
intelligent, refined, affectionate. Not
illegal, not murderer, not widowed,
raped, destitute and fearful.(p.171)

The second form of Multi Culturalism indicated by McLaren is termed as "Liberal Multi culturalism," This vision ✓ defends the natural equality among the whites and other communities. This idea of liberal culturalism sees no difference in human beings. "Taylor didn't want ~~want~~ to change me. He didn't want to scour and sanitize the foreignness. My being different from Wylie or Kate didn't scare him. I changed because I wanted to." (p.185)

The third form of Multi Culturalism is “ Left Liberal ✓
Multiculturalism,” which emphasizes culultural differences and
suggests that the equality of races only erases the importance
of the cultural differences between races which are responsible
for different behaviour and social practices.” Karin, Bud’s ex
once called me a gold digger.”(p.195) or “ Taylor loves you.”
Wylie said , but you must know that.”(p.182). Bud falls in
love with Jasmine because of her “otherness.”:

Bud courts me because I am alien. I
am darkness, mystery inscrutability,
The East plugs me into instant
vitality and wisdom. I rejuvenate him
simply by being who I am.(p.200)

In America Lillian Gordan tells her, people know only
walking and speaking .If you divert yourself from this assumed
majority then you will reveal yourself as an American .By
“Critical culturalism,” Mc Laren wants to suggest the central
taste of transforming the social, cultural and institutional
relations in which meanings are produced. Critical-Multi-
culturalism alien starts from the notion of differences.. as
c instructed between and among groups.

When Jasmine sees Sukhivinder, the Sikh terrorist, in central park, she knows her past has come to reclaim her, that she cannot shake off her previous role despite the promise of her Americanism. At a certain point Jasmine remarks " I wish I'd known America before it got perverted."(p.201) We conclude in the words of Sandra Ponzanesi, "Jasmine has moved progressively away from the conservative multiculturalism " walk American " of Lillian Gordan, to the Liberal multi-culturalism of Hayes, "You don't have to change" to a left Liberal multi culturalism in which her difference is enhanced in Iowa. The conclusion is an attempt to represent critical multi critical culturalism with her decision to move a own and to leave every thing behind, every thing that was erased by her tornado."¹⁵

Materialism or the recognition of the importance both of money and comfort is an integral part of the western way of life as contrasted with the Indian one. The novelist highlights the role of money in her works. The lust for money thrills the immigrants to the new world in order to fulfil their dreams of prosperity. In the materialistic world of today to earn money is the culture of everyone.

They control their family's finances and decide everything even what to buy at the food store, what their wives should wear, whom with they mix etc. The women mostly do not work because their husbands don't like them to work. They find all things American unpleasant and all things relating to India pleasant. But they do not want to go back. The myth of wealth is too powerful. Such is the case of Amit Basu and Jyoti. Both of them want to return to India after earning a lot of money. "If it weren't money, I'd go back to tomorrow," said Jyoti. "This is too much the rat race for a man like me." "So long as I don't die" said his wife. (p.15) Jyoti Sen teaches all tricks trade to Amit: "work twice as hard, keep your mouth shut, and you will be millionaire in fifteen years."(p.68)

In The Tiger's Daughter Mr. Tuntunwala's character is marked by business type attitude of man who keeps money before everything. For him money and muscle power are the main weapons to get power in life and in politics. For him, Love is the "heart's matter." He damn cares for heart's matter"(p.195) The politicians of today consider politics as a mean to achieve money and power. They make false and illusory promises during election times like Mr. Tuntunwala.

Lust for money is also seen in Jasmine. Jasmine says, "I should have saved ; a cash stash is the only safety net." (p.176) Jasmine tells Prof. Vadhera that she needs a green card more than anything else in the world that a green card is a freedom.

If I had a green card, a job, a goal, happiness would appear out of the blue... Prof. Vadhera said, " A green card is an expensive but not an impossible proposition. For the rich such a matter is arranged daily. (p.149)

Venn, a character in The Holder of the World also keeps the same thinking. According to Beigh masters the main purpose of British advent in India is neither to breed nor to colonize, to plunder and to enrich themselves. The narrator or the Beigh masters says, " In the consultation books of the company's factories and forts the story of the Coromandal Coast is the story of Europe of White nation battling each other in out posts paved with gold. It is the story North America turned inside out." (p.160)The author ironically points out the varieties of money :

Money, hand-ever-first money, sweat -
 of-brow money, burnout money, finger-
 to the- bore-money, under -the table
 money, black money, dirty money, filthy
 lucre, money-changing- in- the temple,
 thirty-pieces-of- silver money, blasphe-
 mous money, usurious, treacherous
 money, profit taxes, bribes, licenses, fees,
 levies, octrois, traffs ; middlemen,
 policemen, watchmen, painters,
 Carpenters, Dyers, writers, weavers,
 doctors, teachers, preachers, judges,
 accountants, barristers; wives, widows,
 cooks, servants, slaves, prostitutes,
 concubines; lewd men, austere men,
 gamblers, hoarders, Catholics, Round
 heads, Conformists, Baptists, Muslims,
 Hindus, Jews Parsis, Armenians, black
 men, brown men, yellow men, white re-
 formers, saviors, visionaries, criminals :
 all in pursuit of money, money, money."
 (p.103)

The world of today is a world of utility and of commodity."The value of every commodity was suddenly reassessed with an eye to its resale potential, a meter was put on every one's time, and all the factors and interlopers were down in the pit shouting up, " Buy!Buy!Buy!"(p102)

The chain of multinational factory stretched up and down the coromandal like condos on the Florida coast. Higher strata of society grew rich while the laborers and farmers who could never prosper and might lose their sculps in the bargain.

England was dead, finished, washed, up, effete and retentive. Ah! But India! The India trade. An immediate profit of twenty to one, England to India, and a hundred to one, a thousand to one, on the way back. And all the women, all the luxury, and adventure, all the hunting, killing, debauchery a man could dream about.(p.102)

Even today under W.T.O. agreements the developed nations are exploiting the economy of developing and under developed nations in the name of liberalization, privatization and globalization .

The 17th century was surcharged with lust for money. For Gabriel commerce is our mission. Conquest the necessary means"(p.181) In order to achieve their objective the English men and women had to suffer day and night, tyrannical insultings at the hands of Muslim rulers. The writer observes correctly, " In asset hunter knows when to continue digging long after economists and historians have stopped." (p.161)

Mukharjee's short story collection The Middleman and Other Stories revolves around the theme of money. Money is a alluring side for them. They want to go to America, the land of money, success and opportunity. They want a permanent settlement there. They take up even the menial jobs in the new country of their hope to get livelihood and survival. However they hope that ultimately they will get permanent settlement and hide over the present situations somehow or the other. In a story, "The Middleman "Alfie says," A man with cash and private planes can clear a fortune in Latin America." (p.4) Later when faced bullets, the middleman admits : " I know I am no hero, I know none of this is worth suffering for, let alone dying for. "(p.20)

Even in a feudal system love is measured at the cost of money and for them love is not a matter of heart but a matter of head. Maria's adroit adulteries are her main stay in surviving Latin America-landscape of violence, brutality and dog eat dog conditions of existence. As Alfie put it, "I am no hero, I calculate margins. I could not calculate the cost of night with Maria, a month with Maria, though for first time in life it was a cost I might have borne."(p.16) ✓

"In *Danny's Girls*" the protagonist Dinesh says, "Flushing was full of greedy women, I never met one who would turn down gold or a fling with the money market." (p.137-138) In this story the writer comments how rich people exploit the women in the name of employment and marriage. Needy, ignorant and illiterate fall in their net.

In Darkness Bharti Mukharjee throws light how needy expatriates come to this land of America to make fortunes. Some claimed that they had to marry off daughter to rich, ugly men in big cities like Amritsar and Delhi to pay the one way fare to Los Angeles. This shows how in arranged marriages in India the parents turned a blind eye to the emotions and sentiments

of their daughters only to earn money. Marriage is a sacred ritual and the union of two true souls but in present world of materialism, it is settled on the criteria of profit and loss. The narrator of "Visitors" as Vinita herself, knows that Sailen intends to be a millionaire as do his close friends, especially Vinod Mehra. Every body respects him, for being a money wizard. In America everyone "has to size up the situation and make up one's own rules or it is here, that one has to seize situation?(p.167)Vinita is distressed to realize about the selfishness and money mindedness of American people when she says, " Some Americans won't even give you a glass of water when you drop in."(p.172)

Vinita finds it hard to believe that she had been gifted the life of grace and ease that she and her Loreto college friends had coveted from reading old copies of homes and gardens in Calcutta. "The life of grace and ease has less to do with modern conveniences... Happiness, expressiveness, bad temper: all this states seems valuable and exciting to her. But she is not sure she deserves this life. There is no place for feelings here! We are both a new breed, testing new feelings in new battles grounds. We must give into the old world's curb."(p.163)

Bharati Mukherjee in her novels and short stories handles very tactfully the issues related to racial discriminations. Characters in her works suffer from race prejudices. Immigrants are subjected to racial discrimination. They live in pathetic and undesirable circumstances yet they live there due to their own limitations. It is immaterial whether they belong to the East or the West. Even in the present world of globalisation the giant of racial discrimination still exists in spite of the doctrine of peaceful co-existence. Wars are fought in the name of racial hatred which leads to violence and destruction. People are affected by the values they perceive in their lives.

In The Tiger's Daughter, the protagonist, Tara feels that her marriage with a white person named David Cartwright will be appreciated by her near and dear ones. She feels highly distressed to know that her kith and kin and her friends addressed her as " 'Americawali' and her husband ' Mleccha ' (Impure) Even her mother is offended by this marriage. " Her Bombay aunt would have said all Marwaris are ugly : frugal and vulgar, and all Nepalis are lecherous ".(p.20)

The author comments ironically about the general attitude of Indians for Westerns. She says about friends of Tara,

They liked foreigners in movie magazines- Nat Wood and Bob Wagner in faded Photoplays. They loved Englishmen like Worthington at British Council. But they didn't approve of foreign marriage partners. So much for the glamour of her own marriage. She had expected admiration from these friends. She had wanted them to consider her marriage an emancipated gesture. But emancipation was suspicious - it is a presupposed bondage.(p.86)

Dimple , the protagonist, in Wife exposes racial differences in America when she makes the mistake of asking a Jewish shopkeeper who sells beef, to give her a pound of cheesecakes. He tells her threateningly that he was not allowed to sell anything else but meat. He directs her to a German shop across the road. She tells the incident to Meena and says;

In Calcutta, she'd buy from Muslims, Biharis, Christians, Nepalese. She was used to many races ; she'd never been a communalist. And so long as she had money to spend no one would ask her what community she belonged to. She was caught in the crossfire of an American communalism she couldn't understand. She felt she'd come very close to getting killed on her third morning in America.(p.60)

Commenting on Vinod Khanna, Amit, the husband of Dimple, expresses his opinion that he is a reprehensible person. " He said all Punjabis were lecherous, dirty and uncultured, especially when they drunk, and they drunk all the time. Nothing would please them to get an innocent and pretty Bengali girl in their clutches ... It's known fact that Bengali girls are the prettiest girls in India. That is what I meant." (p.138) This shows the racial discrimination is not found among the uneducated men but in educated man like Amit.

Hannah Easton, the main character in The Holder of the World sees and knows the sins of dynamic puritan world.

Some tenet of inborn nobility : they really are devils, the woods really are evil, it's true, it's true, God is testing us, demanding the sacrifice of our women and children, the slaughter of our live stock, the taking and defilement of possessions, our honor, our scalps! This was the life without God's protection.(pp.37-38)

Purity was no longer valued as the end of human effort, or the goal of social structure ... As offences to common morality grew less punishable, the gibbet took on greater natural force.(p.40)

A continent of opportunity is a continent of cruelty... Now God has rededicated them, praise His name. Devastation exfoliates providential efficacy. Suffering is good , though

sometime confusing. Brook fielders-no more this Quabaug nonsense-scattered to sturdier Puritan garrisons. (pp.38-39).

The new world was hard and savage, it was soft and beautiful, it was evil, it was innocent. England was refined and cultured; it was soiled and sinful. (p.72)

So, Hannah Easton kept her distance from this world,

The English , like her husband, seemed vastly more exciting and knowledgeable and appreciative than the men of Salem; on the other hand their scrutiny extended to realms social rank that seemed to her false measures of value.(p.73)

Inspite of these sins Hannah was attracted to London,

The moral superiority that grew out of the contest with savagery was but one category of excellence. There was wealth and trade, and culture, history and the great common pulse of humanity, that surged from the streets of London. That,too, counted. (p.73)

The novelist shows the racial discrimination in the attitude of Hindus and Muslims. The Emperor Aurangzeb hated the Hindus and considered them as infidels and imposed zazia on them. He waged war throughout his region to convert the Hindus into the realm of Islam." The Grand Mughal calls Raja Singh the Rat of the Corromandel. " (p-218). shows his prejudice mentality against the Hindus. Even Gabriel explains to Hannah about the caste ridden Hindus and Muslim society:

They all spoke different languages , they owed fidelity to different masters, they worshipped different gods and their ancestors had come from different countries. (p.100)

" The World According Hsu, " a story from Darkness enumerates racial harmony and disharmony in Canada . The writer successfully represents the problem of racial encounters and culture collisions. In this story Toronto and Montreal become her metaphors for possible racial tension and harmony respectively. Ratna, the protagonist, herself the offspring of an international marriage in 1936 (her father was Bengali, while she had a Czechoslovak mother) She is married to a liberal

white Canadian Graeme Claton, Professor of Psychology at McGill University, Montreal. The couple is on holiday trip at an island off the coast of Africa, the Dark Continent . Ratna terrified to see this environment of racial hatred . She thinks, "In Toronto, she was not a Canadian , not even Indian. She was something called , after the imported idiom of London, a Paki . And for Pakis, Toronto was hell. " (p.41)

While the critic Christine Gomez considers that the world view of Hsu here becomes a "metaphor, " he also thinks that " Hsu's one world weltansschauung," becomes an " unattainable ideal ." His idea is that " there is perhaps a longing for the world free from cultural collisions, dilemmas and separation."¹⁶But unfortunately that proves a hollow charm. Here we have a world that is based on sharp racial distinctions. There is feeling of " otherness " for those pakis who have come to Canada almost half of the world .

Ratna can't forget the racial bitterness in Toronto." A week before their flight, a Bengali woman was beaten and nearly blinded on the street. And the week before that an eight - year- old Punjabi boy was struck by a car announcing on it's bumper : KEEP CANADA GREEN. PAINT A PAKI ." (p.47)

Graeme tries to cheer up saying , " It won't happen to you." and again , " Look - violence is everywhere . Toronto's safest city on the continent." "Sure " She said , " for you ". (p.47) Nothing can remove her fears. " An Indian professor's wife was jumped at a red light, right in her car. They threw her groceries on the street. They said Pakis should not drive big cars."(p.47)

In " Isolated Incidents " , Ann Vene's job is to file complaints from the immigrants on problems concerning Human Rights. Two specific cases of racial discrimination in Toronto are brought to her notice - that of Dr. (Miss) Supariwala and John Mohan Persawd.

Doctor [Miss] Supariwala was a stern, stocky , woman of forty-three, with doctorates from Western Ontario and Bombay , who claimed to have been passed over at job interviews in favor of lesser candidates . She was a Canadian Citizen, she'd published numerous articles, she'd won a few research grants. No one could fault her promptness , her discipline , her

preparedness . Against these accomplishments were arrayed certain half-articulated, coded objections. Students would not relate easily to her , some might complain of her accent, her methodological stiffness, her lack of humour.(pp.78-79)

Miss Supariwala thinks herself a victim of racial discrimination. She represents her care like other Canadians which irritates Ann who thinks it strange that even after facing so much humiliations and problems these expatriates still find reason for staying in Canada.

Canadian are mean as hell " said John Mohan Persawd. " Life is hopeless, man , no justice, no redress I don't know about that said Ann. "If this had happened in NewYork, You'd have been left for dead. " Correction , " Miss Vane said the lawyer , "If this had happened in New York he'd have been mugged for his money, not racially assaulted. (p.84)

Ann is aware of racial discrimination in Canada. In the beginning , " She had tried too correct earnestly to the nation's wrongs. Now she saw problems as a bureaucrat. Deal only with sure things. Pass the other off . Get documentation . Promise nothing . " (p.81) She knows the futility of her work in documenting such cases , nothing would ultimately come out of it at all ! She admits that law is flexible. "Nothing is fair. "She shouted " There isn't any Justice And your sister was never married. It's a trick to cheat immigration." (p.93)

Torontonians were proud of their subway, their politeness, proud of their moral spotlessness. This after all was not New York. Assault on John Mohan Persawd and dozen like him would always be considered isolated incidents, and who's to say they were racial in nature ? Police treated it as simple assault, rowdiness, and drew no necessary inferences regarding race. No witnesses , no case, and police involvement ended.(pp.82.83)

Thus due to racial discrimination people suffer cruelty and hostility imposed on them and their cases are ignored as isolated incidents not worthy of serious importance. So they have to suffer a lot on the basis of racial discrimination.

Individuals obviously live as integral parts of a social and cultural context and their strivings are directly as well as indirectly conditioned by this circumambulating context, even as they help define and shape the imperceptible contours of this environment. This interaction between the disparate selves of the individuals concerned, when conducted in a responsible manner, helps create a shadow social and cultural. Bharati Mukherjee's novels leave an indelible impression of such values on the mind of her readers and the impact lasts for a long time like fragrance in the air.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER - III
PERSONAL AND
FAMILIAL VALUES

Chapter-III

Personal and Familial Values

Bharati Mukherjee, caught between two different worlds, seeks synthesis, conciliation, compromise and sense of living together, absorbing different influences, mindsets and traditions in a human reality. In the preceding chapter, we saw the delineation of the cultural and the social realm where such an exercise was perceptibly under way. Despite being part of these domains, the personal and the familial constitutes an autonomous whole in itself because of Bharati Mukherjee's commitment to individual reality in all her works. It is therefore that the personal and familial values has been undertaken here to underline the significance given to this component in the novelist's scheme of things. Being herself a sensitive, articulate woman, Bharati Mukherjee reasonably invites the label a 'feminist' in her portrayal of man-woman relationship and it would in the fitness of things to appraise her novels and short-stories from this point of view in particular. Bharati Mukherjee is regarded as a feminist novelist. Feminism may be defined:

As a mode of existence in which woman is free of the dependence syndrome.

There is a dependence syndrome whether it is the husband or the father or the

community or whether it is religious group, ethnic groups etc when women free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of materialism materialises.¹

Sushila Singh's views are also along the same lines:

As a philosophy of life, feminism opposes women's subordination to men in the family and in society, alongwith men's claim to define what is best for women without consulting them, thereby offering a frontal challenge to patriarchal thought, social organisation and control mechanism.²

Bharati Mukherjee has dealt with the woman's question in her novels. Feminism and Masculinity are two gender identity. Society creates certain sexual stereotypes regarding the role of men and women. The entire web of cultural norms and mores functions as the agent of repression restricting women from self actualization. She has been the sufferer in the man dominated society. High ideals are placed before her. Still she is treated just like the second grade citizen, 'the second sex', as an object of sex not as an individual. ✓

She is eager how to break the shackles of a predetermined sexist, traditional bound, centuries old definition of the purpose of her existence in the world ? Can she in the present day society assert her own individuality not as a woman but as a human being and not be held guilty in doing so. Now times has changed due to urbanisation, westernisation, liberalisation, industrialisation, secularisation, sanskritisation and modernisation. Indian woman today has become more educated and enlightened than her predecessors.

Inspite of these changes, woman in the contemporary times is still enslaved by centuries old traditional norms. A powerful strand of feminism is concerned the way in which men have controlled and subordinated women's 'bodies'. Feminist assert women's legal rights to their own bodies including the right to choose motherhood. But feminist also see motherhood as the empowerment of women as a means of influencing the future generations rather than simply as a way of reproducing patriarchy. However, the present day 'post feminist' seeks to question and changes in masculine hierarchy but not sexual dualism which is merely a biological fact. It is necessarily pro-women but this does not mean that it has to be anti- men.

Man-Woman relationship is itself a major issue of feminism. This relationship in modern times has undergone a sea-change. Formerly, woman in India was a typical product of tradition, considered as goddess but in reality destined to become a shadow of her husband, although some palliatives had been adroitly devised to keep her ego satisfied. For instance, no religious ceremony could be considered complete unless the wife sat by the husband to perform the religious rituals. Moreover, at the time of wedding, there were certain customary ceremonies which were performed and handled by woman.

Owing the change in social, economic, political religious, cultural conditions and the rise of feminism, women started enjoying greater importance, not only in society but also in the domestic circles and a notable change in their behaviour patterns. Bharati Mukherjee handles very tactfully the entirely new and controversial area of feminism related to the concept of traditional marriage, married life, pativrata, pregnancy, role of husband in the fulfilment of woman's feminine sensibility, issues of female sexuality, role of communication or understanding in man-woman relationship in her novels and short-stories.

In this relationship the hitherto celebrated conventions are changing rapidly and conventional values are crumbling very fast. Social norms and conventions have now been thrown to the winds. The taboos related to this relationship has underwent a drastic change that we perceive in her works.

Bharati Mukherjee repudiates the hollowness of the institutionalized Indian marriage. In Indian society right from childhood the girl child indoctrinated into the belief that marriage is the ultimate goal of a woman's life and her husband's home is only abode. Shashi Deshpande in her novel That Long Silence has well said, "A husband is like a sheltering tree ... without the tree, you're dangerously unprotected and vulnerable this followed logically. And so you have to keep the tree alive and flourishing, even if you have to water it with deceit and lies."³ Women are supposed to perform patriarchal concepts and ideal regarding marriage. One such ideal is the concept of pativrata i.e. total self abnegation and absolute submission to the will of husband. ✓

An ideal wife is expected to submerge her will within the will of her husband and harbour no desires of her own. She is expected to look upon her husband as the lord in order to relax her from worldly existence.

The ideal of Sita, Savitri, Gandhari and Padmini etc. is placed before her. Bharati Mukherjee deals with such ideal and quest of her protagonist Dimple in familial relationship particularly with her husband in her novel Wife(1975). In this environment Dimple Das Gupta is brought up by her parents. She is docile, obedient and submissive daughter of a middle class Bengali family, who try to find an ideal boy for her. She expects too much from the institution of marriage. "She thought of pre-marital life as a dress rehearsal for actual living." She is married to Amit Basu an ambitious engineer about to migrate to the United States, the golden land of honey, money and opportunity.

She entertains fantastic thoughts about marital life and sees it as an escape from her parental home. "Marriage, she was sure, would free her, feel her with her passion, discreet and virgin, she waited for real life to begin."(p.13) She hopes that marriage would offer her different kind of life :

An apartment in Chowringhee, her hair done by Chinese girls, trips to New Market for nylon sarees, so she placed her faith in neuro-surgeons and architects. She fantasized about young men with mustaches, dressed in spotless white,

peering into opened skulls. Marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, fund-raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love.(p.3)

" She was sure love would become magically lucid on her wedding day." (p.19) She wishes marriage to provide her happiness . She longs for love, for freedom of thought and expression from marriage. " That was supposed to be the best part of getting married, being free and expressing yourself."(p.20) Dimple in the very beginning projects the traditional role associated with wife and her faith in institutional marriage shows her traditionality. This aspect of her personality is depicted from her letter to the editor :

To question the goodness and the utility of marriage because statistics of women suicides is grim is to make a foolish and unjust attack on a long-lasting and noble way of life. Marriage is the song of the road and we all should sing it. Otherwise the virtue of our culture will wither and

fall off by the wayside. Are you forgetting the unforgettable Sita of legends ? Can you not recall how she walked through fire to please Ram, her kingly husband ? Did Sita humiliate him by refusing the stroll through fire in front of his subjects and friends. Let us carry the torch (excusable pun!) of Sita's docility!(p.27)

Her dreams are disillusioned immediately after her marriage. She showed her disliking for Amit's residence, his mother and sister. Basus are good people but their house is not that spacious and attractive. Her mother-in-law does not like her name 'Dimple' and starts calling her 'Nandini' which is not liked by Dimple. She thought that all these difficulties are not forever and started living in a world of imagination. But when she confronts the hard realities of life, feathers of her imagination are clipped. All her dreams are shattered one by one. She behaves in an unconventional manner regarding the news of her pregnancy. She admits, nobody has consulted her, "before ✓ deposing it in her body."(p.31) The rejection of pregnancy symbolically shows her rejection for Amit.

Amit fails Dimple on all planes - physical, mental and emotional. He could not fulfil psychological needs, need for love and affection and to understand. There is a contrast between the romantic outlook of Dimple and realistic outlook of Amit. Amit hurts her feminine sensibility by refusing to taste the salad that she prepared with great care and effort. She also offers to fix the tie for him as a good will gesture. Amit turns down the offer again. Hence the bickering and bantering. "On her very first day in New York's apartment she felt like a star collapsing inwardly."(p.69) She conveys her problems and fears to Amit but he fails to understand her feelings and psychological imbalances, her immoderate day time and sleeping, her night mares, her indecisioness everything remain unknown to him upto his dying day.

Marriage sets despair in her life. She thinks, " marriage was a chancy business, it could easily have been Jyoti instead of Amit that she had married since both were of the same caste and both were engineers."(p.85) "She was bitter that marriage had betrayed her, had not provided all the glittering things she has imagined."(p.102) " Her own body seemed curiously alien to her, filled with hate, malice, an insane desire to hurt, yet weightless, almost airborne."(p.117)

She complained again and again but Amit always turns a blind eye. She said:

I feel sort of dead inside and all you can do is read the paper and talk to me about food. You never listen, you've never listened to me. You hate me. Don't deny it ; I know you do. You hate me because I'm not fat and fair.(p.110)

The outburst of Dimple against Amit shows her increased sense of non-belonging. She is suffering from inferiority complex and thinks that she is not able to win her husband's love and affection. Amit is responsible for his ignorance of female psychology. He thinks that providing creature comforts is enough and hardly bothers for her emotional needs. He takes her out of four walls very rarely and goes on admonishing instead. "You must go out, make friends, do something constructive, not stay at home and think about Calcutta."(p.111) Her whole world is limited to the four walls of the apartment and media becomes her only friends. She feels like Pixie but drops the idea because she thinks friendship was impossible through letters."(p.120)

Amit was a traditional Indian husband. He wanted her to obey him like a devoted wife and work according to his wishes. She should not try to reverse the doctor-nurse, executive-secretary, principal-teacher role. When Dimple forgets to keep fresh lime water ready for Amit on his return from office then angry reaction of Amit shows that she had failed in her wifely duties. But he never peeps into his own nature. Does he always care for his wife? He never tries to fulfil her emotions. Amit could not feed her fantasy of small material comfort. "His disapproval was torture all her life she has been trained to please. He expected her like Sita, to jump into fire if necessary."(p.28) Amit was of the opinion that a woman should stay at home and look after her husband. So he says to Dimple, "You don't know how lucky you are to stay at home and doing nothing better than looking after a husband."(p.101)

Dimple has to cope with her traumatic conditions all alone. "She had expected pain when she had come to America, and told herself that pain was part of any new beginning, and the sweet structures of that new life had allotted pain in special place."(p.115) When a husband does not fulfil the emotional needs of his wife, the wife wants emotional satisfaction in the company of another man.

Shakespeare has rightly said in one of his plays that women get corrupt due to the fallacies of their husbands. Dissatisfied Dimple seeks solace in the company of Ina Mullick, Leni and Milt Glasser in her moment of crisis. But it was also in vain. Her illicit relation with Milt Glasser made her guilty. Her idea of the possibility of greater happiness with Milt Glasser ruins her attainable happiness with Amit in marital relationship. She confesses her love for Milt Glasser to Meena, "Whenever, I think of him, my heart dances a jig and there is an uncomfortable though exciting feelings in my throat. Is love to be measured by physiological symptoms ? Please help me, for I can't ascertain if this is really love. I just can't."(p.202)

Had Amit responded to her properly she might have confided in Amit. She felt a sense of emptiness in her marriage, in company of her friends even in America. Murder, suicide and mugging these are all fascinating words for her. Even her ways of getting rid of life are fanciful like a television advertisement. She can't trust anybody but media. Even " Her own body seemed curiously alien to her, filled with hate, malice, an insane desire to hurt, yet weightless, almost airborne."(p.117)

Linda Sandler account for this feeling of emptiness as follows :

She is uprooted from her family and her familiar world, and projected into a social vacuum where the media becomes her surrogate community, her global village. New York intensifies her frustrations and unhooks her further from reality.⁵

Dimple starts realizing her life was slow and full of miscalculations. Torn by her psyche and emotional needs and tensions, she becomes abnormal. Her husband appears no more than "chimera." she feels that she has lost her balance. She thinks that she is possessed by "some monster..." a creature of serpentine curls and heaving bosom that would erupt indiscreetly through one of Dimple's orifices."(p.156) Her TV world merges with the world of imagination and in consequence, she is left in confusion ... between what she had seen on T V and what she had imagined."(p.157) Dimple is conjured up as Kali- the death goddess she owns responsibility for killing the cacti, "...even the hardy little ivies and geraniums."(p.188)

Ultimately she gives up watching TV- "it was becoming the voice of madness."(p.176) And that leads to her decision to "...kill Amit and hide his body in the freezer."(p.195)

This idea makes her reconcile herself to the cultural shock that Amit thinks of all the time for Indian wives. That idea of murdering Amit makes her feel very American somehow, "Almost like a character in a TV series."(p.195) She takes the drastic step of murdering her husband by stabbing him seven times, signifies the dissolution of her disharmonious marital life. The Hindu rituals require the bride and the groom to walk around the sacred fire seven times to solemnize their vows. She seems to be symbolically destroying the marriage bond.

Under these circumstances, Dimple suffers alone and in a state of abnormality, she kills Amit instead of killing herself. Hence we draw the conclusion that success of marriage depends on the proper understanding and communication between the husband and the wife and too much expectation from marriage leads to frustration and misery.

Bharati Mukherjee's Wife resembles Arun Joshi's The Foreigner, the protagonist, Sindhi Oberoi comments upon the mode of life : "... I was a foreigner in America, but then what difference would it have made if I have lived in Kenya or India or any other place for that matter ? " ... my foreignness lay within me and I couldn't leave myself behind wherever I went

... "Significantly Dimple's problems does not lie 'out there' but it is within herself like the problem of Maya in Anita Desai's Cry, The Peacock.

Tara, the protagonist of The Tiger's Daughter is also a victim of emotional dissatisfaction. From the very beginning she desired the love of her father. Her father packed her off at the early age of fifteen for America because he was prompt by suspicion and pain about his country. She feels homesick in Poughkeepsie. As a typical Indian she feels proud of her family and genealogy. She defends her family and her country. At such moments when she thinks like breaking she even prays to goddess, Kali for strength. She could not receive healthy or fruitful treatment from her room-mates and they refuse to share the bottle of mango chutney with her. When at the end of May, that the first year abroad, girls around her prepare to go home. She is seized by a vision of terror :

She saw herself sleeping in a large carton on a side walk while hatted men made impious remarks to her. Headless monsters winked at her from eyes embedded in pudgy shoulders ... She sufferd fainting spells, headaches and

nightmares ... She complained home sickness in letters to her mother, who promptly prayed to Kali to save Tara's conscience, chastity and complexion.⁷

Little things pained her, luckily she fell in love with David, an American. Mukherjee's description of Tara's chance meeting with David betrays her faith in the inevitable :

Within fifteen minutes of her arrival at Greyhound bus station there (at Madison), in her anxiety to find a cab, she almost knocked down a young man. She didn't know then that she eventually would marry that young man.(p.14)

She married David even her parents did not like this marriage. David could not fulfil her feminine sensibility. He always complained of her placidity. "David was hostile to genealogies and had often misunderstood her affection for the family as overdependence.(p.64) He seemed like a figure standing a shadow or a foreigner with an accent of television. Tara could no longer visualize his face in its entirety only bits and pieces in precise details and this terrified her. And her husband was after all a foreigner.

After seven years of her marriage she visits India. There she realized that she was not married to a person but to a foreigner and this foreignness was a boredom. They were foreigner to each other in matters of love and emotions. But Tara hesitates to express herself fully before her foreigner husband, her relatives and friends. In their relationship, there was also a lack of proper communication.

Tara herself wonders at the foreignness of her spirit which does not permit her to establish an emotional kinship with her old friends and relatives :

How does the foreignness of spirit begin
? ... Does it begin right in the centre of
Calcutta, with forty ruddy Belgian
women, fat foreheads swelling under the
starched white headdresses, long black
habits intensifying the hostility of the
Indian sun.(p.37)

She meets her friends but even in their company antithetical feeling beset her. " She feared their tone their omissions their aristocratic oneness."(p.43) Even their attitudes change to her. Nobody tries to understand her. "Seven years ago, she had played with these friends, done homework with Nilima, briefly

fancied herself in love with Pronob, debated with Reena at the British Council."(p.43)

M. Sivaram Krishana blames American husband and western education for her feeling of rootlessness and lack of identity :

Tara in The Tiger's Daughter finds it difficult to relate herself to her family,city, culture in general since her marriage to an American, her western education are enough signs to brand her as an 'alienated' westernized woman. The implicit logic is that since she is exposed to the west and has absorbed its values she must be necessarily alienated. Therefore, even when she tries to 'voice' her continuing attachment for and identity with India, the voice does not carry conviction for it is at variance with the usual stance-of indifference and arrogance-one generally associates with the 'westernized' exiled Indian. ⁸

David could not understand Tara's emotions regarding her family. He remained hostile to genealogies and often mistakes her love for her family for overdependence. He asks naive questions about Indian customs and traditions and she feels completely insecure in an alien atmosphere because Madison Square was unbearable and her husband was after all a foreigner. For Tara "A husband is a creature from whom one hides one's most precious secrets. Tara had been dutifully devious in her marriage. She had not divulged her fears of mlechha men."(p.125)

According to M. Sivaram Krishana, The Tiger's Daughter is "visionless because it is voiceless." Tara's various questions about different modes of life are an attempt to communicate. "Though she writes to David regularly she fails to communicate her feelings to him. Because it was hard to tell a foreigner that she loved him very much when she was surrounded by the Bengal Tiger's chairs, tables, flowers and portraits."(p.63) Tara writes to her husband:

You can't imagine how I look forward to your letters, though they're not always as affectionate as I'd like them to be ... so Tara confided secrets in her letters to her husband, but

managed quiet deftly not to give her own feelings away."(p.130)

David couldn't understand Tara as he wrote in a letter to her, "He accused her of "stupid inanities," "callousness." He thought the customs she praised merely degraded the poor in India."(p.131)

Tara knew she could never tell David about the misery of her city and could not disclosed her heart broken seduction by a politician Tuntunwala during her visit to Nayapur. Earlier Tara has come across Mr. Tutunwala several times. His so called ideals appealed her, she tries to search a sort of relationship with him but this relationship ends in disaster:

But the outrage soon subsided, leaving a residue of unforgiving bitterness. She realized she could not share her knowledge of Mr. Tuntunwala with any of her friends. In a land where a friendly smile, and accidental brush of the fingers, can ignite rumors- even law suits- how is one to speak of Tuntunwala's violence ? The others could have to make their own compromises.(p.199)

This shows the helplessness of the woman in the man dominated society. So Tara proved a failure in her relationship with David because of emotional dissatisfaction. Neither she understood David nor she understood his society.

Tara's journey from Bombay to Calcutta, brings an equally disgusting experience to her. In Calcutta too, she finds everything changed and deteriorated. Calcutta was under the grip of violence due to riots caused by the confrontations of various classes of society. This shatters her dream of Calcutta. Her changed personality makes her unfit in company of her friends-Pronob, Reena and Nalini and makes her unable to participate in the ritual functions at home. She is disturbed as she is welcomed by her relatives and friends as 'Americawali' and her husband a 'mlechha'. Her aunt Jharna and her old Catelli Continental friends talk her husband David mlechha. Such remarks of distinction made her depressed.

Contrary to her expectation, attitude of her mother changed as she seems to be unhappy at her marriage. The following lines brings out an impact of this on the mind of Tara :

Perhaps her mother, sitting serenely before
God on a tiny rug, no longer loved her either.

After all Tara had willfully abandoned her caste by marrying a foreigner. Perhaps her mother was offended that she, no longer a real Brahmin, was constantly in and out of this sacred room, dipping like a crow.(p.50)

The most important cause aggravating her discomfort and unease in her marriage which hangs on her heart as a burdern :

In India she felt she was not married to a person but to a foreigner, and this foreignness was a burden. It was hard for her to talk about marriage responsibilities in Camac Street; her friends were curious only about the adjustments she had made."(p.62)

Tara's visit to Darjeeling with her friends also proved a failure of her friendly relationship. Darjeeling is as beautiful as ever. Tara tries to enjoy the beauty of blue mountains and natural surroundings in the company of her friends. Again she is disturbed as one of the members of the beauty contest sarcastically remarks about her, "I think your years abroad have robbed you of feminine propriety."(p.187)

In India, woman's fate is decided very early in her life because the parents start discriminating between their male and female child from the very beginning. It is incessantly hammered on the girls' consciousness that she has to move somewhere else and must be submissive and assimilative, come what may. Thus she starts a life of duality and conflicts since her childhood. After marriage, she comes across a new world, a world of Do's and Don'ts. A world together different from her earlier one. It is a sort of migration from one's ownself to an imposed one. Tara's situation should be looked at from this angle and Brinda Bose thinks along such lines:

Duality and conflict are not merely a feature of immigrant life in America; Mukherjee's women are brought up in a culture that presents them with such ambiguities from childhood. The breaking of identities and the discarding of languages actually begin early, their lives being shaped by the confluence of rich cultural and religious traditions, on the one hand, and the 'new learning' imposed by British colonialism in India,

on the other, These different influences involve them in tortured processes of self-recognition and self-assimilation right from the start; the confusion is doubled upon coming to America.⁹

Roshni Rustomji- Kerns, however, ascribes her failure to her constant nervousness regarding her role as a Bengali wife of an American :

Tara's petulance and constant nervousness regarding her role as the Bengali wife of an American, visiting her family in Calcutta; overshadows her well- intentioned efforts to understand her world of diverse cultures.¹⁰

The heroine of Jasmine depicts the radical changes in her outlook of marriage and husband. She is opposed to that sort of marriage where life-partner remain ignorant about each-other till the day of marriage. She refuses to marry the sick widower of Ludhiana against the wishes of her grand mother and father. She likes and loves English. As she says:

I couldn't marry a man who didn't speak English or atleast who didn't

want to speak English. To want English was to want more than you had been given at birth, it was to want the world."(p.68)

She falls in love with Prakash and marries him. In their relationship, we notice a cordial relationship between a husband and a wife. Prakash wanted to break down Jyoti of Hasnapur and wanted to make her a new city woman:

To break of the past, he gave a new name : Jasmine. He said, You are small and sweet and heady, my Jasmine. you will quicken the whole world with perfume. Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttle between identities.(p.77)

She takes a close look of her husband's driving ambition for doing better, making something more of her life than fate intended. Jasmine's Prakash has very sound notions about the role of the husband. He says to Jasmine, "Bhartar (husband) don't "share losses only winnings." The husband must protect the wife whenever he can. Where it is written that the sixteen -years-old girl can share a man's losses ? Such a man should be put in jail.(p.90)

After marriage she becomes a true wife in the Indian sense of the terms identifying her husband wishes with those of hers. Prakash's ardent wish is to secure admission in some obscure American Institute of Technology. They start dreaming about their life in America. But the ill-luck would have it. Prakash is shot dead by a Sikh terrorist, Sukhi.

Jasmine decides to leave for America in order to fulfil her late husband's mission. A village girl, going alone to America without job, husband or papers. She is illegal, immigrant in America. The captain of the ship, Half Face rapes the Hindu widow against her wishes, so she murders him. Jasmine's killing of Half Face is a kind of self-assertion. After this violent encounter with the ugly world, Jasmine starts afresh ; sans money, sans idea about the surroundings- hungry and thirsty, broken in body and mind. Luckily she happens to meet Lillian Gordon, a kind of Quaker lady who harbours her, pities her situation, calls her Jazzy and teaches her to talk, walk and dress like an American. She advises her : "Let the past make you wary, by all means. But do not let it deform you."(p.131)

Here among the Vadhera, she is helpless widow, not entitled to enjoy life. This life is terrifying to her, "I wanted to

distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti like."(p.145) America has so many surprises for Jasmine in it's "Pandora box". Professor Vadhera was a person who inspired Prakash to seek admission in America. After the death of Prakash, Jasmine came to America to fulfil her husband's mission. She contacted Prof. Vadhera to arrange a green card for her, then he said:

All right. I shall make all the necessary arrangements. But this is not something we want to discuss with my wife and parents. She held him in a high esteem and touched his feet in respect. Prof. ji came through but he was emotionally tight with Nirmala, with his parents with me. I was grateful, and I admired him, but didn't understand him. He was secretive, he was parsimonious with his affections.(p.150)

Prof. Vadhera doesn't tell his wife, Nirmla, even his actual place of working and keeps her in darkness about the

nature of his job. "Prof. ji, was not a professor. He was an importer and exporter of human hair. The hair came in great bundles from middlemen in villages as small as Hasnapur all over India."(p.151)

For the first time, Jasmine realizes the reality of immigrant life in America and she rationalizes Vadhera's act :

He needed to work here, but he did not have to like it. He had sealed his heart when he'd left home. His real life was in an unlivable land across oceans.

He was a ghost, hanging on.(p.153)

In New York street Jasmine sees "more greed, more people."(p.153) like herself. New York seems to be "an archipelago of ghettos seething with aliens."(p.140)Next, we see Jasmine in an apartment on Clearmont Avenue, Manhattan with Taylor and Wylie Hayes as a care giver to their adopted daughter Duff. When she comes to know that Duff is not a natural child, but an adopted one, her reactions are culturally revealing :

I could not imagine a non genetic child.
A child that was not my own, or my husband's, struck me as a monstrous

idea. Adoption was as foreign to me as the idea of widow remarriage.(p.170)

For Jasmine, "care giver's life is a good life, a worthy life."(p.240). This is the best period of her stay in the United States. Jasmine is impressed by the treatment shown to her by Taylor and Wylie. As she says:

Taylor loved me and needed me, needed me even more now that there was Stuart. She said she needed me, too, and on weekends or whenever they arranged Duffs's visits, I'd go to her with Duff. They were n't about to abandon me.(p.182)

Taylor is a true professor and at once she feels impressed by his humane conduct :

I fell in love with what he represented to me, a professor who served biscuits to a servant, smiled at her, and admitted her to the broad democracy of his joking. (p.167)

Taylor gives her a new name "Jase" and she is all excited about her life with the Hayeses. She recalls " Duff was my child; Taylor and Wylie were my parents, my teachers, my

family."(p.65) "Wylie made me feel her younger sister. I was family, and I was professional." (p.175) In their company, she became more Americanized, more confident of her proficiency in English. But her instinctive Indian values do surface now and then. Her Indian sense of values can't tolerate the sight of "naked bodies combing their hair in front of dresser mirrors."(p.171) She records her disgust :

Truely there was no concept of the
shame in this society. I'd die before a
Sob Sister asked me about Half
Face.(p.171)

Jasmine is full of praise about Taylor when she remarks "This was a man. I had observed for over two years, who had been unfailingly kind, never condescending, always proud of my achievements. I would listen. And then I would do."(p.187)

Jasmine is astonished to know Wylie's decision to leave Taylor for economist Stuart in search of "real happiness". (p.181) She feels puzzled." I realized for the first time at least a year in America had thrown me again. There was no word, I could learn, no one I could consult, to understand, what Wylie was saying or why she had done it."(pp.181-182)

This is beyond imagination for Jasmine to think of snapping her bonds with her husband. She comes to realize the "liquidity" and "transitoriness" of human relationship in America. She gets the bitterest lesson :

In America, nothing lasts. I can say that now and it doesn't shock me but I think it was the hardest lesson of all for me to learn. We arrive so eager to learn, to adjust, to participate, only to find the monuments are plastic, agreements are annulled. Nothing is forever, nothing is so terrible, or so wonderful, that it won't disintegrate. (p.181)

"Taylor did not want to change me. He didn't want to scour and sanitize the foreignness. My being different from Wylie or Kate didn't scare him. I changed because I wanted to."(p.185) Jasmine lived for future, or Vijn and Wife. Jase went to movies and lived for today."(p.176) She thinks that she has got an established home and now she will no longer be haunted by rootlessness, "I had landed and was getting rooted."(p.179) But still her destination is not reached and she is forced to run from New York. She sights the assassin of her

husband Sukhwinder, and runs for life to Iowa. But her escape is not a sign of her cowardice, it is life affirming, "She (Jasmine) is running away for life not escaping from life which is a positive step."¹² Pushpa N. Parekh thinks that Jasmine's stay at Taylor's for two years is the most fruitful period of her life in America.:

This period in Jasmine's life is the most restful and comforting, emotionally and psychologically, intellectually, however, it is a phase of minute observations of complex inner deliberations on, and keen involvement in her new environment.¹³

Once, at Hasnapur Jasmine's mother wisely commented about the nature of husbands. As she herself admits the hard reality :

My mother always warned me that a husband has layers, like an onion, and you'll still find things to surprise you, usually bad things - since men show of their good side very early - years and years after you marry. May be he was possessive and jealous even

a secret drunk, reeling around the bedroom trying not to spill a glass of antacid, and I was stuck with him.(p.82)

Jasmine life takes a new turn in Iowa when she meets Mother Ripplemayer who helps her getting a job in her son Bud's bank as a teller girl. After six months, she became his companion. Bud not only gives her new life but also a new name -Jane. When Jane meets Bud, he is " a tall, fit, fifty-year old banker, husband of Karin, father of Buddy and Vern."(p.40) But after six months, he was a divorcee living with her. Asia has transformed him, made him reckless and emotional. He wanted to make-up for fifty years of "selfishness", as he calls it.(p.14)

After one year, he is a crippled man living with his Asian wife and adopted son Du, who is a Vietnamese brought from a refugee by him. Nobody is safe in violence torn America. Bud falls a victim to one Harlan Kroener who shoots him living maimed. "Bud may no longer be a whole man, but desire hasn't deserted him. Lust deprived of spontaneous fulfillment: that's what shames him now. Once he had been in control; once he had been an impulsive pursuer." (p.36)

Jasmine tells about Bud when she saw him for the first time. And she was fascinated by his personality and now she repents when he becomes a crippled man as she points out :

When we first met and began making love in my rented room and in the motel rooms of neighboring towns, he was active and inventive, very sure of himself, he loved games. Now I must do all the playing, provide the surprises, I don't mind. His upper body is enormously strong, the bench press of love. It isn't the preparations (for all their awkwardness and crudeness) that I rage against. What kills me in this half-lit bedroom is the look of torture, excitement, desperation on Bud's face as he watches me.(p.36)

In America familial relations are not permanent. " In the America Du Knows, mothers are younger than sisters, mothers are illegal aliens, murders, rape victims; in Du's America, parents are unmarried, fathers are invalids, shot in the back on the eve of Christmas Eve."(p.224)

"Karin still in love with Bud. She didn't leave Badan. She could have, but she chose to stay. The world is divided between those who stay and those who leave. "It was love. Extravagant love. He thought, he could atone for something."(p.228) "I say for being American, blessed, healthy, innocent, in love.(p.228) Karin further adds, "This is a puritan country ; we're born with guilt or quickly learn it. Guilt twist a person."(p.228) As Karin says, "I am a Tornado. I hit the trailer parks first the prefabs, the weakest links. How many more shapes in me, how many more selves, how many more husbands."(p.215) Jasmine herself admits, " I have had a husband for each of the women. I have been Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane, Half-Face for Kali."(p.197) "I survived the sniping. My grandmother may have named me Jyoti, light, but in surviving, I was already Jane, a fighter and adapter."(p.40)

Bud changed the life of Jasmine, she was grateful to him. She "thought of Bud as secular god of Badan, and everyone in the town as his devotee. Shooting was unthinkable, deicid, worse than assassinating the Mahatma." (p.196) "Bud wants to marry him," officially," he says, before the baby comes. People assume we're married. He's a small-town banker, he's

not allowed to do impulsive things. I'm less than half his age, and very foreign. We're the kind who marry. Going for me is this, he wasn't in a wheelchair when we met. I didn't leave him after it happened.(p.7) All through her stay more than three years in Iowa Jasmine has been faithful to Bud. She has acted like an Indian woman who sacrifices all her individuality at the holy shrine of matrimony. She thinks that even the memory of the past life amount to a kind of disloyalty to Bud. Because she feel frightened. With the change of time, her attitude towards Bud also changed. "Bud's face, gray,ghostly, bodyless, floats in narrowing circles."(p.239) around she does not care for this man "who is loosing his world."(p.239) Taylor and Duff come to take her to California where the new world of promises and fortunes is eagerly awaiting her. In deserting Bud and choosing Taylor, Jasmine doesn't exchange between men, but she changes her whole world as she herself confides,"I'm not choosing men. I'm caught between promise of America and old-world dutifulness."(p.240)

She leaves Bud and prefers Taylor because she is "greedy with wants and reckless from hope.(p.241) For her realization of the self is more important than human relations. She doesn't feel guilty of her decisions to leave Bud :

It is not guilt that I feel, it's relief ...
 adventure, risk, transformation ; the
 frontier is pushing indoors through
 uncaulked windows."(p.240)

Hannah, the protagonist of The Holder of the World never shares her emotional tumult with anyone. Hannah, the somber orphan, was brought up by Robert and Susanah Fitch at Herbert Street in Salam. She neither forgets nor forgives her mothers crime of elopment or infidelity. "She has witnessed the Fall not Adam's Fall, Rebecca's Fall. Her mother's fall, infinitely more sinful than the Fall of a man."¹⁴ She was creative and imaginative child. Through her embroidery perhaps she expressed her hidden, subdued and suppressed emotions. In her embroidery Hannah correlates her emotional self. Bharati Mukherjee reiterates:

She had always thought of herself as one
 who watched, who had the privilege of
 remaining outside family or society by
 virtue of her loss and secrets.(pp.53-54)

Hannah longed to escape from the claustrophobic atmosphere and she found Gabriel Legge to help her. Hannah instinctively agrees to marry not as much out of love for him

but as a way of squeezing out of her constructive frontier society. "She didn't believe in him but she too longs for escape."(p.67) Hannah's married life in London itself was without passion, with no proper communication and love for her husband. "His life was mystery to her, fabulously rich when he chose to embellish it but otherwise a blank."(p.71) He pointed to her that his life was provisional. She couldn't be looked after. "New world man was either an ungrateful wretch wallowing in moral regression or the upright angel of God's green promise, reaping the rewards of sober rectitude."(pp.71-72) She counters with Herbert, a man of calm and good personality, fed her fantasy of traveling abroad. He was the man who was capable of encouraging her hidden impulses and desire.

Hannah was not that innocent of the male entitlements, but she has never learnt the code of female accommodation. To accommodate meant to demonstrate, an intention to please, even on occasion to yield, but with a view to establishing control.(p.132)

She was a self-willed woman.

She hadn't led the desperate sort of life, like Sarah, that substituted gratitude for tolerance. She was a faithful wife who had attracted her share of suitable beaux and suitors, and who resisted courting and temptations even when expectations and opportunities presented themselves.(p.144)

Every English husband strayed into infidelity. Gabriel too had found himself a bibi. "Hannah knew the word, but did not let on. Bibis-their uses their place, their importance and the need for tolerance thereof-constituted the opening lecture of old Company wives to Company novices."(pp.130-131)

To Hannah's friends a bibi was an annoyance, not a threat. Hannah senses this obsession with bibis early on her stay in Fort St. Sebastian. "It seemed to Hannah that bibis, suspected and real, were at the center of most female conversations in White Town."(p.131) Martha's teaching was indirect to Hannah. "Black bibis know that their place so a wife's safety lies in assigning them a place that is harmless.

Perverse pleasures could be demanded of them and satisfied without harm to anybody. Accommodation was synonymous with expatriate femininity."(p.134)

Martha's advice to Hannah shows the craze of English women when she says, "let your husband provide you all necessities. You provide yourself the amenities. Acquaint yourself with a trader."(p.137) Robert Fitch tells Hannah crude arithmetic of survival : "Man out of the gate, worth wait; man in the house, mend your blouse."(p.76) Hannah doesn't like the hypocritical personal relationship.

Hannah leaves Gabriel on ground of faithlessness and next sees his ship sinking. She herself should had been drowned when a bridge collapsed but she is saved by Jadav Singh, Raja of Devgarh, only to become his bibi afterwards. Is it not ironical that the same Hannah who leaves her husband for keeping a 'bibi' in the end becomes a bibi herself carrying an illegitimate child ? Hannah wanted to enjoy passionate life. Her courtship with the Raja indicates a relationship based entirely on Indian, 'Eastern' values and morality with the little reference to the life left behind.

He offers Hannah a life of limitless possibilities and sensuous pleasures undreamed of in the English world. The Eastern love makes her more emotional. It transforms her

mentality and her personality. She identifies herself completely with her Indian lover. She is ready to sacrifice herself at the altar of true love.

She wanted the Raja and nothing else; she would sacrifice anything for his touch and the love they made. What she felt for the Raja was of a different order from what she had felt for Gabriel, or not dared to feel for Hubert. Gabriel and Hubert, for all their distinctive eccentricities, were men cast in one familiar mold, men who thrilled and disappointed within a predictable range. The Raja was an agent of Providence. He had saved her life, then saved her from the chilly, unfulfilled life of a governess. (pp.229-230)

Ultimately Hannah discovers that "The survivor is one who improvises, not follows, the rules." (p.234) This is an indirect message of the author herself. She stresses that those people can survive in alien world who are adaptive and who can shape themselves according to the availabilities of space by improvising upon their native rules.

After the defeat of the Raja Jadav Singh, she encounters with the Great Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb with courage and confidence. She is ready to sacrifice her life to end the war. Finally, she wins the heart of 'Alamgir' who hails her with a very precious title : "For your white skin, for the luster of your spirit, for the one-in-a-lakh, I give you these pearls, I call you Precious- as-Pearls."(p.270) She sent them back, too, with her gratitude. To accept would be to acknowledge his attempt to influence her. Beigh Masters, the narrator, passes the final judgement about Hannah's character and personality when she acknowledges :

Wherever she stayed ... she would have changed history, for she was one of those extraordinary lives through which history runs a four-lane highway(p.189)

Hannah returns to Salem where she locates his mother from a mental asylum and brings up her daughter, "Black Pearl" and fearlessly stays in Salem all her life. She has learnt from India the value of true love.

In The Middleman and Other Stories , the protagonist of "A Wife's Story" is an Indian Mrs. Panna Bhatt. She is an aspiring modern woman who doesn't believe in traditional marriage, role related to her husband and purity from the side of woman only. She adopted herself to the new modes of life in America that she feels light almost free. She goes to America for Ph.D. Course in special education. She left her husband and home and says, "I've made it. I'm making something of my life. I've left home, my husband, to get Ph.D. in special ed."¹⁵ The marriage of Panna was "a traditional marriage in which a wife still doesn't call her husband by his first name."(p.31) She says about her husband:

My husband would never dance or hug a woman on Broadway . Nor would my brothers. They aren't stuffy people but they went to Anglican boarding schools and they have a well developed sense of what's silly.(p.27)

She has settled down physically and emotionally in New York. She had broadened her horizon. She is quite open in making love with other, making herself free from traditional shapes associated with a mother, a wife. But she reacts in an opposite manner to that of a traditional woman.

She behaves as a modern educated woman who finds that marriage allows only an outward semblance of freedom. Indian society is still very conventional in its approach in marriage and despite numerous contradictions husband and wife strive to maintain an outward show of balance and harmony. She believes in the autonomy of sex. She has left the past behind her. She says about American :

I don't hate Mamet. It's the tyranny of the American dream that scares me. First, you don't exist. Then you're invisible. Then you're funny. Then you're disgusting. Insult, my American friends will tell me, is a kind of acceptance. No instant dignity here. A play like this, back home, would cause riots, communal, racists, and antisocial.(p.24)

When Panna Bhatt goes to her Indian husband, Mr. Patel, she dresses herself according to the Indian tradition to please her husband and adopts the form of an Indian wife :

I change out of cotton pants and shirts I've been wearing all day and put on a sari to meet my husband at JFK. I don't

forget, the jewellery; the marriage necklace of mangalsutra, gold drop earrings, heavy gold bangles. I don't wear them everyday.(p.33)

Panna knows, " He is not an emotional man - the Ahamdabad Institute of Management has trained him to cut losses to look on the bright side of the economic catastrophes."(p.31) He has inherited notions of marriage duty. He says,"He needs me, he misses me, he wants me to come to him damp from my evening shower, smelling of sandalwood soap, my braid decorated with Jasmine's."(p.31) Panna realizes that her husband doesn't understand her psychological needs. So there is no rapport between the husband and the wife.

In "Fighting For the Rebound," a story from The Middle and the Other Stories the novelist also depicts the hollowness of life-partners without any love or any fulfilment. Griff tells to Blanquita, " Self love may be too much like self hate."(p.88) "Sex, intimacy, love, I can't keep any of it straight any more."(p.89) In the other story, "The Tenant" the protagonist Maya is typical immigrant who has been wandering many places : Calcutta, North Carolina, New Jersey and finally Iowa has indulged in sexual encounters with many persons. "Maya

has slept with married men with nameless men, with men little more than boys. But never with an Indian man. Never."(p.102) Apparently the story of her "Indiscretions" with various men, her marriage and divorce to an American, is known to entire Bengali community in North America. She has been marked as a "loose" woman and as a divorcee, and therefore cannot ever hope to remarry respectably in the Indian community. Dr. Chatterji comments : "Divorced women can date, they can go to bars and discos. They can see mens, many mens. But inside marriage there is no such loneliness."(p.107)

Maya is also aware of the Indian mentality about marriage.

Indian men want Indian brides. Married
Indian men want Indian mistresses. All over
America, "handsome, tall, fair" engineers,
doctors, data processors- the new pioneers-
cry their eerie love calls. (p.109)

Maya is bold adventurer who has made a clean break with her Indian past but Maya understands, that there is no such thing as 'clean' break. "She has changed her citizenship, but she hasn't broken through into the light, the vigour, the

bustle, of the new world."(p.110) In the end, Maya doesn't hope to meet the man who make her whole in this new life. She is dissatisfied with her life because she is divided between two cultures, the East and the West. She remains neither an American nor an Indian. Her fate is like a fate of a tenant. Once a tenant is always a tenant. So we see no sanctity of human relationship in the character of Maya.

Babli - a character in "A father", a story from Darkness, is the true manifestation of modern woman who hates man and marriage. When Babli's father comes to know about her daughter's pregnancy, he becomes happy, but his happiness turns into a shock and violence when he hears that she has gone in artificial insemination out of hatred for men. Babli says :

Who needs a man? The father of my baby
is a bottle and a syringe. Men louse your
lives. I just want a baby.¹⁶

If this means that child bearing and rearing has been reduced to an animal activity then what is the utility of Indian marriage and parentswood. "Yes, yes, yes," she screamed, "Like livestock. Just like animals. You should be happy - that's what marriage all about, isn't it matching blood lines, matching

horoscopes, matching caste, matching, matching, matching."(p.73) Bharati Mukherjee comments on the futility of traditional Indian marriage. Babli's rejection of a father for her unborn child is also a rejection of her father and everything paternity stands for.

One can thus contend that the major issues of all the writings of Bharati Mukherjee revolves around the human relationship particularly the man-woman relationship. This relationship makes all the differences. Relationship can't grow from nothing. It is developed from love, association, fulfilments of the needs of husbands and wives. If they fail to discharge their duty in proper way, the charm of married life vanishes. In all these novels and short stories, the novelist highlights the positive and negative effects and concept related to personal and familial values. For good and healthy marital relationship between men - women proper communication, love, emotional satisfaction and understanding are timely needed.

Society is rapidly changing and this is affecting our day to day life styles. The relation between man-woman is a matter of great importance in our lives. Cracks often appear in relationship because of some upheavals like infidelity, lust for money, egoistic nature of the partners, change in the cultural

and social values, disintegration of joint families, lack of proper communication and understanding. The mosaic novels and stories highlights the fact that man-woman relationship is a very complex and subtle issue. It is through the forging of human relationships governed by norms and values as they evolve in society that an individual can fulfil himself as well as help the selves of other individual fulfil themselves. It is in this sense that Bharati Mukherjee's novels can be seen as well - wrought chronicles of the quest for personal and familial values, undertaken by diverse protagonists in disparate contexts.

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CHAPTER - IV
SPIRITUAL AND
RELIGIOUS
VALUES

Chapter-IV

Spiritual and Religious Value

' A man is made by the places in which he lives.'

Graham Greene

Everyman has his own philosophy of life. Geographical, sociological, psychological and religious conditions determine his way of thinking. Setting in various environment plays an active role in conditioning the behaviour of character by inscribing them in a specific social, political, cultural and geographical framework. Eliot believes that there is a very close relationship between culture and religion. It is religion of people which makes them culturally different from the people of other faith. Two religions may have something in common but their differences might bring about a clash among their followers. It is very difficult to reconcile separate ways of life, shaped into religions.

India is a land of spiritualism. In India spiritual doctrine influences the behaviour of persons. The vision of spirituality is clear in all the fictional works of Bharati Mukherjee. We see the spiritual values in her writings. Bharati Mukherjee spent her childhood and adolescent period in India. She has inherited the spiritual and religious values from her family and

the society in which she lived. It is said that the creative writer perceives his world once for all in childhood and adolescence and his whole career is an effort to his private world in terms of great public world we all share. This exactly applies in case of Bharati Mukherjee. It is natural that in this materialistic world passions and spiritual preoccupation are replaced by business and bargains. It is clear that culture owes much of its existence to religion. An individual, class or group or a society's way of living is moulded and shaped by its religion which in turn becomes the religion of that particular society. In other words we can say that culture and religion are complimentary to each other.

Tara, the protagonist in The Tiger's Daughter, remembers mother Kali in time of distress." She prayed to Kali for strength so she would not break down before these polite Americans. And Kali, who was a mother nursing her infant, serene, black, exquisite, and Kali, who was a mother devouring her infant, furious, black and exquisite, who sat under silk saris in a suitcase at Vassar, smiled at her mischievously."² Tara's father advises his daughter regarding her marriage with Dr. Amya Chakravorti through a letter,

All your Mummy and I can say is that this opportunity is heaven-sent. We are modern progressive people, we do not in any way wish to force you into marriage. We shall leave the rest of this matter in your hands and of course to Fate...Do not act with any undue haste, or any degree of unnaturalness. Whatever God does is for the best, or as the lonely lady would say : Que sera', sera."(pp.126-127)

This idea resembles with the idea of Ashavapti, father of Savitri, regarding her marriage. He says to his queen that it is not wise to muddle with high matters. Such matters are always guarded by destiny.

Tara's mother Arati was a religious lady. She wished that worship of Mata Kananabala would benefit and help in solving the problems of Tara. "Devoties came to see Mata Kananabala Devi not from all over India, but from America and England as well".(p.168) "Americans stand for modernism.

If through intuition or prophetic dream Tara's mother had divined the full importance of Tara's visit to the shrine, she would have insisted on consulting palmists and horoscopes to determine the most propitious instant for such an outing. She believed in good and bad days, even good and bad hours within good days.(p.168)

Her parents considered it unwise to talk of the shrines and pilgrimage in front of foreigners. They'd not even mention their kirtans or pujash in letters to her and David. In revealing the purpose of their ride in palanquin Tara felt she was betraying her whole family. "All faith leads to the same god, Faith is all that counts," said Arati.(p.171)

The writer also mentions about fate and Hindu deities in this novel. Tara thought a Hindu was always set apart by this God. The icons before her seemed so exuberant on the silk table cloths that she wanted to rely on them. In a letter to Tara Arati writes, "I'm sure Goddess Saraswati will make you famous and doctorate soon. I've told your grand mother (paternal)

that I may not have sons like her, but my one daughter is equal to ten sons. I shall pray to Saraswati for success in your exams. On Saraswati Puja days remember to wear something yellow, she has always looked after you before."(p.52) "Now, like her mother, she too believed in miracles and religious experiences. She knew men could walk in fire and sleep on beds of nails. (p.174)"Come along now, Let's not talk of sad things here. As the lovely lady said, "Que sera', sera'. What will be, will be. We are all powerless."(p.29)

In Jasmine too the astrologer cackled, "What is to happen will happen."³ Bharati Mukherjee comments, "change in the anatomies of nations or continents are easy to perceive. But changes by gods or titans are too subtle for measurement. At first the human mind suffers premonitions, then it learns to submit."(p.7)

The Novelsit highlights the role of fate and prayer in the novel entitled Wife. Dimple the protagonist in the novel does not cope with her fate. Mrs. Das Gupta, mother of Dimple advises Dimple, "You must be satisfied what God has given to you." But use it to your best advantage."⁴ And pray to the Lord Shiva to get an ideal husband. When Amit was in search of a job in America Dimple told Amit, "Do not worry, you'll get

a job."(p.52) She said,"I pray every night so there is no way you can fail." In a letter to Dimple Mrs. Das Gupta devised her,"I hope you still pray every day and aren't picking up any bad habits from all those influences." (p.60)

Dimple liked punctuality, creativity and doing with challenges. She tells Amit,"Why do you worry, when you are so qualified ? Engineers can get jobs in any country."(p.57) Dimple heard Amit say, "Boredom is the devil's workshop or however that proverb goes. The point is you must go out, make friends, do something constructive, not stay at home and think about Calcutta."(p.111)

Dimple wanted to enjoy drink in the company of Ina Mullick but she could not do so in the presence of Amit. "It was sad, she thought, how marriage cut off glittering alternatives. If fate had assigned her not Amit but some other engineer, she might have been a very different kind of person."(p.126) "Life should have treated her better, should have added and subtracted in different proportions so that she was not left with a chimera. Amit was no more than that. He did not feed her any reveries; she felt sick."(p.156) Amit was annoyed from the behaviour of Dimple. "What the hell do you all day ?" He asked. In the next incarnation I want to be a wife and n't at

home and doing nothing".(p.129) Amit held the Ganges in high esteem. "Amit said that she would find his life insurance policy in drawer of the night table and that he wanted to be cremated and have his ashes scattered over the Ganges".(p.167)

In opening chapter of the novel Jasmine Mukherjee uses an archetypal image of Shiva's 'Third Eye' When Jyoti gets a star shaped wound on her forehead while scavenging fire wood in the fields. She shouted, "It's my third eye." (p.5) In the stories that our mother, recited the holiest sages developed an extra eye right in the middle of their foreheads through that eye they peered out into invisible world. "Now I'm a sage"(p.5) The third eye gives her a wide and true perspective in life. She learns to look back the past like coward and looks into future with pain and hope. In her final journey in America she is "Greedy with wants and reckless from hope."(p.241) It is as if like Shiva she swallowed the cosmos whole. As she puts so emphatically in the end of the novel:

The smell of singed flesh is always with me. Du and I have seen death up close. We've stowed away on boats like Half-Face we've hurtled through time tunnels. We've seen the worst and

survived like creatures in fairy tales, we've
strunk and we've swollen and we have
swallowed the cosmos whole.(p.240)

Another significant image that Bharati Mukherjee associates with Jyoti's ardent rebellious spirit is her encounter with the soft water logged carcass of a small dog whose body was rotten and eyes had been eaten:

The movement I touched it, the body
broke in two as though the water had
been its glue. A stench leaked out of
the broken body and then both
quickly sank. The stench stays with
me. I'm twenty four now I live in
Badan, Elsa County, Iowa but every
time I lift a glass of water to my lips,
fleetingly I smell it. I know what I
don't want to become(p.5)

Obviously Jasmine does not want to be broken body and spirit like the drowned dead dog.

Another archetypal image that the novelist uses to bring out the protagonist feminist trait is that of Kali, the Goddess of destruction of the Demons of the Evil Incarnate. But in Hindu

mythology Kali is also an Incarnation of Durga, the Goddess of Strength who acts for the liberation of the oppressed and destitute. The use of this metaphor for Jasmine on her first day in Florida, America she is raped by a Caribbean called Half-Face. She contemplates but the survival instinct overcomes her bravery. She Kali - like kills Half- Face rather than killing herself. "I could not let my personal dishonour disrupt my mission".(p.118)

Later she performed a token funeral behind the motel by burning Prakash's suit and looks at white sari. She had thought to burn herself. Out of the ashes a new self of Jasmine takes place. The novelist fuses into another powerful archetypal image of the broken pitcher.

I said my prayers for the dead,
clutching my Ganpati. I thought, the
pitcher is broken. Lord Yama, who had
wanted me, who had courted me, and
whom I'd flirted with on the long trip
over, had now deserted me."(p.120)

She points out that the pitcher is broken. There is no difference between the inside and outside air. The feminist of the nineties marches on questing for a new identity.

Jasmine takes a close look of her husband's driving ambition for "doing better making something more of her life than fate intended." (p.85) She realized while going abroad she would nullify prophecy of old crazy astrologer. " If we could just get away from India, then all fates would be cancelled. We'd start with new fates, new stars. We could say or be anything we wanted. We'd be on the other side of the earth, out of God's sight." (p.85) When her husband Prakash is shot down by the fundamentalist Sukhi she is not broken in adversity. She resolves to reshape her identity. She wants to fulfil her late husband's mission. Her brothers managed forged passport for her to go to America. She undertakes the trip and overcomes all hardships to achieve her sacred mission. On her first day at Florida she is raped by Half-Face and she Kali like murders him. She wanted to commit suicide. "It is the murkiness of the mirror and a sudden sense of mission that stopped me. What if my mission was not yet over ? I didn't feel the passionate embrace of Lord Yama that could turn a kerosene flame into a lovers caress". (pp.117-118)

"Theoretically, I believe in reincarnation", I say, I am astounded by all this, the Americans need to make intuition so tangible, to possess a vision so privately." (p.125)

I am moved by Mary Webb's story- what if the human soul is eternal- the swamis say of it, fire can not burn it, water cannot drown it, winds cannot bend it what if it is like a giant long-playing record with millions of tracks, each of them a complete circle with only one diamond-sharp microscopic link to the next life and the next and only God to hear it all ? I do believe that. I do believe that extraordinary events can jar the needle arm, jump tracks, rip across incarnations, and deposit a life into grove that was not prepared to receive it.(pp.126-127)

There is a large dose of Hindu philosophy in this novel. The novelist mentions the Hindu dieties in the novel - Lord Brahma, Shiva,Ganpati, Yama and Goddess Kali."We are just shells of the same Absolute."(p.15) and again, "The scale of Bharma is vast as vast as space in the Universe".(p.60) "My body was merely the shell, soon to be discarded.Then I could be reborn, debts and sins all paid for."(p.121) "We are all put on this

earth with a purpose. Mata ji would have said. All act are connected. For every monster there is a hero. For every hero, a monster."(p.114) That every second of your existence as a possible assignment from God."(p.61)

The novelist also points that there is no true relationship in this mortal world. On the death of Jasmine's father his Lahori friend consoles her mother, "Why cry ? Crying is selfish. We have no husbands, no wives, no fathers, no sons. Family life and family emotions are illusions. The Lord lends us a body, gives us an assignment, and sends us down. When we get the job done, the Lord calls us home again for the next assignment."(p.59) This is an old Indian value which stands for the world as illusion. "In Hasnapur Dida told stories of Vishnu, the Preserver containing our world inside his potbellied stomach."(p.223-224) "In my life I have never dithered. God's plan have always seemed clearly laid out."(p.189)

In the stories that our mother recited, the holiest sages developed an extra eye right into the middle of their foreheads through that eye they appeared out into invisible world. "She considered the scar on her forehead as 'Third Eye', With the help of that eye she can see the past, present and the future. As she says, " Now I am a sage."(p.5) She says about Du, "

But he is a real yogi, always in control"(p.18).Goddness and evil square off every movement. Forgiveness implies belief in an ultimate triumph. I dream only neutralizing harm, not absolute and permanent conquest".(p.203)

The title The Holder of the World, the literal translation of Alamgir, is a name of Aurangzeb. This is story of two white women, one living in the seventeenth century and the other in the present one who becomes obsessed with retracing the former's transformation from puritan girl brought in Salem in Massachussets to be the Bibi of a Hindu king Jadav Singh of Devgarh. Beigh Masters,narrator of the story, describes her job as " Uniting people and possessions, it's like matching orphaned sockes through time." ⁵

She learns from the book, Auctions and Acquisitions that though the "people and their property get seperated, a people want to keep their assests hidden. "Nothing is ever lost, but continents and centuries sometimes get in their way."(p.5) Both Beigh Masters and her Indian lover, Venn Iyer - a computer scientist-are dealers in the thing of past.They claim, " The past presents itself to us."(p.6) Venn is of the view that every time-traveller will create a different reality-Just as we do now .
No two trevellers will be able to retrieve the same reality or

even a fraction of the available realities. History is the big saving bank."(p.6)

The narrator chooses to rename the last painting in the Salem Bibi series initially known as "The Apocalypse" precisely with the title "The unravish'd Bride.(p.17)

Both of them prove the historicity of 'Salem Bibi.' Now she is trying to locate what her client calls the most perfect diamond in the world. "The Emperor's Tear " it belonged to the last of the great Mughal kings, Aurangzeb and was stolen from him during the battle against the Raja Jadav Singh, the Hindu lover of the seventeenth century puritan woman Hannah Easton, who takes her journey from the West to the East.

The novel The Holder of the World consists of four parts and each part of the novel starts with the two lines from the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by John Keats. It's meditation on a piece of pottery from classical Antiquity with it's aphorism "Beauty is Truth and Truth is Beauty." It resembles with Satayam, Shivam, Sundaram. There is a deliberate asymmetry here,since it's poem of five stanzas and the novel has only four part. Keats's third stanza therefore is deliberately left out in the sequence of quotations used by Bharati

Mukherjee. This Ode contains a deep symbolical philosophy of life.

Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster child of silence and slow time...

First part of the novel starts with two lines of this Ode. In part first of the novel the narrator describes the childhood and the youth of Hannah Easton and her marriage with Gabriel Legge. He was impulsive, charming, jealous, violent and generous yet he had a democratic spirit. He had faith more in ideals than in institutions. The ideal of England moved him. The ideals of spreading enlightenment, science, sanitation, love and toleration delighted him. His practical nature was not at war with his lust for maximum profit, he had an open mind. Gabriel Legge, the Robin Hood of Coromandal Coast believed and supported even the freedom of slaves.

Heard melodies are sweet, But those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on.

In the second part, the narrator depicts the temptations and prevailing corruption of the officials of the English factory on the Coromandal Coast in the year 1695 to 1700. She also describes the fall of Adam and Eve from the Eden Garden. Hannah, a puritan child was over-burdened. "She had witnessed

the Fall, not Adam's Fall, Rebecaa's Fall. Her mother's Fall infinitely more sinful than the Fall of a man."(p.30) But one thing is ~~without~~ that"Hannah Easton, whatever the name she carried in Massachusetts, in England, in India or even into history to this very day, loved her mother more profoundly than any daughter has ever loved a mother."(p.30)

Who are those coming to the Sacrifice ?

To what green altar, O! mysterious priest...

In part three, the narrator subtly shows the fanaticism practised by both Hindus and muslims. The fourth part of the novel hinges on the tension between the bafflement provoked by the silent form of the art object and it's cold distance from the warmth and disorder of real experience.

Thou silent form dost tease us out of thought

As doth eternity : Cold Pastoral.

The novel closes by showing the role of time:

Time, O Time! Time is the tincture of lucid colors, time for the local understudies to learn their foreign lines, time only to touch and briefly bring alive the first letter of the alphabet of hope of horror stretching out, and back to the uttermost shores.(p.286)

"As illustrated by the use of extracts from Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," then, The Holder of the World can be perceived as an inventive appropriation of the aesthetic principles contained in Keat's poem through a subversive exploration of Difference -- in artistic mediums, in logicals sequence, in art as form, in the disharmonious multiplicity of meanings, in religion, in the moral value of Beauty, in technology and along the axis of Time".⁶

Jadav Singh. Raja of Devgarh whom Aurangzeb, the Grand Mughal Emperor calls "rat of Coromandal."(p.219) Father of Raja Jadav Singh, though a vassal of the emperor, advises his son to be a king in the real sense of terms:

The text that was pounded into him by his tutor was the Sanskrit Classic, Kautilya's Arthashastra, the Art of State-Craft. In deference to his concept of patriotism, the young Jadav Singh struck the coins of his realm in Sanskrit, not Persian. From Kautilya, he learned the art of survival in a ruthless but elegant age :the weaker king, in order to survive, must seek the protection of the

more powerful, or he must strike and alliance with his equals, or he must retire behind fortified walls and wait him out. If defeated, he accepts the most humiliating terms, suffers silently, then plots his revenge. Defeat and humiliations and the thirst for vengeance, he learned from the fate of his father.(p.212)

Aurangzeb was a Sunny Muslim ruler. He not only hated the Hindus but also Shias. In his whole lifetime, he waged wars against Hindus and Shias. He wanted to kill or drive from power all Shia Sultans and to expel all Hindus from positions of assumed power. His battles were fought on the principles of Zehad(Holy war) against the infidels.

Venn bristles at Hannah's misconception of Hinduism. He believes in cosmic energy that quickens and governs the universe. He explains to me (Beigh Masters) impatiently the Hindu concepts of Brahman and Atman. "Not gods", Venn protests, "but vivid metaphors.

The 'gods' are visualization of the Brahaman's aspects and attributes."(p.219)

He simplifies the concepts for himself into Cosmic Soul and Individual Soul:

The antagonisms between the three religions naturally reinforced each other's prejudices of other two, but Christians and Muslims tended to concentrate their opprobriums against the common Other. If anything, Hannah had a Christian skepticism about other faiths, bolstered by a Muslimized intolerance for idolatry."(pp.219-220)

After becoming the bībi of Raja Jadav Singh she was in a totally Hindu world. In the company of Raja and Bhagmati she was influenced by Hindu values.

In other words, at the age of thirty, Hannah was a pure product of her time and place, her marriage and training, exposed to a range of experience that would be extreme even in today's world, but none of it, consciously had sunk in or affected her outer behaviour.

I want to think, however, that the forces of the universe (for want of a more precise concept) were working within her. I don't have any other way of explaining what she was about to do, or become."(p.220)

Bhagmati was of the opinion 'only cowards choose shameful life than honourable death'. As Lord Krishna in Shrimad Bagwad Gita, the Song of God, the Hindu Bible.

"If you don't wage this holy war and lose your Swadharma (Self-Duty) and honour, you will get sin."⁷ The Lord further adds, "People will talk about your dishonour and for a self-respecting man dishonour is worse than death."(p.134) Arjuna was a warrior, born to lead men into battle there is no other calling for him. As Krishna had said to his prize bowman Arjuna "There is no greater good for a warrior than to fight in a righteous war."(p.138)

Hannah believes in fate, when she says, "The Raja was an agent of Providence. He had saved her life, then saved her from the chilly, unfulfilled life of a governess."(p.230) The Raja was a true warrior. The Raja raised his sword, addressing his officers : "Today is but another death.

Who frightens or who fears is irrelevant. A warrior faces death with cowardice or courage".(p.243) "Guilt did not enter his make up, only duty, and, his duty was to lead, to defend, to fight."(p.241) Hannah startled Raja Jadav Singh when she said, "I would rather die, however horribly, than see others killed"(p.242) shows the spirituality of Hannah Easton. Bhagmati used to say "In the eyes of Brahma, the world is less than a grain of sand, all human lives less than anything clinging to it. Hannah remembered the Brookfield stories, the sound of scalps ripping, like polling up roots."(p.246) She sees the horrors of war. She is not afraid of death."Human are beasts, base driven, venomous, unfeeling. She deserved this death, Lord knew, the way she'd lived for pleasure amid the sufferings of others, but atleast she would not surrender."(pp.246-247).

When Mother Queen of Raja Jadav Singh saw her wounded son i.e. Ruler of Devgarh, "a mother duty is to place the needs of her son above her fears. A wife's duty is to walk through fire to please her husband. A king's duty is to sacrifice himself for his subjects."(p.254) For Hannah and Bhagmati Aurangzeb was a father killer, brother killer, destroyer of temples and churches. He was more than a conqueror and acquirer. "To them he was Ravana, the demon-king of Lanka, in Muslim

disguise"(p.263) Hannah Easton plays the role of peace maker . in war torn society. "She had vision, the life inside compelled it; she would offer her life,if necessary to end the war."(p.259) She believes in religion of huminity. She is against discrimination in the society. She says to Aurangzeb : They are not Devgad people or Roopconda people, not Hindu people, or Muslim people, not Sunni or Shia, priests or untouchables, servants or kings; if all is equal in the eyes of Brahma as the Hindus say, "if Allah is all seeing and all- merciful as you say, then who has committed atrocities on the children ,the women and old people ? Who has poisoned the hearts of men."(p.268)

After the defeat of Raja, Hanna and Bhagmati were taken as hostages and they were brought before the Mughal Ruler Aurangzeb. They were bold enough to face the consequences."You despot ! you tyrant!"Hannah screamed, " You may make me your prisoner but I'm not your plaything."(p.264) She further added," We are here on a mission, then we shall leave. If you detain us or dishonor us we shall die."(p.265) The Emperor reiterated"A skillful ruler trust no friend,no family member. Trust only the Hunting Tiger or the vengeful enemy.The survivor is he who distrusts his own shadow. He destroys himself who does not submit."(p.265)

" Look around you"! Hannah shouted, "There is no golden world. It's a dream, all a dream."(p.266) She further explains,"I speak as one who has lost everything, who owns nothing, and who desires nothing for herself. I have come late in my life to the feeling of love. Love for a man, love for a place and love for a people."(p.268) This idea of Hannah shows her detached attitude of her life. She is like a 'Karamyogi'. Her only mission was to end the war between the Raja and the Emperor. She cried from heart," Oh! Great Emperor, build your city, build your mosques and your palace but stop this war before it destroys the world ! You speak of the mercy, but where is the quality of the mercy."(pp.268-269)

Emperor Aurangzeb explained,"Mercy before Allah, not mercy before men. Allah judges men, and the Emperor is but a man who must also be judged. The duty of the Emperor is to bring the infidel before the throne of judgement. There is no escaping the judgement of Allah."(p.269) She had failed in her mission, this was the final night of the life she had known . "She prayed for the first time in years, for strength for survival."(p.273)

She steals the diamond from Aurangzeb's war tent and escapes to Panpur. She hands over the diamond to Bhagmati

and pays her deepest tributes to Bhagmati; buried her under the name of her English lover whom she passionately served and remembered. The novelist's denunciation of war and violence is loud and clear.

"The title The Holder of the World used for the Moghul king Aurangzeb, is ironical as Mukharjee seems to pose an important question: is it possible to become the "Holder of the World" through physical prowess and coercion? One may achieve this goal through these means, but it will only mean power over mens bodies and not over their hearts. What is important is to rule over the hearts of people than become an undisputed ruler of the vast territories."⁸ The novelist points out that 'dharamvijay' is better than 'dikvijay'

Subhash Chandra in The Holder of the World : An Anti-War Novel says, " It is significant that this wisdom of the heart is offered by a woman protagonist. The novelist seems to be suggesting that the world would be a safer and happier place to live in if men heeded the sane councils of women. The novelist is unambiguous and emphatic in her assessment of the malaise and her corrective : the world is in danger from power-seekers, waiting to be the holders of the world. The value system of humanity is askew. It is imperative to correct the balance in

favour of love, selflessness and generosity.

Bhariti Mukherjee frequently mentions Indian deities in all her works. In The Tiger's Daughter she particularly mentions goddess Saraswati, Symbol of Knowledge and Learning, in Wife she mentions Durga- the goddess of power and strength. In Jasmine she gives reference of Kali- the goddess of Destroyer of evil doers and Jasmine acts like a Kali when she murders her rapist Half-Face. In The Holder of the World the writer describes the qualities of mother queen in the battle field are shown like a multi armed goddess riding a lion and hurling thunderbolts against the armies of the Great Mughal.(p.231) Bhagmati sacrifices her life for the sake of Hannah Easton. In her novel Leave it to Me the author describes the role of Devi, the Goddess of power and Strength who murders The Buffalo Demon as she writes in the Prologue in her novel as follows :

"In Devigaon, a village a full day's bus ride into desert country west of Delhi, old Hari tells of times before the "long ago" of fairy tale, when celestials battled demons and the Cosmic Spirit revealed itself in surprising forms to devotees. The story that children beg him to repeat at

twilight— that smoky quarter hour most full of menace—is of Devi, the eight-armed, flame-bright, lion-riding dispenser of Divine Justice. They know that the Cosmic Spirit (assuming the appearance of gods) continually makes, un makes and renakes the world they live in. They know that it also created goddess Devi and endowed her with the will to save and the strength to kill, and that it charged her with the mission of slaying the Buffalo Demon who had usurped the throne in the kingdom of heavenly beings.¹⁰

And in this village, named after the serene slaughterer of a demon king, the children already know the story's ending. Before twilight blackens, Devi will blow the conchshell call, and brandish in her many arms a lasso, a trident, a fire-tipped spear, a demon-splitting disc, a bow and arrows, a death-dealing staff, a thunder-sparking axe, a pitcher of water and a necklace of blessed beads, and will lead her soldiers on lionback. The Buffalo Demon, inheritor of the brute strength and physical

appearance of his buffalo mother and the deceit and rage of his demon father; cunning, and magical powers, will vanquish her men. Some of Devi's soldiers the Buffalo Demon will gore to death; other he will stomp, still more fell with the tempest blasts of his panting breath, and lacerate with the whip-crack of his tail. Then he'll let loose the full ferocity of his bestial hate on the Earth itself. With his hooves, the Buffalo Demon will scour canyon-deep trenches; with his horns, he will shred the sky and scoop out mounds of soil as high as mountains; with his tail, he will churn the calm waves of the ocean into fatal hurricanes.

And just as he is about to declare himself destroyer of gods and goddesses, Devi will muster the full power of vengeance. She will fling her lasso around the demon neck, pierce, strike and slash the demon flesh, pin that demon bulk to the ground with her foot and cut off the usurper's buffalo-head. While the children, comforted by story, curl into sleep on their bed-pallets, the Cosmic Spirit will smile on its daughter-goddess, then go back to creating, preserving, breaking and re-creating the cosmos as always. And Devi? The Earth Mother and Warrior Goddess wipes demon blood off weapons and puts them away for the next time they are needed.

Devi Dee, is the protagonist and narrator of the novel Leave it to Me the fragmented nature of the narrator's memories before her adoption is a stimulus for her to find out more about her pregenitors and the circumstances of her birth and early childhood. She was adopted from India by American parents Di Martino at the age of two. Having discarded her identity as adopted child Debby of the American Di Martino this abandoned daughter of unidentified parents breed herself into a new identity as 'Devi Dee', choosing to claim as her mother, the daughter of the Cosmic Spirit "Earth Mother and Warrior Goddess" endowed with the contradictory powers to save and kill. The terrifying aspect of the mother Goddess are popularly symbolized in India. In her protruding tongue. The association of Goddess's tongue with fear and violence appears at the beginning of the novel. The narrator sits with the head of a lover on her lap and " the ferrous taste of fear" in her mouth "as though my whole body were tongue"(p.10) Here the character of Debby seems to merge with the image of the Goddess Devi.

Darkness is a collection of twelve short stories. These stories portay double prolonged dynamics where danger and disappointment appear side by side with a hopeful determination

to adapt and to lead good life even in a adverse circumstances."Angela" is the first story of Darkness. This story is full of pathos, grief, grace, passion, temptation and compassionate service of a missionary. The author highlights the brutalities of military junta in Bangladesh in 1971 on helpless persons particularly on women and children. The narrator of the story "Angela" enumerates her sad story. She takes a new birth in North America: She says, " I am Angela, the Angel. Angela was sister Stella's name for me. The name I was born is lost to me, the past is lost to me, I must have seen a lot of wickedness when I was six, but I cannot remember any of it. The rapes, the dogs chewing dead bodies, the soldiers, Nothing."(p.13) Feelings have their own importance but it is a tragedy that in unavoidable circumstances we can't express or show our feelings. As Angela mentions :

We have deep feelings, but we aren't a demonstrative family. Fellowship is what we aim for. A parent's grieving would be a spectacle in Bangladesh.(p.16)

Angela believes in miracles not chivalry, decides : " Tomorrow when I visit Delia, I'll stop by the personal department. They know me, my family. I'll work well with

handicapped children, with burn-center children. I'll not waste my life."(p.19) Nurse Grimlund declares fatalistically, There is no telling who'll be taken and who'll be saved. I wait for sign. I've been saved for a purpose."(p.19) "Grace makes my life spin. How else does a girl left for dead get to the Brandon's farmhouse in Van Buren Country ?" (p.10)

This reference to the Christians concept of Grace which chooses but can't be choosen reminds Angela of the Christians Orphanage in Dhaka when she was nursed back to life.

After having being tortured by soldiers in the Bangladesh forest. They left her dead but the Lord saved her. Now it's her turn to do Him credit. She is a girl with a special mission. Some day soon, the mysteries will be revealed. She is determined to assert herself to do noble deeds for others. She knows very well that she is a defeated one but always believes that she has a bright future and has been saved for a purpose.

"The World According to Hsu," is a story from the said collection. "According to Hsu," Graeme said, "last time the world was one must have been about six million years ago. Now Africa and Asia are colliding. India got smashed into Asia- that is why the Himaliyas got wrinkled up. This island is just part of the Debris."(p.34)

Christine Gomez considers that the world view of Hsu become a "metaphor", he also thinks that "Hsu's one world weltansschauung" becomes an unattainable ideal. "His idea is that there is perhaps a longing for the world, according to Hsu, a one world free from cultural collisions, dilemmas and more separations." But unfortunately that proves a hollow charm. Here we have a world that is based on sharp racial destinations. There is a feeling of "otherness" for these "pakies" who have come to Canada concerning almost half of the world".¹²

Bharati Mukherjee throws light on the formation of the earth and environment. i.e. the one world conception. In the words of Kenneth J. Hsu:

...That six million years ago the
Mediterranean basin was a desert ?
And it took the Atlantic a million years
to break through and fill it again ?
Gibraltar for a million years was the
most spectacular waterfall the world
will ever see. The old sea was called
Tethys and it connected the Atlantic
with the Indian ocean.(p.52)

In "Isolated Incidents" the novelist says that chance also plays an important role in life. As Ann mentions "not everyone had done well but they had taken a chance. Sometimes you had to live the safe and sober places of this world." (pp.87-88) The future would be better than the past." (p.89) It resembles with the idea of Jawaharlal Nehru that past is dead and gone while future is alive.

The next story is "Saints". It stresses the importance of planning and vision in life. It is a first person narration by Shawn Patel. The narrator tells about his father.

Forsight is what got him out of Delhi to New York. Could I have become a psychiatrist and near millionaire if I had not planned well ahead. Dad used to tell Mom in the medium bad days. "Mom thinks making a million is a vicious, selfish aim. His Dad is really very generous. He sends money to relatives and to Indian orphanages. He's generous but practical. (p.147)

He has a friend named Tran. Who is not happy like him with his mother and step father. The narrator himself is not happy from the behaviour of his parents. Shawan tells about

his Dad and Mom,"When things blew up, they sold the big house in New Jersey and Mom and I moved to this college town in upstate New York."(p.146)."At fifteen I'm too old to be a pawn between them and too young to get caught problems of my own"(p.146).

His father sends him a gift of two books, one concerning an art book of Mughal paintings and the other Hindu Saint who had vision. Dad has sent him a book about vision.

His dad wishes him,"May this book bring you as much as happiness as it did me when I was your age... In forty pages into the book, the saint describes a vision. I see the Divine Mother in all things. He sees Her in ants, dogs, flowers, the latrine bowls, in the temple. He keeps falling into trances as goes for walks or as says his prayers. In his perfect state, sometimes the saint kicks his disciples. He eats garbage thrown out by temple cooks for cows and pariah dogs.(p.153)

while strolling along the Ganges the saint fell and his arm broke. he had been thinking his love for his followers "Love as for a sweet heart, he says when he slipped into a trance stumbled and... Love and pain : in the saints mind there is no separation."(P155) Like other stories there is also an element of luck in this story. Tran tells Shawn Patel. "My luck's got a change."(p.152) While Shawn replies Luck has nothing to do with any things. I want to say. You're out of the clutch of pirates now. Now safe hiding places."(p.152) "He further adds"Bad luck and good luck even out over a life time. Cancer can ravage an ecstatic saint, things pass"(p.155)Fate plays its roll none can avoid it.

Shawan Patel wished to have a sister. When he says, "Mom should have had a daughter. Two women could have consoled each other."(p.153) The story ends with the illicit relations of his Mom with Wayne, a new friend of his mother, who is a writer, a Janitor in the college, calls himself "monologist", a hunter and a seducer.He saw them quarelling and waited for the lovers to finish. Shawn Patel feels agonised and say:

I can feel her warm, wet sobs, but I
don't hurt. I am in trance in the middle

of a November night. I can't hurt for me, for Dad, I can't hurt for anyone in the world. I feel so strong, so much a potentate in battle dress. How wonderful to be a in visionary. If I were to touch someone now, I 'd be a touching god(p.158).

In "The Management of Grief" Bharati Mukherjee narrates the Air India disaster. It depicts the pathetic conditions of survived, the under score, the inadequacy of Canadian officials while dealing with the relatives of the crash victims. The novelist refers that in the period of trouble, crists and tragedies people seek solace in Fate and God.

Kusam says that we can't escape our fate. She says that all those people-our husbands , my boys, her girl, with nightingale voice, all those Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Muslims, Parsis and Atheists on that plane-were fated to die together off this beautiful bay. She learned this from a swami in Toronto.¹³

Doctor Ranghanathan says, "God provides and God takes away. I want to say, but only man can destroy and give back nothing"(p.190).

The writer seems to advise to be optimistic in the time of distress. As Dr. Rangnathan further adds, " It is parent's duty to hope . It is foolish to rule out possibilities that have not been tasted. I myself have not surrendered hope."(p.181) He is of the view that people should have scientific attitude towards life.

In his orderly mind, science brings understanding. It holds no terror. It is the shark's duty. For every deer there is a hunter, for every fish a fisher man. In text book on grief management" Judith Templement replies that there are four stages to pass through : rejection, depression, acceptance, and reconstruction.(p.188)

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, it can safely be concluded that Bharati Mukherjee deems spiritual and religious values to be of great importance in life of the individuals as well as the society he constitutes with other individuals.

Human interaction, devoid of a sustained focus on such values, would be lacking in any depth and significance. Such values as they emerge from the sustained quest of different protagonists, are not a monolith. They incorporate a healthy and life-affirming amalgam of norms believed in across the religious and the denominational divide. It is this plurality of the sources from where these values spring that gives the collectivity its persuasive force.

ENDNOTES

1. Veena Kumar, " The Geo-Spiritual Setting in the Novels of Graham Green" in M.K.Bhatnagar, ed. Twentieth Century Literatute in English (New Delhi : Atlantic Publishers, 1996), Vol. II, p.94.

2. Bharati Mukherjee's The Tiger's Daughter (New Delhi : Penguin Books, 1990), p.11.
All subsequent references are from the same edition and page numbers are shown in parenthesis.

3. Bharati Mukherjee, Jasmine (New Delhi : Penguin Books, 1990), p.3.
All subsequent references are from the same edition and page numbers are shown in parenthesis.

4. Bharati Mukherjee Wife (New Delhi : Penguin Books, 1987), p.5.
All subsequent references are from the same edition and page numbers are shown in parenthesis.

5. Bharati Mukherjee, The Holder of the World (New York : A Fawcett Columbine, 1993), p.5.
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- 6.Florence D' Souza, "Bharati Mukherjee" in Pier Paolo Piciucco, ed. A Companion to Indian Fiction in English (New Delhi : Atlantic Publishers,2004), p.195.
- 7.R.C.Zaehler, Bhagawat Gita (Oxford : University Press,1969), pp.137-138.
- 8.Subhash Chandra, "The Holder of the World : An Anti-War Novel" in R.K.Dhawan, ed. The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee (New Delhi :Atlantic Publishers, 1996), p.219.
- 9.Ibid. p.219.
- 10.Bharati Mukherjee, Leave It To Me (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), p.
- 11.Bharati Mukherjee, Darkness (Ontario : Penguin Books, 1973), p.13.
- All subsequent references are from the same edition and page numbers are shown in parenthesis.

12. Christine Gomez, " The On Going Quest of Bharati Mukherjee from Expatriation to Immigration" in R.K.Dhawan, ed. The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee (New Delhi : Prestige, 1996), p. 29.
13. Bharati Mukherjee, The Middleman and Other Stories (New York: Fawcett Crest Books, 1989), p.179
All subsequent references are from the same edition and page numbers are shown in parenthesis.

CHAPTER - V
QUEST FOR
IDENTITY

Chapter-V

Quest for identity

Searching for a person

That is me!¹

- Vijay Goel

Identity crisis and a quest for identity are basic to the human world. Quest is an archetypal and universal motif in literature of all ages. Identity crisis has intensified in the post-world war era — the era which has witnessed the decline of grandeur and dignity of human life. With all faith shattered in God, religion, nature, philosophy, institution and system, man is faced with an unprecedented rootlessness, loneliness and alienation.

Identity has many aspects and dimensions — it is a personal, socio-cultural, national, sexual, spiritual and constructive construct. Baffled by the existential questions and worldly queries, man takes up a quest to comprehend the core of experience and to attain the state where he tries to understand his internal and external world. 'Identity crisis' or the search for identity is no longer confined to the individual, it can characterize a group, an institution, a class, a profession or even a nation. Albert Camus and other modern existentialists agree with Sartre that alienation is inherent in the finite and isolated character of man's existence as a 'stranger' in the world. Sartre says "Man

is a vast emptiness which he carries with him as a snail carries its shell."²

Quest for identity can assume different forms in different individuals. It may be on personal level, social level, physical level and spiritual level. Every individual is caught in the gulf of identity and rootlessness. While living among the midst of people an individual may suffer from the sense of rootlessness. Sometimes he comes on the verge to realize who I am ? where I have to go? What is my destiny?

In Bharati Mukherjee's fiction the quest for identity or search for rootlessness is not an alien spirit. All the women characters in her novels and short stories try to evolve their own values in life. The protagonist like Tara, Dimple, Jasmine and Hannah all are in search of their roots as an individual or as a body and they set out on the quest to assess what society has made of them and what they would like to be. All of them did their best to realize their self not only in their own land but on the land of their heart's desire. But no where they will be able to find their roots except Jasmine, Mrs. Bhava, Hannah and other a few. It is not surprising that the women characters in fiction of Bharati Mukherjee are conscious of their Indianess because at the bottom of all lies a crisis of identity.

Dimple, the protagonist of Wife, tries to search her roots in her married life but it was also an unpleasant experience for her. She found herself in 'wifely tension' and thought that she has no individuality or identity. Dimple wants to break the traditional taboos of a wife. She wants an independent identity rather than to be known only as Amit Das Gupta's wife. Dimple's vision of Sita's docility, sacrifice and responsibility is a flay with many messages. She aspires for freedom and love in marriage. But this brings her indignation, grief, resentment, peevishness, spite and sterile anger.

Dimple is the case study of an individual who fails to assert her individuality. In the quest to seek her authentic self she exposes hostility to socio-cultural environment and becomes disturbed and confused personality. In order to search their identity both Dimple in Wife and Jasmine in Jasmine adopt the means of violence. Just as Jasmine kills her rapist in order to survive, similarly Dimple kills her husband whom she thinks a threat to her new individuality. In a magazine Dimple read:

Express your self in your surroundings.

Discover your own grand passion and indulge it to excess. Then simplify the rest, throw out, be ruthless. That's the secret to happiness.³

Dimple is an extremely immature girl who constantly tries to search her identity in married life as she hopes that marriage would bring freedom and love. Dimple Das Gupta had set her heart on marrying a neuro surgeon but her father was looking for engineers in the matrimonial ads.

Dimple wanted a different kind of life - an apartment in Chowringhee, her hair done by Chinese girls, trips to New Market for nylon saris — so she placed her faith in neurosurgeons and architects. She fantasized about young men with mustaches, dressed in spotless white, peering into opened skulls. Marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, fund-raising dinners for nobel charities. Marriage would bring her love.(p.3)

For Dimple Das Gupta, neuro-surgeon is a very strange choice. Mukherjee's choice of the name of the heroine as Dimple is a deliberate one and her intension is quite explicit from the cover page of the novel where she quotes the OED definition of Dimple as " any slight surface depression" From the very beginning we feel that Dimple is far from normal girls. In Indian

terminology she is full of "Trishna" [expectation/ desires). Too much expectations ultimately leads to frustration and unhappiness. Dimple expects too much from marriage and life. Dimple, " thought of premarital life as a dress rehearsal for actual living. Years of waiting had already made her nervous, unnaturally prone to colds, coughs and headaches."(p.3)

Dimple is twenty but she mourns for wasted years. Nothing pleases her more than the imagination about marrying a fellow who provides her all comforts. She is preparing for her examinations but books irritate her. Finally, she is married to Amit Kumar Basu, an average middle class, unimaginative, young engineer who dreams of making fortune in America and on retiring to live a comfortable rich life in Calcutta. Soon after the marriage Dimple's fantastic world, a world which is created by herself is shattered like a house of cards. She does not realize that in real life freedom too has certain limitations. She begins to resent her new home, her in-laws and even her husband.

She hated the gray cotton with red roses inside yellow circles that her mother-in-law had hung on sagging tapes against the metal bars of the windows.(p.20)

Dimple thinks that marriage has robbed her of all romantic yearnings so tactfully nourished. Amit was not the man Dimple had imagined for her husband. When he is out of the house she starts thinking the man of her dreams. After knowing her pregnancy she become abnormal. Pregnancy is a boon for Indian woman because she is the source of creation. If a woman fails to reproduce a child she is condemned and becomes an object of hatred in society. She wilfully terminates her pregnancy. Her killing of the mice which looked pregnant also suggests that she does not feel at ease with her pregnancy. Dimple is about to migrate but "she did not want to carry any relics from her old life."(p42) She thinks that old things will remind her of frustrations and irritations.

Symbolically, by revoking her motherhood Dimple liberates herself from the traditional role of a Hindu wife of just bearing and rearing a child. Like the western feminists she asserts her will but her abortive act is a kind of moral and cultural suicide. On the eve of their departure to America, Dimple says, "real happiness was just in the movies or in the west."(p.47) She feels excited to see the city of New York, "She had never seen such bigness before; the bigness was thrilling and a little scary as well. She couldn't imagine the kind of people who had conceived it and who controlled it."(p.52)

Once again, even after going to America her hopes are belied due to the temporary joblessness of Amit. Getting a job in America is not easy especially if one happens to be an Indian. Should one get an opportunity, it is very difficult to sustain it. There one has to bear all sorts of humiliation and exploitation without giving any vent to it. Amit's unemployment was the root cause of all troubles. He was not the man Dimple had wanted as husband:

She wanted Amit to be infallible, intractable, godlike, but with boyish charm; wanted him to find a job so that after a decent number of years he could take his savings and retire with her to a three story house in Ballygunje Park.(pp.88-89)

She was bitter that marriage had betrayed her, had not provided all the glittery things she had imagined. She thinks that waiting for marriage was better than getting married. She starts hating everything :

She wanted to dream of Amit but she knew she would not. Amit did not feed her fantasy life; He was merely the provider of small material comforts. In

bitter moments she ranked husband,
blender, color TV, cassette, tape recorder,
stereo, in their order of convenience.(p.113)

After it she tried to realize her self identity in American culture
by rejecting the Indian one:

She had given up bathing during the
middle of the day, an old Calcutta habit;
instead she showered at night, which
made her feel different and very modern.
Amit had once said, Why don't you try
a sauna? American women are supposed
to love saunas. Why don't you be
outgoing like them."(p.113)

She could not realize herself fully in American culture
except it's negative influences. At times when loneliness becomes
unbearable Dimple contemplates as many as seven ways of
committing suicide. It was the effect of American culture and
society. Dimple starts contemplating the murder of her husband.
The violence outside turns inside. She now fails to differentiate
between what she sees on television and what she thinks. The
idea of slaughtering her husband fascinates her. She thinks:

She would kill Amit and hide his body in the freezer. The extravagance of the scheme delighted her, made her feel very American somehow, almost like a character in a TV series.(p.195)

Ultimately Dimple kills Amit. She stabs him seven times, it seems she frees herself from the marriage tie or bond. In America talking about murder it like talking about the weather .She is all apologetic and blamed America for her timidity : "this wouldn't have happened if we had stayed in Calcutta. I was never so nervous back home." (p.132)

S.P. Swain comments," The novel traces the psychic break down of an Indian wife in America and the concomitant deep cultural shock leading to neurosis. Free and rebellious throughout, Dimple has no inhibitions. Her predicament transcends the plight of the alienated self enmeshed in the vortex of the limbo of cultural shock. A lacerated and anguished spirit Dimple, like Tara, is the no where woman. She is neither of India nor of America but a stunned wanderer between these two worlds, yet to attain a distinct identity. Neither does she belong to the TV world nor to the world of reality but keeps on shuttling between the two. She is yet to release her self

from the hallucinatory world, she is yet to get out of her schizophrenic self. A waylaid traveller, she is yet to search her destination and carve out a niche for herself. Her quest is a quest for voice, a quest for identity".⁴

Bharati Mukherjee deals with the problem of rootlessness of expatriates. She depicts the difficulties which are faced by the immigrants in order to assimilate themselves in the mainstream of the U.S.A. In spite of their best efforts they are said to be on the periphery of the life in the U.S.A. Their concept of values change and they see values in their American dream. Such is the problem of Tara, the protagonist of The Tiger's Daughter. The problem of 'rootlessness' lies in her and she could not lay herself behind wherever she went. Tara's problem does not lie outside but it is within herself.

Tara tries to adopt American culture and leaves her country to fulfil her dreams of life in America. There she marries David Cartwright- a man of her choice. But after marriage she could not make a complete harmony with her husband. She tries to accept the changed identity by throwing her Indian cultural heritage in which she saw ray of hope but not completely. She could not get rid of her past whole heartedly. She was unable to realize her self identity in America while living with her husband. So

she made up her mind to visit India. She thought that in India her parents, relatives and friends would embrace her with too much love, affection and somehow she will be able to find her roots in her native land. Her mind is again torn between the cultural clash: her native taste and touch have turned alien to her. But alas! to her entire dissatisfaction they considered her 'Videshi'(foreigner) or 'Americawali' and her husband as 'Mleech.'

Her Indianess is always with her throughout the novel. In most of the scenes we find the typical spirit of a Bengali which is found in her use of Indian terms. The protagonist's habit of retaining her maiden surname after marriage symbolically reflects her conscious mind which is still deeply rooted in her native land and has not been able to forget it in spite of changed identity of an European culture.

Tara, the protagonist of The Tiger's Daughter, and Dimple in Wife, are faced with the problem of rootlessness. They represent the dilemma faced by expatriates. Shiva Ram Krishna says about Tara and Dimple, that the "retention of their identity as Indian is in constant tension with the need for its renunciation if they have to acquire a new identity as immigrants."⁵ Upto the last scene, Tara could not realize herself.

The novel ends with these lines: " And Tara still locked in a car across the street from the Catelli Continental wondered whether she would ever get out of Calcutta, and if she didn't, whether David would ever know that she loved him fiercely".⁶

'Know thyself' said Socrates, the famous Greek philosopher. To know one's real self is one of the greatest virtues. It can be realized through a missionary spirit. It is not an easy process. A person has to go through various adventures and misadventures but s/he remains adamant on his/her path, realization of the self or quest for identity is one of the major aspect which has been dealt by the novelist in her novel Jasmine.

Jasmine is also an Indian immigrant who constantly struggles in the new world for her self identity. To attain her identity she adjusts herself in new culture, As Sumita Roy points out: Jasmine's "search for self recognition takes her in a social and spiritual direction... till she arrives at a time when she can see the future "greedy with wants and reckless from hope".⁷

Jasmine realises her identity in modern American culture with all its complexities and contradictions, and going through the trial and turbulations of a long period of paradoxes. During her stay with her husband's professor Mr. Vadhera who is in reality a seller and importer of human hair from India. She is also a 'day mummy' or a care giver for the adopted daughter,

Duff, of Taylor and Wylie. Duff was a non-genetic child of Taylor :

I could not imagine a non-genetic child.
A child that was not my own or my husband's struck me as a monstrous idea. Adoption was as foreign to me as the idea of widow remarriage⁷⁸.

In order to search a new and independent self she says:

It isn't guilt that I feel, It's relief, I realize
I have already stopped thinking of myself
as Jane. Adventure, risk, transformation
: the frontier is pushing in doors through
uncaulked windows. Watch me re-
position the stars, I whisper to the
astrologer who floats cross- legged
above my kitchen stove.(p.240)

" The villagers say when a clay pitcher breaks, you see that the air inside it is the same as outside," (p.15) writes Bharati Mukherjee and her heroine Jasmine has to traverse much of the long and hazardous journey of life before she can transcribe this village saying from theory to practice. Beginning in Hasnapur, passing through varied " adventure, risk,

transformation,"(p.240) finally looking forward to a future in the west in California. The story of Jasmine's life can be read as a movement towards the realization of the social and spiritual dimensions of existence.⁸

In an essay entitled "Image of Spiritual Power in Women's Fiction," Carol P. Christ suggests that the "new literature created by women has both a spiritual and a social dimension. It reflects both women's struggle to create new ways of living in the world and a new naming of the great powers that provide orientation in the world."⁹

Carol P. Christ comments again, " Women's social quest concerns women's struggle to gain respect, equality and freedom in society ... in the social quest a woman begins in alienation from the human community and seeks new modes of relationship and action in society..."¹⁰. Carol P. Christ is of the opinion that " Women's spiritual quest concerns a woman's awakening to the depths of her soul... provides orientation for women's social quest and grounds it in something larger than individual or even collective achievements... support(s) her when her own personal determination falters."¹¹

T. Padma focuses the thrust of her study on "Jasmine's achieving self- actualization not by a geographical shift to

America but by a personality ' honing' through acculturation to different identities. She takes on finally to realize that the crux of self actualization is the exercising of not the Indian or American but the human right to be at peace with herself^{m.12}

After the death of her husband, she is not a broken hearted rather she emerges in a bold spirit and decides to go to America for fulfilment of her mission with the help of her brothers who managed forged passport for her. She undertakes the trip and overcomes all hardships inspired by her sacred mission. On her first day at Florida she is raped by Half-Face and she Kali like kills him. She wanted to commit suicide :

I had not thought of any conclusion but the obvious one : to balance my defilement with death. I could not see myself in the steamed - up- mirror- only a dark shadow in the center of the glass. I could not see, as I had wanted to, an arm reaching to the neck, the swift slice, the end of my mission. It was the murkiness of the mirror and a sudden sense of mission that stopped me. What if my mission

was not yet over ? I didn't feel the passionate embrace of Lord Yama that could turn a Kerosene flame into a love's caress. I could not let my personal dishonour disrupt my mission.(pp.117-18)

Jasmine's journeys through different continents as also through hunger, ill-treatment, violence, rape and murder but she is not frightened at any time by her adverse circumstances and determined to go to America for the fulfilment of her late husband's mission. All these can be fulfilled in America at any cost. She is willing to make every compromise and adjustment. Jasmine hopes from place to place and person to person in order to realize her place in life. From Jyoti Vidh to Jasmine to Jase may appear to be real transformation of the personality of the protagonist, from Hasnapur to Jullunder to Florida, Manhattan, Iowa and California may appear to be moving from old world value to the values of the new world. She shapes herself according to the American way.

Jyoti means light. The heroine is born eighteen years after the partition riots at Hasnapur. From the very beginning she resists the prophecy of village astrologer about her, would be widowhood and exile. Jyoti starts the "war between her fate and her will"(p.72) by creating her own inter space for individual

growth. She knows her potency when she says, "I didn't feel I was nothing."(p.4) She considered the scar on her forehead as not a curse but a third eye. Even from early childhood she is aware of her strength through which she can win all battles and establishes a strong identity. Her heroic encounter with mad dog gave her a "buzz of power".(p.54)

She discloses her ambition to her father, "I want to be a doctor and set up my own clinic in a big town"(p.51) for which she is considered as mad girl by her father. Jasmine is attracted by American culture. She tried to find her roots in America. She enters into the new world of her dreams. She says that she had been re-born.

America may be fluid and built on flimsy, invisible lines of weak gravity, but I was a dense object, I had landed and was getting rooted. I had controlled my spending and now sat on an account that was rapidly growing."(p.179)

She is of the opinion that the U.S.A. is a multi-cultural country which welcomes all immigrants irrespective of their caste, creed, colour and sex. She longs to become the American person. She loves and admires the American world:

It's ease, it's careless confidence and graceful self absorption. I wanted to become the person they thought they saw : humorous, intelligent, refined, affectionate. Not illegal, not murderer, not widowed, raped, destitute, fearful.(p.171)

She lives for 'today'. In context of Jasmine, the novelist concludes, "Jasmine may or may not appear as 'rubble maker' by everyone stepping into the orbit of her life, but at every stage in her trouble torn life, in all her identities as Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase, Jane, she seems to act boldly and unhesitatingly, thrilled at the prospect of adventure, risk and transformation." In her choice of Taylor and Bud she says, " I'm not choosing between two men . I am caught between promise of America and old world dutifulness"(p.240) Her desire of self-realization is very strong. She says," I want to do the right thing. I don't want to terrible person."(p.239)

T. Padma remarks, The word 'transformation' together with her words of farewell to the mental image of the astrologer which has been haunting her all these years, "Watch me reposition the stars", suggests that Jasmine has indeed achieved self-actualization in America— the only land on earth that gives

one ample opportunity to work at making a dream reality. Thus synchronous with her self-actualization Jasmine becomes truly Americanized, not just in peripheral social or cultural mores but in a primal "intensity of spirit," and finds peace neither in India nor America, but in the American dream".¹³

Hannah Easton, the main protagonist of The Holder of the World, is also in search of identity. In this novel the journey is from the West to the East. It is a journey of the human mind. Hannah Easton's voyage to the orient is a pre-determined truth which effectively voices and manifests the latent tensions, aspirations and ambitions of her psyche. She was an ardent researcher, full of vigour bubbling with confidence and having faith in her sincerity to achieve her goal. She depends on her personality and the mental make-up at this juncture. "They reach surely one moment in every life when hopes surprises us like grace, and when love, or atleast it's promise, landscapes of the jungle into Eden."¹⁴

Hannah Easton becomes a co-wanderer of Beigh Masters as a constant source of vital energy, inspiration, adventure, odyssey, always whispering in her ears 'to go': "Fly as long as hard as you can my co-dreamer! Scout a fresh site on another hill."(p.19) Beigh Masters says about Hannah that she is like a doctor and a lawyer, like a mother and a daughter. She is always

confident in achieving her objective.

Three hundred years ago, it existed
in her hands; I know where she came from
and where she went. I couldn't care less
about the Emperor's Tear, by now. I care
only about the Salem Bibi.(p.19)

She further adds, "Of all the qualities I admire in Hannah Easton that make her entirely our contemporary in mood and sensibility, none is more touching to me than the sheer pleasure she took in the world's variety.(p.104)

Beigh Masters, the narrator, passes the final judgement about Hannah's character and personality when she acknowledges : "wherever she stayed... she would have changed history, for she was one of those extraordinary lives through which history runs a four-lane highways."(p.189)

She is in a quest for a vital life of feelings and emotions denied to her in Puritan New England. Hannah as an expatriate can only embrace the new world in its entirety, for it is this world that she has been in quest of ever since the fateful evening of her mother's abduction." She sought to neutralize her shame by emulating her mother's behavior. (p.69)

Hannah's married life in London is itself a testament to the total absence of passion, personal involvement and love between her and her husband. She feels alienated from her husband and spent most of her time in her cottage, tending to her garden and writing memoirs and letters to her friends in America. Ultimately Hannah comes to India. Her arrival in India in 1695 is set against a period of tumultuous political and economic activity. But Hannah's primary concern in this new world appears to peel the layers of superficiality and social grace and a quest for a meaningful life. In fact, as soon as she steps on the shores of the Coromandel Coast she feels an instinctive sense of belonging and decides that she does not aspire to return to England on completion of Gabriel's tour.

Hannah's yearning to attain a kind of passionate salvation is fulfilled in her encounter with Raja Jadav Singh. Her courtship with Raja indicates a relationship based entirely on Indian values and morality. "She wanted the Raja and nothing else; she would sacrifice anything for his touch and the love they made."(p.229) Ultimately she wins the heart of "Alamgir" who hails her with a very precious title : " For your white skin, for the luster of your spirit, for the one-in-a-lakh, I give you these pearls. I call you precious as Pearl!"(p.270)

Hannah's journey to India is fraught with images of adventure, action and passion. She returns to her native land, not as a reformed American but a rebel living on the fringes of society. Like Jasmine, Hannah finds final contentment and joy in the adopted land and it is the morality of this land that Hannah carries along with her.

Bharati Mukherjee describe The Holder of the World as a "post modern historical novel."¹⁵ But at its most basic level, it is a novel of expatriation, of a quest not only to geographically diverse lands but to cultural variant societies as well. Hannah's life succeeds in questioning and discovering new ways of defining reality in a world which was essentially orthodox. Hema Nair is assertive in her comment : " Hannah is a stunning creation, a bold mind striving for identity in strange surroundings, a timeless creature trying to survive in a rigid, inexorably defined society."¹⁵

Hannah Easton has never say die optimism and courage. She was full of vigour. She learnt the lesson from the school of life that "Survivor is the one who improvises, not follows, the rules."(p.234) This comes to an indirect message of the author herself. She stresses in all her works that only those people can survive who are elastic and adaptive to the circumstances.

Bharati Mukherjee in her collection The Middleman and Other Stories proclaims again and again the universal truth that a foreign culture is not an impediment in a person's coming to terms with oneself. She also has the courage of conviction to point out that an alienated psyche will find itself estranged anywhere in the world, America, Uganda, Trinidad. The reader comes across an entirely different facet of the inter-cultural and inter-racial encounter in this stories she has put forth.

In "A Wife's story," Panna, the pivotal character from The Middleman and Other Stories is also in search of her new self or identity. She left India and settled down in New York. American values attracted her a lot. America has broadened her horizon. There is also a suggestion that she tugs at the bondage of a traditional Hindu wife must dress up in a saree and jewellery to meet her husband at the airport : "I change out of my cotton pants and shirts I've been wearing all day, and put on a saree to meet my husband at JFK."¹⁶

She becomes very open in making love with others. She believes in the autonomy of sex. "In the back of cab, without even trying, I feel light, almost free. Memories of Indian destitutes mix with the hordes. New York street people, and they float free, like astronauts, inside my head. I've made it.

I'm making something of life"(p.27). She rejects the norms and values attached with Indian value system and likes the American one.

This is more privacy than we ever had in India. No parents, no servants, to keep us modest. We play at housekeeping... These Americans , they're really something.(p.33)

She does not want to go back to India. This is brought out in two telling images. Images of freedom. First the little girl with wiry braids: "then she starts to flap her arms. She flaps, she hops." (p.39) and the wife's reflection in the mirror as she waits for her husband to make love to her, "I want to pretend with him that nothing has changed. "In the mirror that hangs on the bathroom door, I watch my naked body turn, the breasts, the thigh glow. The body's beauty amazes .I stand here shameless, in ways he has never seen me. I am free, afloat, watching somebody else."(p.41) This is her new found self that has emerged out of the cocoon of years of bondage and oppressive meaningless tradition .Thus Panna realizes her new identity by rejecting Indian traditional views of life .

The same unending quest continues in "The Tenant" a story from the same collection. It is a successful and artistic

piece of writing conveying the theme of rootlessness. Rootlessness is basically a psychic problem .If a person suffers from self alienation ,S/he will not be able to take root in any culture Indian or foreign. The protagonist of "The Tenant" is Maya Sanyal, a Ph.D in Comparative Literature, teaches Utopian Fiction and course in Women's studies at the University of Northern Iowa with the motto: "A person has to leave home. Try out his Wings."(p.96) This is what she does until she meets Ashok Mehta, " no folly is ever lost, Maya pictures history as a net, the kind of safety net travelling trapeze artists of her childhood fell into when they were in attentive, or clumsy."(p.96) Maya's heart longs for a permanent lodging but she is fundamentally rootless : she craves one lodging from another.First it was John, then the Chatterjee's family (then nephew of Poltto) then Ashok Mehta.Maya Sanyal is against hypocrisy and worthless traditions. She wants to rehabilitate herself in the new culture. The world of immigrant 's is a world of constant clash between the illusion and reality .Both Maya and Paltto feel a sense of rootlessness, Maya became American in her outlook but she could not shed off her veil from the past. Maya is caught between these two worlds - One was difficult to give up and the other was hard to follow . The use

of 'But' suggest her associations with the past .when she says, "She is an American citizen. But."(p.99) "She has broken with the past ' But ."(p.100)

She answers the matrimonial advertisement by Ashok Mehta who seeks an emancipated Indo-American woman as his wife. When he says, "you have a zest for life. You are at ease in USA and yet your ethics are rooted in Indian tradition. The man of your dreams has come."(p.109) But her dreams never saw the light of the day. In Indian tradition the word 'maya' stands for illusion and her life became an illusion not only for her own self but for others. Ultimately we have to say that 'rootlessness' or 'alienation' is in her psyche and because of it she remains incapable of establishing a permanent relationship. Once a tenant, always a tenant. Imetaz says, "When she moves out, she tells herself, it will not be the end of Fred's world."(p.113) suggests her loyalty to both the worlds: the world of reality and the world of illusion.

"Jasmine" a story from the same collection illustrates the Indo-Caribbean consciousness. Jasmine was an illegal immigrant. "She crossed the border at Windsor in the back of a gray van loaded with mattresses and box springs."(p.123) She had to face various problems but she was a very ambitious

girl who wanted to avail herself of each and every moment of life. In this endeavour, she is guided by her father. From Detroit she came to Ann Arbor, a place which captured her attention. She had dauntless courage to realize her identity in new life and in a new world. Here she comes in contact with Bill and Lara and learnt the American ways of life.

Jasmine was a student of life and she adapted herself in changed circumstances and learnt the experience from the school of life. She felt happy and proud that " she'd become her own person."(p.132) Though she felt sentimentally nostalgic for her family at Christmas time, there were no regrets about leaving Trinidad : " She missed them." " But."(p.133) Though she cried Daboos, she asked herself : " what for ? This is where she wanted to."(p.132) Bill said to her, "Learn to be more selfish.Come on, throw your weight around."(p.131) Jasmine learns fox-trot in the company of Bill and lets Bill make love to her. Bill said to her,"you feel so good. You smell so good.You're really something flower of Trinidad." "Flower of Ann Arbor", she said, "not Trinidad."(p.135) She forgets all the dreariness of her new life and gave herself upto it."(p.135)

Jasmine realizes her true potential as a vibrant individual by taking to the outside alien world in an open-minded manner,

without being distracted from her commitment to her innate Indianness, viz. her sense of sincerity, dedication and commitment to her goal and her sense of relatedness to the relationship she values. "She was a bright, pretty girl with no visa, no papers and no birth certificate. No nothing other than what she wanted to invent and tell. She was a girl rushing wildly into the future."(p.135)

"Danny's Girls" is a story from the same collection. The dreams of protagonist of "Danny's Girls" are his dreams of quest for identity and true self in a foreign culture not only through admission to Columbia engineering school but also through a meaningful love relationship particularly with Rosie- a beautiful girl from Nepal. The protagonist works for Danny Sahib as a Dogra boy from Simla with a slicked - back hair and coppery skin(my Aunt Lini still called him Dinesh, the name he'd landed with) Danny Sahib was in marriage market:

The real money wasn't in rupees and bringing poor saps over. It was in selling docile Indian girls to hard-up Americans for real bucks. An Old World wife who knew her place and would breed like crazy was worth at least twenty thousand

dollars ... My job was to put up posters in the laundromats and pass out flyers on the subways. (p.138)

Bharati Mukherjee takes pain to contrast this job with the protagonist's dreams. He assumed that he would not find a girl worth marrying, not that girls like Pammy could make him happy. Rosie was the kind of girl who could make him happy. Thus in case of protagonist it is the value of true love which helps him to realize his self identity. According to Florence D'Souza," the last sentence of the short story affirms the narrator's self-confident stepping into his own life, having tamed the otherness of his doubts and inner conflicts..."¹⁷

Slowly, she moved the flimsy little fan, then let it drop, I knelt on the floor with my head on the pillow that had pressed into her body, smelling flowers I would never see in Flushing and feeling the tug on my shoulder that meant I should come up to bed and for the first time I felt my life was going to be A-Okay(p.145)

"The Buried Lives" enumerates the same theme but in a lighter vein. The protagonist of the "Buried Lives" is Mr. N.K.S. Venkatesan, a Tamil school teacher. He did not take interest in his surroundings. He was dissatisfied soul aspiring for material comforts, simultaneously a quest for identity in an alien land. In case of Mr. N.K.S. Venkatesan the search of identity results into the desire for freedom. In his quest for freedom and fresh identity Mr. Venkatesan thinks of immigrating by hook or crook. But every country turned down his ambitious desire to go abroad.

His sister's example inspired him to realize his identity abroad. She had meant to leave home, with or without his permission. She had freed herself of family duties and bonds. In other words she had found her true identity by severing all bonds. Similarly Mr. Venkatesan desires to lead a new life. Now he was almost fifty and he realizes that by fifty a man ought to stop running. The desire of self realization was not so strong in his character as it was in his sister.

In "The Management of Grief", there is also a quest for self identity. Mrs. Bhave is also in the search for identity. She says, "I heard the voices of my family one last time. Your time has come, they said. Go, be brave. I do not know where this voyage

I have begun will end I do not know which direction I will take. I dropped the package on a park bench and started walking"(p.194).

Mitali R. Pati comments: "The self division experienced by Mukherjee's Indian men as they encounter the sexual liberation of the new country leads to acts of shame, madness, even violence..."¹⁸

In "A Father" the Bhowmick family, originally from Ranchi in Bihar, having settled in Detroit go through the upheavals of adapting to the American way of life. The story is remarkable for its images and reversals. This story deals with the problem of reconciliation between the Indian and the American values. Mr. Bhowmick, the hero of the story migrated to the United States in search of a better life. He is "a modern man, an intelligent man"¹⁹, but still he is prudent enough to know "that some abiding truth lies bunkered within each wanton Hindu superstition." (p.64) He is always caught in the mass of his native culture but still trying hard to cope with the new one. A dozen times a day he repeats the words compromise and adaptability and always tries to synthesize between "new-world of reasonableness and old world beliefs."(p.64)

His wife and his daughter, Babli, "were smarter than him. They were cheerful, outgoing, more American somehow."(p.61) Babli was brighter than the sons and daughters of other Bengalis in Detroit. " Babli would do what she wanted. She was head strong and independent ." (p.67) While his daughter Babli is a modern girl, she does not tolerate the superstitions and traditional outlook of her father. Her father hears her muttering : " This Hindu myth stuff is like a series of super graphics." (p.65)

Babli and her mother adapt themselves in American way of life. By discarding the traditional way of life, Babli tries to search her new identity in a new found world. She is neither in love nor interested in getting married. She just want a child, and has got herself artificially inseminated, when her parents knew her pregnancy, she hissed, " Who needs a man ?" " The father of my baby is a bottle and a syringe. Men louse up your lives. I just want a baby." (p.72) Babli's rejection of father for her unborn child is also her rejection of her own father and everything that paternity stands for.

Bharati Mukherjee says about immigrants, " In my fiction and in my Canadian experience, "immigrant" were lost souls, put upon and pathetic. Expatriates, on the otherhand, knew all too well who and what they were and what foul fate

had befallen them".²⁰

Kirtee Agrawal is also of the same opinion and says, " Her entire corpus is replete with uneasy troubled stories about expatriates who find themselves adrift in an alien world wandering if, they will even feel a sense of belonging".²¹

Ratna, the main character in the story "The World According to Hsu" a story from Darkness, is also a lost soul like other expatriates, always fighting for her real identity. The truth is that even at this unknown, obscure Island she knows that she can not escape from the consequences of being half-the dominant half. Indian owing to her mixed origin. Throughout the story Ratna feels not at home any where. She is shunned, as "a white rat" in India, (p.44) and scorned as a 'paki' in Canada and further more she is an alien on the island of political instability. At the end of the story while enjoying the dinner party with other tourists she comments:"She poured herself another glass, feeling for the moment at home in that collection of Indians and Europeans babbling in English and remembered dialects. No matter where she lived, she would never feel so at home again."(p.56)

In "Hindu" a story from same collection Mukherjee juxtaposes an expatriate against an immigrant to draw out the

contrast. It is a contrast between an expatriate Maharajah Patwant Singh of Gotlah and an immigrant Leela Lihari, the narrator of the story. She is aware of her Hindu culture and still she assimilates herself in the new world of America. She neither complains against India nor she finds Indianess as a barrier in her adjustment in the states. Her Indian convictions are tough to be shaken.

In my family, in every generation, one infant seems destined to be the repository of the family's comliness. In my generation, I inherited the books, like an heirloom, to keep in good condition and pass on to the next. Beauty teaches her humility and responsibility in culture I came from. By marrying well, I could have seen to the education of my poorer cousins.(pp.131-132)

"An Indian woman is brought up to please. No matter how passionately we link bodies with our new countries, we never escape the early days."(p.139) Leela reveals her immigrants fluid identity. She proudly declares, "I am an American citizen"

(p.133) but she is proud of her Bengali Brahmin past and superiority of her class in India. She disclaimed any recent connection with India but still for her 'home' is India, as she adds, "I haven't been home in ages."(p.133) Leela leaves India. In two years she has tried to treat the city not as an island of dark immigrants but a vast sea in which new Americans like myself (herself) could disappear and surface at will. Lisa comments on Leela's language as 'Hindi' - this irritates Leela and she thinks of refuting her. However she realises: "No matter what language I speak, it will come out slightly foreign, no matter how perfectly I mouth it. There's a whole world of us now, speaking Hindi."(p.140)

Maharaja Patwant singh of Gotlah also feels a sense of rootlessness from the core of his heart. He nurses his grievances in India. The ghost of past haunts him wherever he goes. For him "the world is full of empty promises."(p.130) He is a man lost in a vacuous nostalgia. He is not at ease with dhoti-wallahs of his country:

" The country's changed totally, you know. Pat continued. Crude rustic types have taken over. The dhoti-wallahs, you know what I mean, they

would wrap themselves in loin clothes
 if it got them more votes, no integrity,
 no finesse. The country's gone to the
 dogs, I tell you."(p.135)

And again, "I have nothing, he spat. They've stripped me of everything. At night I hear the jackals singing in the courtyard of my palace."(pp.135-36) He finds solace in writing his memories: writing is what keeps him from going through death's gate. There are nights... though he leaves it unfinished. The vacuous nostalgia of Patwant is an impediment in the process of his cultural assimilation in the states. It is another respect that Bharati Mukherjee's treatment of the bewildered stage of souls lost between two desperately worlds have been captured most artistically in all its urgency and desperation.

Conclusively, we can say that all the characters in the works of Bharati Mukherjee suffers from the crisis of identity. The identity crisis leads to heightened sense of alienation, immigration, expatriation etc. There is a strong desire to come to terms with reality. They find themselves estranged not only from the fellow men but also from their innermost nature because they can find nothing to depend upon in the moments of extreme despair. They find themselves caught in the whirlpool

of rootlessness and restlessness. The main characters whether she is Dimple in Wife , Jasmine in Jasmine Tara in The Tiger's Daughter and Hannah in The Holder of the World , alongwith various character from the two collections of Short Stories suffer from sense of isolation, alienation and rootlessness. Their alienation comes out from their own self, from cultures i.e. the Eastern or the Western.

Bharati Mukherjee's fictional universe thus chronicles an unrelenting quest for identity on the part of her protagonist. Their hankering after a set of values in the cultural, social, and religious domains precipitates to them in a yearning to know their own selves and thus ensues a much more absorbing, though acutely, agonizing, quest for discovering there true selves freed from the gloss of the incidental and the ephemeral. Focusing on the values inextricably intertwined in the tales she spins to the exclusion of this dimension of self-discovery would be missing the wood for the trees.

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CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

Chapter-VI

CONCLUSION

Indian aesthetics has a very high and exalted notion of literature. An artistic creator, a kavi is one who takes his self-assigned, onerous assignment with as much solemnity and seriousness as is associated with Brahma, the Original Creator. Each work of art is thus permeated with a quest for some dimension of truth or the other. Bharati Mukherjee does not bring any different conception of art to bear in her presentation of reality. In the preceding chapters the quest for values in the sociological, cultural, philosophic and other related fields have been taken up in Bharati Mukherjee's novels like The Tiger's Daughter(1972), Wife(1975), Jasmine(1989) and The Holder of the World (1997) besides other writings by her.

In the realm of the quest for the values, outlined above, one discerns the fall out of expatriation as well as immigration—the two all-enveloping phenomena which left an ineffacable impact on Bharati Mukherjee's psyche. What one comes across in her fiction is a concerted effort to present in all its inherent dialectics the image of the immigrants who proclaim their claim to an American identity by struggling heroically to transplant themselves successfully in a new cultural landscape. The novelist saw in immigration an opportunity to redefine and review herself

as an artist. She was not content to limit her role to an expatriate writer, focusing on the subversive potential of life on the margin. Bharati Mukherjee seized on immigration as an opportunity to portray the heroic endeavour on the part of her protagonists to rediscover themselves. She also used it to seek for the writer in her a release from constrictive social and cultural restraints in the homeland in tradition-bound India. She herself is one such seeker who has assimilated herself into the American ethos. Her novels deal with people who have left their countries for various reasons and who have landed in America with hopes, aspirations and the resolve to turn over a new leaf. The stage is thus set for value-testing and value-forging in a country characterized by such quest by most people on a collective scale, for it is not for nothing that America has been dubbed a 'nation of nations' and a 'melting pot' as part of the totality. Search for norms and values becomes an inevitable concomitant in such a scenario. This search is all-enveloping and has ramifications in the domain of the individual and of entities larger than the individual. Consequently one has to take cognizance of the quest in realms of personal and familial, social and cultural and psychological, philosophical and spiritual.

In matters, personal and familial, Bharati Mukherjee's novels raise rebellious queries on supposedly settled norms like the haloed institution of marriage in Indian society and the stereotyped role these accord to woman as "the second sex" to use the celebrated phrase coined by Simone de Beauvoir. Even a lay reader could be struck by this impression after browsing through Wife and The Tiger's Daughter perhaps the most representative works in this respect. Jasmine traces the tortuous way ahead where discarding the debris of delapidated constructs, one has to build an edifice anew. This is accomplished through uninhibited, unrestrained participation in the flow of life through minute observations of complex inner deliberations on and keen involvement in ones new environment. Such a quest is fully imbued with the consciousness that values are contextual and impermanent for, as the protagonist in Jasmine herself realizes during her travails that nothing lasts. An individual thrown into the arena of action discovers as does the protagonist in The Holder of the World that the survivor is one who improvises, not follows the rules. Through a perusal of the diverse human situations delineated in her novels, Bharati Mukherjee seems to be projecting the view that inter personal relationship do not grow on nothing. They develop

out of love, compassion, understanding, reciprocity, sympathy and fellow-feeling. Social institutions, however, old and sanctioned by antiquity and religious authority, facilitate and mould human urges and aspirations. They can be taken as defining and circumambulating the precise contours of such relationship only at great peril to self and society.

Values set the tone in the lives of the individual as well as the social community they collectively constitute. Bharati Mukherjee's protagonists undertake the quest for values in their struggle for self-definition, self-fulfilment and self-realization in the demanding circumstances in which they are placed. The protagonist in The Tiger's Daughter, Tara Banerjee-Cartwright finds herself a 'nowhere' person, for both her native-land and America, the environ of her transplantation, are characterized by a strait jacket of set responses and attitudes and adaption by the individual to one set of values to the exclusion of the other makes him/her anathema for the context spurned. This either-or exclusivism has been highlighted as a confining constraint in the incessant flow of life. Time in its rush and flow makes everything change with its passage and human or social mindset cannot be set in stone, invulnerable to change. The social and the cultural matrices in India have to be perceived as

dynamic and the western world has to open its cloistered horizons to let in fresh air from quarters new. It is this seamless continuity of the three interpenetrating zones - the past, the present and the future that one discerns at the very outset in The Holder of the World. Both Jasmine in Jasmine and Hannah in The Holder of the World represent the dynamism of boundless hope and the resolve to frustrate the limitations and claustrophobic influence of their environment. The exposure of gender-bias against women in societies marked by patriarchy in general and the Indian context in particular is another facet of the quest for values on the part of Bharati Mukherjee's protagonist. Valuing an individual's intrinsic worth irrespective of gender or background has been presented most subtly as a positive attitude and value in itself. Synthesis and forging together the positive norms of conduct evolved in different communities is another characteristic of the open ended set of values artistically projected in Bharati Mukherjee's novels. Such positive liberalism goes well with the general tone and tenor of Bharati Mukherjee's novels.

Search for values in general and in literature in particular has to be discerned as much as a quest for locating norms of human conduct as it is for defining the precise contours of

one's self in relation to these norms. All seeker in Bharati Mukherjee's fiction - Tara, Dimple, Jasmine, Hannah, to name the most prominent ones- attempt to articulate their inchoate self not only in their own land but on the land of their heart's desire. Dimple in Wife undergoes a psyche breakdown, demonstrating the plight of the alienated self entangled in the vortex of cultural shock. With your roots and branches spread over in disparate worlds, you end up as a traveller doomed to trudge ceaselessly, never reaching your destination. Jasmine, on the other hand in the novel named after her realizes her rooting self not by transplanting herself to the land of fantasy but by consciously 'honing' through acculturation to be at peace with her inner aspiring self. The stories in the novelist's highly popular short story collection The Middleman and Other Stories reveal a similar pattern of quest, the restlessness of not having an anchor to hold onto, the discovery of a support-system within reach and the assurance of a new perspective where-from the disturbing distractions seem to dissolve and yield felicity.

The dramatis personae in Bharati Mukherjee's fiction, move from the personal to the spiritual and the religious, seeking a larger value system for self sustenance. It is their rootedness

to the characteristically Indian attitudes like patience, calm acceptance of what proves inevitable despite one's strivings, resilience and other related responses. These characters realize on their pulse how changes by gods or titans are too subtle for measurement, how the human mind suffers premonitions and gradually learns to submit. Jasmine, Wife and The Holder of the World are replete with diverse dimensions of such self-questionings and resolutions of the spiritual dilemma. The wisdom of the heart is revealed to be longer lasting and much more effective in the final analysis than the wisdom of the head. The world is seen to be poised on the top of a precipice because of the craze of power-seekers, rendering the value system ashew. A corrective antidote can only be through inculcation of sentiments like love, selflessness and generosity.

The stories in Darkness prioritize the humane running down the political and the narrowly ideological. What constitutes the human is not seen in a blinkered reiteration of the dicta of a particular religion. What has been highlighted is a bouquet of values highlighted as desirable in different religions practised all over—Hindusim, Islam, Christianity. It is only by getting over one's narrow set of beliefs and by interacting with the vast, larger network of such attributes, culled from varied

religious practices that a more fulfilling basket of positives can be evolved to guide human endeavour in different situations of stress and strain.

Bharati Mukherjee's critical appraisal of the contemporary sociological, cultural and personal landscape continues not merely in her novels but also in the other genres attempted by her. After the enthusiastic response of her first two novels - The Tiger's Daughter(1972) and Wife(1975) in the west, she took time off and the intervening period between Wife(1975) and her collection of short stories in Darkness(1985) she devoted to the writings of Days and Nights in Calcutta(1977) and some other pointed articles in the same pursuit. Days and Nights in Calcutta is the result of Bharati Mukherjee's collaboration with her husband, Clark Blaise. In the first half of the work, Blaise Chronicles his slow but steady exposure to the Indian reality on the ground, while in the latter half Bharati Mukherjee examines the upper-middle class bhadralog scenario in Calcutta in the seventies. It is a human account throbbing with life, vibrant with urgency as well as immediacy. It is an attempt to capture the very ethos of the context in all inclusiveness warts and all. It is in a way a pitting together of two contrasted world-views, a juxtaposition of what she had left behind in all

its comfort and constraints and what lay before her in all its adventure and adversity. A later work-again in collaboration with her husband-is The Sorrow and Terror : The Haunting Legacy of the Air India Tragedy (1987). As the title makes clear, here is an examen of the human dimensions of the crash of the Air India flight off the coast of Ireland, as the plane flew from Toronto to Bombay. Even as Mukherjee recounts the tragedy involving the death of as many as three hundred and twenty nine passengers on board -most of them Canadian Indians, she pauses to take stock of human attitudes like apathy, callousness, indifference, conformism, fatalism, evasiveness- all impediments in moving ahead and build anew on the wreckage of what has been. It is against the background of such non-fictional works that the desperation and committedness of Bharati Mukherjee's protagonists have to be seen to make a place for themselves in a totally new environment.

Bharati Mukherjee's women—— centered novels do succeed in projecting a set of values—— cultural, social, personal, familial, religious and spiritual, among others and in chronicling the quest for their real selves against a nerve ——recking and challenging environment.

Nevertheless one not-so-successful dimension of her novels can not be brushed under the carpet in the praise for the ideological edifice of the novels. Bharati Mukherjee's novel are woven around a set of immigrant - seekers where they voluntarily efface their former selves to land into the 'boiling cauldron' of America and thus seek self discovery and self-definition. The very fact that the protagonist in her novels have 'dared' to embrace a fluid identity devoid of a past, has been enlogized, even glamourized by Bharati Mukherjee. In catapulting her 'adventurous' women from one mishap to another, the novelist has no option but to take recourse to situations which are not always credible or probable.

Bharati Mukherjee's opting for 'improbable possibilities' rather than for its theoretical antonym, at times, strains credibility and makes the fictional situation contrived. One can illustrate this hazard with reference to Jasmine. The manner in which she moves from one situation to the other, subjecting herself to perfect adaptations, one after the other, is too rapid and abrupt to sound anything but superficial. Changing herself chameleon like from Jyoti to Jasmine, Jasmine to jase, Jase to Jane, she moves from one 'husband' to the other, playing to perfection the role of a 'caregiver'. The

Indian symbols and myths ranging from Kali to Durga, come in handy to land her quest a local habitation and cultural tag. The values highlighted are acceptable, even credible and palatable but the same cannot be said of the rather simplistic, even stereotyped situations. What is true of Jasmine is true, in general, with the others novels too, though there may be difference in degrees.

Another dimension of Bharati Mukherjee's fiction which militates against the possibility of her being considered as a novelist of great stature is the reduction of life in all its complications to a bare formula with predictable situations. All her novels hoil down to the tales of Indian characters in search of an American identity. The characters have some recognizable Indian traits which lend them an exotic flavour but they seek to flow like travel- weary rivers into the ocean of American mainstream experience. She herself confesses that in an interview : "... America is more real to me than India. I greed to belong. America matters to me. It is not that India failed me- rather America transformed me."¹

Bharati Mukherjee calls her subject immigrant self-transformation, her characters as beings evolving into 'unhyphenated Americans'. She is equally candid about the

thrust of her works : " I say let the old self die if it must, if the new self be born. "2 All this would not have been as much contentious as it turns out to be, had Bharati Mukherjee not been insisting, in the same breath, on being "An American author in the tradition of other American authors..."3, and had she not been claiming that "When I say am an American writer, I am saying it in order to break down racism in the west or Canada ... "4

Insistent flaunting of her self acknowledged mainstream Americanism, takes attention off other components of her fiction to her detriment. One has to ignore the novelist's polemical propaganda to enable the artist and the seeker of values in her through means subtly artistic to come centre-stage. It is for the artistic projection of values in all fields of human interaction that Bharati mukherjee's works would deservedly be read and appreciated.

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