

**The Immigrant Experience and the Female Identity in Bharati
Mukherjee's Novels**

A Thesis Submitted to
Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirrapalli
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH



By

B.Pradeepa

Ref.No.32595/Ph.D2 / English / part-time /dated: 7-01-2011

Research Advisor

Dr.S.Ramamurthy



Centre for Research

Department of English

**Srimad Andavan Arts and Science College (Autonomous),
Tiruchirapalli - 620005.**

July 2014

Dean of Academics & HOD of English, **srmurthy1948@yahoo.com**

Centre for Research, **9894777716, 0431-2431528**

Srimad Andavan Arts & Science College (Autonomous),

Tiruchirapalli-620 005

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **The Immigrant Experience and the Female Identity in Bharati Mukherjee's Novels** submitted by B.Pradeepa is a bona fide record of research work done by her under my guidance in the Department of English, **Centre for Research at Srimad Andavan Arts & Science College,** Tiruchirapalli-620 005 and the thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or any other similar titles.

The thesis represents the independent work on the part of the candidate.

July 2014

Signature

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled **The Immigrant Experience and the Female Identity in Bharati Mukherjee's Novels** has been carried out by me under the guidance of Dr S.Ramamurthy, Dean of Academics & HOD of English, Centre for Research **Srimad Andavan Arts & Science College, Tiruchirappalli-620 005** Tiruchirappalli and the work has not been submitted either in whole or in part for any other degree or diploma at any University or Institute.

Tiruchirappalli -5

B.Pradeepa

July 2014

CONTENTS

S.No.	Title	Page No.
1	Preface	I
2	Abstract	i
3	Introduction	1-35
4	Study of Themes	36-98
5	Study of Characters	99-143
6	Her World View	144-170
7	Conclusion	171-193
8	Works Cited	194-201

PREFACE

Bharati Mukherjee is a Diaspora writer who has been much discussed in academic circles both in and outside India. She is a novelist as well as a short story writer who has settled in America. She takes pride in calling herself as an American. Her novels mainly deal with Indian immigrants in the USA who face various problems. She has immigrant consciousness and it is reflected in her novels. Her novels are women centred and this shows her feminist concerns. Though numerous critical works have been published on her novels discussing her themes, no serious attempt has been made to discuss her immigrant experience and female identity. An attempt is made in this thesis to discuss this dimension by examining her novels closely.

It is my duty to express my gratitude to my Research Advisor . Dr S.Ramamurthy, Dean of Academics and HoD of English, Centre for Research, Srimad Andavan Arts and Science College, Tiruchirapalli for his guidance and valuable help he has rendered. I must thank him for his going through my typed scripts patiently and made corrections and suggestions wherever they were warranted. But for his guidance at every stage of my thesis writing, this thesis would not have been successfully completed and submitted.

I must thank the members of the Doctoral Committee for their guidance. I should thank the administration of Srimad Andavan Arts and Science College (Autonomous) for admitting me in the college as a research scholar in the Dept. of English. I am also thankful to the Librarians of Srimad Andavan Arts and Science College and American College, Madurai for lending me books and journals for my research.

I must thank my well-wishers and friends for all their help. My thanks are due to my dear husband Mr Karikalan for his support and my parent for their encouragement. I should also thank my son Mithun for helping me in his own way during the course of my research. Finally, I should offer my prayers to God for his benevolence.

ABSTRACT

The first chapter of the thesis is an introduction in which the Indian Diaspora writers are referred. The differences among exile, refugee, expatriate and immigrant are also brought out in this chapter. One cannot ignore the immigrant consciousness in the writings of Bharati Mukherjee since she is an immigrant writer. The feeling of rootlessness and expatriation are constantly being subjected to artistic execution and treatment in her novels.

The second chapter is the study of themes. The recurring themes in her novels are 'Alienation, Search for female identity, Assimilation and Hybridity'. Seven of her novels are taken for discussion in this chapter. The novelist portrays the image of women facing the cross cultural problems trying to assimilate the alien culture while losing the sustenance to the Indian cultural heritage. She problematizes the stereotypical notions of identity, culture and nationality in her novels.

The third chapter is the study of characters. Her characters are often immigrants who face peculiar immigrant problems such as split personality, identity crisis, alienation, nostalgia, depression, self-assertion and reverse assimilation. Each one of the characters is different from others in their attitude and behavior. Her protagonists go through double colonization either by patriarchy or later by expatriation. The strong autobiographical factor that spreads through the novels of Mukherjee is a trait of the confessional, testimonial narration often exploited by women writers in the USA.

The fourth chapter examines her narrative technique, language, style and her use of myth in her novels. She portrays the women characters as expatriates in a few

novels and later as immigrants. The novelist's world view, outlook and her feminist concerns are discussed in this chapter.

The study reveals that Bharati Mukherjee is a renowned immigrant novelist who shares her interesting immigrant experiences with her readers. In handling her themes, the novelist gives an ethnic dimension. Her novels portray the women immigrants in an alien land as undergoing mandatory metamorphosis and transformation into self-liberated, self-assured persona. She emerges as the voice of the expatriate-immigrant sensibility describing the mental and interaction of the female mind and complexities of a human feeling through her characters.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Indian-English writers such as Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Shahsi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Sunetra Gupta, Rohinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Hari Kunzru have all become popular novelists after immigration. These non-resident Indian writers have made the investigation of feeling of dislocation as a recurrent theme in all their exile works. The probing involves displacement or dislocation in cultural aspects rather than mere geographical displacement. The problems they deal with in their works are generally the hardships faced by immigrants, refugees and exiles. Bharati Mukerjee, Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul and Kiran Desai are a few renowned Diaspora writers who have made remarkable contribution to the growth of novel. The Diaspora writers have enriched the English literature with their remarkable contributions. These writers target at discovering India through mythical legends, the intricacies of civilization, cultural adaptation and nostalgia. They also penetrate into the world of imaginations and memories to bring about something unique and distinct from that depicted by contemporary writers. The Diaspora writers portray the enormity and complex nature of the country which owns multiples of all things – multiple actualities, multiple veracities and multiple issues and this assortment are brought to the notice of the people worldwide. The term Diaspora which was used to refer to Jewish dispersion is being now used to refer to contemporary situations that involve the experiences of expatriate workers, refugees, exiles, immigrants and ethnic communities. “Indian Diaspora” refers to population outside

India, particularly of those who have migrated to foreign lands and in course of time have renounced their Indian citizenships but can trace their origin from another land. Since the latter half of the twentieth century, the word Diaspora has gained a different meaning and is being used as a substitute for transnational, which refers to population that has originated in a land other than in which it currently resides and whose social, economic and political networks transcend the borders and play significant roles in the country of its adoption as well as the country of its origin. Indian Diaspora writers are of major focus today mainly due to the theoretical formulation being produced by their fictions. These writers are frequently obsessed with the feeling of nostalgia as they endeavor to fit themselves in foreign cultures. They carve their works with citations to the culture of the native land while simultaneously taking on and settling in the cultural milieu of the host country. Conversely, Diaspora works when viewed in a wider sense reveals their facets enabling the comprehension of different cultures, shattering of the barricade between countries and thereby globalization. Diaspora or expatriate writing is of tremendous importance across countries and cultures. Theories are created and status described so as to frame new identities which promote elimination of boundaries and limits that are associated with various transient and spatial metaphors. Thus, the migration results in the displacement and replacement of cultures and the characters cling to memories. Diaspora writers usually thrive on the marginal space between their two countries and fashion cultural theories. Interestingly, the words 'Diaspora', 'exile', 'alienation' and 'expatriation' are tantamount and hold an uncertain position of being both an expatriate and an envoy. The two tasks being dissimilar, the Diaspora writers try to justify both. As an expatriate the writer yearns for security and shelter and as an envoy

communicates his native culture and improves its comprehension in the alien land. The feeling of homelessness which each immigrant senses is authentic and potent. Bhiku Parekh asserts that the Diaspora Indian is

like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes, and that is the only way he increasingly comes to feel at home in the world. (*Some Reflection on the Indian Diaspora* 106)

The Indian-English writers, for instance, Raja Rao was an expatriate even in pre-independent India; G. V. Desani born in Kenya had lived in England, India, and USA; and Kamala Markandaya dwelled in Britain following her marriage with a British (*An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*, 180, 186, 226). Nirad C. Chaudhuri had chosen Britain to settle in as his perceptions were not approved in India. Salman Rushdie's *Imaginary Homeland* includes worldwide. The Iranian "fatwa" stage has introduced a new facet to the exile state of Rushdie. African-English writers such as Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ngugiwa Thiongo', Wole Soyinka, and Ben Okri resided in an exile condition.

The Colonial and the post-colonial India are partitions that are currently more pertinent to a historian compared to a writer as Indo-English fiction has risen above all the hurdles of trivial categorizations and has evolved almost a part of the mainstream English literature. A remarkable contribution to the repository has been made by the Indian writers, such as Rushdie and Naipaul, who survive as global citizens - a universal demonstration of the exile scenario. The Indian

Diaspora has been framed by a dispersal of population and not, in the Jewish conception, a mass departure of population at a specific period of time. This periodic immigration shows a steady trajectory from the labourers of the past to the current IT professionals. Sudesh Mishra in his essay “*From Sugar to Masala*” classifies the Indian Diaspora into two groups - the old and the new. He makes a distinction thus:

This distinction is between, on the one hand, the semi-voluntary flight of indentured peasants to non-metropolitan plantation colonies such as Fiji, Trinidad, Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia, Surinam, and Guyana, roughly between the years 1830 and 1917; and the other the late capital or postmodern dispersal of new migrants of all classes to thriving metropolitan centres such as Australia, the United States, Canada, and Britain (“*From Sugar to Masala*”: *Writing by the Indian Diaspora* 276).

Particularly after independence the Indian Diaspora community has obtained a new identity as a result of self-affirmation and growing recognition by the West. It is appealing to make a note of the account of Diaspora Indian writing which is as aged as the Diaspora itself. In fact, the foremost Indian writing in English is attributed to Dean Mahomed, who was born in India and then migrated to “eighteenth century Ireland, and then to England” (*Away: The Indian Writer as an Expatriate*, xx) in 1784. The first Indian English novel, Bankimchandra Chatterjee’s *Rajmohan’s Wife*, was published in 1864. Seepersad Naipaul and later Shiva Naipaul, V. S. Naipaul, Cyril Dabydeen, David Dabydeen, Sam Selvon, M.

G. Vassanji, Subramani, K. S. Maniam, Shani Muthoo, and Marina Budhos are some of the noteworthy contributors in that field.

The immigrant characters in their novels turn to be nomadic examples of the alien and the homeless. To cite an example the characters of V. S. Naipaul, such as Mohun Biswas from *A House for Mr. Biswas* or Ganesh Ramsumair from *The Mystic Masseur*, are characters who are conscious of their past though residing far away from their native land India for generations. Their efforts to resist fluidity are all the times tested by the eventuality of their restless subsistence - a state emerged out of the migration of their ancestors, although within the Empire, from India to Trinidad. Naipaul's characters are in fact not controlled by real dislocation but by an innate memory of displacement. For these psychically dislocated people, their native India is apparent as a spot of imagination rather than a geographical locale. Rushdie's words can be made use of to describe their dilemma: "the past is a country, from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity" (*Imaginary Homelands* 12). The novels of the older group of Diaspora Indian writers such as Raja Rao, G. V. Desani, Santha Rama Rau, Balachandra Rajan, Nirad Chaudhuri, and Ved Mehta primarily turn back to India and hardly ever document their experiences as expatriates. This proves that these writers are aware of their belonging to India even though they are away from India. Evidently, these writers perceive their native country as an outsider as the distance could facilitate the perception to be clear. Makarand Paranjape states:

that instead of worshipping the leftovers and relics of a now inaccessible homeland as the old Diaspora of indentured labourers did, the new Diaspora of international Indian English writers live

close to their market, in the comforts of the suburbia of advanced capital but draw their raw material from the inexhaustible imaginative resources of that messy and disorderly subcontinent that is India (*Triple Ambivalence: Australia, Canada, and South Asia in the Diasporic Imagination* 252).

These contemporary writers present their experiences out of India and they never look back their native land with the feeling of nostalgia. Paranjape explains this fact in reviewing the novels of Rohinton Mistry. (*Triple Ambivalence: Australia, Canada, and South Asia in the Diasporic Imagination* 251) Eventually, Indian writers in the West are more and more finding themselves in tune with the fictional tradition of the global immigrant writers. Rushdie notes that “Swift, Conrad, Marx [and even Melville, Hemingway, Bellow] are as much our literary forebears as Tagore or Ram Mohan Roy” (*Imaginary Homelands* 20).

The recent Diaspora Indian writers can be divided into two different categories. One group encompasses those who have harbored in the shores of foreign countries after spending a part of their lives in India. The second category includes those who reside away from India since birth and hence look at India as an interesting origin of their heritage. The writers of the first group have a factual displacement whereas those incorporated in the second group regard themselves as rootless. Both the categories of writers have generated a desirable volume of English fictions. These writers while portraying immigrant characters in their fictions exploit the perennial subjects of dislocation and self-realization. The Diaspora Indian writers’ representation of displaced characters secures enormous significance if viewed against the political backdrop of India. The Diaspora Indian

writers have largely focused on characters from their native dislodged society. For instance, Vikram Seth's two novels *The Golden Gate* and *An Equal Music* have focused solely on the lives of Americans and Europeans. Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* and Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man*, portray Diaspora Indian characters. These works bring about the influence of racial discrimination against Indians in the United Kingdom during 1960's which has estranged the characters and exacerbated their sense of dislocation. On the other hand, Salman Rushdie in *The Satanic Verses* moves towards the metaphor of migration by implementing the practice of magic pragmatism. The physical changes of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha following their fall from the exploded jumbo jet on the English Channel is representative of the self-making that immigrants have to endure in their host land. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in *The Mistress of Spices* describes Tilo, the central character, as an interesting one to depict the migrant's sorrow. Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines* features Ila who is raised solely on alien lands as her father is a wandering diplomat. As a result, she feels as an outsider in India. Instead while she evokes the story of Magda being saved by Nick Price, it clearly illustrates the intensity of her sense of being rootless. Amit Chaudhuri in *Afternoon Raag* carves the living of Indian students in Oxford. Likewise, Anita Desai in the novel *Fasting, Feasting* represents Arun as an immigrant student residing in the fringes of Massachusetts. However, the fact to be considered is that in a multi-ethnic world one cannot exactly be a foreigner in any country. Moreover, certain merits accompany the survival as an immigrant - the opportunity to own a dual outlook, capability to experience a variety of cultural traditions, acquisition of influence offered within the Diaspora community by social networking. On the other end, these merits drive the Diaspora Indians, in particular

the second generation, to bump into the quandary of double identities. This chaotic situation generates existential trouble in their psyche and the world seems to be complex for them (*Writers of Indian Diaspora* 78).

The first generation Diaspora Indian writers have proved themselves by bagging several literary awards and honours. Yet, of late, the status of the second generation Diaspora writers has grown extremely and most of them have achieved recognition worldwide. Meera Syal, who was born in England, has productively thrown light on the living of both first generation and second generation non-resident Indians in the West in her creations *Anita and Me* and *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*. Hari Kunzru in his novel *Transmission* projects the lives of three varied characters Leela Zahir, an actress, Arjun Mehta, a computer expert, and Guy Swift, a marketing executive – are travelling respectively through Bollywood, the Silicon Valley, and London. Sunetra Gupta has portrayed both the joy and sorrow in intercultural interactions through characters such as Moni and Niharika in her novels *Memories of Rain* and *A Sin of Colour*. Jhumpa Lahiri's book of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* and her novel *The Namesake* persuasively exemplify the lives of first generation as well as second generation Indian immigrants in America.

The primary aspects of the Diaspora writings are the pursuit for identity, uprooting and transplantation, varied inner and outer psyches, homesickness and niggling feeling of guilt. The Diaspora writers return to their native country for several reasons. For instance, Naipaul comes back to India to explore his roots. Rushdie turns to India to comprehend its history. Mistry visits India time and again for a sort of renaissance and to recuperate his painful soul. Bharati Mukherjee's

childhood memories often harp her. However, the realization of the significance of the cultural conflict aids in the materialization of the alien culture. The Diaspora writings make an aesthetic appraisal and arbitration of cultural constructs and facilitate the establishment of a novel of hybridity.

Fictions written in the contexts of Diaspora alter languages and cultural traditions. Examination of their novels from a cross-cultural viewpoint can help to discover the prolific novel ways of thinking and expression. Globalization has also shaped new patterns of immigration and received several responses all around the world. The apparent blending outcome of globalization cannot conceal the divergent responses it has provoked in different regions. Queries of Diaspora evoke with a specific force: pressure between internationalism and nationalism; the bond between location and identity; and the ways of interaction of cultures and literature. Fresh models of movement are originating in the trend of migration and exclusions. Migration from centers of capitalist economies to cosmopolitan pockets in the margins ('first' to 'second' or 'third' worlds), migration from deprived economies to lands of opportunities ('third' and 'second' worlds to 'first' world, or margins to the cosmopolitan centers within the 'third' world), seem fertile ground for new forms of identity politics. New articulations of Diaspora, necessarily overlapping with familiar ways of conceptualizing it, have found their way to literary writings (*Diasporic Writings: A view* 3-6).

Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Kavita Dasvani, M.G.Vassanji, V.S. Naipaul, and Hari Kunjru are writers who deal with the problems confronted by the immigrants that interrogate the traditional comprehension of the concepts like home, nation, native and alien in their writings.

Among them, Bharati Mukherjee is one of the major novelists of Indian Diaspora who has achieved an eminent position within a comparatively short creative span. As an expatriate in the United States, Bharati Mukherjee has captured evocatively the Indian immigrant experiences in her novels and collections of short stories. The creative odyssey that started with *The Tiger's Daughter* has kept her seriously involved in exploring the complexities of cross-cultural interactions. She is an established if not controversial voice of the Indian Diaspora in North America. In a critical and creative career that has spanned over thirty years, Mukherjee has been engaged in redefining the idea of Diaspora as a process of gain, in contrary to the conventional perspectives that construe immigration and displacement as a condition of terminal loss and dispossession, involving the deletion of history and the dissolution of an 'original' culture associated with the literary and ideological prescriptions of Diaspora. Diaspora is hence, a dispersal of the seed in air, the fruits of which are a new identity and the struggle to survive. Every Diaspora migration owns a historical importance, as it holds within itself the core of the history of the nation. Diaspora is a voyage towards self-awareness, self-realization, and self-empowerment. The component of creativity that is evident in the Diasporic writings serves as the compensation for the associated sufferings and losses (*Displacement and alienation of Indian Diaspora* 28-29).

Mukherjee describes herself as an 'American' writer and has announced through various forums that it is the cultural narrative of America that has provided the scope for her own identity transformations as well as for those she used to celebrate in her fictions. Her cultural politics has led to considerable critical interest and also indicates her rising status as a writer. Her characters of Diaspora are with sentimental attachments to a distant homeland but no real desire for

permanent return. Mukherjee locates the trajectory of her identity and cultural-politics in the course of crossing and re-crossing multiple borders of language, history, race, time and culture. Disrupting the constraints and absolutism of nationalist boundaries, her poetics of Diaspora embody her sense of what as in her case, it means to be a writer who was born and raised in India, been a citizen of Canada and America, and who has been shaped and transformed by the cultures of India and North America. Mukherjee herself elucidates her aesthetic stand on the identity reformulations made possible by Diaspora and its context in terms that involve a trajectory from ‘unhousement’ to ‘rehousement’ (*Displacement and alienation of Indian Diaspora* 148). The trajectory encompasses a process that entails “breaking away from the culture into which one was born and in which one’s place in society been assured” and “re-rooting oneself in a new culture” (*Conversation with Bharati Mukherjee* 19).

Mukherjee’s experience of the positioning in Diaspora, that “Space constituted through and between places and ... marked out by flows” (*Small Act* 193) enables her cultural productions to map a site that reconfigures the dominant discourse of multiculturalism and citizenship in Canada and the United States. Gilroy’s characterization of Diaspora as a space “marked out by flows” particularly resonates with the terms of the present discussion for it calls up that global “flows” of people, cultures, ideas, capital, and institutions end up in cultural citizenships.

Bharati Mukherjee has varied experiences of Diaspora in Canada and the US which have influenced her and also her literary productions, leading to imaginative textual and cultural negotiations. Diaspora writing, thus occupies a significant position in all cultures and countries and Diaspora figures exist

prominently in all the fictions of Bharati Mukherjee covering various moods of expatriation such as nostalgia, frustration, uncertainty, and despondency. Keeping these Diaspora features in mind, it is proposed to undertake a study of her novels focusing on the theme of immigrant experience and the female identity in them.

A distinguished feature of her novels is that they represent the new-immigrant women who are obliged to metamorphose, transforming themselves to develop into self-liberated, self-assured associates of the American Society. Exceptions are there, but the male protagonists are the only ones, who tend to dwindle between the two cultures, and in spite of their patriarchal superiority, in comparison to the female protagonist seem dwarfed and demeaned. The fictional works of the Diaspora writers have provided more significant expression to cross-cultural encounter from a varied perspective.

Bharati Mukherjee was born on July 27, 1940 in Calcutta, India into an elite Hindu Brahmin family to Sudhir Lal Mukherjee and Bina Lal Mukherjee and later became an immigrant in the USA. She says:

In traditional Hindu families like ours, men provided and women were provided for. My father was a patriarch and I a pliant daughter. The neighborhood I'd grown up in was homogeneously Hindu, Bengali-speaking, and middle-class. I didn't expect myself to ever disobey or disappoint my father by setting my own goals and taking charge of my future. Until the age of 8, I lived in a house crowded with 40-50 relatives. My identity was viscerally connected with ancestral soil and genealogy. I was, who I was, because I was

Dr. Sudhir Lal Mukherjee's daughter because I was a Hindu Brahmin, because I was Bengali-speaking and because my *desh*- the Bengali word for homeland- was an East village called Faridpur ("American dreamer" 1) .

Bharati Mukherjee at her young age happened to come across a variety of facade of Indian culture where a bride performs suicide because of dowry demands. All these incidents had an impact on her. Atrocities imposed on women shaped her mind: "To be a woman, I had learned early enough, was to be powerless victim whose only escape was through self – inflicted wounds" (DNC 229). In fact, the neurotic behavior of the protagonist in her novel *Wife* is reminiscence of her own childhood, when she attempted to escape the crowd of relatives:

I even as a small child in a large joint family had learned that frugality of feeling was my best defense against assault. I loved my headaches, later, with a Bengali's typical love of adumbration. I added to that a love of vomiting, of slipping long delicate finger over the rough grained tongue and down the silky, fleshy walls of throat and gullet until I was awarded by an arc of fluid which I watched splatter against the rusty grid of the old-fashioned bathroom drain. Headaches meant that I would be made to lie down with a cold rag over my forehead and eyes, while my mother would try to snatch as many minutes as she would from her cooking for the enormous family tribe and knead the pain out my forehead (DNC 222-23).

The use of the term ‘enormous family tribe’ shows her bitterness that her mother could not care much for her as she was busy with her household chores. Hence, her father’s decision to go to London and settle makes her feel relieved. In 1947, she migrated to Britain with her parents and sisters and dwelled there for about three and a half years, where she gained English fluency: “It was time of forgetting Bengali and acquiring English until I reached an absolute equilibrium” (DNC 102). Mukherjee visualizes that when a language is withdrawn, the person loses his roots: While she was in London, she had an awareness of this:

That gradual erosion of the vernacular also contained an erosion of ideas I had taken for granted. The sense that I had had of myself in Ballygunge, of being somehow superior to my cousins, was less destructive than this new sense of being a minority on account of my color. I felt I was a shadow person because I was not white (DNC 182).

She felt the same in Canada. Racialism in London made her more submissive than she was in Ballygunge: “I began to regard facility in English as my chief weapon for bending my own personality and for making friends among the British” (DNC 182). Adaptation and evolution turned to be her weapon in life. Submissiveness in exterior world changed her more defiant when after marriage she has to stay in Canada and encounter the issues of racialism and multiculturalism. Her approach to adjustment enthused her decide to live in U.S.A. as an immigrant than to fight to be established as an expatriate writer in Canada. In her fictions, Bharati Mukerjee produces a flamboyant, multifaceted world about the commotion and transformation, that crop up during intermingling of cultures;

the territory which she has so intensely built up as her own through her much-admired novels and also the ordeals imposed on the immigrants striving to ascertain their identities in the new world and unfavorable circumstances have also been dexterously handled in her novels.

In 1951, her father returned to Calcutta and her family settled in a mansion in a factory compound in fairly comfortable circumstances since her father took up an active role in business as a co-owner of a pharmaceutical factory. Bharati Mukherjee regarded their separation from the joint family was like a release from a “terrifying communal bonding” (DNC 181). Back in Calcutta, her mother got her daughters admitted into Loreto convent school run by Irish nuns, who regarded the “walled-off school compound in Calcutta as a corner (forever green and tropical) of England” (*The Fictional World of Bharati Mukherjee* 14). Bharathi Mukherjee says,

Like the feminists that my mother was, who didn't know the word feminist but who managed to give me, at great physical expense, she really had to put her body on the line in order to get me into English medium schools, guarantee me the best education so that I would not end up, she said to chattel, to a traditional Bengali husband (Interview with Runar Vignisson 8). Her schooling at the convent stimulated the removal from her own culture and Hinduism: But I realize now that what the school in India, the very English postcolonial school in India forced me to devalue my own Indian or Bengali literature, language, and ways of thinking. (Interview with Runar Vignisson 2).

Mukherjee's life thus, comprises several phases: the initial phase of childhood in a joint family till her eighth year; the second and glorious phase was the life in Britain; the third phase points out her luxurious, sheltered life in her father's factory compound after returning to India. Changing residential nations and leading an unsettled, insecure life had started right from her childhood and continued till she decided to settle in North America as an immigrant. Mukherjee's life in North America can be divided into three phases. At first she lived the life of an exile in Canada, thinking of herself as an Indian, even as she raised a family and pursued a career in Canada. In the course of her year-long stay in India, however, she discovered that India has become "just another Asian country" (Interview with Runar Vignisson 2).

Mukherjee then felt ready to commit herself to Canada and embrace the life of an Indian expatriate in that country. But as soon as she perceived that Canada would not accept her as one of its own, she resolved to move to the United States. "In the third period of her life in North America, Mukherjee can be seen in a celebratory mood, upholding the life of an immigrant in the United States" (*The Fictional World of Bharati Mukherjee* 25).

Mukherjee's works can also be split into three phases with respect to the three phases of her life in North America (*The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee* 28). The first phase includes *The Tiger's Daughter* and essays of *Days and Nights in Calcutta* when she lived as an exile in Canada, considering herself as an Indian. The stories of *Darkness*, the essay, *An Invisible Woman* and *The Sorrow and the Terror* are of the second phase when she thought herself as an Indian expatriate in Canada. *The Middleman and other stories*, *Jasmine* and her essays, which depict

the life of an immigrant, come under the third phase. The final phase works reflect her happy mood, attitude of transformation and adaptation to a new cultural environment. The author's primary concern has been the life of South Asian expatriates and the chaos of "alienation and assimilation" (*Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction : A Perspective* 167). The recurring themes in her novels are the theme of immigration and alienation. Alienation refers to the concept of transnationalism, multiculturalism and theory of Diaspora. For instance, Tara in her novel *The Tiger's Daughter* belongs to the other Diaspora community, which is alienated and struggles to join the nationalized community by marrying an American, David Cartwright. Bharati Mukherjee's characterization of Dimple Dasgupta in *Wife* also provides a variety of perspectives to the theme of immigration and resulting alienation. The novel exemplifies the confusions to choose between personal satisfaction and matrimonial bondage in a strange cultural background. Two incidents from the novel, one, her self-abortion and the second, her killing of her husband show signs of dilemma and her split personality. Mukherjee confides:

When I'm writing I'm not conscious of anything other than getting in the skin and into the skill of my character but when I'm finished with a draft and look at it to realise that very often it's about mother-daughter relations and about the formation of a very strong woman. And that strength may sometimes express itself in negative and violent ways but I still think of all my characters as women who've asserted themselves according to their own improvised moral code even if they murder or hurt other men who've hurt them earlier, the hurt that they inflict comes out of their own very precise sense of Right and Wrong ("Being a woman writer" 1).

Even before her teen age, Mukherjee drafted a novel of about English children when she lived in England. She had also written short stories for the magazine *Palm Levels* in Loreto Convent School, which comprised of fictionalized episodes from European history. Soon during the completion of her studies at college, she decided to become a writer which was authorized by her father. In 1958, her father moved to Baroda after losing his partnership in the factory. Meanwhile, she earned her B.A (Honors) in English from the University of Calcutta in 1959. Later on, she completed her Master's degree in English and Ancient Indian Culture from the University of Baroda in 1961. Her postgraduate education at Baroda involved a study of ancient culture and the rich heritage of Hindu origin, re-established her beliefs in Hinduism, and the values inculcated into her by her traditional religious Hindu parents. Destiny was on her side when a UCLA Drama Professor was invited to their house for dinner. He was in India with some students on "Project India" and recommended that Bharati Mukherjee could be sent to Professor Paul Engle in Iowa, and afterwards, the wife of a visiting Fulbright Professor offered her a recommendation letter. This led Bharati Mukherjee to avail a scholarship with PEO Group, ultimately halting her in Iowa's writers' workshop in September, 1961. In 1963, she secured her MFA from the University of Iowa. She completed her doctorate in English and Comparative literature in 1969. A brief account of her life is necessary for understanding her vision of life.

Bharati Mukherjee had to encounter racialism which prompted her to become aware of the ill effects of colonialism and they are reflected in her writings:

It was only when I came to Iowa, to the writers' workshop, that I realized the damage of colonialism. I wasn't aware of it growing up in independent India where I was part of the mainstream- but coming here and being part of a minority, and then realizing what I had been robbed of in a way (Interview with Runar Vignisson 2-3).

At the University of Iowa, she met Clark Blaise, a Canadian student at Harvard and after a short courtship period, she married him in North American style in September 1963. Together, the couple had produced two books. In 1966, she followed her husband to his motherland of Canada and lived there in Toronto and then in Montreal as Canadian citizens till 1980. She had to face the problem of racialism in Canada:

And then we went to live in Canada in 1966, as soon as was legally possible we took out Canadian citizenship. And then after fourteen years, in 1980, because I found that as a dark-skinned Canadian, as a non-European immigrant to Canada, life was really impossible (Interview with Runar Vignisson 4).

Her marriage had an impact on her personal life as well as on career. As she herself says, her marriage is "an intensely literary marriage" (*Carb Alison. An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee* 6). Bharati Mukherjee took up teaching jobs at Canadian universities at the insistence of her husband and held the job of instructor in English at Marquette University, Wisconsin during 1964-65 and a similar position at Madison in 1965. Subsequently, she accepted the job of lecturer in McGill University, Montreal from 1966 to 1969 where she got promoted as Assistant Professor in 1969

and Associate Professor in 1973. Indeed, the couple made a daring decision to enter the U.S. where she continues to live and work. She worked as a Professor of English in Skidmore College, New York and then at Queen's College, New York for a short period before settling down ultimately at the University of California, Berkley, presently as a Professor of English. In the meantime, she received her naturalized U.S. citizenship in 1988. Bharati Mukherjee has won grants from McGill University in 1968. She was awarded Canadian Arts Council Grant twice in the years 1973-74 and 1977. She has also availed herself of the prestigious Shastri-Indo-Canadian Institute Grant during 1976-77. She was honored with Guggenheim Foundation Award in 1978-79 and Canadian Government Award in 1982. Moreover, she was the first prize winner in 1980 for her short story "*Isolated Incidents*." She was the recipient of the National Book Critic Circle Award, for her short stories collection, "*The Middleman and other stories*" in 1989.

Her creative work set encompasses seven novels- *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972), *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the World* (1993), *Leave it to me* (1997), *Desirable Daughters* (2002), *The Tree Bride* (2004) and *Miss New India* (2011), two short story collections- *Darkness* (1985) and *The Middleman and other stories* (1988). She has co-authored with her husband two non-fictional works- *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977) and *The Sorrow and the Terror* (1987). *The Sorrow and the Terror*, that Bharati Mukherjee co-authored with her husband and the story *The Management of Grief* from *The Middlemen and Other Stories*, and the stories of *Darkness* throw light on her obsession with Indians facing discrimination in Canada, which could be indubitably correlated to the Canadian immigration policy. The stories about the Indian immigrants in America are marked with the distrust at the triumph of their integration into the American

culture. The diverse activities of her characters jog the memory the readers of her own experiences:

In the United states, however, I see myself in those some outcasts: I see myself in an article on a Trinidad – Indian hooker; I see myself in the successful executive who sides Hindi film music in his tape deck as he drives into Manhattan; I see myself in the shady accountant who’s trying to marry off his loose- living daughter; in professors, domestics, high school students, illegal busboys in ethnic restaurants. It’s possible with sharp ears and the right equipment to hear America singing even in the seams of the dominant culture. In fact, it may be the best listening post for the next generation of Whitman. For me, it is a movement away from the aloofness of expatriation, to the exuberance of immigration (D 3).

Mukherjee’s one year stay at India demonstrated that the individuals who go away from their native uphold a similar outlook towards the old world. Bharati Mukherjee comprehended that India had changed a lot during her brief visit to India. The colonialism was still subsistent among the elite people but then the subjugated and oppressed had attained their tether’s end, and originated rebellions, which had altered the entire state of affairs. Staying with relatives and attending marriages was nostalgic, but the altered circumstances drove Bharati Mukherjee to apprehend the nuances of the two cultures. The free will of west was not present in Indian city. The activities of her aristocrat parents were adequate for her to choose

to settle as an immigrant. The aristocratic behavior, which captivated little Bharati Mukherjee early in life did not embrace the same appeal:

On the other hand, Clark Blaise is more inclined and impressed in fact, charmed by the exotic Indian culture and people. Commerce, community, marriage, family, on the rights when I was feeling not Marxist but somehow Hegelian, I would have dropped five rupees- a good week's wages – into those hands or others. And I would think they were the same thing, somehow- commerce, community, marriage, family- all part of the Indian's identity, part of the world image that antedated my own (DNC 105).

Clark Blaise, her husband has been a motivation for Bharati Mukherjee, as she has confided in her interview. He has been an immense support, an eager audience and critic of her works. Often, his suggestion has been critical for her plots. For instance , while creating her first novel she could not approve about including an episode where her heroine is seduced by a less- than- agreeable character because of her worries that people would decipher that “something similar happened to her”(The Fictional World of Bharati Mukherjee 14). India was apparent as a poor country to Blaise, but slowly, reconciliation has brought about a change in attitude and Clark Blaise is more sympathetic to Indians than Bharati Mukherjee herself. Bharati Mukherjee's decision to stay abroad bore no guilt on her conscience. India instantly became another Asian country rather than her homeland (The Fictional World of Bharati Mukherjee 20). She was very comfortable in America where life was easy:

It is, of course America that I love where history occurs with the dramatic swiftness and interest of half-hour television shows.

America is a sheer luxury, being touched more by presentation of tragedy than by tragedy itself. History can be dealt with in thirty second episodes; I need to suffer its drabness and continuum (DNC 168).

Mukherjee's attitude towards exile, expatriation and immigration has also changed over years. Although she now has a full and joyous sense of herself as an immigrant, living in a continent of immigration she had at first sensed like an exile, or at best an expatriate. As on exile, Mukherjee felt drawn to the country she had left behind and compelled from time to time to evaluate the nature of her ties to her "home." As an expatriate in Canada, she considered herself superior to immigrants, people who appeared to her as "lost souls, but upon and pathetic," while expatriates "knew all too well who and what they were, and what soul fate had befallen them" ("Bharati Mukherjee: The Immigrant Sensibility" 2). Accepting and adjusting to new situations seems to be a regular feature of her life. This view is very much reflected in her novels. Jasmine's decision in the novel *Jasmine* to leave her country to fulfill her husband's dream taking up all kinds of dangers and challenges seems to reflect a facet of the author's life (*The Fictional World of Bharati Mukherjee* 22). In 1988, Bharati Mukherjee, wrote an essay titled "*Immigrant writing: Give Us Your Maximalists*" published in *New York Times Book Review*, which dealt with the American fiction and its policies of immigration. With this piece of work, Bharati Mukherjee has not only highlighted herself as a significant voice in the US multi- cultural debate, but has also "consolidated her position as one of the best known South Asian American

writers” (Helena “Who Speaks for us?” Web). Bharati Mukherjee in her essay has markedly branded the two types of American literature, as “minimalism” and “maximalism” the former focused on fiction concentrating on subjects like midlife crises, childlessness, divorce and prevalent hazards in the society like drugs and AIDS. Maximalist fictions demonstrate the experiences of the immigrants, their emotional turmoil brought about by change. Immigrants who have protected their past lives, culture and language, groping through new territories, live through centuries of history in a single lifetime. “As far as Mukherjee was concerned, ‘multiculturalism’ was essentially an excuse for not allowing other cultures to merge with the dominant culture and to keep new immigrants like her outside mainstream Canada”(“Is there a Feminist Aesthetic?” 2).

In America, she became a part of the melting pot as she was not discriminated or abused in New York unlike Canada. “In her opinion, American society at least allowed a new immigrant like her to slug it out, while Canadian society degraded South Asians even though it permitted them to be citizens” (“The Melting Pot Lady?” 29). Mukherjee discusses the standing of the new Americans from non-traditional immigrant countries in her essay *“Immigrant writing: Give Us Your Maximalists”*. She asks:

But where in fiction do you read of it? Who in other words, speaks for us, the new Americans from non-traditional immigrant countries? Which is another way of saying, in this altered America, who speaks for you? (“Who Speak for us?” 83).

Mukherjee states thus:

Questions such as who is an American and what is American culture are being posed with belligerence and answered with violence....But in this decade of continual, large-scale Diaspora, it is imperative that we come to some agreement about who 'we' are, and what our goals are for the nation, now that our community includes people of many races, ethnicities, languages, and religions. The debate about American culture and American identity has to date been monopolized largely by Eurocentrists and Ethnocentrists whose rhetoric has been flamboyantly divisive, pitting a phantom 'us' against a demonized 'them?' ("Who Speak for us?"⁸⁵).

The mentality of 'us' vs. 'them' is also not free of own hazards which Mukherjee pinpoints as: "We must be alert to the dangers of an "us" vs. "them" mentality. In California, this mentality is manifesting itself as increased violence between minorities, ethnic communities. The attack on Korean-American merchants in South Central Los Angeles in the wake of the Rodney King beating trial is only one recent example of the tragic side effects of this mentality. "On the national level, the politicization of ethnic identities has encouraged the scapegoating of legal immigrant, who is blamed for economic and social problems brought about by flawed domestic and foreign policies"("American Dreamer" 3-4).

Two of her essays *American Dreamer* published in 1997 and *Two Ways to belong in America* published in 1996 are debatable pieces on policy of immigration and citizenship in America. The former has more of personal experiences of Bharati Mukherjee and her changeover, her marriage to Clark Blaise and her migration to Canada, the disgusting years spent there and her vacation in India,

which transformed her decision to exist as an immigrant, which was a key moment in her life, triggering her progress as an individual and as a writer. The latter castoffs the dissimilar focus towards citizenship in America. Bharati Mukherjee's sister Mira is firm on returning to India, selecting a life of expatriation whereas Bharati Mukherjee admits her standing as an immigrant in America to liberate herself from the ties of the past. The writings of Bharati Mukerjee are based on her myriad experiences in immigrant countries.

Bharati Mukherjee's first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* illustrates the rootless of Tara Banerjee, the protagonist of the novel. The plot emphasizes the necessity to redefine the notions like home or homeland and identity from the view of an immigrant. The novel observes the protagonist as an exile in both the homeland as well as in the adopted land. Tara goes to America for higher studies, marries an American there and returns to India after seven years. The plot is drawn on the author's own experience and those of her sisters who had been to America for higher studies. Her second novel *Wife* depicts the existence of the protagonist, Dimple Dasgupta, as an expatriate in the US. She is torn between the roles of a traditional Indian wife and an assertive wife of the west. Though she makes efforts to establish contact with the host culture, she finally becomes a disillusioned expatriate and succumbs to cultural or social pressures. Dimple, a docile young Bengali girl dreams about her marriage and subsequently marries off Amit Basu, an engineer expecting to emigrate to US. She lives in dreams and believes her marriage and migration to US will bring her a new life of happiness. Unfortunately, her alien environment and cultural trauma at US forces her to stab her husband to death and commit suicide.

Jasmine, the most acclaimed novel succeeded *Wife* explains the story of a Punjabi peasant girl, Jyoti who transforms as an assimilated immigrant. Jyoti,

widowed at a young age decides to migrate to America as Jasmine to fulfill her husband's dreams. Meanwhile, she takes revenge on her husband's murderer and the rapist. She utilizes every opportunity to become an American and undergoes the process of transformation into Jazzy-Jase-Jane to get assimilated into the new culture. She learns to live for herself, abandoning the bondages of caste, gender and family. Eventually, she emerges as a winner against unfavorable circumstances and shapes a new life in the alien society. This novel is notable in Mukherjee's oeuvre because with the publication of this novel, the phase of 'expatriation' terminates and the phase of immigration starts in her career as an 'immigrant' and also an 'immigrant' story-teller. Her next novel, *The Holder of the World* deals with tensions, aspirations and ambitions of Hannah Easton, the protagonist. The story establishes expatriation as a journey of the human mind. Hannah Easton, born in Massachusetts moves to India and becomes the lover of a king who gives her a diamond named as 'Emperor's Tear'. The tale goes on with the detective looking for the diamond and revolves around Hannah Easton's perspective. Eventually, the female protagonist reaches her native as a probed or translated self, achieving self-recognition.

In her fifth novel *Leave It to Me*, the novelist discusses the hunger of Debbie Di Martino, the leading character of the novel, to get linked to her biological parents who are a Californian hippie and a Eurasian serial killer. The plot describes the contradicting eastern and western world, Debby's search for true identity and mother-daughter relationship via the emotional and political indulging of Debby in her thirst for revenge. The novel aids the author to problematize the stereotypical notions of identity, culture and nationality. Her sixth novel, *The Desirable Daughters* depicts the life of immigrants. The author deals with familial

bonds, feeling of belonging and identity crisis in this novel. Few of the themes treated in this novel include acceptance of the 'new', values of the American culture, second generation and their values and morals. The story narrates the attitude and approaches of Padma, Parvati and Tara (symbolic names of Hindu Goddess Sakthi), the three sisters to various situations. As the title explicates, the sisters are the daughters who make the parents proud or for whom every parent would long for. The three sisters, daughters of Motilal Bhattacharjee and the great-grand-daughters of Jai Krishna Gangooli, hail from a traditional Bengali Brahmin family. Padma and Parvati make their own choices, former, an immigrant in New Jersey and the latter, had a love marriage and settled in Bombay. Padma is regarded as the hyphenated Indian, which the author refuses to settle for as an 'immigrant' in the U.S. Parvati is an ideal, traditional Indian wife. Tara is the narrator of the novel and lives the author's version of cultural hybridity. Tara marries Bishwapriya Chatterjee, a choice of her parents and identifies her marital life as a failure. She settles on an American divorce and sends her son with his father. She quits her traditional life and starts a fresh love life with Andy. The novel testifies the fluidity of her identity as well that of the immigrants. Lastly, Tara returns to her father's home for comfort. The novel has autobiographical elements.

Her seventh novel *The Tree Bride* relates the past incidents with the present circumstances of Tara's life of *Desirable Daughters*. The socio-cultural and political history of Bengal is interwoven into a fabric in this novel. The novel is a 'historiographic-metafiction', which tells the impact of colonialism on Bengali minds. The problems confronted by the British officers in India are discussed in the plot. The novel proves that there exists convergence but not coincidences in the

universe. Attempts to evaluate past history of own culture to reconstruct the present, when living in an alien culture is the key feature of the story. Tara's root-search to discover her identity leads to several surprises. The plot moves back and forth in time between pre-independent India and San Francisco. The short story collections of Bharati Mukherjee are built round the deep-rooted racism in Canada. The stories in *Darkness* celebrate the changes of 'Aloofness of expatriation' to the 'exuberance of immigration'. These stories specify the problems in the life of South-Asian, African and Caribbean immigrants, some of them are narrated from the viewpoint of whites too. The plots involve the traditional theme of Diaspora of exile and immigration, requirement of all acts of courage and will and all the shocks, satires and failures associated

Bharati Mukherjee's eighth novel *Miss New India* indulges in many new clichés. The heroine of *Miss New India* is a young woman, Anjali Bose, who escapes the constrictions of small-town Bihar, one of India's most backward states, for the promise of Bangalore, one of the country's (and the world's) fastest growing cities. There she works at a call centre, falls in love, meets dynamic young entrepreneurs and marvels at the fortunes being made all around her. She encounters her share of hardships — police brutality, real-estate sharks — but ultimately succeeds in reinventing herself.

The Middleman and Other Stories is a collection of short stories with a mythic baggage. The collection enumerates what happens when the third world meets the first and covers the perspective of various immigrants such as Tamil, Srilankan who fall in love on the way to America. The book expresses the resourcefulness of the immigrants in their domicile through the narrative voices of the characters, male and female, young and old. The author utilizes her Indian background to translate into the

American experience, which is evident from the shift of her focus from themes of expatriation and nostalgia to the exciting features of the American melting pot. In fact, the author interprets the two cultures as a middleman. The third world immigrants, the characters of *The Middleman and Other Stories* are conquerors who boldly claim their rights in the adopted land. In *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, a collaborative work with her husband, the author accounts her own experiences during one year sojourn in Calcutta with her husband. She writes about the urgency of her life, life of a particular class at a particular period of Calcutta's history. The work reveals that she considers herself as an Indian woman who has left her home to settle in the west. She also looks over the possibilities of her life in India if she would have not refrained. While writing this book, she realized that despite the cultural conflicts she was facing in Canada, it was still the new world that she wanted to live in.

Another non-fictional work that she collaborated with her husband was *The Sorrow and Terror: The Haunting Legacy of the Air India Tragedy*. It details the crash of the Air India plane, off the coast of Ireland, during its flight from Toronto to Bombay. The crash ended the lives of three hundred and twenty nine persons, mostly Canadians of Indian origin. The tragedy was perceived only as an Indian disaster by the Canadian government, as illustrated by the author. Her first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter* manifests the cultural conflict faced by Tara Banerjee, an upper class Bengali Brahmin girl who goes to America for higher studies. Though she experiences a tough time there in the beginning, she adapts to the alien culture by entering into wedlock with an American. She, like the author comes across bewilderment when she comes back to India after seven years. She discovers that the country has changed a lot since she departed and visualizes a strange society with the impressions of poverty, hungry children and political issues. She also realizes that she

has not blended into the American culture but also cannot hold the values and morals of her native country. The author's *Days and Nights in Calcutta* exemplifies the strong autobiographical strain in *The Tiger's Daughter*. The author claims in an interview with Geoffrey Hancock that she is not an autobiographical writer but her obsessions reveal themselves in metaphor and language. However, the novel reflects the author's own experience and her sister's experience at Vassar (*Conversation with Bharati Mukherjee* 22). Bharati Mukherjee had to establish her own identity in a foreign land, tackling the conflict between two different cultures and to struggle against racial discrimination while she was in Canada. Her immigrant experience is very much reflected in all her novels. The bitter experience of Bharati Mukherjee in Canada is portrayed in her earlier works like *Jasmine, Darkness* and *The Middleman and Other Stories*. Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* to Debbie in *Leave it to Me*, Dimple Dasgupta in *Wife* to Hannah Easton in *The Holder of the World*, illustrate a part of the author's early and late life, first as an expatriate and then as an immigrant. Jasmine is a perfect blend of characteristics of feminine idols of Sita and Kali; visualized as an embodiment of feminism and a human being aware of self; her achievements through self-determination and self-efficacy are praiseworthy.

Transformation of Bharati Mukherjee is evident in *The Middleman and Other Stories*, particularly as characters Panna in '*A Wife's Story*' and Maya Sanyal in '*The Tenant*'. Maya is a naturalized American leading a free life variant to Indian standards. Panna is boundless of Indian in-laws and refuses to return with her husband to India not willing to lose the freedom she has in America. *Darkness* is full of characters trying to gain foothold in the new environment whereas the characters of *The Middleman and Other Stories* comprise of who are already there or are trying to accomplish their dreams. Tara Chatterjee in *Desirable Daughters* is simultaneously an

Indian and an American and she has acquired the third space of enunciation. Padma is a hyphenated immigrant and Parvati is the icon of a traditional Indian wife with the western orientation. Each one lives in her own way of immigrant life. Both Tara and Padma question their identity and are self-empowered despite floating rootless. Tara looks at the nation, identity and culture in a postcolonial way and she sweeps between traditional and modern clutches. Though she is comfortable with her American identity, still she believes that she belongs to India. She is similar to Hannah of *The Holder of the World* who tries to resurrect her present. Yet, she is fluid that she glides from her husband to her lover back to her husband as a lover. Tara Lata in *The Tree Bride* is married to a Sundari tree to prevent life-long widowhood and stays in her paternal house like the tree, empowering the freedom movement, healing and praying for the people around. She resembles Hannah Easton in *The Holder of the World*, who is a healer.

In the novel *Jasmine*, it is self-assertion that transplants self-fashioning in the adopted land that does not easily approve the immigrants. Jyoti, an exile in America is sexually abused on her entry into the multiethnic nation. Yet, this does not hamper her from pursuing her American dream besides being an illegal immigrant. She murders her rapist and abandons her embarrassment by incessantly rejuvenating herself as Jasmine, Jase, and Jane Ripplemeyer. She protects her self-respect by emphasizing her new identities in an endless process of self-realization similar to breathing:

Jasmine's every movement is a calculated step into her
Americanization and with each development a vital change is
marked in her personality. Jasmine's flight to Iowa and her

renaming as Jane is indicative of a slow but a steady immersion into the mainstream American culture. Here we encounter a changed Jasmine— one who has murdered Half-Face for violating her chastity, now not only willingly embraces the company of an American without marriage but also is carrying his child in her womb (*The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee: A Cultural Perspective* 115).

Jasmine herself asserts: “Once we start letting go — let go just one thing, like not wearing our normal clothes, or a turban or not wearing a tika on the forehead — the rest goes on its own down a sinkhole” (J 29). As Jasmine is attempting to assimilate into a culture that is not very receptive and hence she retains her suspicions as well as her Indian self. Though she can talk, walk and wear like Americans she can believe only Asians: “I trust only Asian doctors, Asian professionals. What we've gone through must count for something” (J 32) “She is admired for her Indian self, which has made her a lovable and caring wife, an affectionate mother” (*The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee: A Cultural Perspective* 120). Nagendra Kumar explains that “had she been purely guided by the American values, she should have abandoned Bud at the time of his disability”. *The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee: A Cultural Perspective* 121). Jasmine gets incorporated in the American society partly due to her assumed American and partly due to her intact Indian, hence she exists as a hybrid.

Bharati Mukherjee who has married a Canadian narrates her American experience and the convergence of two cultures very clearly:

I was not right to describe the American experience as one of the melting pot but a more appropriate word would be 'fusion' because immigrants in America did not melt into or were forged into something like their white counterpart but immigration was a two-way process and both the whites and immigrants were growing into a third thing by this interchange and experience (D 3).

Thus, the postmodern fictions of Bharati Mukherjee such as *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife* represent the expatriates who are overwhelmed by the sting of nostalgia. The despair developed in their lives swallows them and makes them marooned between the duality of us/them, self/other, inside/outside and centre/periphery (*Ethnicity in an Age of Diaspora* 45).

Many research articles and critical texts have been published on the novels of Bharati Mukerjee discussing her themes. The following books are perceptible critical studies and commentaries on the novels of Bharati Mukerjee: 1. *Bharati Mukherjee* by Fakrul Alam .2. *Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives* by Emmanuel Nelson. 3. "Relocation as Positive Act: The Immigrant Experience in Bharati Mukherjee's Novels" *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* by Carmen Wickramagamage 4. "Representations of South Asian femininity: evolutions in Bharati Mukherjee." *The Expatriate Indian Writing in English. Vol.*, ed. T. Vinoda and P. Shailaja. 5. *Home Elsewhere: A Study of Short Fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee* by Virender Parmar. 6. "Bharati Mukherjee." *A Companion to Twentieth-Century United States Fiction* edited by David Seed. 7. "Bharati Mukherjee: A Post Modern Indian Woman Novelist." *Critical Studies on Indian English Literature. Vol. 2* edited by M.F. Patel 8. *The*

Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee: A Critical Symposium edited by R.K.Dhawan.9.*The*

Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee: A Cultural Perspective by Nagendra Kumar. 10.

Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction: A Perspective by Sushma Tandon and

11.“Mongrelisation as an Immigrant Experience in Bharati Mukherjee.”

(Ad)ressing the Words of 'the Other': Studies in Canadian Women's Writing

edited by D. Parameswari. But no serious attempt has been made in these books to

discuss her immigrant consciousness and female identity. Any study of her novels

cannot ignore this important dimension of her art. Therefore, an attempt is made in

this dissertation to discuss the immigrant experience in her novels focussing on her

themes, characterization and the world view of the writer. Sociological,

psychological and formal approaches are followed in this dissertation to discuss

her themes, characters and the immigrant experience and female identity.

Accordingly, the dissertation has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter

is an introduction and the second chapter is a study of her themes. The third

chapter is devoted to the study of her characters and characterization, the fourth

chapter on the writer's world view and the fifth is the concluding chapter in which

the findings are recorded.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THEMES

The themes of the novels of Bharati Mukerjee are discussed under four heads for the convenience of study: 1. Novels dealing with the theme of alienation & ghettoization. 2. Novels dealing with the theme of search for female identity. 3. Novels dealing with the theme of assimilation. 4. Novels dealing with the theme of displacement in a bicultural setting. The following novels of Bharati Mukerjee are taken for a discussion in the chronological order in this chapter. 1. *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) 2. *Wife* (1975) 3. *Jasmine* (1989) 4. *The Holder of the World* (1993) 5. *Leave it to Me* (1997) 6. *Desirable Daughters* (2002) 7. *The Tree Bride* (2004).

Commenting on her novel *The Tiger's Daughter* Bharati Mukerjee says:

It is the wisest of my novels in the sense that I was between both worlds. I was detached enough from India so that I could look back with affection and irony, but I didn't know America enough to feel any conflict. I was like a bridge poised between two worlds (*Bharati Mukherjee* 46-47).

In *The Tiger's Daughter*, the protagonist, Tara Banerjee Cartwright, returns to India but now finds herself imbued with the 'foreignness of spirit' (*Indian Women Novelist* 188). She discovers that she is adored neither by her family nor by her friends. In the process of immigration, it is woman who ails a lot because of her numerous dislocations, and expatriate writing is capable of transforming the stereotypical suffering women to an aggressive, self-defined person striving to

establish her own identity via her relationships within the family and society. She gets alienated from her native culture and is wandering between two worlds and this poses the problem of imbalance between her dual personalities. While her Indian friends and relatives condemn her marriage to a foreigner, she does not receive much credit from her husband David, for cleaning the bathroom, which she regards as a wifely duty. Tara painfully realizes that she has got uprooted and out of place both in India and America. This is evident when her husband gets her some books on India. She is also scared that David “no longer wanted to make her over to his ideal image that he no longer loved her.” (TD 50) Tara perhaps believes that she is hated by her mother for marrying a foreigner and abandoning her caste.

In such a critical situation, Tara finds herself rootless or homeless.

F.A.Inamdar observes: “Tara’s efforts to adopt to American society are measured by her rejection and revulsion of Indian modes of life”. (*Immigrant lives* 187-96) Tara socializes with the English speaking Bengali’s in the Catelli – Continental Hotel at Calcutta but feels alienated and annoyed by their trivializing passions and attitudes. Those Westernized friends condemn a Western husband. Tara’s state is similar to that of an expatriate who stays away from the emotional spiritual tenor of the country that had once been her own. The conservative attitude of her westernized Indian friends who are crazy for foreign items and dresses but disapprove marriage with foreign people kindles anger in Tara. There is always a conflict between Tara’s sense of perception and outlook on her home town and her changed outlook. Jasbir Jain rightly comments on this:

Tara’s consciousness of the present is rooted in her life in the States and when she looks at India anew it is not through her childhood associations or her past memories but through the eyes of her foreign

husband David. Her reactions are those of a tourist, of a foreigner
(*Foreignness of Spirit* 13).

Bharati Mukherjee leaves the climax of the novel to the reader's imagination. Does Tara return to her husband and live happily with him keeping all her nostalgia aside or she fall a victim to the rioting crowd? The novelist depicts the inner state of the mind of Tara through the external turmoil. By leaving Tara amidst that turmoil, she manifests that such conflicts are irreconcilable. In fact, Tara's chaos is due to her own "unstable self". Tara should have stuck on to her decision and struggled with her predicament once she has married an American. Yet, she plans a trip to her native place with a change of perspective. Tara is unable to understand that:

she is an outsider in India because of her decision to leave India, to live in North America, to marry an American mleccha (outcaste) husband.....Her sense of alienation in Calcutta is symbolised by her regular visits to Catelli-Continental Hotel, from where she views the turmoil of Calcutta from the safe heights of a tourist, cut-off from the 'real' India which is below her" (*Foreignness of Spirit* 30).

Whichever way she turns, Tara seems to be inadequate, incomplete, self-fragmented and unable to hold her dual affiliations together. The question of belonging is the key issue behind the protagonist's arrival to her native. She starts to explore who she is and where she belongs to and how does the foreignness of spirit begin. She wonders:

How does the foreignness of spirit begin? Tara wondered, Does it begin right in the centre of Calcutta, with forty ruddy Belgian women, fat foreheads swelling under starched white head dresses, long back habits intensifying the hostility of the Indian Sun? The nuns had taught

her to inject the right degree of Venom into words like ‘common’ and ‘vulgar’.... did the foreignness drift inward with the winter chill at Vassar, as she watched the New York snow settle over new architecture, blonde girls, Protestants Matrons and Johnny Mathis?”
(TD 37)

She explains the nostalgia in an interview:

I was writing about the passing away of a way of life that I and many young Bengali women growing up in the Calcutta of the fifties experienced. Many of the characters are meant to operate both believably and symbolically. There is a nouveau rich class in coming in and that is personified by one principal character. There are those who have been prepared by their Westernized education for a gracious Calcutta that is on the eve of disappearing and there is a new people with a great deal of political vitality with reformist ideas...It is a nostalgia for, a Calcutta that has already collapsed. (Interview with Bharati Mukherjee)

Like in other expatriate novels, journey is a recurring phenomenon in *The Tiger's Daughter*. Tara travels from India to America and after a lapse of seven years she revisits India. In India, she goes to Calcutta from Bombay, visits her aunt's place, the Catelli – Continental, Mr. Worthington's Council, the charity carnival, the funerary banks, Tollygunge, Darjeeling and Nayapur. There is also the temporal movement from Old India to New India. Hence, her journey to search for identity includes a journey at the spatial and the temporal levels. It also implies a journey from illusion to reality. However Tara's journey to search her identity becomes vain as she only tries

to reclaim her lost collective or community identity and not her personal identity. At some point of time, her journey ends as a physical one and turns out to be Odyssey of the mind. The destination of her journey is not a geographical place called India but a mental reality. It is interesting to observe that in this novel, expatriation is not only a major theme, but it evolves as a metaphor for deep-rooted levels of isolation like existential alienation and self-estrangement. Some significant images portrayed in the novel reveals the alienation state. Hotel Catelli- Continental, mentioned as the “navel of the universe”, implies rootless existence, a symbol of Tara’s expatriate sensibility.

The mentality of an immigrant is always pathetic as they get caught in between the two socio-cultural environments, between the feeling of rootless and nostalgia. On his return to homeland, his mind is torn between the cultural conflicts of the two nations and his visualization and view of the native is also alien to him. Hence, he experiences a split personality. When Tara visits India, Western culture has almost become her second self, which becomes vivid in difficulties she faces to adjust with her friends and relatives in India; and sometimes with her own family and its traditions. Her new self is responsible for her displeasure, yet the political turmoil in the society, and her new view towards the problems of poverty and dirtiness in India add more to her discomfort, frustration and disharmony. Tara gets disappointed by her visit which is explained as

For years she had dreamed of this return to India. She had believed that all hesitations, 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 brought only wounds. First the corrosive hours on Marine Drive, then the deformed beggar in the railway station, and now the inexorable train ride steadily undid what strength she had held in

reserve. She was an embittered woman, he now thought, old and cynical at twenty-two and quick to take offence (TD 25).

To Tara, Bombay railway station was more like a hospital. It looks like the foreign land has turned out greater than a home to her. Tara gets the feeling: "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" (TD 21). Tara finds herself a misfit wherever she goes. She is constantly confronting two personalities- one of an Indian and the other of an American. When she realizes that reconciliation is impossible, she feels to go back to her husband. Tara's reaction on the changed situation of Calcutta makes her friend Reena to say that she has, "become self-centered and European." (TD 105) Still Indian pulse vibrating in Tara makes her to believe that Calcutta is the best place to live in spite of all the darkness and drawbacks. Tara's instinct is implicated as; "She thought about Calcutta. Not of the poor sleeping on main streets, dying on obscure thoroughfares. But of the consolation Calcutta offers. Life can be very pleasant here, thought Tara" (TD 132). This also makes her compare the lives in her two environments.

Tara told him how much easier she thought it was to live in Calcutta. How much simpler to trust the city's police inspector and play tennis with him on Saturdays. How humane to accompany a friendly editor to watch the riots in town. New York, she confined was a gruesome nightmare. It wasn't muggings she feared so much as rude little invasions (TD 69).

Tara's journey to her native land ends up as a futile attempt leading to frustration, illusion, alienation, depression and tragedy. The greatest truth hidden in this story is that she was able to emerge as a winner out of racial hardships in a foreign land but succumbs to violence at her own hometown, where she comes to seek peace. Tara's view on her journey to India is clearly represented in these lines, "It was so vague, so pointless, so diffuse, this trip home to India" (TD 130). The immigrant's return to her own land proves fatal to her. The world of western liberation, which includes Tara and her husband and the contrasting world of Indian and conservatism, represented by Tara's mother are not held together. The gulf cannot be bridged and consequently, Tara experiences a split of her personality between the two worlds like other immigrants.

Tara, the protagonist is packed off by her father at the early age of fifteen to America owing to his suspicion and pain for the homeland and Tara feels homesick at Poughkeepsie. Even little things hurt her, which is exemplified by her feeling to have been discriminated in the alien land when her roommate is not willing to share her mango chutney. Choudhury views in this connection: "She had been desperately homesick, lonely, and desperate to belong - in fact she was in the typical position of an immigrant.... She had to adjust to things which had been outside the purview of her previous idea of life as a whole". (*Images of Women in Bharati Mukherjee's Novels* 82) Tara guards her family and her country fervently in the foreign culture. Moreover, she worships Goddess Kali for strength, so that she will not crumble, before the Americans. When at the end of May, her roommates and others around are prepared to go home; she is jammed in an apparition of terror:

She saw herself sleeping in a large carton on a sidewalk while hated men made impious remarks to her. Headless monsters winked at her from eyes embedded in pudgy shoulders she suffered fainting spells, headaches and nightmares.... she complained of homesickness in letters to her mother, who promptly prayed to Kali to save Tara's conscience, chastity and complexion(TD 13).

It is nothing other than her fate, which makes her fall in love with an American as the writer aptly begins the novel with a mention to fate and astrology. It apparently looks like a device implemented by the writer around which she can construct her plots. The author writes: 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 did not know then that she eventually would marry that young man (TD 14). Tara's husband David is devastatingly Western; she is compliantly deceitful in her marriage. She cannot match the finer tinge of her life and family background in Calcutta. Her husband asks her credulous questions about Indian customs and traditions. Subsequently, she feels entirely apprehensive in an alien atmosphere. Tara has got married to a man who is rooted in the American soil. Tara after marriage is changed as Tara Banerjee Cartright, a name illustrating a fusion of the American and deep-rooted Indian in her psyche. Mukherjee depicts Tara with distinctive thirst of an 'exile' for her 'home'. After a lapse of seven years, Tara makes a trip to India, for years she has dreamt of this come-back. As Shoba Shinde has marked apparently, "An immigrant away from home idealizes his home country and cherishes nostalgic memories of it" and Tara repeats the same in America. (*Commonwealth Writings* 58) She craves for the Bengal of Satyajit Ray, children running through cool green spaces, aristocrats despondent in music rooms of empty

places but what she encounters is an agitated city which obliges weak men to obsessive insolence or dishonesty. Tara no more owns an Indian identity and is for all time in conflict with the traditions of her native soil. The spar is profoundly felt in the psyche of Tara who uncovers it hard to adjust with her friends and relatives in India; and now and then with the traditions of her own family.

Now she deems America a dream land. When bounded by her relatives and vendors at the Howrah railway station Tara senses discomfort. It is predisposed that she dislikes everyone and everything in India where she has been born, raised and educated various values, all since her acculturation in America. Gradually, Tara's altered personality makes her a misfit in the group of her old friends. The utmost paradox of her return is that she experiences alienation in her native land. She recalls: "Seven years ago she had played with these friends, done her homework with Nilima, briefly fancied herself in love with Pronob, debated with Reena at the British Council. But now she feared their tone, their omissions, and their aristocratic oneness" (TD 43).

The writer, through Tara, names her friends as "racial purists." Tara has started believing that by marrying a westerner, she has committed all the seven deadly sins:

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 made (TD 62).

Tara is reluctant to convey her feelings and futile experiences in her letters to David. She becomes mystified for she cannot communicate her feelings with her American husband. Thus, she exists as a foreigner both to her husband and to her friends. Her alien nature looks to be a “double-edged weapon” (“Images of Women in Bharati Mukherjee’s Novel”¹⁶)

The writer interweaves the events-like Tara’s visit to funeral pyre at the river bank, her meeting with a small beggar girl suffering from leprosy, the revelation of beggar children eating off the street, the westernized lives of her friends, the riot and manifestations and her catastrophic rape by the politician Tuntunwala to portray the distress of Tara’s visit to India. Like the Americans, she views India as a nation of poor residing in daunting, unhygienic environment, quite habituated to ailments and starvation. Tara also confirms that she is incapable of assimilation into the multifaceted American culture. Hence, her psyche sways back and forth between two – one of an Indian and the other of an American. This makes her feel that she would be more at ease if she goes back to her husband. Tara realizes the changes in her personality due to her entire Americanization. Stirred by her Westernization, she is unable to confront the disease and depression, rebellion and poverty of people in Calcutta. There arises a conflict in her mind between her aged sense of perception in Calcutta and her current tainted outlook. Tara’s visit to Darjeeling is also blemished by repulsive and violent incidents. At Nayapur, when she meets a Marwari merchant named Tuntunwala, it ends up in her rape by this impious man. But Tara conceals this incident of seduction from others for fear of humiliation. The trip to the ashram of Mata Kananbala Devi makes her share the love for her mother as well as the other worshippers. Though the Indian dream is splintered the writer guides the heroine to an ultimate reconciliation. At the end of the novel, Tara is trapped in a brutal protest, in

which Joyob Roy Chaudhary, an icon of the old world is viciously trampled to death. The end of Tara seems mysterious but it is envisaged that she does not survive. Locked in the car she only thinks about her husband, and the novel concludes with these lines: “And Tara, still locked in the car across the street from the Catelli – Continental, wondered whether she would ever get out of Calcutta, and if she did not, whether David would ever know that she loved him fiercely” (TD 210). The novel is autobiographical as it manifests the cross-cultural encounter of Mukherjee and her feeling of loss of inheritance of native values and mores.

Bharati Mukherjee’s novel *Wife* dramatizes the deep inner dimension of neurotic and isolated individuals, applying symbols as “centering nodes”. This novel is open-ended, implying the inadequacy and intricacy of individual experiences. In spite of trying to merge the individual freedom with tolerance for fellow humans, Bharati Mukherjee attempts to glorify the alienated individual. When looking at America from India, it appears as the land of proverbial Golden Fleece but once there, immigrants confront several unimaginable difficulties. In general, the immigrant learns to adapt to the new culture and assimilate it, which consumes paramount time and energy (*Negotiating Identities* 43). Three thematic concerns are dealt while analyzing the *Wife*: “as an expatriate fiction: as a feminist text: and as a study in a woman’s madness and cultural trauma and aloofness” (*Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives* 84).

The story of *Wife* begins with Dimple’s dreams about marriage. In her imagination, life would be all joy with no responsibility, without struggle for day-to-day existence like water storage, electricity failure and problem with the in-laws. Her husband, Amit, a choice of her parents fails to satisfy her fantasies. Hence, Dimple considers her marriage as a burden and she cannot live in a dark and dingy apartment

with her in-laws, and desires to go to the US, where new troubles begin for her. Her husband tries his best to keep her happy, besides himself struggling to get a job. The practical problem is that he cannot dedicate all time to his wife and this leads Dimple to misunderstand that he does not care for her, and she lavishly spends time to watch television for hours together by which gets used to see murders and aberrations in the films and the serials. Unable to balance herself, one night she stabs her husband to death.

The novel is the cast of an unbalanced personality, of a person who is devoid of grace and self-possession and who fails to understand the reality. The novel *Wife* takes into account, the conflict between the Western and the Indian cultures and traditions as symbolized in the life of the protagonist, and she seems to be a very disgusting character that ends in frustration, madness and murder. The problem is that one of communication, the inability to cope with emotional conflicts. The novel in another sense narrates the agony of a voice, fighting for identity and getting prevented in the attempts repeatedly. As the novel progresses, “She leaves more of a gash than just a dimple” (*New York Times Book Review* 5) which describes her level of depression. Visualizing the cast of Dimple, it is easily interpretable that she should feel uprooted as it is hard for her to adjust and to get Americanized. The alien experience fills her with boredom, distrust, fear to move along with fellow beings and a type of philosophical detachment. Ultimately, she is deprived of her sense of balance, sense of reality and falls to neurosis. Dimple’s problem is her own self and she will remain alienated wherever she goes, “It is difficult to treat the novel as a study of cultural shock for even while in Calcutta, Dimple is an escapist and lost in her private world of fantasy” (*Foreignness of Spirit* 12-18). Her dreams are straightaway related to sexual awareness.

At no juncture does she posit a world which is more integrated or more free than the one in which she is placed. Her isolation is rooted not merely in loneliness, in isolation or cultural differences but in her estrangement from her own past and her own inner being.” (*Foreignness of Spirit* 17)

There is no interaction between the past and present in Dimple’s life. She is basically an abnormal person driven to extreme by her alien environment. Her difficulties to adopt and assimilate the new culture are deeply rooted than the temporary cultural shock diagnosed by her husband. The simple opening line - “Dimple Dasgupta had set her heart on marrying a neurosurgeon” (W 3) sets the background to expect something unusual. She dreams about her marriage and thinks it will bring her joy and freedom: “Marriage would bring her freedom, Cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, and fund-raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love.” (W 3) Dimple, “thought of premarital life is a rehearsal for actual living. Years of waiting had already made her nervous, unnaturally prone to cold, coughs and headaches.” (W 3) Nothing makes her happy more than the imagination of her marriage with a man, who offers her all the materialistic comforts. To marry a neurosurgeon is a strange choice, and from the very beginning of the novel, she stands out from normal girls. At last, her father finds Amit Basu, the consultant engineer as the suitable match for Dimple. Amit is ready to immigrate for US or Canada or Kenya. After marriage, Dimple lives in India in a dark and suffocating apartment with her husband and in-laws while she does not feel comfortable from the very beginning. Dimple has been wandering in her own world of fantasy and hence, when she faces the hard realities of life finds her dreams getting crumbled one by one and becomes deeply upset. She starts hating everything: “She hated the grey cotton roses inside

yellow circles that her mother-in-law had hung on sagging tapes against the metal bars of the windows” (W 20). She frequently discusses with her husband about the awaited foreign trip though, “Thoughts of living in Africa or North America terrified her” (W 17). Unlike a normal woman, she dislikes pregnancy which is apparent from her killing of the mice, which looked pregnant. “She pounded and pounded the baby clothes until a tiny gray creature ran out of the pile, leaving a faint trickle of blood on the linen. She chased it to the bathroom. She shut the door so it would not escape from her this time.... “I’ll get you”, she screamed. “There is no way out of this my friend” And in an outburst of hatred, her body shuddering, her wrist taut with fury, she smashed the top of a small grey head” (W 35). “She thought of ways to get rid of whatever it was that blocked her tubes and pipes” (W 31). Her act of killing is a demonstration of violence that builds up inside her. She decides to end her pregnancy as she does, “not want to carry any relics from her old life” (W 42).

The description of Dimple’s self-abortion is very aghast and touching. Her self-abortion criticizes her very womanhood. She never repents or rethinks after terminating her pregnancy. Dimple’s self-abortion symbolizes her liberation from the ideal role of a Hindu wife of a just bearing and rearing child, but it is a moral and cultural suicide. Dimple migrates to the U.S, with her husband. Her very first exposure to America creates a trauma on her mind. She cannot understand the law of America, why a man selling beef cannot sell cheese cake, is it a real insult to ask that man for cheese cake, is that sufficient enough to kill her. This is because she has never been outside Calcutta and enjoyed a sheltered childhood. Dimple leads her life under fear and spends her time in watching T.V or reading newspapers.

Dimple happens to meet people both Indians and Native Americans and analyses their behavior. There she meets Ina, who is “More American than the

Americans” (W 76). Her theory about Indian immigrants is, “It takes them a year to get India out of their system. In the second year they’ve bought all the things they’ve hungered for. So then they go back, or they stay here and vegetate or else they’ve got to live here like anyone else.” (W 76) Dimple realizes that her husband will not fulfill her dream and her marriage is futile, she hopes she cannot bear his snores anymore and suffers from insomnia. She feels bitter that: “ She was bitter that marriage had betrayed her, had not provided all the glittering things she had imagined, had not brought her cocktails under canopied skies and three A.M drives to dizzy restaurants where the sold divine Kababs rolled in roti.” (W 102)

Amit is not the man Dimple has craved for. “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-storey house in Ballygunge Park.” (W 89) Dimple moves to Greenwich to a splendid apartment, fully furnished, and it is like a dream come true for her. However, she feels annoyed by the burden of responsibilities and complains of exhaustion to Amit while he is reading something. “I feel sort of dead inside and 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” (W 110).

Amit hardly cares for her emotional needs and ignores female psychology. A sense of nostalgia grips her and she cannot understand, “How could she live in a country where every other woman was a stranger, where she felt different, ignorant, exposed to ridicule in the elevator.”(W 112) In her leisure time, she tries to dream about her husband but fails because, “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.” (W 113) Nostalgia starts rooting deeply in her and makes her recollect the ease of life at Calcutta. Her fear and disguise in the new environment is explained as,

She is scared of self-service elevators, of policemen, of gadgets and appliances. She does not want to wear Western clothes as she thinks she would be mistakenly taken for a Puerto Rican. She does not want to lose her identity but feels isolated, trapped, alienated, and marginalized. (*Images of Woman* 84).

Dimple suffers from a deep depression and conceals everything from her husband. “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.”, says Asnani (*Identity Crisis in The Nowhere Man and Wife* 42). Eventually, she plans of slaughtering husband. 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.” (W 195) She kills Amit by stabbing him seven times, hoping that she will be freed from the marriage bond.

K.S. Narayana Rao, views it from a different angle: “The novel raises an important question: was the Indian wife happier in India with her little freedom and greater docility, or does she achieve happiness in her painful search for more individual freedom and the process of maturing.” (*Review of wife* 275) The answer is yes, though the wife was not happy in Calcutta, she should have reconciled if she could have stayed back. American notion of freedom makes her think of her own

freedom and happiness. Her ‘splintered-self’ is the root cause and is intensified by the American environment and she ends up as a murderer. Dimple, the protagonist in *Wife* is an exceptionally immature girl who always dreams of marriage as she intensely believes that it would fetch freedom and love. Simultaneously, she is not clear about the notions of freedom and love. This uncertainty behind her intellectual makeup describes her incomplete being. Dimple in *Wife*, is denoted as the predicament of a voice without expression and without a vision.

Dimple’s prolonged wait for marriage makes her distressed and suicidal. Setback in marriage has made her very desperate so when she is married presumably to laudable groom-by Indian values of marriage, her likelihood of happiness must be very high. Nevertheless, shortly after her marriage, she is resentful as her quixotic, pubescent mind cannot grab the realism that liberty as well has definite limitations. Her husband, Amit Kumar Basu is a typical middle class, insipid, young engineer who thinks of making a fortune in America and plans to live a contented wealthy life in Calcutta after retirement. Dimple commences to hate her new home, her in laws and even her husband who does not look like competent to feed her fantasy. Amit falls short to meet out the necessities of her creative world. At this point of time, when she embarks on recreating her ‘perfect’ man, based on the faces from magazines, and is incapable to make out herself with anyone in the family, the outlook of becoming a mother infuriates her. She regards it as indignation on her body and persuades an abortion, discarding that ‘tyrannical and vile’ thing dumped in her body. She defends herself by declaring that she cannot afford to carry any vestiges from her previous life to America where she anticipates beginning a new life and changing into a more exhilarating person. “She did not want to carry any relics from her old life; given another chance she could be a more exciting person, take evening classes perhaps,

become a librarian" (W 42). Dimple has passed her time so long in a dream world of advertising and advice columns that she is psychologically inept to identify with another human being including Amit.

At her first party in Manhattan, Dimple faces the Diaspora of Indian and Pakistani immigrants who offer varying examples of the means in which being "Indian" is in discussion with being "American." She comes to know about Ina Mullick, the Bengali wife whose inattentive husband has permitted her to become "more American than the Americans" (W 68). Dimple soon realizes that Amit is critical of women who go to college, wear pants, and smoke cigarettes: "with so many Indians around and a television and a child, a woman shouldn't have time to get any crazy ideas" (W 69). Hence, she has to forbid the choices of higher education and job in America which leaves her to wonder what her role in the new place will be. When Ina gives her a "weak gin," Dimple

felt that Amit was waiting for just the right answer, that it was up to her to uphold Bengali womanhood, marriage, and male pride. The right answer, I do not need stimulants to feel happy in my husband's presence ... my obligation is to my husband, seemed to dance before her eyes as though it were printed on a card. All she had to do was read it, but she feared Ina's laughter, or anger, more than anything in the world. If she took a drink she knew Amit would write it to his mother and his mother would call the Dasguptas and accuse them of raising an immoral and drunken daughter. The Calcutta rumour mill operated as effectively from New York as it did from Park Street". (W 78)

Dimple's character is thus represented as a foreigner and an inert object. Ina's apparently comfortable incorporation into the host culture is soon falsified by frantic confessions of her discomfort and despair. She distinguishes her "before" and "after" self in caricatures of a woman in a sari and a woman in a bikini. These drawings signify, "the great moral and physical change, and all that" (W 95). Ina suggests, "I think it is better to stay a before, if you can'...'Our trouble here is that we imitate badly, and we preserve things even worse" (W 95). Ina's confession adds to her thought that she is replicating, rather than really living, a life which might be authorizing. She is persuaded to yield in the 'before' because it confronts with the perfect that she has erected of the modern Western woman. In accommodating the oppositions between East and West, Ina forestalls the prospect of being both.

Dimple desires to breach the traditional taboos of a wife. She seeks freedom and love in marriage. This endeavour conveys her resentment, angst, irritability, malice and sterile anger. As she wants to break through the traditional taboos of a wife she turns out to be an escapist, vanished in her world of fantasy. In the U.S. she regards herself as some sort of non-human being such as a bug. She considers as if she is impulsively driven towards some catastrophic end: "It was as if some force was impelling her towards disaster; some monster had overtaken her body, a creature with serpentine curls and heaving bosom that would erupt indiscreetly through one of Dimple's orifices, leaving her, Dimple Basu, splattered like a bug on the living room wall and rug" (W, 156). Dimple's reaction to the lack of adjustment that Western feminism offers is linked to her feeling that Ina and Leni live with merciless limits: "that was the trouble with people like Leni and Ina who believed in frankness, happiness and freedom; they lacked tolerance, and they abhorred discussions about

the weather” (W 161). Like Amit, Ina presents a space through her example where Dimple cannot easily get acquainted to discuss her options.

The vibrations between Dimple and Ina are fiery. Ina cannot agree to Dimple’s choices and Dimple is compelled to simplify herself in a defense that shields her from rapacious Western feminisms:

I can’t keep up with you people. I haven’t read the same kinds of books or anything. You know what I mean Ina, don’t you? I just like to cook and watch TV and embroider’...’Bravo!’” cried Ina Mullick from the sofa where she was sitting cross legged. ‘And what else does our little housewife do? ‘You’re making fun of me,’ Dimple screamed. ‘Who do you think you are?’(W169-70).

Dimple is trapped in a tornado of traumatic sensations - her myths questioning her disgraceful infidelity and her current perplexed self-desiring to become American by any means. She says, “I am terrible in crises” (W 204). Her extra- marital liaison amplifies her guilt as a result of which “She was so much worse off than ever, more lonely, more cut off from Amit, from the Indians, left only with borrowed disguises ... [living] like a shadow without feelings” (W, 200). If Amit has been responsive to her, she might have confided her crisis to him. Ultimately, she ends up in murdering her husband as she cannot endure that type of life anymore. In a strikingly tranquil and cool way, she picks up the knife from the kitchen drawer and stabs him seven times repeatedly hitting at a spot near his hairline. Her violent killing of her husband is to curb her guilty conscience and to feel as a true American, more like a character in a T.V serial. The murder of Amit is a claim of her American identity. She is neither of India nor of America but an astounded wanderer between these two worlds, yet

yearning to achieve a distinct identity. Neither does she fit in to the T.V. world nor to the world of reality but keeps on shuttling between the two. She is yet to relieve her 'self' from the fantasy world; she is yet to come out of schizophrenia. An accost traveller, she is yet to arrive at her destination and shape a forte for herself.

Geographically, the story of the novel *Jasmine*, begins in India and takes off from Europe to America, where it bounces back and forth from Florida through New York to proceed to Iowa, then finally lands in California. Assimilation is the theme of this novel. The novelist deliberately transports her in time and space again and again so as to bring in a sense of instability into the novel. Born in Hasnapur in India, Jyoti has the distinction of being the most beautiful and clever in the family. She is seen against the backdrop of the rigid and patriarchal Indian society in which her life is controlled and dominated by her father and brothers who record female as follows, "village girls are cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go" (J 46) However, Jyoti seeks a modern and educated husband who keeps no faith in dowries and traditions, and thus finds a US based modern man, Prakash. Prakash encourages Jyoti to study English, and symbolically gives Jyoti a new name Jasmine, and a new life. "He wanted to break down the Jyoti as I'd been in Hasnapur and make me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name; Jasmine....Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities." (J 77)

Here starts her transformation from a village girl under the shell of her father and brothers to a wife of an American traditional husband who gives her all liberties. Jasmine's happiness is short-lived. She is widowed and returns to India to her family. She has to now choose between the rigid traditions of her family and perform Sati, or continue to live the life of Jasmine in America. Jasmine sways between the past and

the present attempting to come to terms with the two worlds, one of “nativity” and the other as an “immigrant”. Hailing from an oppressive and a rural family in India, Jyoti comes to America in search of a more fruitful life and to realize the dreams of her husband, Prakash. Jasmine sets off on an agonizing trip as an illegal immigrant to Florida, and thus begins her symbolic trip of transformations, displacement, and a search for identity. Jasmine undergoes her next transformation from a dutiful traditional Indian wife Jasmine to Jase when she meets the intellectual Taylor and then moves on to become Bud’s Jane. It seems likely that as Jasmine leaves for California with Taylor and Duff, her identity continues to transform. The author depicts this transformation and transition as a positive and an optimistic journey. Jasmine creates a new world consisting of new ideas and values, constantly unmasking her past to establish a new cultural identity by incorporating new desires, skills, and habits. This transition is defined not only in the changes in her attitude, but more significantly in her relationship with men.

In New York, Jasmine clearly recognizes her ability to adapt: “I wanted to become a person they thought they saw: humorous, intelligent, refined, and affectionate. Not illegal, not murderer not widowed, raped, destitute, fearful.” (J 171) The abilities to adjust to the requirements of a changing environment and to cut the past loose are Jasmine’s survival skills. They allow her to deal with the ethics and culture of two dissimilar worlds and her occurrence with different identities of Jyoti and Jasmine, where Jasmine feels hanging between the traditional and modern world and controlled and independent love, offered by her Indian husband, Prakash. Jasmine then meets Lillian Gordon, staying with whom begins her process of assimilation by learning how to become American. Lillian bestows upon her the nickname “Jazzy”, a symbol of her entrance into and acceptance of American culture which she welcomes

gladly. After that she moves in with a traditional Indian family in Hushing, New York. Jasmine soon finds herself stifled by the inertia of this home for it was completely isolated from everything American. Considering it to be a stasis in her progression towards a new life, she tries to separate herself from all that is Indian and forget her past completely.

She proceeds with her migratory pattern and moves to New York City, to become the au pair for an American family. With Taylor, his wife Wylie and their daughter Duff, she creates yet another identity upon a new perception of herself. But though Jasmine creates a new identity for every new situation, her former identities are never completely erased. They emerge in specific moments in the text and exacerbate the tension, thereby causing Jasmine to create another more dominant identity, different from all those that came before. While living with the Hayes, Jasmine begins to master the English language, empowering herself to further appropriate American culture. Taylor begins to call her 'Jase' suggesting that again she does not have an agency in the creation of her new self since Taylor constructs it for her. Also, for the first time in the Hayes household, Jasmine becomes aware of her racial identity because Taylor and his friends understood that she was from South Asia and tried to associate her with that community.

Though Jasmine is attached to Taylor's family and become his Jase, her foreignness never forgets to peer in her activities. But Taylor doesn't bother about that and we can know from Jase's words, "Taylor didn't 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." (J185) Before long Taylor gets romantically involved with Jasmine and embraces her different ethnicity. Jasmine transforms but this time the change is not from a reaction, but rather from her very own yearning for personal change. In

becoming Jase, Jasmine gets increasingly comfortable with her sexuality which she always tried to repress earlier, more so, after her traumatic experience. But the relationship between Taylor and Jasmine ends abruptly when the past creeps upon her once again manifested in the form of Sukhwinder, the murderer of her husband in the disguise of a Hot dog vendor. The inescapability of memory, and the boundless nature of time and space is stressed once again and Jasmine finds her life distorted by the different consciousness through which she now experiences the world. She loses even her sense of self expression. Unable to live with this plethora of conflicting identities she decided to leave New York for the sake of Taylor and Duff and move towards Baden County, Iowa to give her life a new beginning. Taylor, the man of New York commented on Jase's decision, "Iowa? You can't go to Iowa- Iowa's flat" (J 189).

In Baden she meets Bud Wipplemeyer, an American banker who instantly falls in love with her. They eventually marry and Bud renames Jasmine 'Jane' yet another sign of her evolution. Bud encourages Jasmine to freely change roles from caregiver to temptress whenever she feels the desire to and views her sexuality through the lenses of his own oriental fantasy. This instead of demeaning Jasmine serves to instill her with a sexual confidence and she thrives on it. Her racial identity also morphs in Baden, for here her difference is recognized but not comprehended or openly acknowledged. The community attempts to see her as familiar instead of alien. This new perception of her race is an essential portion of her identity as Jane because now she feels assimilated and in fact becomes the typical American she always wanted to be.

Bharati Mukherjee has figured out the assimilation of Third World immigrants into the American melting pot, which is thus enriched by the 'new pioneers'. *Jasmine* is the portrayal of one such pioneer, a successful survivor with courage.

Transformation is the major theme of the novel. The novel steps forward with the out of box adventure of the protagonist in the United States. The journey of the protagonist through life includes a series of transformations- Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase, Jazze and Jane via several geographical locations like Punjab, Florida, New York, Iowa and California. Like Jasmine, the author has changed cultures and citizenships with notable bravado and rapidity. Nevertheless, Jasmine herself senses an unbalance at the rapidity of her transformation, the mutability of American character and American landscape: "I feel at times like a stone hurtling through diaphanous mist, unable to grab hold, unable to slow myself, yet unwilling to abandon the ride I'm on. Down and down I go, where I'll stop, God only knows" (J 123). Jasmine narrates her story as a twenty-four-year-old pregnant widow, living in Iowa with her crippled lover, Bud Ripplemeyer. It takes two months in Iowa to relate the most recently developing events. But during that time, Jasmine also relates biographical events that span the distance between her Punjabi birth and her American adult life. These past biographical events inform the action set in Iowa. Her odyssey encompasses five distinct settings, two murders, at least one rape, a maiming, a suicide, and three love affairs. Throughout the course of the novel, the title character's identity, along with her name, changes and changes again: from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jazzy to Jassy to Jase to Jane. In chronological order, Jasmine moves from Hasnapur, Punjab, to Fowlers Key, Florida (near Tampa), to Flushing, New York, to Manhattan, to Baden, Iowa, and finally is off to California as the novel ends (*Jasmine: An Immigrant's Attempt at Assimilations* 7).

The novel's opening phrase, ‘‘Lifetimes ago...’’ sets in motion the major motif, or theme, the recreation of one's self. Jasmine is seven years old. Under a banyan tree in Hasnapur, an astrologer forecasts her eventual widowhood and exile. Given the traditional Hindu belief in the accuracy of such astrological forecasts, this is a grave moment in the young girl's life. It foreshadows her first husband's death and even her move to the isolated Iowa farm town of Baden. The action shifts, at the end of the first chapter, into the most recent past tense. This clues the reader into her narrative strategy of the novel. The twenty-four-year-old Jasmine currently lives in Baden, Iowa. The next four chapters provide details about her current situation. It is late May during a dry season, which is significant because the farm community relies on good harvests. She is pregnant. Bud, her partner, became wheelchair-bound some time after the onset of their relationship. Bud wants Jasmine to marry him. The neighbor boy, Darrel Lutz, struggles to run his family's farm, which he inherited after his father's sudden death a year before. Darrel entertains the idea of selling off the farm to golf-course developers, but Bud, the town's banker and thus a powerful figure to the independent farmers, forbids it. Bud has close, though sometimes strained, ties with all the farmers. Though change—technological, social, and sexual—seems inevitable, Bud resists it. Du, Jasmine and Bud's adopted Vietnamese teenaged son, represents this change. He comes from an entirely different culture than his sons-of-farmers classmates. Jasmine describes her introduction to Bud and their courtship, introduces her would-be mother-in-law, Mother Ripplemeyer, and Bud's ex-wife Karin. She hints at sexual tension between her and Du, and her and Darrel. When Jasmine makes love to the wheelchair-bound Bud, it illustrates the reversal of sexual power in her new life. Desire and control remain closely related throughout the novel. Du's glimpse of the lovemaking adds another dimension to the sexual politics: there

are those in control, those who are helpless, and those bystanders waiting to become part of the action. This resonates with ideas later chronicled about Indian notions of love and marriage. In these early chapters, the narrator, Jasmine, alludes to more distant events. These hints at important people and events: her childhood friend Vilma, her Manhattan employers Taylor and Wylie, their child and her charge Duff. These allusions begin to create the more complicated and full circumstances of the story, but remain sketchy until later, when the narrator gives each their own full treatment.

Jasmine, the protagonist of the novel, undergoes several transformations during her journey of life in America, from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jane, and often experiences a deep sense of estrangement resulting in a fluid state of identity. This journey becomes a tale of moral courage, a search for self-awareness and self-assertion. Uprooted from her native land India, Jyoti does her best to introduce herself into the new and alien society as an immigrant; the culmination finally indicated in Jasmine's pregnancy with the child of a white man - Bud. Jasmine changes herself constantly, ferrying between multiple identities in different spaces and at different times. Jasmine shows the most predictable crusade towards Americanization and its obvious uncertainty and without feeling infuriated she survives to make a new start in the host country. Jasmine experiences a dual cultural shock but she triumphs in establishing her own identity at the U.S and finally achieves reconciliation. The Indian immigrant's encounter with the new world and her gradual transformation as she thoroughly imbibes the new culture are dealt in *Jasmine*. The novel also explores a quest for true identity: how a woman recognizes herself. Sumita Roy comments that Jasmine's: "search for self-recognition takes her in social and spiritual directions . . .

till she arrives at a time when she can view the furniture ‘greedy with wants and reckless from hope’ (*Exile as Spiritual Quest* 203).

An immigrant’s life certainly involves a series of reincarnations. The author discloses in an interview:

I have been murdered and reborn at least three times, the very correct young women I was trained to be, and was very happy being, is very different from the politicized, shrill, civil rights activist I was in Canada, and from the urgent writer that I have become in the last few years in the United States (*An interview, Iowa review* 18) .

Here, the protagonist utters similarly: “There are no harmless compassionate ways to remake one self. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves-in the images of dream” (J 29) .The assimilation of Jasmine occurs through forgetting her past and the process is not as easy and smooth as it seems externally: “Once we start letting go-let go just one thing, like not wearing our normal clothes, or a turban or not wearing a tika on the forehead –the rest goes on its own down a sinkhole.” (J 29) “Fear, anger, pain, bitterness, confusion, silence, irony, humour, as well as pathos - underline her observations as she discovers for herself the undefined median between the preservation of the old world and the assimilation into the new one.” (*Telling her tale*, 117)

Jasmine’s struggle unravels the restless expedition of a rootless immigrant occupied with a gloomy sense of alienation all around. The story shuttles between past and present, between narrator’s early life in India and her present one in America. The past encompasses Jyoti’s childhood at Hansapur, a village in Punjab, her marriage to Prakash Vijn and the series of events that made her flee to America. Her

present life is in the name of Jane, live-in-companion to Bud Ripplemeyer, a banker. Jyoti is born eighteen years after the partition riots as the fifth daughter and seventh of nine children of her parents. She gets married to Prakash, an ambitious young man who calls her Jasmine, and she proves herself a traditional Indian wife. She identifies her husband's wish to study in America as hers and starts dreaming about their life in America. Unfortunately, she becomes a widow when Prakash falls prey to the rebelling Khalsa Lions. Jasmine is rendered heart-broken for a while and then plans to visit the obscure American Institute of Technology where her husband had to secure admission and fixes on accomplishing Sati in the campus of that institute. Her valiant decision panics her family and they wonder: "A village girl, going alone to America without job, husband or papers?" (J 97)

Jasmine secures forged documents to move abroad to America, oblivious of her future there, but she says,

We are the outcastes and deportees, strange pilgrims visiting
outlandish shrines, landing at the end of tarmacs, ferried in old army
trucks where we are roughly handled and taken to roped-off corners of
waiting rooms where surly, barely wakened customs guards await their
bribe. We are dressed in shreds of national costumes, out of season, the
witted plumage of intercontinental vagabondage. We ask only one
thing: to be allowed to land; to pass through; to continue (J 101).

She ponders her estrangement of the qualms of her new life: "What country? What continent? We pass through wars, through plagues. I am hungry for news, but the discarded papers are in characters or languages I cannot read" (J 101). Jasmine is raped by an ugly fellow, half-face, the captain of the ship in which she travels to

America. She decides to die but discovers that she yearns to live and at last murders the demon in the style of Goddess Kali. Her assassination of half-face is an act of self-assertion. Her choice to commit suicide is that of a woman who lives for the expired husband but her murder of the demon elucidates her will to live for herself. Samir Danyal points out that “she experiences an epistemic violence, which is also a life-affirming transformation” (*Creating, Preserving, Destroying*, 77).

At the U.S, she arrives at her first American home, ‘Flushing Ghetto in Queens’, ‘a fortress of Punjabiness’, an apartment with artificially maintained Indianness. Feeling suffocated there, she secures a job as a nanny and leaves the home. Meantime, she learns to talk and to walk like an American. Again, she suffers from fear and anxiety, takes off to Iowa, where she falls in love with Bud, an invalid banker. Bud names her Jane. Her sudden changes in name divulge her fluidity, a part of the melting process. Jasmine is in constant motion, progresses westward with Taylor, her former lover, makes herself out as an American, no longer as an immigrant. She transforms as Jase who expresses herself as “greedy with wants and reckless with hopes”, (J 214) values native to American fluidity, rapidity and transformation, qualities of both American landscape and character. The author counts the aspects of the experience of an immigrant in America, and the ways in which the ‘new pioneers’ are being assimilated by and simultaneously transforming the society. The novel proves to be an evidence for tracking down the author’s growing self-confidence and slowly emerging identity as an American. Jasmine grows very confident in reshaping her identity as that of the author. Her decision to move on with Taylor, leaving Bud elucidates that she is trying to reposition her stars. She does not wish to lead a life of mere duty or sacrifice and seeks a life which showers happiness. Jasmine confides,

I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the promise of America and old-world dutifulness....It isn't guilt that I feel its relief. I realize I have already stopped thinking of myself as Jane. Adventure, risk, transformation: the frontier is pushing indoors through uncaulked windows. Watch me reposition the stars, I whisper to the astrologer who floats cross-legged above my kitchen stove (J 240).

The liberated Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane, who make a life time for every name, look like possibility for every exuberant immigrant. But in this flurry of change and action is the conflict and confusion of the whole cross-cultural business, the trauma of getting used to the idea that one is not going to be completely at home in either place-or trying to bury that idea in a heap of excitement in being and becoming 'American' as Jasmine does. (*Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction :A Perspective* 141)

Jasmine is remarked, at best, by cultural duality. The quest for identity is resolved as the interaction between the two cultures yields love of understanding. At the end of the novel, all the new identities of Jasmine metamorphoses into one,

all identities are resolved into one and Jasmine becomes a metaphor for that type of Indianness, which has through the ages welcomed and absorbed within itself all that is fine and descent in every country, every religion, culture of the world(*The Novel Status* 7).

The novel *The Holder of the World* deals with the consequences of cultural conflicts. It also manifests the dislocation and transformation that arise when two different cultures interact with each other. *The Holder of the World* is based on the surprising and the most unlikely meet between the two worlds, the puritan 17th and early 18th century America in a Mughal perspective of Indian life. The inspiration

behind this historical novel was recalled by Mukherjee in an interview: “The novel got started because I was at an auction of Sotheby 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 Indian miniature painting.” (*Bharati Mukherjee’s The Holder of the World* 190) There, she happened to have a glimpse at a miniature named ‘A European Woman in Aurangzeb’s Court’. A Caucasian woman appeared awesome in full Moghul dress and the author “suddenly realized that I was looking at a woman who three hundred years back had taken a lot of risks, had transformed herself’. Her earlier works narrated the odyssey from east to west, and now the travel is vice-versa.

The title *The Holder of the World* is the translated version of Alamgir, a name for the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb. The plot involves retracing the transformation of a Puritan girl from Salem in Massachusetts to the ‘bibi’ of a Hindu Indian king. *The Holder of the World* has two plots, for it has a main plot and a subsidiary plot. The subsidiary plot is the story of Beigh Masters, the narrator of the novel. Beigh, a modern, sophisticated woman, an assets researcher does the job of “uniting people and possessions; it’s like matching orphaned socks, through time” (HW 5). Beigh vividly explains the intentions and objectives of the author in the following lines: “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” (HW 5).

Beigh’s lover, Venn Iyer is a computer scientist, whose family has come from South India and settled in Boston area. Venn works on a ‘virtual-reality project’ that involves input of data into a computer to reconstruct a time segment that has elapsed. Beigh does the work of Venn, which is to track down for a client a precious and perfect diamond titled ‘The Emperor’s Tear’. She travels from Boston to India and

back again in the hunt of the diamond supposed to have been lost while in the possession of the last of the great Mughal emperors, Emperor Aurangzeb. The main plot of *The Holder of the World* emphasizes the unusual and intriguing adventures of Hanna Easton, a New Englander, born in Brookfield, Massachusetts, to Edward and Rebecca Easton in 1670. Following the death of her father and flee of her mother to her Nipmuc Indian lover, she grows up as the adopted daughter of an orthodox Puritan couple, Robert and Susannah Fitch. Later, she marries Gabriel Legge, an Irish adventurer and finally finds herself as the wife of the East India company man Gabriel has turned out. Gabriel turns to piracy and becomes the 'Robinhood of the Coromandel Coast'. Hannah falls in love with a Hindu raja named Jadav Singh. He provides Hannah a life of endless possibilities and sensuous pleasures she had never dreamt of. But he dies as a result of the struggle with the mighty Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. Hanna goes back to Salem along with the pearl she has got because of her affair with the raja.

The main plot and secondary plots of *The Holder of the World* are connected through Beigh's hunt for the Emperor's Tear. Beigh tries to address two quests: she will not only detect where the diamond could have disappeared to but will also retrace the events leading to the transformation of Hannah Easton into Salem Bibi, Beigh gets obsessed with Hannah's life rather than the diamond itself: "It isn't the gem that interests me. It's the inscription and the provenance. Anything having to do with Mughal India gets my attention. Anything about the Salem Bibi, precious-as-pearl feeds me" (HW 5). Beigh's reconstruction of the trajectory of Hannah's life is to declare that there were channels to and from India even in colonial New England and that lives existed across cultures in all centuries. Through Hannah's life, Mukherjee contends that even a woman of English origin could have assimilated India, its people

and values in her mind in a positive notion. It is a general statement that East and West had never met or will hardly meet in a reductive and static view of history. Nevertheless, the author provides a new dimension to the concept of history through Venn, who sees that, “everything in history...is as tightly woven as a Kashmiri Shawl” (HW 189).

The theme of subtle relatedness of lives is in fact, a modulation of the theme of immigration, the third and the celebratory phase of the author’s career. Wendy Brandmark in his ‘New York Times Book Review’ of the novel tells, “*The Holder of the World* reminds us of the interconnections among cultures that have made our modern world”. Another major theme of *The Holder of the World* is the sexual awakening through an alien lover. This theme also encompasses the ideas used by the author in her previous works. For instance, her tales of wives not satisfied with their marital lives, quite unable to attain fulfillment through an affair with the ‘other’ lover are thematically similar. In this novel, both the women from the West relish romantic pleasures with Indian lovers. Nalini Iyer reviews the novel and points out, “This is an alternative history which could revise forever the imaginative relation between immigrants and natives in Mukherjee’s America”(Metaphor of the Self in Bharati Mukherjee’s *The Holder of the World* 8). Mukherjee develops clues left in history to explore the connections between America and India across centuries. Beigh’s ‘hunger for connectedness’ and increasing similarity with Hannah stimulates her to discover the history of Salem Bibi. Not only Beigh tries to see what Hannah saw, thinks and feels what she thought and felt, tries to project her own life onto the seventeenth century lady’s life. Beigh always illustrates the point of contact between her and Hannah. For example, she says, she has arrived at a meaningful affair with Venn like Hannah did with the raja. She reveals, “Ten years of bobbing in the tangle and clutter

of semiserious relationships” (HW 34). Beigh’s exploration on Hannah makes her learn to go beyond her ‘cynical self’, her ‘well-trained feminist self’, and to be aware of ‘multiple contingencies’ in life (HW 60).

John Hawthorne, son of a notorious judge and great-grandfather of Nathaniel Hawthorne, was wanderlust, inspired by Hannah’s company in his youth. By depicting Hawthorne in the novel, by Beigh’s linking the “morbid introspection into guilt and depression that many call our greatest work” (HW, 286) with Hannah’s life, and by exploiting every opportunity to relate the novel with the ‘Scarlet Letter’, the author is demanding two points: she is making her readers to place the novel in the tradition of American romance initiated by Hawthorne and is manifesting the historical aspects of her novel. Hannah, while knowing about the story of Rama and Sita and Sita’s trials fantasizes Sita as “A woman impatient to test herself, to explore and survive in an alien world” (HW 174-75). Of course, the author tries to offer an “alternative history” of Sita through Hannah’s reimagination of the story.

Hannah, the protagonist of the novel *The Holder of the World*, turns into orphan as a result of her father’s death and mother’s flee with her Nipmuc lover. Then, she grows up as an adopted daughter of Robert and Susannah Fitch at Massachusetts, Salem in a conservative puritan environment. She unravels her passion and proficiency in needle work and she always has a distressing memory of her mother. She remembers the sweet voice of her mother who sings psalm but she likes to forget her mother’s elopement with her lover leaving her daughter alone. Hannah has been a spectator of her mother’s fall. Hannah comes past the two stages, ‘Innocent’ and ‘Orphan’. Being an orphan, Hannah feels pain and tries to overlook the suffering in her obsession for needle work. Her embroidery opens doors for her sensations and the conflict she strives to reject or repress. She also gets trained to do

the work of a nurse “washing and bandaging wounds, cleaning up pus and vomit- all this she found too passive, too mundane.” (HW 49) Often, she cherishes the glorious moments spent with her mother in the forest but hides her memory of her mother. Gabriel’s arrival to Salem reshapes Hannah’s destiny, he is more of a catalyst than a decisive power in her life. “Consciously taking one’s journey, setting out to confront the unknown, marks the beginning of life lived at a new level, for one thing, the Wanderer makes the radical assertion that life is not primarily suffering, it’s an adventure. (HW 51)

Hannah marries off Gabriel Legge, an adventurer with the hope of liberation from a restricting environment. Unfortunately, her marriage life is not to her expectations. Gabriel is impatient and unwilling to pay heed to Hannah. She has to pass her time writing letters to her American friends. Eventually, she feels lonely and senses an exasperating environment of detention. Pearson states: “For many people *alienation within captivity is the initial stage of wandering*” (*The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By* 59). She further witnesses: “The new feminist hero leaves her parents, husband, or lover and takes off too. For women, leaving the husband, lover, or family is a recurrent form of the Wanderer archetype in contemporary times that Erica Jong writes in “How to Save Your Own Life”, “Leaving one’s husband is the only, the cosmic theme.” (*The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By* 59). Hannah steps into India in 1695 in a period of riotous political and economic bustle. Yet, Hannah’s key concern in the alien world seems to wipe out the layers of flamboyance and social grace and reside beneath it in a pursuit for a meaningful life. In fact, as soon as she arrives at the shores of Coromandel Coast, she senses an instinct of belonging and desires that she does not “aspire to return to England upon the completion of Gabriel’s tour” (HW, 104). However, when she realizes Gabriel’s

betrayal she wants to go to London. During her journey, she manages to survive a disaster with the help of Bhagmati, her friend cum servant maid. Then, they happen to be the guest of Raja Jadav Singh, the king of Devgad. Hannah is in love with Raja Jadav Singh and gladly becomes his bibi, dispensing all morality and all anticipations of an ordinary relationship.

Jadav Singh presents Hannah a life of endless possibilities, of zeal and sensuous bliss she has never dreamt of. The oriental love makes her more poignant. She comprehends the transformation of her psyche, her entire personality. Finally, she ascertains that “the survivor is the one who improvises not follows the rules” (HW 234). Hema Nair asserts that: “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” (*The Toronto Review* 106).

Hannah saves Raja’s life in a war as the Warrior archetype offers her the vivacity to combat and get rid of all the hurdles. Hannah gets transformed into a warrior woman. The warrior archetype is aggressive and eager to fight to guard one self. Hannah Easton drowns her past and comes out as a real survivor of life. Raja Jadav Singh’s love for her drives her wild and audacious. Now, she is ready to confront the ‘holder of the world’, the Alamgir, the great Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, with utmost valor and self-reliance. ‘Martyr’ signifies the keen sacrifice that involves surrendering one’s self for the well being of others. In a warrior way of life, achievement is that enumerated; yet besides the feats one wants to be assessed as a person. Hannah’s appeal before the emperor to end the war against her lover reveals her choice to care at the cost of self-sacrifice

I have come late in my life to the feeling of love. Love for a man, love for a place, love for a people. 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 eye 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 heart of men? (HW 268)

Eventually, she is able to win the heart of “Alamgir” who awards her a 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” (HW 270). Beigh Masters, the narrator of the novel, delivers the final verdict about Hannah’s character and personality: “Wherever she stayed . . . she would have changed history for she was one of those extraordinary lives through which history runs a four-lane highway” (HW, 189). Hannah displays ‘Martyr’ archetype, which is evident from her speech in the end of the novel: “I speak one who has lost everything, who owns nothing, and who desires nothing for herself” (HW, 268).

Hannah recognizes that the universe is dynamic ever in the process of creation and since each human being is indulged in that creation, all human beings seem to be magicians. Hannah is willing to save her Indian lover despite separating from him. Yielding in her morality and anxiety for new experiences makes her encounter Aurangzeb and even accept his gifts of Pearls as an embodiment of his superiority and power. She returns to Salem accomplishing her duty: “Heroism for this age requires us to take out journeys, to find the treasure of our true selves, and to share that treasure with community as a whole through doing and being fully who we are. To the degree that we do so, our kingdoms are transformed.” (HW 152). Reality always changes with the change in the hero “the more we have the courage to be

ourselves, the more change we have of living in communities that fit for us” (HW, 153).

Hannah goes back to her home land not as a reformed American but a rebel living on the fringes of society. She has attained complete satisfaction or fulfillment and happiness in her adopted land and she adheres to the culture and values of this land. She forges ahead with interrogating and identifying new ways of definition of reality in a conservative society. At the end of the novel, Hannah goes back to Salem where she finds her mother in a mental asylum, raises her ‘black’ daughter Pearl Singh and stays in Salem throughout her life along with her mother’s five half Nipmuc children. Though the story finishes in the same vein her whole personality has undergone drastic changes during her restive moves from Salem to Stepney, Coromandel to Devgad and then back to Salem.

In Hannah, Mukherjee portrays a woman who is marginalized mainly by gender. She decides to make an affair with Jadav Singh, unlike Bhagmati who is refrained by economic and cultural factors in her relationship with Henry Hedges. In India, Hannah believes the same as Tringham in her eminence as a white person: as Beigh Masters explains, “Hannah had Tringham's faith. Nothing could happen to her, not from alien enemies” (HW 244). This faith illustrates the reason of Hannah to envisage the stop of the war: “Only a person who thought she was God Almighty could have struck out through the jungles of India at night . . . [to] the battle tent of the Great Mughal (HW 259-260). Her identity as a white woman both safeguards and demarcates her; she can defy the Great Mughal and live, but she cannot dominate him: “She'd trusted in her 'firangi' status, and while it gained her a hearing and allowed her to keep her ears, tongue and head . . . her message [of peace] had

failed”(HW 270). Hannah's particular prevalence as a white woman in seventeenth-century India both constrains and strengthens her.

All of the women contravene sexual limits and hence cross the border between self and Other. Hannah and Bhagmati (like Sita) erase the gendered space (Sita's circle of protection) and become sexually awakened by men outside of their culture (much as the narrator, Beigh Masters, who chooses to have affairs with Other men, with whom “the codes were different” (HW, 33). Bhagmati turns into the mistress of Henry Hedges; Hannah has become the “white bibi” of Jadav Singh. Hannah’s transgression can be linked to that of her mother’s: “Hannah's rescue by Jadav Singh is also the point at which she consciously crosses racial boundaries, and like her mother, Rebecca, takes a lover from another culture”. “Violence is the other face of power; gaining an understanding of it involves grasping the play ... and the staging ... of power structures, particularly in the post-colonial Diaspora context” (*Creating, Preserving, Destroying* 65). Violence is a tool which the characters of the novelist employ in the struggles to transcend gendered space. Hannah also kills with a knife “Hannah thrust the long dagger she'd hidden in the fold of her sari into the exposed flesh under Morad Farah's battle tunic, through the muscles and organs, back across to the spine itself. Even his scream was cut short, barely an in-suck of breath, barely the registering of pain and death from *an unexpected source* [my emphasis].” (HW 249). Bhagmati starts her life as Bindu Bashini. She is thrown into river after her rape but she refuses to die and survives: “Individual effort thwarted divine fate. She had neither wanted to, nor known how to drown” (HW, 223). She is disowned by her relatives and she becomes a kitchen worker for Henry Hedges, who renames her Bhagmati “- - his name for her, for her reborn self” (HW, 224). Bhagmati dies as Hester Hedges, in whose remains Beigh Masters hope the “world's most perfect

diamond lies" (HW, 284). Bhagmati's character literally dies, a fact that could be ascribed to her status as "twice a victim" (HW, 223), weakened by both race and gender.

Bharati Mukherjee conceived the theme for *'Leave it to Me'* when she spent a year in Delhi twenty years before the publication of the novel. During her sojourn in Delhi, an Asian serial killer and three of his white-hippie-women accomplices were arrested. The man, it was told, was dexterous to befriend, rob and kill people. His three accomplices were young backpackers drawn to him by physical attraction. Mukherjee happened to attend the trial held in a dirty courtroom in Delhi. She felt repelled and fascinated to see the prisoner, who seemed to be an evil incarnate to her. Twenty years later, she converted her annoying encounter with evil into a novel. Intriguingly, the draft of the novel was stolen from her apartment at Manhattan and without the back-up disk or hard copy of the draft; she reconstructed the draft after two months.

The novelist recollects:

I was so traumatized that for two months I couldn't face reconstruction of that stolen draft. And then, on a hot July afternoon in Saratoga Springs, I experienced a miraculous emotional break-through. I heard Debby's voice. She spoke the first page and half part of one. After that Debby took over, as had Jasmine and Hannah in my two preceding novels. She surprised me. She became my alternate self, the 'what if . . . ?' self. The paces, the language, the events - all were dictated by Debby. I suppose that sounds a little crazy, but it's the way I've always written fiction." (Conversation 1)

The themes of remarkable identity and dislocation are pivotal in *Leave it to Me* as they are executed in *Jasmine* as well as *The Holder of the World*. The themes are evolution of the new Americans and two-way transformation of America. This novel is perhaps the most American of the author's oeuvre. Besides the American English style followed, the novel sketches another dimension of the immigrant experience and her writing apparently reveals the associated changes of such transitions. Shalini Gupta in 'The Hindu' muses: "In her latest novel, "*Leave it to Me*," about hitting the hippie-trail in post-hippie America, Mukherjee views life from the outside. Behind plastic, unauthenticated facades, the reality crumbles into a Karma-Cola as tacky as "cosmic glue"." (*A kaleidoscopic Wheel* XX)

Mukherjee realizes that she is no more an Indian writer or an exile or an expatriate. She asserts that she is an American writer. Her aim is stated thus: "I am an American writer, in the American mainstream, trying to extend it. This is a vitally important statement from me. I am not an Indian writer, not an exile, not an expatriate. I am an immigrant; my investment is in the American reality not the Indian." (*Indian English Literature* 108)

In *Leave It to Me*, Debby Di Martino, a young girl is an adopted daughter of an upstate Italian American Di Martino family in Schenectady, New York. She comes to know that her bio-parents deserted her "to be sniffed by the wild dogs, like carcass in a mangy shade" (LM, 10) She is rescued by the Gray Nuns of the Sisters of Charity, who baptize her Faustine, a name indicative of cyclone and pack her off to the United States for adoption. She persistently feels that she is eccentric and bizarre. She undergoes genetic conflict being a mixture of multiple races and finds it irksome to live in a culture that forces her to feel like an outsider. She attains her womanhood with an intense sense of awareness of being different. She also regrets to be the

unwanted child of her unknown parents. In her desire to survive, she begins to uphold her strangeness and exotic beauty. She declares: “When you inherit nothing, you are entitled to everything: that’s the Devi Dee philosophy.” (LM, 67)

Devi Dee travels through America in search of her biological mother. When she comes to San Francisco and takes up with the band of aging ex-hippies and a psychotic Vietnam veteran, her identity crisis grows large. It urges her to track down her bio-parents in Laxmipur, Devigaon, India and the orphanage where she was brought up- the Gray Sisters - “Soeurs Grises”- Sore Grease - in Mount Abu. She knows from Fred, her hired detective that her mother was the hippie follower of a sex-age Guru, and her father, the founder of Ashram, serial killer Romeo Hawk/Haque. The offspring of this unlikely genesis, Devi Dee-presumed missing or dead-is saved by nuns and shipped abroad to America, where she is raised as the adopted child of the Di Martino family. Twenty three years later, having graduated from SUNY Albany, she takes off to seek her bio-mom in off-beat California. Hence, the novel expresses the objective of the protagonist crystal-clear. The author explains the reality of time-travel and reverts to her prior obsession with the agony of an exile.

The prologue of *Leave it to Me* runs with the Goddess Devi, which serves as a template to read the novel. The Goddess Devi kills the buffalo Demon as she is rendered the agent of cosmic spirit to ride the world of evil. Debby’s transformation to Devi Dee is an inevitable episode in the novel as it is the point of introduction of the Hindu mythology into the novel. The title of the novel, *Leave It to Me* can be interpreted in several ways. It can be marked as the statement of an immigrant who desires to rebuild/reinvent himself/herself on his/her own terms. Devi Dee intends to be left alone to confront her fragmented self. Apart from this, the novel focuses on the universal theme of embroil between Good and Evil. As the evil dominates the world,

Goddess Devi wants the human beings to leave it to her to deal with. Hence, *Leave It to Me* can be regarded as the call of nature which is ready to govern the natural justice as per the universal rules.

Debby in *Leave It to Me* begins her journey from a very different place but discovers the same about herself as the writer did. As an orphan she has to find out her birth place, biological parents and the contributors of her personality. She feels the whole world is involved in the making of her and she cannot claim any ethnic group of her own. She starts questioning: “Who are you when you don’t have a birth certificate, only a poorly typed, creased affidavit sworn out by a nun who signs herself Sister *Madeleine*, *Gray Sisters of Charity*? And that name? [. . .] What are you when you have nightmares and fantasies instead of dates and statistics?” (LM, 16) As Debby sets off, she adopts the name Devi without the inherent knowledge of the Hindu origin of the name. The tug of war between her biological parents and the adopted parents, between the native land and the adopted land, ends in fragmentation of the self rather than integrating it.

One of the themes throughout the fiction is the transition of the way America thinks of itself and it is perceived by the rest of the world as a result of Vietnam War. ‘Vietnamization’ of America is the subject of *Leave It to Me*. The phrase implicates the continued impact of Vietnam War on the lives of people who took part in it and those who protested against it. The plot offers a vast scope to criticize the American society by narrating the Hippie movement, America’s involvement in the War and the culture of the post-war America. Like all other novels of Mukherjee, violence dictates the protagonist in this novel too.

Francis A. Fong, a Chinese immigrant, inculcates hope in Devi to understand more of the country where her biological parents had been. She realizes the truth of life in America that its people treat life in a different way, “Americans convert needs into wants; Asians wants into needs.” (LM 35) She thinks that she is bored with crossed signals and conflicting impulses. At last, she shows her violent behavior by burning the house provided to her by Frankie when she feels betrayed by him. She seeks the service of a family reuniting firm, namely Finders/Keepers. She is adamant in her quest and to her it is not love that is adequate in the face of need – “It would never be. Need teased out the part of me that the Orphanage had whited out pin my best interest. It’s about me and them.” (LM 16).

Devi envies people with known identities and who mistake her identity as she is in search of it. She sticks to a new philosophy of her own to lead her life, “when inherit nothing, you are entitled to everything- that’s Devi Dee’s philosophy.” (LM 67). When questioned why she analyzed a disturbing personal counter with evil through the lens of myth, Mukherjee replied:

I wrote the story of Goddess Devi in the prologue to provide a template for reading the novel. I hoped the prologue would allow the reader to react to Debby/Devi’s actions. In the myth I use, Devi the goddess slays the Buffalo Demon because she is charged with that mission by the Cosmic Spirit. The Cosmic Spirit makes her its agent for ridding the world of evil on that occasion. I intended for all of Debby/Devi’s experiences to be interpreted by the reader as visitations from God. [. . .] Jess, Debby’s biological mother, is villainous on a pettier, more human scale. She is just a flower child gone nasty. The story of the Goddess Devi - also known as Maha Devi or the Great Goddess -is

also very much a part of my personal experience. It is recited with great feeling in Sanskrit during the most important Bengali Hindu religious festivals. I can still hear my father, who was a scientist and the founder of a successful pharmaceutical company, chanting this musical passage about Goddess Devi slaying the Buffalo-Demon in his clear-toned, authoritative voice. (Conversation 1)

The battle between Devi and Demon is the ‘Pralaya’- ‘Pra’ means special and ‘Laya’ signifies end. This end refers as ‘cosmics’ disillusion. Since this is the point at which physical becomes psychic and matter becomes spirit. The final scene of confrontation when Devi assumes the Goddess and kills her bio-father, revelation and cosmic (dis)illusion are inferred. Achieving her mission, she unites with the ultimate reality. *Leave It to Me* has three levels – the levels of fiction, mythology and science. At the level of fiction, the protagonist kills her father. At the level of mythology, the protagonist repeats the myth of Goddess Devi killing the Demon. At the level of science, the geographical locale of the conflict is San Francisco Bay Area. As the story proceeds towards the climax tremors hit the sea and where the last scene occurs, the house boat aptly named “Last Chance” is being tossed back and forth by the tremors. (*Violence as a device for Problem Solving 2*) The climax is where the three levels converge to create the moment of revelation. It is the point at which the real and the virtual merge, the earth and heaven meet, myth and reality criss-cross, the time and timeless meet, the natural and supernatural synchronize, the mundane and the spiritual overlap. The apocalyptic vision of enlightenment conveys the victory of GOOD over EVIL. It is the answer for the existential question of humans. The sacred as well as the secular apocalyptic event is captured in the final lines:

Destiny works itself out in bizarre loops. [. . .] I heard the urgent police sirens; I waited a long while for the waist chains, handcuffs, leg shackles. And just when I prayed for my misery to be over, the waves rocked wild and heaved *Last Chance* free of its moorings. The houseboats skimmed a molten gold sea carrying its cargo of dead and living towards a horizon on flames. I heard mermaids sing and police sirens screech, but not for me, not the night the Big One hit, with fires rimming the Bay like some nighttime eruption, with the night sky pink, reflecting off the fog, the sparks flying down like fiery rain, sky hissing into sea.(LM 240)

Thus, the myth acts as the framework for *Leave It to Me* though the writer has done necessary modifications to suit the contemporary lifestyle. She makes a successful attempt to write a solely American subject. Her audacious use of the American idioms and metaphors underline her longing to see herself as a mainstream American writer. In *Leave It to Me*, she eradicates the ethnicity completely and strives to develop a complex, new translated self.

Within her inner thinking, Debby changes shape consistently through the story, adopting her own antecedents of goddesses or nonhuman symbols. Debby declares a new philosophy when she enters California: “. . . I owed it to myself to grab as many nice ones [days] as I could. Go for bliss. Dump pain, pity and rage on somebody else. Pursue happiness: that’s the American way” (LM 61). The plan to dump pain, pity and rage on somebody else has previously showed up in her revenge on Fong. She professes: “Debby DiMartino died and Devi Dee birthed herself on the Donner Pass . . .” (LM 62). When blocked at the Fruit Inspection Barrier, she ponders: “I’m a disgrace to California, I deserve to be turned away: That was my last true

Debby thought, all wrapped up in ash, sack cloth and guilt” (LM 62). As this new character emerges, she transforms her identity: “Devi arm-wrestled Debby. I was quicker, stronger as Devi; my intuitions were sharper, my impulsiveness rowdier. As Devi I came into possession of my mystery genes” (LM 64).

The act of renaming herself Devi ties to the story in the novel’s prologue. In a tie with the mythical tale framed in Kingston’s work, the prologue to *Leave It To Me* presents a legend of an avenging warrior—this time a supernatural figure, “Devi, the eight-armed, flame-bright, lion-riding dispenser of Divine Justice.” This supernatural woman warrior is described as a character in a children’s story in “Devigaon, a village a full day’s bus ride into desert country west of Delhi” (LM 5-6). Aware of the lack of a precise identity for her, she attempts to identify her to the new people she comes across. She envies on people having a determined identity and feels uprooted. Her psychological lack is filled when she takes the name ‘Devi’ from a vanity car plate and christens herself ‘Devi Dee’. She conveys: “The trouble was, I wasn’t a geek, a freak, a weirdo. I’d had a life and the chance at a Big Life, and lost it, temporarily. I told myself. (LM 67) Devi constantly reinvents herself to facilitate assimilation and survival in Haight. Her fluid and mutable identity affords her space to mature and transform as per the requirements of alien land. She accustoms herself to the various ways of living in Haight. Mukherjee’s novel *The Holder of the World* probes the origins of violence and the nature of identity in this grim tale of a young woman whose need to know her past leaves corpses from Sarasota to Sausalito.

In her earlier works, Mukherjee presented the holding of one’s own culture amidst residing in an alien land as an unsuccessful immigrant. On the contrary, in *Desirable Daughters*, she embarks on the alternative ways to belong. The novel revolves around the theme of ‘home desiring’. Padma, Parvati and Tara are the three

daughters of Motilal Bhattacharjee who run tea business. Tara narrates the society to which she belonged as:

To be Calcutta bhadra lok, as we Bhattacharjees were, was to share a tradition of leadership, of sensitivity, of achievement, refinement, and beauty that was the envy of the world. That is the legacy of the last generation of Calcutta high society, a world into which we three sisters were born, and from which we have made our separate exits. (DD, 22)

As the story begins, Padma lives in New Jersey with her Punjabi husband, a divorcee with grown-up children. Parvati, completing her studies in Boston, has settled down at Bombay. Tara, the last daughter and also the narrator of the story lives in San Francisco with her son Rabi and Andy, her new lover, a Hungarian refugee. Her ex-husband Bishwapriya Chatterjee, whom she has divorced, is a software geek and the tycoon of Silicon Valley. Arguably, diasporans possess double identity, which makes up a hybridity. Cultural hybridity in words of Rutherford is as follows:

The notion of hybridity comes from two prior descriptions [. . .] the genealogy of difference and the idea of translation [. . .] the act of cultural translation (both as representation and as reproduction) denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture [. . .] all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity. [. . .] the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives [. . .] hybridity is precisely about the

fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them.”(*Third space* 211-216)

Bharati Mukherjee deals with the crisscross of tradition and modernity, descent versus consent, through sib ship and three sisters, as characters with different ways of adaptation to the environment, both as ‘family’ stories and ‘global’ plots in this novel. The three daughters, members of an elite society are described in Darwinian notions, as “homobengalensis, Subspecies Hindu Calcutta, Subbreed Ballygunge” (DD 245), a middle-class, devout, Calcutta-bred clan, “already extinct in our native habitat” (DD 245) Padma is the most rebellious in her youth, bears a child as a result of her love affair with a friend’s brother Ran Dey in Calcutta but she immediately abandons the baby who grows up in an orphanage, supported by his father. Christopher Dey, the illegitimate son had been finally conveyed of his parentage by his father. He plans to meet his maternal aunt, Tara but meanwhile a conman namely Abbas Sattar Hai murders him and steals his identity. Hai enters Tara’s house assuming Dey’s identity and handovers a letter from Ran Dey with details regarding the circumstances of his birth. This evokes questions and doubts in Tara’s mind regarding their family traditions and cultural values. Padma refuses to disclose her pre-marriage liaison and the follow-up events, as she is now a style icon at New Jersey.

By the time, Tara involves herself deep into the investigation of the matter to unravel the mystery. Ran Dey is killed in an accident and Tara survives a bomb blast that destroys her house. Tara presumes great-great aunt Tara Lata as her role model and reconstructs her life. Her ancestor was a ‘Tree Bride’, an unfortunate girl who got married to a tree to prevent widowhood. She had displayed enormous courage by

educating herself and served as an Indian freedom fighter. Tara takes up a search to find her 'roots' and travel to India with her son Rabi. There, she learns a message from the tree bride's life how to persevere against the restricting traditions and win.

Desirable Daughters is a protest against restrictions imposed on women in traditional societies. The three sisters deliberately give up the preached codes of conduct to survive. Padma rebels by her love affair with an outsider in her teenage. Parvati's mode of escape is repressed to her love marriage with Auro. Her actions, however, do not result in drastic changes or outcome as she does not go against any caste taboo. Tara seems to be very submissive at first by accepting arranged marriage. She also breaks the Hindu code by settling on an American divorce with her software icon husband. Padma settles her marriage finally with Harish Mehta, who is an unsuccessful immigrant, relying much on his wife's earnings. Padma proves herself as a performance artist, as an ambassador of the Indian culture and mythology to the suburban Americans. Padma's response to cultural clash is entirely different from that by Tara. Tara is unable to remain as an Indian or assimilate totally in the host culture. Tara embraces self-happiness and self-fulfillment as per American notions. Anguish Tara states: "the gap between youngest and oldest, the disparity of our marriages and the paths our immigration have taken, have made us strangers. Her reaction to my divorce (that I had brought shame to the Bhattacharjee family had been her refrain) had hurt" (DD 94). However, Tara's Indian ties are never completely vanished. "Yet I'm still too timid to feed my Ballygunge Park Road identity into the kitchen garburetor. That dusty identity is as fixed as any specimen in a lepidopterist's glass case, confidently labeled by father's religion (Hindu), caste (Brahmin), subcaste (Kulin), mother-tongue(Bengali), place of birth (Calcutta), formative region of

ancestral origin (Mishtigunj, East Bengal) education (postgraduate and professional), and social attitudes (conservative).” (DD, 78)

After marriage, Padma, and Tara migrate to America and Parvati, after her love marriage, settles in Bombay. Their fate and strategies of survival are poles apart as Tara rightly pinpoints, “We are sisters three/as alike as three blossoms on one flowering tree. (But we are not).” (DD, 83)

Tara, the narrator and protagonist is a blend of modern and conventional attitudes. She aspires to create her own universe; she sweeps between her cultural values and postmodern intricacies of life. She tries to take pleasure of the luxuries provided by America and assimilates herself into American culture to survive. In the process of her assimilation, she understands and learns the American social and cultural norms. She envisions an imaginary host land and spends money lavishly. Bish, her husband is always engaged with his work and business, which ends up in Tara’s loneliness and grief. She even restrains her sensational bonds with her native land and its culture. She feels annoyed to hear Hindustani spoken by Nafisa’s mother; she constructs an ambivalent identity which esteems American notions of freedom and individuality without profound knowledge.

Tara shapes her ambivalent prejudice which is neither wholly Indian, nor American; she is an American as well as an Indian simultaneously. Her subjectivity is comprised of diverse sources, various materials and multiple locations. Thus, Mukherjee has effectively shattered the thought of pure, discrete or firm subjectivity. All the three sisters, despite being raised in an orthodox society of India, rebel in their own ways to show off their freedom. Whenever they find an opportunity, they transgress their cultural codes. Padma, the elder sister of Tara is engaged in a pre-marriage liaison with a Christian, Ronald Dey and gives birth to a boy as a result of

the affair. Moving abroad, she again falls in love with a Punjabi and enters into wedlock. Another sister, Parvati also marries a man of her own choice and fortunately, he is a Bengali Brahmin. Tara appears to be submissive initially and marries Bishwapriya Chatterjee, the man chosen by her parents. Yet, at the U.S she endeavors to break the Indian cultural norms to materialize as a free individual. She thinks that her “life was one long childhood until I was thrown into marriage.” (DD, 86). As a modern female immigrant she is stimulated by concepts of woman liberation and gender rights. The term divorce is intolerable to her Indian character. However, she manages to settle on with an American divorce on account of her craze on American culture and notions. When I left Bish . . . it was because the promise of life as an American wife was not being fulfilled. I wanted to drive, but where could I go? I wanted to work, but would people think that Bish couldn’t support a wife? Her sister Parvati indicts her of being unemployed that she has “much time on [her] hands for narcissistic projects” (DD 104), and Padma, despite her own transgressions, tells her that Tara should be “very thankful to Daddy or to [her] ex-husband that [she has] never had to worry where [her] next meal was coming from or how to keep a roof over [her] head or clothes on [her] back” (DD 145). After she divorces Bish, Tara makes her debut in dating and narrates her numerous relationships after divorce to her elder sister Padma:

I may be alone right now, this week, but these past three nights are the first time I’ve been without a man or the attention of many men, most of it unwanted, in seventeen years! You thought that my world ended when I left Bish? You think I’m so unattractive, so uncomplicated, and so unadventurous that I’ve been sitting at home alone for five years

just raising a son? I never told you about Andy, or Pramod or Mahesh or Donald – but could you not have guessed? (DD 193).

Tara is involved in a serious relationship with Andy through which she discerns the ways of interpretation of love by different people. She explains that “Love” in my childhood and “adolescence” (although we didn’t have an —adolescence and we were never — “teenagers”) was indistinguishable from duty and obedience. Our bodies changed but our behavior never did. Rebellion sounded like a lot of fun, but in Calcutta there was nothing to rebel against. Where would it get you? My life was one long childhood until I was thrown into marriage. The qualities we associated with our father and with god were not notably divergent from the respect we accorded the president of the country, the premier of the state...great names in history, science and literature, older uncles, cricket players, movie stars and – of course – the boys our fathers would eventually select for us to marry”. (DD 29)

For Andy, love is — “having fun with someone else, more fun with someone than with anyone else” (DD 29). In contrast, for Bish love is —:” “the residue of providing for parents and family, contributing to good causes and community charities, earning professional respect, and being recognized for hard work and honesty”(DD 28).

Tara’s divorce and her subsequent relationships with other men proves her to be an untraditional mother. As her son Rabi is born in America and is much more incorporated into the country, it is hard for Tara to bring him up as a traditional Brahmin. But his father Bish needs Rabi to be raised in the same way like that of a kid in India.

Bish like other Indian fathers, considers that America makes their children —“soft in the brain as well as in the body” (DD 161). Tara then leads her life as a single mom at Upper Haight, San Francisco. By the time, she is with her live-in-lover

Andy. Still, her thoughts wander around her ex-husband Bish, who continues to handle her affairs for her in spite of being divorced. Tara's divorce with Bish and her subsequent union with Andy entail insurrection of male supremacy and conventional code of conduct by marginalized women. Tara exhibits the feministic attitude of a woman who conveys her insolence against any cultural or patriarchal restraint through candid sexual behavior. When Tara evaluates her life to that of her American friends, she concludes that she should be grateful for their identity crisis: "When everyone knows your business and every name declares your identity, where no landscapes fails to contain a plethora of human figures, even a damaged consciousness, even loneliness, become privileged commodities" (DD, 35). Tara's desire to survive makes her take on assimilation. Though she throws out the conventional society of the East and acclaims the individualistic society of the West, she cannot intermingle with the other.

Tara's character deals with the diasporic experience that does not emphasize the native/alien hierarchy, rather explains the cross-cultural clash and its impact, especially, on minds of women. Tara exemplifies a displaced identity that trusts that co-existence of cultures and the search of roots is an effort to realize the stranger (the other) as well as the stranger within ourselves. Bharati Mukherjee throws light on the pathetic state of women when she makes a comment on the Tree bride, which also implies the tyrannical restricted life of women : "A Bengali girl's happiest night is about to become her lifetime imprisonment. It seems all the sorrows of history, all that is unjust in society and cruel in religion has settled on her." (DD 4) Mukherjee reveals her objection of child marriage and ensuing widowhood with the story of Tara Lata in *The Tree Bride*. The narrative of Tara Lata who is blamed for the death of her bridegroom and finally marrying a tree to prevent widowhood represents the

traditional Indian society. It is entirely ruthless on the role of society to hold up a girl of her inherent right to survive and accomplish her needs. The abuse of women on grounds of religion and family prestige is condemned by Mukherjee. Mukherjee portray the girl as: “The poor child had no idea that already she had been transferred from envied bride...into the second worst-thing in her society... the most cursed state....” (DD, 12). The Tree Bride symbolizes self-sacrifice and freedom of women from patriarchy as she confirms that woman can sustain despite the protection by men. Mukherjee brings out marriage as the means of exploitation rather than an enviable divine delight. Indian society inflicts marriage on girls who are not permitted for love marriages particularly of other castes. This is evident from Padma falling short to legalise her liaison with Ronald Dey: “...any violation of the codes, any breath of scandal, was unthinkable.”(DD, 32) Tara’s futile marriage is also a consequence of forced marriage. She argues for the freedom to select one’s life partner and exposes the success of Parvati’s love marriage but abrupt failure of arranged marriage of Tara. The problem caused by obligatory marriage on girls is also illustrated in her previous novel *Wife*. Tara evolves from a desirable daughter to a new woman in America who is torn between convention and modernity. She tries new food, trend and dresses and seeks to construct her individual identity. She calls her husband by his name which she has never done before in India. She develops a liaison with Andy and feels that her desires as an American wife are not fulfilled, hence gets divorce from her husband despite her awareness that divorce is considered as dishonor in the Indian society. She acts as per her sexual desires and yearns to be cherished and esteemed and does not need only to be sheltered by her husband unlike the attitude of other women. She differs from other women and has tremendous courage to transgress the standards set by her native culture. While the other two Padma and Parvati live a self-satisfied and

submissive life, Tara endures and survives all adverse situations to exercise her complete potential as an independent woman. Padma despite residing in America cherishes Indian style of living. She instructs Tara to adopt the archetypes of Sita and Savitri "...things are never perfect in marriage, a woman must be prepared to accept less than perfection in this lifetime-and to model herself on Sita, Savitri and Behula, the virtuous wives of Hindu myths." (DD, 134), but Tara disobeys her. Padma's belief emphasizes male bigotry and by rebelling Tara sets up the perspective of feminism.

The Tree Bride follows the same rethinking through history while trying to trace the origin of a female consciousness and evolution of an identity that transcends boundaries and scrutinizes history to provide it a new recourse. The author drafts the multi-layered histories of a South Asian American woman who has multiple identities. The novel is a sequel to *Desirable Daughters* and opens with the note, "Abbas Sattar Hai: I pray we do not meet him again." (TB 1) The prologue of *The Tree Bride* triumphs in making the readers to wonder about life-before-birth, life-after-death, incarnations, and anxiety of the immortal soul to re-inhabit another living body.

Mukherjee weaves the plot of *The Tree Bride* in a mythical framework. In *The Tree Bride*, when the bridegroom of Tara Lata, the protagonist dies of snake her father decides to get her married to a sundari tree to protect her from the fate of a "despised ghar – jalani, a woman who brings – misfortune – and death to her family". Tara Lata's father decides to tie her knot with a sundari tree (TB 15) and Mukherjee has yet again brought about the superstitious beliefs and myths prevalent in her homeland. She also makes several references to Kashi, where "death would not have signaled the end of life but the soul's return to the Abode of Ancestors in the realms invisible to

mortals, to be judged, and returned in time to a new existence.” (TB 24) She also makes a mention of Yama, “Yama comes when it is time.” (TB, 244)

The epilogue of *The Tree Bride* tells about Tara Chatterjee conducting the cremation for her great-great aunt Tara Lata. She has been insisted by the spirit of Tara Lata to do so: “I am trapped in your world of mortals, perform the rites...set me free, Tara”. (TB 279) The plot involves narration of the fragmented identities of a woman who strives to search the truth behind the unattainable identity of a diasporic woman, through the modes of disruption, disassembly and assimilation. In the process of narration, the protagonist reinvents new definitions for her identity in terms of dislocation, while carrying out an attempt to establish ‘connectedness’ with her own heritage by tracing back to the histories of her sister, mother, and grandmothers. Tara Lata Gangooly in *Tree Bride*, the legendary protagonist marries a tree at the age of five and ultimately turns out to be a freedom fighter. She shows a sense of self-dependence and lack of inhibition, which have evolved as the distinct features of a modern age woman. Tara Lata is the youngest of the three daughters of Jai Krishna Gangooly, a lawyer in the Dacca High Court. Her father has carved her destiny very early in her life. At the age of five, her father fixes her marriage with thirteen-years-old Surendranath Lahiri who hails from an affluent but greedy family of the nearby village. To her father, “his were placid and obedient daughters who would make loving and obedient wives. Tara Lata, his favorite would be no exception” (TB, 10). Her father, like all other ancient Indians is influenced by the rigid culture and traditions of a conventional Hindu society. Unfortunately, her bridegroom dies of snake-bite when the wedding party is moving through a jungle. Tara Lata is blamed for his demise and cynically cursed: “Your happiness-wrecking daughter is responsible: may she die as horrible a death” (TB 11). Her father decides to get her

married to a sundari tree to protect her from the fate of a “despised ghar – jalani, a woman who brings – misfortune – and death to her family”. Tara Lata’s father decides to tie her knot with a sundari tree (TB15). Thus she starts the journey of a life-long virginity. Tara Lata educates herself to read and write Bengali and English. She becomes a voracious reader that she is even acquainted with the works of George Orwell. She also makes her servants to read and write and insists them to educate five others in remote villages. Vertie Treadwell acclaims, “Well, she was another one of them. She’d managed to take the curse of virginity – the worst thing a woman can be in that country – and elevate it into something worthy of a Catholic Saint” (TB 211). Acknowledged as the “teacher of literacy, distributor of grains and oracle on subjects of Indian freedom and communal harmony”, she is greatly honored by the people of Mishtiganj (TB, 255). Tara Lata is actively involved in the national freedom movement and has been an inspiration to all other to take part as she firmly believes that, “No boy is too young, no sutra too poor, no woman too weak to fight for the freedom of India” (TB, 61). She even donates her gold jewels to the freedom struggle which creates Mishtiganj on the map for being the major contributor to the freedom struggle. Similar to Dimple and Jasmine, she also owns a defiant facet of her character. She propagates violence though she is not directly involved in such activities. The violent dimension of her personality is exposed when she leaves Gandhi to support. Her house, Mistmahal is a printing press, and “munitious factory for seditious elements” (TB, 207). She accomplishes all her moves without setting her foot outside the campus of her house as she is able to access information through a strong network of informants in about two hundred villages in the district.

In *The Tree Bride*, diverse sets of three women are writing and re-writing histories. The first multiaxial set, formed within Tara, Tara Lata, and Victoria

Treadwell Khanna gives shape to the disordered mass of Tara's diasporic consciousness through resolving the puzzles concealed with the triangular locations of Tara, Tara Lata and Sameena and the connection is established through the power of violence. The third set, within Tara, Victoria, Tara's unborn daughter accomplishes the assimilation of oral, written and re-written histories and personal consciousness intertwined with crack of history as Tara goes back to India to perform the cremation ritual of Tara Lata. Tara Chatterjee, the protagonist, is happy with her privileged life at San Francisco in the 'gated community' as a cosmopolitan wife as a Silicon Valley tycoon. She starts craving for home and tradition when her house is bombed by the terrorist, Abbas Sattar Hai. Consequently, she develops the quest to search her roots in India. In her mission, she becomes fascinated by one of her ancestor, great-great aunt, who is Tara Lata. Tara, the protagonist writes the history of Tara Lata, a five year old girl being married to a tree at the age of five to save her from a life of widowhood and shame. She spent her whole life as a virgin at Mist Mahal, her father's house. She was rooted and silent like a tree there and became the legendary 'Tree Bride'. She had an incredible courage and will so that she could convey the details about British atrocities to a reporter, who had it published in British newspapers. The doors of her house were always open for the refugees and sick and those injured in partition violence. She was able to achieve all these without leaving the compound of Mist Mahal. She had become a celebrity when she died of police custody. Her body was never found and cremation rituals were not performed. Years later, she was prayed by unmarried girls seeking husbands and by women needing sons.

The Tree Bride akin to *The Holder of the World* explains 'reverse assimilation' through three characters John Mist, Nigel Coughlin and Dr. Victoria Khanna. Raised in unhappy circumstances as an orphan, Mist grabbed love and attention of people in

East Bengal. He held the job of Sergeant's assistant on Board, 'The Malabar Queen'. He then escaped to East Bengal after killing two people during his tenure in colonial administration. He created a place, later named after him, Mistigunj at Razakpur. Mukherjee applauds lives without memory or history.

Dr. Victoria Khanna also stands out to demonstrate the phenomena of 'reverse distant assimilation'. When she is killed by bomb detonated by Abbas Sattar Hai, her husband Yash Khanna is bewildered whether she has to be buried as a proper Presbyterian or has to be given Hindu cremation. Lastly, he decides, "I think a proper Hindu cremation would serve her better." (TB, 244) Tara admires Victoria's passion for India thus: "It is most appropriate; she was Indian by adoption, by marriage, wasn't she? . . . She had expressed great tenderness for India. I recalled her final words: "five little Indians," Bish and I, Yash and she and baby make five. She felt, finally, she belonged with Indians." (TB 244)

The writer focuses on Text-to-Text connection while telling the story of the *Tree Bride*. The text is entangled with Hindu philosophy and mythology. The epigraph is thus:

"All Kings must see Hell at least once.
Hence you have for a little while,
Been subjected to this great sorrow."
(The Mahabharatha , Chapter XCIV)

The plot ends with the chanting of Ram! Ram! , recollecting the final moments of Mahatma Gandhi. *The Tree Bride* illustrates that 'homing desire is in fact a home-invading fear. Vertie Treadwell was left 'unhoused' in India after 1947. He was Anglo-Indian by birth and English by nature. But, India was his country. His parents

and grandparents were born, or had died, in India. His mother lies in Anglican cemetery on Mysore When his father had fallen in the Sudan with Gordon Pasha, they'd found his last instructions stitched in to his tunic: Do not condemn me to a second English death. Burry me beside my wife in Mysore (TB 195). Before his death, he justified his Indian home and identity and thus,

I am the one of the India-born. Fully ninety percent of my life has been spent in India. I have probably spent a greater percentage of my life in India than Mr. Nehru has, and certainly and more than the late Mr. Gandhi has. I have participated in many of India's greatest moments. I have endeavored from love to keep India free of modern contaminants (TB 201).

However, he was also proud to be the one who "tried to save the British Empire". (TB, 180) The notion of home was contradictory for him. Britain was his actual home where he never was and would never be and India was a home he owned once with mixed feelings of love and his homing desire constituted one of a British India, hybrid home for a hybrid resident. He was in love with Tara Lata but his double-consciousness made him arrest her and put to death owing to her connection with national activists.

Victoria, like her grandfather shifts here and there, through continents, gain an Indian last name through a second marriage. When Victoria is assassinated in a bomb blast executed by Abbas Sattar Hai, Sergeant Jack Sidhu interrogates Tara, "What did you ever do to him?" Tara reverts, "I'm sure I never did anything to him". Her inner monologue still continues, "But I know I had. Maybe not this I named Tara and living in San Francisco, and not even the distant I of Calcutta". (TB, 246) It is the other I-

Tara Lata, her namesake-who did something which caused different lines get tangled in the “wire-web of History.” (TB, 246) Through her final resting at Freemont, the heart of the Indian community in California, she gains a new identity as Indian and acquires her Indian home abroad.

CHAPTER III

STUDY OF CHARACTERS

The themes of Bharati Mukerjee's novels are concretized through her characters. All her characters are immigrants and the novelist presents them with their peculiar immigrant problems. Each character in the novels of Bharati Mukerjee retains its own values and tradition, adapts to the new environment that enhances the femininity and gives way to modernity. The female characters in her novels display a tinge of feminist attitude, free of dependence syndrome but with resilience and adaptability. For instance, Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* is a woman more than an immigrant, which brings out a difference in the Indian context. Her marriage itself implies a dimension of immigration – migration from one's previous self to a new one. This conflict and duality gets proliferated with migration to another country. ("Expatriates, Immigrants and Literature: Three South Asian Women Writers" 12)

Brinda Bose is right in her comments:

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 culture 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. (*Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives* 50)

The journey of Tara cannot be retraced as the immigration has not only involved the physical planes but also the psychological aspects. It is unfeasible for the immigrants to again relay themselves with their own country, and this is what that has been displayed through the character of Tara. In fact, it looks like the writer represents herself through the character of Tara, a victim of split personality and identity crisis. Tara's mentality is relentlessly at divergence with the two personalities – one of an Indian and the other of an American. Trapped in the gulf between these two contrasting worlds, Tara feels she has given up her Hindu rituals of worshipping icons. It is the American customs that has roofed Tara like an imperceptible spirit or darkness. Tara forgets the next step of ritual in a religious worship and this upsets her more and leads to a gradual development of her split personality (*Indian English Novelist* 55).

When the sandalwood paste had been ground Tara scraped it off the shiny stone table with her fingers and poured it into a small silver bowl. But she could not remember the next step of the ritual. It was not a simple loss, Tara feared, this forgetting of prescribed actions, it was a little death, a hardening of the heart, a cracking of axis and centre. But her mother came quickly with the relief of words (TD 51).

She glimpses everything with an American eye and remarks on everything from the perception of an Americanized Indian. She identifies herself marginalized on the psychological level and is affected by a split self. The only place where she can soothe herself is The Catelli-Continental Hotel on Chowringhee Avenues. Initially, the parties hosted by her friends in honor of her return fascinated her but later; the conversations with her friends enhanced her feel of discomfort and ease in her

unconventional marriage: “Her friends let slip their disapproval of her, they suggested her marriage had been imprudent, that seven years abroad had eroded all that was fine and sensitive in her Bengali nature” (TD 55).

Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* also senses difficulty in adapting to the alien culture for clash with a different society initiates the progression of de-structuring and restructuring of the identity. Confronted with two assorted atmospheres which are governed respectively by the inherent value systems of the East and the West, Tara packed off to Vassar at the age of fifteen for higher education encounters an initial anxiety. The third part of the fiction is dedicated to Tara's early experiences in America and the steady acculturation ending up in the marriage with a westerner. She commences her foreign life with suspicions, nostalgia and a sense of prejudice. The representation of young Tara grasping her unopened suitcase as her only support puts across the bafflement of the immigrant. Isolated from an acquainted cultural system, Tara “longed for Camac Street” (TD 10). To her Vassar has been nearly a blunder mistake. She condemns her father's choice to set off his only daughter to abroad as callousness. Nevertheless, the reputation of her father and her education under the Belgian nuns to stay composed avert her from a come back home in disgrace. She lacks a means to outcry her sufferings to her parents. Tara falls short to communicate to her roommates and being homesick she views bias in their disinclination to share her mango chutney. Little things hurt her a lot. She is compelled to guard her country before the Americans. Estranged and introvert Tara takes the help of Kali to endow her with strength and prevent from breaking down. When external demands become awful to the immigrant, to surmount the psychological crisis of his identity, frequently adheres to his past, and to his native community. Similar is the case of Tara who has no one to reduce her tension and thereby clings to her native country when the exotic

environment of New York leads her to despair: “On days when she had thought that she could not possibly survive, she had shaken out all her silk scarves, ironed them and hung them to make the apartment more Indian” (TD 34). Her subsequent transmutation to a pseudo bedside intellectual is a mere subsidiary of her endeavor at conquering the increasing sense of alienation and inferiority. To demonstrate her modernity she tries to talk about the population control methods though circumventing any discussion on the ruthless realities of life. America instigates new experiences for Tara. The milk cartons and the food vending machines, in spite of captivating her, only generate waves of fear. The thought of beggars in the streets, which is converse to her anticipation of a foreign country, drives her actually sick. Her illness can be endorsed by symptoms of depression representing a sense of uncertainty at Vassar during the vacation. Nervous breakdown is forestalled by the timely assistance of the counselor. Life in New York deepens her panic and guides her to desolation. The xenophobia which an Asian senses abroad is felt by Tara in her seclusion for she has come to know that girls like her are being killed in elevators. With reluctance to get uncultured Tara tries to a great extent to retain her ethnic identity. In immigrant tales the recurring pattern of assimilation as a principle is characterized as the marriage of two cultures: the colored immigrant and the white partner. The socially, emotionally and spatially intruded psyche, trapped between the drag of cultures that are poles apart, halts all its hopes on marriage. However, the purposeful attempt of seizure of a new space does not obliterate the cultural differences completely. Indispensable differences springing from their inner psyches cannot be pacified by a fluidity of character.

Instead of her love marriage to David, Tara is unable to serve as a bridge between the two cultural worlds for she fails to convey the finer nuances of her

culture, family and life in Calcutta to David. Moreover, marriage does not alleviate her feeling of insecurity: "Madison Square was unbearable and her husband was after all a foreigner." (TD 120) The perfect relationship does not survive for what starts as a great fervor diminishes to disaffection and separation and makes Tara nostalgic. Tara resents her more firm, more banal pre-American life in India. Tara harbors all her hopes on her awaited trip back to India to relieve all her hesitations and shadowy fears of time abroad. But revisit to the country after a lapse of years only emphasizes the feeling of rootless as the variation and distance between the westernized Tara and her people. The immigrant stays rootless in spite of having been existed between two cultures, two countries and two homes. Preferably though the expatriate writer has to represent both the countries clearly and precisely, Mukherjee often turns out to be spoof in her portrayal of Tara. Juxtaposition is a technique that is employed by Mukherjee to depict the two countries together. Tara's reaction to the same vision both before and after her life in the West illustrates the cultural change that has influenced her. Seven years back she has admired everything that is Indian. The houses on the Marine Drive which have looked trendy on her way to the airport now disappoint her with their shabbiness. The journey to home is the juncture at which she senses the shift of her identities as an expatriate. The dullness of the city which she has never discerned before upsets now because her attitude has transformed. The sickness she experiences at the congested railway station which looks "more like a hospital" (TD 19) takes her back to David and thereby America. As she is used to travel in planes, the train ride disgusts her. Her condescending attitude in the air-conditioned compartment to Calcutta forces her decisively and paradoxically to criticize the companions as destroyers of her journey. She is scared by their competence for anger on insignificant matters. Her denial to take any food or even

coke on the train indicates her fear of pollution. Her thinking of her husband at those moments demonstrates that the western culture has evolved almost a second self to her. The foreign land has turned more of a home to her that she is not aware which is her real home. The negative social changes along with her self-attitude to poverty and dirt worsen her discomfort. The sarcastic hours on the Marine drive and the relentless train journey make her “an embittered woman she now thought, old and cynical at twenty two and quick to take offence” (TD 25).

Tara's experience in Calcutta is no less thwarting. The filth and perplexity of the Howrah station annoys her. In spite of the much craved Satyajit Ray film like *Bengal* she encounters a dowdy, grimy, disturbed city. The dreams of the immigrant about the native land slowly shatter while facing the reality. Tara feels the organization, ceremonies and even language as eccentric, futile and incomprehensible. Her feeling of estrangement is further intensified by her helplessness to take part in the religious rituals at home. The truth that she is unable to recollect the next step of the ritual is regarded as her dismissal from the cultural heritage: the innate racial, religious and cultural customs. Trapped in the void between two contradicting Worlds, Tara senses a pious death: “It was not a simple loss, Tara feared, this forgetting of the prescribed action, it was like a little death, a hardening of the heart, a cracking of axis and center” (TD 51).

The incapability to sing the bhajans of the earlier period has a potential impact on her psyche than mere stupor. An imperceptible spirit or darkness has distorted her. Marriage has transformed herself as an interloper into the puja-room as she considers herself as a westerner who has been refused entry into that room during her childhood. Her rapid decision to depart Calcutta is dictated by four interrelated

incidents: the trip to the burning Ghats with Joyonto Roy Chowdhari, the excursion to the factory, the distasteful experience at the summer resort in Darjeeling and eventually the rape by Tuntunwala. The visit to the funeral ghats reveals her failure to adjust with the unknown. At the Kapur's restaurant, while the others enjoy their food Tara can only speculate at the speed with which they evacuate their plates. Even her tongue has got accustomed to the taste of the West. Her summer trip to Darjeeling further bumps up her despair owing to the offensive and impertinent attack on her by some Bengali tourists who advance to her with obscene remarks. What is initiated by them gets concluded with the seduction by Tuntunwala at the Nayapur Guest House.

Through Tara, Mukherjee explains the states of anxiety, oppression of the former self and explicit appreciation of the present. The sequestration of life into 'now' and 'then' ends up only in a fragmented self. It is the nostalgic feeling of Tara that makes her revisit India but the gap between the time of departure and return cannot be bridged. Ultimately, Tara falls a prey to biculturalism. As she lacks the maturity to meet the demands of the two contrasting worlds, she exists as a hyphenated immigrant, an Indian-American who is hanged between two worlds but rooted in neither. Tara who is always being disturbed by the past life becomes a split-psyche and a permanent alien.

Most of the characters of Bharati's novels belong to the upper class society and are from various other Asian countries, attempting to intermingle into the main stream of America- Hispanics, Expatriates and Immigrants. Dimple Dasgupta in *Wife* oscillates between independence and dependence. Dimple and Jasmine, the protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife* and *Jasmine* respectively are two young women immigrants to the United States for different reasons under dissimilar

circumstances. Both of them encounter the problem of loss of culture and piling of physical, mental and emotional agony which drive them to violence. Dimple is a typical Indian girl, with the basic mentality that she has to be protected all her life, firstly by her father, then by her husband, and later on by children. She, being an obedient and submissive daughter of a middle class Bengali family, marries Amit Basu, an engineer, chosen by her parents and moves to the USA. There she is left alone with her husband who reluctantly responds to her building up of emotional and physical turmoil. She inspires to break the traditional identity of a wife, which brings her grief, indignation, resentment and sterile anger. Dimple's name signifies any slight surface depression, correctly implying her psychic defect. Ultimately, her husband's inattentiveness rounds up her stay in the US with the murder of her husband and termination of the disharmonious marital bondage. Amit disappoints Dimple on all planes – physical, mental and emotional “on her very first day in the H.Y.V. apartment she felt like a star collapsing inwardly” (W 69). She tries to express her qualms and fears to Amit but neither does he makes an effort to understand her nor is he proficient to rise above a routine understanding. She strives hard to adjust to Amit's desires and be devoted wife; she is always aware of the truth that he is not the man of her imaginations. Life with him, both in India and America, is obviously an immense frustration for her. Dimple has to manage her upsetting mental state all alone. “She had expected pain when she had come to America, had told herself that pain was part of any new beginning, and the sweet structures of that new life had allotted pain a special place” (W 109). She is dazed by the awareness that America with all its superficial glitter permits Indian wives only to generate “little Indians” around them but does not provide them either free will or fulfillment as obvious in the case of Ina Mullick who, regardless of her efforts at becoming 'a total American', still

remains a perturbed individual. Such a disconcerting realization makes Dimple to be submerged into a world of loneliness, unable to be open to the bright outlook of establishing a new home even after Amit finds a job. She spends time with Ina, Leni and finally Milt Glasser in her period of crisis. Ina and Leni betray her as friends. She tries to blend into the host culture by putting on the borrowed outfit of Marsha and by flirting with Milt Glasser, Dimple feels total rift from herself and her environment as well. Torn by the clash between her fancy world and the actuality of her position, she lends her mind to be controlled by the commercials on T.V. and magazines so much so she is not able to demarcate between them and the reality. She watches

[D]ay time shows with inspiring names like ‘Guiding Light’ and ‘Love of Life.’ The women on television led complicated lives. Became pregnant frequently and under suspicious circumstances ... murdered or were murdered, were brought to trial and released; they suffered through the Ping-Pong volley of their fates with courage (W 72-73).

From television, Dimple “learned the details of American home life” (W 73). Dimple’s submissive nature restates a culture and creed that disagrees with her right to private feelings and desires that satisfy her own interests, and which would permit her to form an own identity. As an Indian woman, and as the icon and repository of ‘virtue’, it is her feminine obligation to vanquish her feelings and desires to the will of her husband: “She wanted Amit to be infallible, intractable, godlike, but with boyish charm” (W 88-89). Dimple is torn between two cultures, and seeks a third, imagined world. Dimple is similar to American people who suppose and are let down by the pledge of fulfillment presented by the media, and who opt the resolution recommended by a violent milieu. Violence is her primary experience of New York

and thus desolation sets in her life. She reflects “her own body seemed curiously alien to her, filled with hate, malice an instance desire to hurt, yet weightless, almost airborne”. (W 117). Television brings in love in a middle-American style. Her T.V. watching astonishes her by the incredible violence and transforms into a diabolical ambush, a torture without trust of either release or relief. Dimple has been portrayed liberated and rebelling throughout the novel. She has no reticence in conveying whatever she feels.

Though Dimple is enthralled by the preferences signified by Ina, and begins to inquire her self- happiness, her discomfort with the absolutes increases. Ina’s feminist friends upset Dimple because of their incapability to identify with her; they correspond to a part of the American landscape that Dimple has been frightened of through her experience of American culture through the television and magazines. Leni Anspach’s naked gums, “horribly pink and shiny, like secret lips, only more lecherous and lethal, set themselves up as enemies of decent, parsimonious living” (W 152). Leni’s talk intimidates to wipe out any knowledge that Dimple has of herself and her only opposition to this is a sarcastic reversal of her submissive role: “After Leni removed her cup Dimple kept on pouring, over the rim of Leni’s cup, over the tray and the floating dentures till the pregnant-bellied tea pot was emptied” (W 152).

Mukherjee in *Wife* portrays the emotional shocks of an aggravated, immature housewife who is incapable to assimilate into the contradicting world of the American environment. Whereas Tara in *The Tiger’s Daughter* responds emotionally and physically to the altered Indian set-up, Dimple in *Wife* feels mixed-up while facing an extraordinary culture. The former comes back to Calcutta from New York while the latter moves vice-versa. At America, Dimple cannot derive a balance between the two contrasting worlds--the world she has been familiar with and the strange, adopted

world. The second part of the novel focuses on the devastating experiences of Dimple in the host culture. Obviously, her relationship with the western world and its ambiguity commences on her last day in India with the exposure to the fascinating world of Calcutta: “Just as she was being introduced to happy people, she was being taken away to become a resident alien” (W 47). The fear that grabs her at the reference of an unknown term hangs around her stay in America. Though they are provided a warmth welcome by her husband’s friends at the Kennedy airport, Dimple's introduction to the new world of America obsesses her with a sense of insufficiency and lowliness. The first exposure to the actuality of the foreign world daunts the delicate spirit of Dimple. Her effort to buy cheese with her too little exposure and imperfect English implies her transitory feeling of adventure. The obnoxious experience with the Jewish merchant completely upsets and unnerves her. The incident reminds her of Calcutta where she could procure from anyone: Muslims, Christians or Nepalese. She becomes aware of her dislocation from the protection and predictability of her own culture. As she fails to relate, it nurtures the attitude to escape from the unfamiliar. The party in Manhattan further augments her sense of incompetence. Amidst a seemingly happy mob Dimple is bothered by nervousness. Moreover, the excitement of being offered a job dwindles with the condemnation of Amit. She seems to be caught in a dilemma of anxiety between the American traditions and the conventional restrictions for an Indian wife: between a feminist aspiration to be firm and the Indian requirement to be compliant.

The vibrant imaginings of American apartments also conflict with the actuality. She has dreamt of American apartments to remind of sets in a Raj Kapoor movie. But the Khanna apartment is only just bigger than that of theirs in Calcutta. The parties she attends amplify the sensation of the sectarian type of life in America.

Like Tara who views herself appalled with everything native, Dimple responds negatively to everything related to home. She has been certain of first-rate jobs for her sincere and clever husband but on becoming aware of the reality feels less secured amidst the fascinating world of America. As she gets introduced to Ina Mullick who is “more American than most Americans” (TD 68). Dimple begins comparing herself against Ina and is embarrassed of her sari-swathed body. Ina exposes her to new ideas and trends of living. Meeting with Marsha Glasser Mookerjee, Associate Professor of Semitic Studies at Bernard and the American wife of Pranab Mookerjee, drives her to rebuild a new image of the daring, gorgeous and brainy female replacing the Indian notion of woman only as beautiful or motherly, neither clever nor friendly. A magazine article encouraging people to utter themselves to the environments instill abhorrence in her attitude to the Sen's apartment which she has thought so lovely on arrival and which has signified a surrogate India for the immigrant. Her disgust with everything native spreads to Amit also who crumbles interiorly in assessment against the T.V heroes. Displaced from the sturdiness of her Bengal home and distressed in the frantic, liberal yet unfriendly world of America, Dimple undergoes psychological fragmentation due to the combat of cultures and the discrepancy between desire and reality. As Dimple is unaware of feminine sexuality, it pushes her into a state of depression and frustration. Dimple is guilty and not able to understand her sexual attraction towards Milt Glassner, an American. As her conscience slaps her for being immoral she cannot overcome the craving of her body for pleasure which she has never sensed in her marital relationship with Amit. She soon becomes aware that she has distanced herself from the prototype Sita. As a result of this, her brief sexual encounter with Milt ends in disappointment. The subsequent guilty feelings and bewilderment boost the dejected situation of Dimple and it persuades her to withdraw

herself from the aching reality. Dimple's past traditional habits of taking warmed food and bathing in the middle of the day give rise to new habits: "instead she showered at night, which made her feel different and modern." (W 113) The refusal of communication with old Calcutta marks the distance she has navigated. Added to that, in her own world of inertia she has nothing to convey or communicate. Though she is not homesick she finds it tough to live with people who do not comprehend Durga Puja. In her gradual endeavour at acculturation there is an unaware desire for the customary rituals. The dilemma of Dimple is explicit in her own assertion: "How could she live in a country where she could not predict these basic patterns where every other woman was a stranger, where she felt different, ignorant, exposed to ridicule in the elevator." (W, 112) She has foreseen pain and has counseled herself that pain is part of a fresh beginning and has fit it in a special place among the lovable aspects of a new life. Nevertheless, she has not practiced her mind to strain beyond tolerance. She has never expected inactivity, fatigue and incessant wavering. The female appetite for tameness, inertia and mental exhaustion is illustrated in Dimple's aloofness in Manhattan. The dissatisfaction of lonely and monotonous existence disheartens her. Mukherjee's comment on Indian immigrant females perfectly suits Dimple: "The Indian women walking around in the malls with nothing to do all day, while men are out busily marketing money. These men have a sense of accomplishment. But they don't realize the women have transformed" (W 116).

Dimple experiences depression partly because of her own unclear notion of freedom and remaining due to her detestation towards other Indian immigrants. For the Sens, America presents no problems because they detain themselves to the expatriate community and cling on to native culture. They invest on the dream of earning as much as possible in America and settling in India as millionaires. They do

not desire to be part of the melting pot; they anchor themselves behind the fortress of their cultural legacy. Dimple, despite the linguistic and cultural difficulties, desires to talk with white Americans. The effort to amalgamate with America makes her shocked because of her delicate sense of identity and the nature of the people she is linked with. Her separation from Meena Sen and attraction towards Ina Mullick emphasize the mounting need for acculturation. The borrowed outfits only aid in her estrangement from self and she presumes that even her shopping carts and its contents symbolize the mask she has to wear in America. With no cabbages or egg plants or orange lentils it looks like a typical American cart. Her borrowed personality and sexual venture with Milt Glasser mutate her only “much worse lonelier, more cut off from Amit, from the Indian, left only borrowed disguises. She felt like a shadow, without feelings” (W 200). Dimple permits herself to be apparently assimilated, but stays as a cultural schizophrenic. When she gets introduced to the two new Bengali couples from Calcutta she evaluates herself to be out of fashion as per the Calcutta standards. Thus not relating to her husband, to the Indian community as well as the American environment she finishes her course in America as a pitiful immigrant among demanding appliances. Upset beyond the level of tolerance she assassinates her husband which she defines as an act of assertion, another evidence of her slow and misguided Americanization (*American Literature Today* 12).

Unlike Dimple, Jasmine starts her life in the US with a murder. Akin to the author, Jasmine, chameleon-like transforms herself easily and quickly. She is Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase, and Jane rapidly and uninhibitedly. Jyoti, heart-broken by the assassination of her young husband does not accept to spend the rest of her life in widow's weeds, secures forged documents and migrates to US, which had always been her husband's ambition. Jasmine acclimatizes in the new environment, which is

the core around which her identity emerges. Her intention to falsify the astrologer's prediction of widowhood and unhappiness drives her. She refuses to stagnate and live an unhappy life of sacrifice. She confirms the doctrine of *Gita*, which says that 'nothing lasts forever' and the criteria, 'survival of the fittest'. The Indian culture, which preached her to 'give', makes her to live with disabled Bud and bear a child by artificial insemination. Her adaptable nature leads her to go through artificial insemination, which might be a revolutionary idea to an Indian mind. Professor Vadhera, another character in *Jasmine*, is also an immigrant to US but he survives as an Indian in the foreign land and tries to control his family with his laid-out rules. His wife keeps obeying his rules but they dwell in a fictional world that raises a new problem. (*Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction: A Perspective* 42-45)

Jasmine's character is contradictory to an ideal woman of her period as she exhibits self-assertion and determination, which are hard to witness in the latter. In the U.S, she is supported and led to transformation and rehabilitation by Mrs. Gordon, another strong personality. Jasmine explains, "She [Lillian] was a facilitator who made possible the lives of absolute ordinariness that we [immigrants] ached for" (J 131). Within a week, she makes over to dress up in jazzy T-shirt, tight cords and running shoes. Thus, she transforms from being a "visible minority" to being just another immigrant. She is then Jazzy from Jasmine and her adoption of various names becomes another part of her feminine sensibility. She finds her first home at the U.S, the mansion of Professor Vadhera and comes to know that he imports human hair which he receives from India through the middlemen. She thinks that a hair from a villager's head could travel across sea and preserve the reputation of an American meteorologist. She feels nothing is rooted and all are in constant motion. At Vadhera's mansion and also at Manhattan, where she serves as a day mummy, she is

not contented. However, as a pure feminist she does not suffer from nostalgia and in fact becomes more Americanized.

Despite assimilating the host culture, she sustains the basic traits of her own culture and still it is inconceivable for her to have a non-genetic child like Duff. Jasmine is ever an Indian woman at heart till the end. Her Indianness makes her tell Duff about Indian Gods, demons and mortals. Hence, when Wylie leaves Taylor in search of another man for a happy life, she is heart-broken and she regrets:

In America nothing lasts can say that now and it doesn't shock me, but I think it was the hardest lesson of all 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 that it won't be disintegrate (*Creating, Preserving, Destroying* 181).

Jasmine is outraged with the decision of Wylie leaving Taylor. She realizes the fluidity of relationships and lack of a place for shame in the American society and she finds difficult to empathize women like Wylie. Her attitude here resembles that of an Indian woman in American locale. Later, she understands the course of action of Wylie during which she falls in love with Taylor and narrates her past to him. She lives happily with Taylor and Duff but again her past re-enters in the form of Sukhi, her husband's murderer and she runs to Iowa. Jasmine's life in Iowa starts with her meeting with Bud Ripplemayer, who gives her both a new name and a new identity. She has then become Jane Ripplemayer, which symbolizes her ability to imbibe herself according to the environment. During their first meeting, Bud, the fifty years old banker was a husband, and father of two children. But after six months, he gets divorce and lives with Du, an illegal immigrant and an adopted son. Then, he begins courting Jasmine because of her exotic Indian beauty, which she is aware of and says:

Bud courts me because I am alien. I am darkness, mystery, inscrutability. The east plunges me into instant vitality and wisdom. I rejuvenate him by being who I am (*Creating, Preserving, Destroying* 200).

Jasmine again proves to be an ideal wife of Indian concept as she blends her dreams and wishes with Bud's and forfeits all her individualism. A deadly accident to Bud, which demotes him to a cripple on a wheel chair, does not daunt Jasmine from her ideal behavior since she still carries on the native cultural myths. But somehow she is not happy and Taylor's arrival is a sigh of relief for her. She leaves Bud and comprehends Wylie's intention to leave Taylor. Her exit from Bud's life implies the ultimate assertion of a true feminist. She clarifies: I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the promise of America and old-world dutifulness (*Creating, Preserving, Destroying* 240). The transformed Jasmine breaks all her silent promises to Bud and walks away with ex-lover Taylor to fulfill all her unfulfilled dreams as she has become "greedy with wants and reckless from hope" (*Creating, Preserving, Destroying* 241).

Jasmine is the greatest paradigm of the hyphenated immigrant who has become skilled at forming a varying reality which is neither purely national, nor totally American. More than other characters, Jasmine encounters violent incidents one after the other: opening with getting a star scar on her forehead following which astrologer foretells her widowhood to her rape by an American Ship captain. Jasmine's Americanization is the result of her encounter with adverse situations, traumatic circumstances and worthy lessons she has picked up from various persons in her life. For instance, she learnt from Prakash that 'love' means letting go and she employs it by letting go of all that buried and stunted the augmentation of her inner self. She also considers it to be the strategy for assimilation in America. She realizes

that death is a myth, it is only “an ascending or a descending, a moving on to other planes” (J 96) Jasmine who is anxious about the women’s sexuality in America has a male for all her identity. When she becomes Jase with Taylor, she underlines her agency in the making of this new self: “Taylor didn’t want to change me...I changed because I wanted to” (J 185). Lastly, with Bud, Jasmine emphasizes the creation of Jane as a result of her aspiration to change: “Plain Jane is all I want to be. In Baden, I am Jane almost” (J 26). While Jane looks like having gained agency throughout the route of her transformations, the word “almost” notifies that there still is (and always will be) a part of herself that she does not possess the authority to change, and perhaps never will. Jasmine will ever be disturbed, for disruption is the way in which she eventually transforms and recreates herself.

Being audacious and self-confident, still the character of Jasmine never demarcates the designation of woman. She avails only support but not mercy from men whom she meets in America. Jasmine’s postcolonial, ethnic characters are post-American, carving out new spaces for themselves from among a constellation of available cultural narratives, never remaining bound by any one, and always fluidly negotiating the boundaries of their past, present, and futures. (“The Expatriate Indian Writing in English” 80)

Jase becomes Jane of Bud Ripplemeyer and they both lived together as husband and wife without an official marriage which is rare in Jyoti’s culture but quite common in Jane’s culture. Jane and Bud adopted Du, a seventeen year old Vietnamese boy, as an orphan when he was fourteen. In this novel he represents his own condition of dislocation and isolation from his motherland, Vietnam to a new where he comes from an entirely different culture than his sons-of-farmers classmates. Du and his friend Scott enjoy watching Monster Truck Rallies on TV, and Jane

remembers that his first question to them was whether or not the family had a television. Escapism from burdens, complications and contradictions of continuity is well depicted by the character of Jane Ripplemeyer who hardly sends out or receives any mail because she wants to disconnect herself from continuity, that is, from her past which implies carrying the burden of history. Jane carries her own inherent, whereas Du, the Vietnamese American is not as she. He has twice born, as Jane says, “my transformation has been genetic; Du’s was hyphenated.”(J 222)

No doubt the liberated Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane, who make a life time for every name, look like a possibility for every enthusiastic immigrant. Thus, caught between the two cultures of the east and west, past and present, old and new, Jasmine constantly ‘shuttles’ in search of a concrete identity. Bharati Mukherjee ends the book on a note, and re-emphasizes the complex and alternating nature of identity of a woman in exile.

Then there is nothing I can do. Time will tell if I am a tornado, rubble-maker, arising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud. I am out the door and in the potholed and rutted driveway, scrambling ahead of Taylor, greedy with wants and reckless from hope. (J 241)

Jasmine implies these words and moves to California with Taylor, which symbolically represents the uncertain of what the future will bring but nevertheless confident in her decision to leave. This sense of movement further reinforces the notion that her identity is forever evolving, she cannot remain in a stable life because disruption and change are the means of her survival. The surrounding environments influence her formation of her identities and she navigates between temporal and spatial locations, her perception of herself changes, thereby resulting in a multiplicity

of consciousness. These create a tension within her and she feels the need to reconcile these conflicting perceptions so that they do not wage a psychological war inside her. Thereby we see her reinvent her identity completely. Jasmine also is not free of sexual violence. The rape of Jasmine on her way to America by the shrimper captain, whom everyone calls Half-face, proffers a clear picture of the trauma faced by the immigrants, in particular by the women, in an alien soil. The beast like captain is smart to take advantage of the unawareness and virtuousness of the uneducated nineteen year widow, Jasmine, from rural Punjab. For the captain, Jasmine is only another woman he has abused but for her it means the loss of sacredness of a widow and thus she decides he has to be penalized for spoiling her purity. She kills the rapist in Goddess Kali like fashion and shows an eagerness to reposition her stars for the future. Her choice to immigrate to America exhibits her willingness to get rid of all bonds of her homeland. Later as an American citizen, she has hitherto never felt nostalgic. The plot's twisted structure permits Jasmine the liberty to glide between classic Western feminist characters such as Jane Eyre, Eliza Doolittle and Calamity Jane to mighty Hindu goddess Kali. This construction also sets down the collapse of cultural obstructions such that it eliminates the margins between American and Indian classic literature. Mukherjee offers both a room for the Asian immigrant in the American hub and an assertion that Indian immigrant women do not linger on their inert eastern brand. Mukherjee employs the pitcher as a metaphor of femininity within Hindu culture owing to its link with water gathering (work of women) and the power required to break it. Mukherjee facilitates Jasmine's maximalism to be viewed as feminist in means that confront both historical outsets of women by rupturing the "pitcher" that demarcates American and Indian feminine responsibilities manifested in these characters. Mukherjee lays down a fictional example for Jasmine and hence

confirms her position as a western feminist character through entwined identities of literary women that achieve agency through their mutating abilities. Jasmine as Jyothi in her village Hasnapur desires to pursue her education to become a doctor and to live her life on her own differing from the village girls who are “like cattle” that follows “whichever way you lead them.” (J 39) However, Jyoti is fond of “hearing the men talk” (J 56) since she is strange to the world they discuss about. Hence, she first faces a contradiction between the patriarchy and the modernity she craves. While living in Hasnapur, a village in Punjab, as one among the nine children, she has also observed the inferior standing of her own mother. When her mother protests a marriage proposal for Jasmine and argues on behalf of Jasmine’s future academic ambitions, her father becomes enraged. Consequently, her mother is beaten by her father that night, which Jasmine says, “And deeper into that night I heard the thwack of blows. . .” (J, 52) Jasmine/Jyothi is almost adolescent at the age of eighteen. She starts her life as a silent girl, predicted by the astrologer of her widowhood and exile. (J, 1) Her free thinking husband Prakash instructs her “Pygrnalion like,” to be “a new kind of city woman.” (J 77) The plot of *Jasmine* opens with the ancient Hindu myths against the most modern western view: “Lifetimes ago, under a banyan tree in the village of Hasnapur, an astrologer cupped his ears--his satellite dish to the stars--and foretold my widowhood and exile” (J, 1). Jyoti/Jasmine becomes a widow and migrates to America but her existence in America can never be termed as ‘exile’. When Jasmine shouts and denies the predicament, she is chunked on the head by the astrology, which makes her to fall on the firewood and get “a star shaped wound” (J, 1) on her head. She announces her ‘star’ to be her third eye--not a superficial “inch-long pale, puckered scar” (J 1-2)--and declares: “Now I'm a sage” peering into “invisible

worlds” (5). “Seeing through the third eye,” as Jasmine says to Taylor, leads to “enlightenment...and sensing designs in history's muddles”(J, 52).

The image of the third eye of Jyoti connects seven-year-old Jyoti in Hasnapur, nineteen year old Jasmine in Manhattan, and twenty-four-year-old Jane in Iowa. Shiva's third eye concept is related not only with wisdom and insight but also with violence and sexuality. As per one of the traditional stories, the love god Kama is reduced to ashes by Shiva's third eye when he tries to attempt to stir up Shiva with love of Parvati during his austere meditation (Ions 81-82). Jasmine exploits her third eye in the same way when Half-Face, the rapist, shatters her forehead against a motel television set and she believes her “scar tightening, and the heat from the screen on my swelling” (J 113). Reminiscent of Shiva's fire-emitting third eye, Jasmine's hot scar aids her transformation into Kali, who in benevolent form called as Parvati, consort of Shiva. Similar to Kali, she obliterates evil to arrive at an ultimate good. In America, she accomplishes her mission of committing Sati (another traditional practice to be followed by a Hindu widow) symbolically by burning her widow sari and Prakash's suit in the funeral pyre (J, 102). In Jasmine, a friend soothes Jasmine's widowed mother: “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” (J 51).

Hannah Easton in *The Holder of the World*, who is abandoned by her parents, marries a conman, goes to India to be the mistress of a king in India and eventually returns home with more maturity and understanding. She has the confidence or audacity to plead her lover Raja's case at Aurangzeb's tent. Each character of Bharati Mukherjee, be it Dimple, Jasmine, Hannah Easton or Debbie, exhibits duality in personality, which is visible in reality. She deems it the colonial writers' “legacy”

of “duality”, the “learned” ability “to be two things simultaneously; to be the disposed as well as the dispossessor”. Tara in *The Tiger’s Daughter* displays a balanced disposition due to her education in England. She travels back to home to reinstate her own inherited identity whereas Dimple in *Wife* is ever on the periphery of balance and trips to her native. She desperately needs to wipe off her native identity. Her only way to handle the agony and guilt is to stab her husband to death. However, for Jasmine killing is inevitable to maintain sanity. Jasmine has confronted the realities of the world and the confidence inculcated in her by her husband guides her towards a balanced life. However, Dimple lacks the knowledge of realities because throughout the novel she lives in her own world of fantasy. Debbie, an orphan shapes her own identity and leads a very different life. Later characters of Bharati are stronger, like Debbie, Jasmine, Hanna Easton, who far exceeded the humiliating characters like Dimple and Tara. Her characters often demonstrate the inhuman behavior of men who can destroy without their sensibility being involved. The female characters strive hard to get rooted beside the gender and cultural differences.

Each of the character of Bharati Mukherjee, be it major or minor, has its own voice, imparting a new meaning to life. The ethics behind the characters is that each one is treated individually, and as a whole, to bring about everyone’s evolution. The author says,

In a way, I suppose that’s being a Hindu, I mean, this being constantly aware of the existence of many universes, this undermining of biography and individual ego. The cosmology that my characters and I inhabit derives very much from the Puranic tales. The Puranas are cycles of tales (think of them as morality tales, religious fables, there are thousands of them) that every Hindu child is told the way that kids

in US are exposed to fairy tales and bedtime stories. As “story”, they really work, too! Conflict, heroes, villains, obstacles, action, surprise revelation! But the stories metaphorize the Hindu concepts of cosmology, time and space. Current discoveries in astronomy are certainly pointing up the existence of universe other than ours. I believe in re-incarnation, which, too, may be a metaphor for some geo-biological phenomena, why not? (*Interview, Chen Tina and Goudie, S.X 5*)

Hannah's needlework portraits the Taj Mahal rising and focuses more of colonial India even before she has come to India (HW, 44). This needlework foretells an aspect of fate for Hannah and implies that she subconsciously relates with India. Hannah's psychic link with India makes the distinction between Salem and Fort St. Sebastian to fade. Her aptitude to refrain from submerging herself in one culture is that of a wise identity in that Hannah can assimilate quickly into various countries and political environments. Hannah acclimatizes so effectively that she becomes aware of similarities between locales in means that points out her competence to progress into a postcolonial mindset rapidly compared to her white English or American counterparts. Clairvoyance allows Hannah to generate sectors of American and Indian culture such that she starts viewing the English notions of superiority over Indians on both continents as detrimental. It also forewarns her to remain in India after her husband is guessed to be dead, which leads to her no thinking of herself as an English woman (HW, 214). Hannah confirms that otherness is not as appalling as it is amazing. Hannah is capable of emerging out of the societal values that have structured her ways of life and ultimately understand, empathize with, and respect her mother, who had done what she desired amidst an

adverse situation. Hannah is open to the novelty. Her journey involves the travel of her psyche also. She does not contrast India with London or Salem. It is her inquisitiveness and zeal towards life which transforms her woman with contemporary outlook:

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. Hannah develops exotic relationships with other persons when she is in India, and these ties formed with non-Western people convert Hannah by translation, a term suggesting foreign but not domestic or local exchanges.(HW 104)

Her journey to and life in India causes confronts with other characters that create change: "She was alert to novelty, but her voyage was mental, interior. Getting there was important, but savoring the comparison with London or Salem, and watching her life being transformed, that was the pleasure (HW, 104).

Hannah's affair with Raja Jadav Singh, a Hindu King in Mughal India, changes her into the Salem Bibi, a fused title that blends her American and Indian selves. As his bibi, Hannah troubles the colonial authority of white domination and obligation. Still she handles well to form an exotic relationship with the Raja, for "it was here in India that she felt her own passionate nature for the first time, the first hint that a world beyond duty and patience and wifely service was possible, then desirable, then irresistible" (HW, 237). Hannah judges her sexual awakening by comparing the Indian culture with that of the Puritan world, which instead of

merely expressing a duality that highlights the difference; draws links between the experiences of Hannah and her mother Rebecca: “She had traveled the world, a witness to unimagined visions, merely to repeat her mother’s folly, and to live her mother’s life over”. (HW, 238). Hannah’s replication wipes off cultural differences and breaks down the geographical distance to declare a global experience. When Hannah initially goes to the Coromandel Coast and into Henry Hedges’s house, she thinks: “the household ran itself—Hannah didn’t think of it as being run by the servant woman and the peons.”(HW, 128).

These wrong perceptions of Hannah present her American self in both positive and negative notes. In her changing names and cultural adaptations, Hannah emphasizes the American proclivity for change and adaptation, but her efforts to appeal to Jadav Singh and the Muslim Emperor Aurangzeb with the hope that she has the potential to stop a religious war in progression manifests the dark side of Hannah’s American identity as to transform and control others. Curious, imperative, and conscious to her own possibilities, Hannah materializes as a cosmopolitan woman. She embraces multiple cultures and translates herself and she effectively banishes the obstructions of time and geography. Finally, Hannah understands that “the survivor is the one who improvises, not follows, the rules.” (HW, 234) In the circumstance of the upset experienced by the migrated and dislocated persons, this is a valuable message of Bharati Mukherjee.

Beigh Masters, the narrator of *The Holder of the World*, begins the novel as: “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.” (HW 5). Yet the tale she tells includes journeys from America to England to India and back, and from

present to past and back, for all time signifying a future for immigrants that will permit and grant global experiences. Bharati Mukherjee expects a future through an act of coming back, exploring the genetic origins of both the characters and countries. She makes the Americans realize that they are all immigrants, though not literally then by inheritance, and she explains the making and incessant shaping of America by a combination of cultures.

Devi Dee's character in the novel *Leave it to me* tends to be audacious, aggressive as well as empathetic. Her tactful, manipulative, blatant and self-confident personality accommodates her with the alien people at ease. At Haight, she spends more time with street people, the flotsam and jetsam who are the remnant of the post-Vietnam American culture. Obviously, she becomes the backer of the derelict, marginalized and deserted in American society. Her social nature makes her befriend with Loco Larry, Pammy Whammy, Stoop Man, Duvet Man, Tortilla Tim and other displaced characters. Devi grasps her supremacy to grip men to the point of manipulation. Her relationships with men have ever been mighty relationships. She employs her exotic beauty to acquire the assistance of men like Ham in her quest of searching her biological parents. She avails the help of Ham to get a job, settle in a house and meet Fred Pointer, the detective. Through Pointer, she gets acquainted to Rajiv Raj in India who aids her to find out her parents.

In her interview with Ron Hogan, Mukherjee confides how she imagined the character of Devi Dee:

Devi came to my mind as the opposite of the characters I'd written earlier, Jasmine from the novel *Jasmine*. Draft by draft, I came to

understand Devi better, and the most important idea that wrote itself in the second or third draft was that she prizes clarity over anything else. I never saw my character Devi's tale as optimistic. Here is a street, smart, savvy. Manipulative young woman, enraged about the fact that she was thrown out like a garbage sack on the hippie trail, which's part of a larger design in which some higher power uses her to restore some kind of balance and purge evil out of our California. I never saw her as a mean person, more than a person capable of redemption after she's gone through some of the violence within herself." (Interview)

Debby is unique from other characters in her growing malice. This character queries the American notion of freedom through violent acts, particularly that lifestyle of the counterculture that materialized at the time of the Vietnam War. Debby is aware of the differences from her adopted family; she maintains a clandestine inner life unidentified by her family, "the part that sings to moons and dances with stars" (LM 10). Debby denies herself because she has "no weight, no substance. I had to toss her out" reflecting her thoughts about her genesis: ". . . just a garbage sack thrown out on the hippie trail" (LM, 10-11). Debby emphasizes that she is fortunate to be an orphan so that can design her life in her own way with the traits she has chosen from a variety of background. She is happy to be an individual free of fetters and can act as per her wish. She affirms: "You're just on loan to the DiMartinos. Treat them nice, pay your rent, but keep your bags packed." (LM 17)

Debby's first affair is with a twenty-two year old graduate student from whom she gains significant knowledge as she says: "But he left me with the most important prediction of my life, something that got me through high school and college, and even helps today." He says her she will be "tall and beautiful" and "rich and

powerful” (LM 14). “After Wyatt left, I convinced myself that I was lucky to be an orphan. From the families I’d been given; I’d scavenge the traits that I needed and dump the rest” (LM 14)

Devi’s character with reference to globalization suggests that she is not a crumbled immigrant swaying back and forth between two cultures. Devi’s passion to find out her bio-parents makes her brash and she leaves the comfortable life of Schenectady. When her liaison with Frankie goes skewed, she burns down his mansion as impulsiveness seems to be an element of her fragmented self and makes her move on and on as a displaced traveler. Nevertheless, she remains unsheltered even after finding her biological parents. Romeo Hawk, her biological father murders Jess DuPree, her mother and also kills Ham. Hence, Devi becomes furious and enacts a mythical Indian Goddess Kali and kills Romeo Hawk. Thus, the end of the novel portrays her as a woman/goddess who demolishes her roots as well as the demonic forces of the world.

Debby’s character is linked to heroes of freedom stories by several factors. She is an outcast and eccentric who leaves home in search of true home and identity, given names by others, experiences false escapes and finally creates her own community in her journey. She shows twists and turns often yet has a stubborn desire to search her roots and expresses a need for own community and revenge. She progresses from a sufferer to the retaliator during her journey, often with ensuing violence. As she certainly is a misfit in the adopted family or the American life she is unable to dream of American life like her siblings or friends. In the course of exploration of her roots, she goes through a series of liaisons with other communities but never finds an exact match for her and therefore she transforms herself as per her desire like a chameleon. Debby seems to be of unpredictable and somewhat swindler

type. In *Leave It to Me*, Debby Di Martino adopted daughter of an upstate Italian American Di Martino family in New York is deserted by her bio- parents and sets off on a mission of identifying them. Devi is self-determined and her adamant nature guides her to cling on to her mission. Debby declares a new philosophy when she enters California: “. . . I owed it to myself to grab as many nice ones [days] as I could. Go for bliss. Dump pain, pity and rage on somebody else. Pursue happiness: that’s the American way” (LM, 61). She professes: “Debby Di Martino died and Devi Dee birthed herself on the Donner Pass . . .” (LM, 62). When blocked at the Fruit Inspection Barrier, she ponders: “I’m a disgrace to California, I deserve to be turned away: That was my last true Debby thought, all wrapped up in ash, sack cloth and guilt” (LM, 62). As this new character emerges, she transforms her identity: “Devi arm-wrestled Debby. I was quicker, stronger as Devi; my intuitions were sharper, my impulsiveness rowdier. As Devi I came into possession of my mystery genes” (LM, 64). Devi’s stubbornness and determination along with her ability to assimilate into the host land broaden the sphere of her life. She never senses loss of her homeland, Schenectady or the feeling of alienation. She emerges as a successful immigrant who embraces the adopted land’s culture:

I parked the car, and strode unfamiliar streets, tapping businessmen for fives and tens, starting small by picking up pennies and dimes, paying attention to the bases of parking meters, then lifting wallets from too-tight jeans, snatching purses off coffeehouse tables. (LM, 67-68)

Devi Dee’s character tends to be audacious, aggressive as well as empathetic. Her tactful, manipulative, blatant and self-confident personality accommodates her with the alien people at ease. At Haight, she spends more time with street people, the flotsam and jetsam who are the remnant of the post-Vietnam

American culture. Obviously, she becomes the backer of the derelict, marginalized and deserted in American society. Her social nature makes her befriend with Loco Larry, Pammy Whammy, Stoop Man, Duvet Man, Tortilla Tim and other displaced characters. Devi's passion to find out her bio-parents makes her brash and she leaves the comfortable life of Schenectady. When her liaison with Frankie goes skewed, she burns down his mansion as impulsiveness seems to be an element of her fragmented self and makes her move on and on as a displaced traveler. Nevertheless, she remains unsheltered even after finding her biological parents.

Romeo Hawk, her biological father murders Jess Du Pree, her mother and also kills Ham. Hence, Devi becomes furious and enacts a mythical Indian Goddess Kali and kills Romeo Hawk. Thus, the end of the novel portrays her as a woman/goddess who demolishes her roots as well as the demonic forces of the world. There are other immigrant characters that are notable. The Martinos are immigrants from Italy to America and settled there by adopting the host culture. Yet Fong, the ex-lover of Devi is a typical expatriate. He lives in America only for business transactions and separates himself from the host culture and distinguishes himself from others. He says, "Americans convert needs into wants; Asians wants into needs. (LM, 35)

Tara in *Desirable Daughters* displays such a cultural hybridity and she says, "I am both." (DD 6) It is because this hybridity or dual identity, she acquires the third space of enunciation. She tells: "The rhetoric of modern San Francisco makes me invisible. I am not 'Asian,' which is reserved for what in outdated textbooks used to be called 'Oriental.' I am all things. [. . .] I thrive on this invisibility. It frees me to make myself over, by the hour." (DD 78)

Mukherjee describes in an interview to Dave Welch: “The aesthetic strategy of the book was using the width of the field- of history, geography, diaspora, gender, ethnicity, language- rather than the old-fashioned long, clean throw.” (“The Expatriate Indian Writing in English” 64) In terms of history, the author uses Tara Lata as a tool to illustrate the history of India before and after independence. Yet, the history is rewritten as coloniser’s recording and it is merely an ancestral history of family rather than the history of the nation. There is also a triangular movement geographically as the plot sweeps between the Indian and the American subcontinent. Parvati is settled down in East of India. Both Padma and Tara reside in United States, the West. Moreover, Tara is located in the West of the U.S whereas Padma is in the East of the U.S. These varied geographical locales bring out their differed mindsets as well. Hence, the story forges ahead across diverse geographical and historical sweeps with constant shifts in direction and side-passes. A model with several side connections, sibships and lateral moves substitutes the straight trajectory of the plot. This suggests that all our histories coincide at some point in the modern world, which is made possible through the connectedness of information and shrinking of space and time. The novel underlines the intricate network connections in which routers are equally important as roots.

Tara’s understanding of Padma’s philosophy of life in America is “Take what America can give but don’t let it tarnish you in any way”. (DD 134) Tara’s way to belong is a path-breaking experience and can probably be a model for modern women to follow. Tara is at home in all cultures wherever she is despite she neither belongs to India nor America. Tara’s case here is not ‘homelessness’ but ‘a multiplicity of homes’. The plot includes many instances in which she feels proud of her lineage such as, “We are Bengali Brahmins from Calcutta and nothing can touch us”. (DD,

44) Yet, these dimensions of her personality does not refrain her survival in the host country. The writer effectively employs the metaphor of fault lines and earthquakes to illustrate the rifts, silences and gaps in human relationships. Tara's son leaves home and Andy comments: "He is on the edge, babe. All this fighting is just piffle and puffle. That's what thirty years working construction has taught me: its piffle and puffle. I fix the piffles and I look for the puffles. 'A PIFL is a previously identified fault line.' [. . .] A PUFL, a Previously Unidentified Fault Line, is a killer." (DD, 92)

In another instance, Tara refers the "invisible fault lines" (DD, 180) between her and Padma. Tara tells:

Didi was sitting just inches away, a firm identity resisting all change, at least from a distance, on a brief inspection. But under scrutiny, fractured, like cracks under old glaze. Up close, I didn't know who she was. I was following the cracks, fascinated by their complexity, not the simple, shining face. 'Puffles and Piffles,' Andy once called them, but I never thought that previously unidentified fault lines could refer to my sister, or to me. (DD, 196)

The writer takes tremendous efforts to describe India to Americans. In a review of the novel, Manju Sampat pinpoints, "There is a thin storyline padded by generous dose of insights into Hindu religion, heritage, history and philosophy. This is done to give the text fullness and complexity that will appeal to Mukherjee's numerous western readers." (*Caught in a Pickle* 27) Also, the celebratory mood of immigrants in the adopted land explicitly depicted in the writers previous works are absent in this novel. Tara is more similar to Jyoti of *Jasmine* than Dimple of *Wife*. Akin to Jasmine, Tara accepts American life style and sets up a new identity. She is

different to Dimple who does not succeed in adapting to the alien ambience; becomes neurotic owing to incidents of Diaspora; stabs her husband and commits suicide, because she is self-determined and confident to incorporate the host culture and fiddle with the new socio-cultural and geographical environment. In spite of her affirmative response to dislocation, Tara always senses estrangement as she cannot amend her inferior black race, nor can she influence American outlook towards Indians.

Analogous to other Indian Diasporas she endures the spasms of alienation, lack of belonging and identity crisis. She utters: "I am sick of feeling an alien." (DD, 87) "I am not the only Indian on the block. All the same, I stand out, I'm convinced. I don't belong here." (DD, 79) Tara She is a victim of racialism, a common practice in western world. Tara conveys: "I didn't have a single close friend in San Francisco... The Atherton wives treated me as a pariah I didn't belong in India or in the Silicon Valley...." (DD, 109)

Tara confirms that survivor is one who admits change and makes over oneself according to situation. She rips apart the myth of single identity and seeks to equate the 'world of origin' and the 'world of adoption' through the process of assimilation. Tara is proud of her Bengali Brahmin lineage. She tells, "even as proud members of the majority community, we were a blessed, elite minority and we knew it" (DD 88) she alleges proudly, "We are Bengali Brahmins from Calcutta and nothing can touch us". (DD 89) But these features of her persona do not deter her strategies of survival in the adopted land. She contravenes the Indian conventions of marriage and lives with Andy for six years. Eventually, she recognizes herself to be exotic and feels alienated. She is even uncertain about the breach of the notions of identity, culture, tradition and homeland which she regards as sacred. The fact lying behind is that though Tara yearns to become distinctive and free, she cannot relinquish the socio-

cultural and conventional luggage which she has brought from India. Padma's behavior in the USA confirms that she does not perform the roles of wife, sister, daughter and mother but she makes herself and others believe that she does. Padma is aware of attaining comfort with her own troublesome attitudes. As a daughter, she seems to be very traditional and submissive. Though she marries Harish Mehta, a previously married non-Bengali, she knows to be an ideal daughter away from her home, by talking and writing to her parents often. Parvati contrasts the way that she and her sisters undertake to keep in touch with their parents: You know how they long to hear from you and Didi. In fact, Didi is more considerate than you are in this respect. She even remembers their wedding anniversary each year. They keep all the letters and greeting cards, including the Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Valentine cards, in shoeboxes in a trunk. "Didi's pile is five times bigger than yours. I hope that makes you feel guilty, Tara. In any case, why don't you redirect your energy writing them – better still, visiting them, and us – instead of digging into whatever did or did not happen when Didi was seventeen". (DD 104).

Padma displays contradictory attitudes as a sister. She does not offer her home for Tara to stay, as Tara tells, "The idea that I should have a sister within a hundred miles of the city and be forced to stay in a hotel is unimaginable in our culture, but somehow I've never found it bizarre" (DD, 98). But she takes Tara around New York and ensures that her sister is appropriately fed, clad and treated well according to Indian tradition. Padma is the bread winner for her family, as her husband Harish is devoid of any profession. Tara slams Harish as living in Padma's shadow: "Her radiance helped him wipe out his past, her past, India, his former marriage, his children in Texas and California, and his multiple failures to establish himself as entrepreneur, consultant, money manager, and venture capitalist"(DD 192). Padma

performs about Indian culture and traditions for local schools and community centres. She also works as a newsreader in a TV channel and plans to film a “vernacular soap opera for North American thirty something Bengalis, full of vicissitudes of American life from an Indian perspective” (DD, 183). Her friend Danny Jagtiani describes:

Padma Mehta is a television personality. She is an icon among Bengalis of the tristate area. What she wears and what she recommends are taken as fashion statements in the community. They are high-rollers, but their wives don't get out that much, and the men don't like to waste time coming into the city on Sundays. So Padma thought up these parties as a kind of home shopping service for upscale Indians. There's an economic benefit for participating merchants, but the social values far outweigh it. And so, from time to time, we throw these parties so that the community can sample these styles in saris and jewelry that they might be missing by being out of Bengal. (DD 243)

Padma criticizes Tara to be so Americanized on knowing her divorce. Tara feels that Padma, her sister “had chosen to echo our mother and our aunts – things are never perfect in marriage, a woman must be prepared to accept less than perfection in this lifetime – and to model herself on Sita, Savitri, and Beluha, the virtuous wives of Hindu myths” (DD, 140). In fact, *Desirable Daughters* is the fictional form of Mukherjee's article titled ‘*Two Ways to Belong*’ published in New York Times, 22 September, 1996. In the article, Mukherjee talks about the own ways of interaction of herself and her sister Mira with the country of their choice. Mira studies child psychology and American pre-school education at Detroit. Bharati pursues her a year later to learn creative writing at Iowa. Mira marries a Bombay-born graduate and acquires Labour Certification to get green card. Mira now resides in Detroit and has

gained national reputation for her contribution to pre-school education. She still clings onto her Indian citizenship and wants to come back to India after her retirement. On the other hand, Bharati marries an American of Canadian origin. She has chosen fluidity of her identity, self-invention, abandonment of fetters of caste and other traditions. Like in *Desirable Daughters*, the sisters speak over phone, never share their inner feeling, but sympathize with each other. Mira points out “the lack of structure, the erasure of Indianness, the absence of an unvarying daily care” (TWB, 1-2) Bharati pinpoints Mira’s “narrowness of perspective, uninvolvement with the mythic depths or the superficial pop-culture” (TWB, 2). Mira likes to maintain her native identity in the host culture but Bharati wishes to transform it. Mira is happy to live in America as an ‘expatriate’ instead as an ‘immigrant’ whereas Bharati wants to be a part of the adopted community. Mira and Bharati, like Padma and Tara differ in the ways they interact with the host culture. Through the character of Bish, Mukherjee demonstrates a novel strategy for survival in a foreign world. Bish is an Indian tycoon who has flourished in the host land with his technical skills. He is not nostalgic about his homeland and accepts the new land’s culture and its opportunities. Even after separation, he nurtures Tara and their son as he values love as a responsibility. Unlike Tara, he is never with the combat between tradition and modernity. He lives only in the present with no looking back.

The foremost and recurrent theme of *Desirable Daughters* is the conflict arising from native and foreign cultures. Accordingly, the main characters in the novel grapple with the challenge of accommodating the American feminist culture into their traditional Indian one. But, as schools of thoughts go, these two concepts are incompatible. Tara Lata was first married to a tree in a ceremonious ritual, as a measure to mitigate the malefic aspects of her horoscope. It was earlier predicted by a

Hindu astrologer that Tara's married life would be short lived as a result of this malefic aspect. Such conceptions of marriage are mere superstitions from the point of view of feminism. The American feminist movement, which was informed by scientific, sociological and historical knowledge would never approve of such primitive practices in the name of orthodoxy. This is a typical example of the sorts of conflict that Tara Lata and her sisters confront throughout the narrative text.

The aforementioned example also brings to light the different ways in which societies are organized in India and in America. In India, the happiness of the individual is subordinate to the collective good of his/her community. More importantly, the role of women is to be supportive to their husbands in all circumstances. The individual needs and aspirations of women were not given due importance in what is essentially a patriarchal society. But the three sisters from Calcutta are no longer strictly bound by this primitive culture, for they find themselves in the midst of liberal America, where the scope of their freedom and expression is at its furthest from realities in India. Paul Brians, who has written a nuanced interpretation of the novel, makes a relevant observation:

On the one hand, members of various minorities seek to shed the stereotypes that lump them together with others sharing the same origins and work to be recognized instead as individuals. On the other hand, they strive to recover their roots and create new group identities that can give them a sense of heritage and worth. Although these are not really contradictory impulses, and they do not cancel each other out, there is always a tension between them, and this tension is strongly apparent whenever a writer is singled out by the majority as a recognized representative of a minority struggling for self-expression. The three women from Calcutta grapple what to choose: their choices being an oppressive but known Indian tradition and a

liberating but unknown feminist way of life. In this context, it is inevitable that some parts of their identity had to be destroyed and new facets to it developed. As these processes of self-destruction and self-construction take place in parallel, Indian American women portrayed by Bharati Mukherjee invariably seem to evolve into modern feminists. Feminist critics of the novel *Desirable Daughters* tend to perceive “the same distinction as a gender difference within Anglo-American bildungsroman, with the result that the genre itself is a form for examining (and symbolically reconciling) this tension within women’s texts” (*Multiculturalism in Global Society* 15).

Tara is a savvy, cosmopolitan world-traveler with beauty, brain, wealth and a fortunate life as the wife of a Silicon Valley magnate. Tara migrates to America following her marriage with Bishwapriya Chatterjee, and is deeply rooted in Indian culture displaying the actions of an exemplary Indian wife. At home in Calcutta, she has been subjected to a sheltered life submerged in culture, tradition and values despite being educated by the Catholic nuns. Thus Tara undergoes a combat between tradition and liberation at America as she puts in efforts to fulfill expectations that are often widely conflicting. However, then she soon attempts to grab the American culture making use of the opportunities it offers and endeavors to incorporate into the foreign society at her level best. Though she has left Calcutta decades back, she is ever on the act of deciphering names, manners and accents whenever she confronts strangers of Indian descent. Tara, however, loses the vestiges of the Indian patriarchal customs and traditions. Tara “as a good Hindu wife-to-be, could not utter any of his [her husband’s] names to his face . . . after crossing the dark waters to California I called him Bishu, then Bish, and he didn’t flinch.” (DD, 23) Tara’s frustration at her attempts to diffuse into the host culture and Bish’s inert attitude towards the same

ends up in a divorce and Tara ponders: “because the promise of life as an American wife was not being fulfilled. I wanted to drive, but where would I go? I wanted to work, but would people think that Bish Chatterjee couldn’t support his wife?” (DD, 82). She ignores her husband’s wish and sends her son to an arts school. She also accepts the job of kinder garden teacher. It underlines her shift into a new identity and a liberated self.

Vertie Treadwell in *The Tree Bride* is an uprooted English officer in India, is cruel, perilous and cold-blooded in his dealings. His state of expatriation makes him show his intrusive rage on unsuspecting victims. John Mist on the other hand, discards his past to acclimatize in the new host conditions and acquires the status of an immigrant, contrary to Vertie Treadwell. He hides his identity and delivers his best to the culture he resides. He emphasizes the fact that a person should welcome the new culture with an open mind and there should be a sense of responsibility towards the culture that has embraced one with open arms. In fact, John Mist is born to unknown parents, brought up in an orphanage called the Orphans and Foundlings Trust situated in east London. He is rescued from the labour by Tom Crabbe, a sailor of the Indiaman *Malabar Queen* and migrates to India. He is apparent as a rebel and an exile living as a Moghul in the deep interior of Shoondari Bon. He founds a village in the adopted land called George’s Bight, which is later known as Mishtigunj and Razakpur on the bank of the river, George. He develops an incredible relationship with Jai Krishna Gangooly, Tara Lata’s father and Rafeek Hai. Eventually, he is hanged publicly by the British rulers. John Mist is regarded as a British-turned Hindu and the maker of a perfect social order. As a British Hindu, he stands for the Hindu-Muslim unity as his philosophy of governance includes the harmonious combination

of 'two', which implies occupation and employment for both Hindus and Muslims in an unbiased proportion.

Nigel Coughlin is another ICS officer, who eagerly accepts the host culture and becomes the first naturalized Indian in 1947. On the contrary, Vertie Treadwell hates India and its people for uprooting him after its independence. He feels that India should have been ruled for 100 more years due to which he insists that the natives should be educated in English to serve their masters. Victoria Treadwell Khanna, granddaughter of Vertie Treadwell, a true American admits her connection with Tara and Indian culture. She sets up a bond with Tara and likewise attempts to dig out some more facts about her life and dies in the bomb detonated by Abbas Sattar Hai. She is fearless even at her death and feels happy as she has accomplished her Karma and is peaceful inside. She says, "Of course, what did it matter in light of this exciting new discovery? I'm Indian". (TB, 242)

Compared to Tara and John Mist, Virgil Treadwell is less a superior human being despite of his assimilation into westernization. His act of spying on Tara Lata has destroyed the nobility of his soul. He has sold his soul to get profit whereas John Mist has shared his profit with the people and identified his soul in his sacrifice. Tara, Virgil Treadwell and John Mist are shifting examples of the new proposal. Tara Lata Gangooly symbolizes the best of the East and her ancestor. John Mist signifies both the best of the East and the best of the West. Characters like Virgil Treadwell are more apprehensive with the British type and demureness than with the spirit of life. Both John Mist and Tara Lata Gangooly subsist at a profound level while men like Virgil Treadwell move about an outward plane. There are many places where Virgil Treadwell is matched up to Churchill and Nixon and he is mocked delicately. Acclimatization to the new, instead of being nostalgic renders each character to lead a

life as per own belief. Some of the characters get through the adaptation easily but some other like those in the Collection of Short stories *Darkness* cling to their past and senses the life to be abnormal. *Darkness* is a collection of twelve short stories with appealing themes and articulate narration. The themes of the stories reveal Mukherjee's claim for the status of American Asian writer. She needed to belong as she says, "instead of seeing my Indianness as a fragile identity to be preserved (or worse, a visible disfigurement to be hidden). I see it now as a set of fluid identities to be celebrated." (Introduction to *Darkness*, 3)

Darkness is full of characters trying to gain foothold in the new environment whereas the characters of *The Middleman and Other Stories* comprise of who are already there or are trying to accomplish their dreams. The characters of *The Middleman and Other Stories*, are immigrants from different Asian countries who celebrate their Americanism, in particular the second generation who have assimilated into the host society and acquired freedom. Nafeesa Hafez in *The Lady from Lucknow* in *Darkness* tries to be an American but hesitates when affronted by her lover's wife. "She sat on my side of the bed. She stared at me. If that stare had made me feel secretive and loathsome, I might not have wept later." (D 33). Panna in 'A Wife's Story' is boundless of Indian in-laws and refuses to return with her husband to India not willing to lose the freedom she has in America. Dr. Rab Chatterjee in 'The Tenant' is alike an Indian husband who maintains etiquette in the presence of his wife but he constantly thinks of flattering Maya Sanyal since he has an egoistic overconfidence that widows and divorcees are fragile and can be taken for granted. Maya is scared by his pervert behaviour and she plans to marry another Indian immigrant to gain stability and transforms to be self-sufficient and self-determined. Though Maya is nostalgic about Indian culture she is able to balance the two cultures as she does not

want to lose the American freedom. Dr. Rab Chatterjee and Bhowmick are characters with male egoism and chauvinism and they believe only in 'taking' but not 'giving'. They use America to fulfill their dreams and to be happy but never accept to change or surrender to its culture because transformation for them means losing one's own identity.

Expatriates, on the other hand, knew all too well who and what they were; and what foul fate had befallen them. Like V.S. Naipaul, in whom I imagined a model, I tried to explore state-of-the-art expatriation. Like Naipaul, I used a mordant and self-protective irony in describing my characters' pain. Irony promised both detachment from and superiority over, those well-bred-post-Colonials much like me, adrift in the new world, wondering if they would ever belong. If you have to wonder, if you keep looking for signs, if you wait-surrendering little bits of self every year, clutching the souvenirs of an ever-retreating past you'll never belong, anywhere. (D 2)

The stories of the collection describe the agony of the immigrant, such as exile, aloofness and disorientation. The story *Angela* expresses the painful story of an immigrant from Bangladesh who can only dream of love and all the comforts a doctor's wife deserves in the host culture. *The Lady from Lucknow*, the second short story in this volume is ironical in theme and technique and it revolves around the theme of passionate love turning out to be a major cultural paradox as the Muslim protagonist marries an engineer working at Atlanta, Georgia. The writer develops a double-edged situation: one on the cultural, ethical level and other on the personal-moral level. *The World according to Hsu*, the next story implies the one impossible existence of a world free of cultural conflicts, chaos and disparity. *A Father* describes

that cultural and ethnic confronts are not between individuals but within their attitudes and between reason and superstitions. *Isolated Incidents* is again based on the maladies of racial discrimination and assaults. However, Mukherjee has tried to balance unbalanced circumstances of racialism in Canada. A White Canadian woman in her late twenties is the protagonist of the story who displays a disordered and fragmented personality despite being stable. *Nostalgia* deals with the price paid for the feeling of nostalgia in an alien culture. Mukherjee outcries, "She was frequently taken for a prostitute or shoplifter, frequently assumed to be a domestic." (Introduction to *Darkness*, 3) Hence, her stories in Canadian background are in darkness and silence symbolizing the discrimination and abuse suffered by the immigrants.

Darkness, thus, connects the theme of expatriation with fragmentation, isolation and disintegration of characters. *The Middleman and Other Stories* comprises eleven stories reflecting Asian immigrants, though Native American narrate some of the stories as a result of the impact of these immigrants on their lives. The theme of all the stories in the book is immigration, however, a reverse effect of immigrants. Mukherjee says to Carb in an interview: "Immigration from the third world to this country is a metaphor for the process of uprooting and rerooting. Or what my husband Clark Blaise in his book *Resident Alien* calls 'unhousement' and 'rehousement'" (D 648) *Middleman*, in the title suggests that the expatriate marginal men and women turned out to be immigrants are middle of where action is. In the title story, *Middleman*, the protagonist who is an immigrant is able to transform himself as needed and he triumphs amidst traumatic experiences.

These stories deal with the American perception of immigrants. *Loose Ends* explains the anger and aggression of the native protagonist towards the immigrants

who have been well settled in the adopted land and employ the native community. *Orbiting* illustrates how, “The American family has become very different, not just because of social influences and new sexual standards, but because of the interaction between mainstream Americans and new immigrants.” (Interview with Carb) and also explicates the trials of illegal immigrants. *The Tenant*, *Jasmine* and *Buried Lives* are third person narratives. The protagonists of all the three stories have skipped out nostalgia and focus on their present lives. Thematically, the two short story collection explicitly put forth the odyssey of Mukherjee from expatriation to immigration. The metaphor for the reintegration of alienation in these short stories is nothing other than immigration. Similarly, the main focus in the novel *Desirable Daughters* is the pull of two cultures. Tara and her teenage son exemplify the Indian trying to meld with American culture. Her sisters - one in New Jersey and one in Bombay - hold onto traditional culture in the face of pressures to assimilate.

However, her women characters do not simply assimilate their host country’s cultures; rather they keep a critical view of both the United States and India. They present disruptive behavior as they play the roles of wife, sister, daughter, mother, and widow in their adopted homes which are quite different from the way they had been trained to conduct themselves in India. Gender, class, caste, education and social conditions are some general factors that distinguish each character’s Diaspora experience and influence their response and disruptive attitudes. As a consequence of their Diaspora movements, the women of Mukherjee’s novels question the gender roles that they were taught to play in their homeland and suffer transformations in their subjectivities.

CHAPTER IV

HER WORLD VIEW

Bharati Mukherjee was born in India, married a Canadian and settled in America. She has experienced the immigrant life with all its vagaries. She is an immigrant writer who has assimilated into the American ethos. Her experience in that country has provided her with enough material to portray life in her novels with authenticity. Every American who ever lives in America, with the exception of the native Indian, was either an immigrant himself or a descendant of immigrants. This is true of Canada also. All the settlers in Canada except the natives are immigrants and they have settled there as immigrants at different times at different periods of history. American society is made up of people who either came themselves or their forefathers came from other countries. The interaction between cultures and men from different countries, the ideals which led them to America, their struggles and pursuits gave American society its culture and tradition. Mukherjee writes about people who have left their countries for various reasons and come to America with their hopes, their aspirations, their struggles, their alienation, their pain, and trauma. To comprehend Mukherjee's fiction correctly, it is essential to understand why America is called a 'nation of nations' and how the struggles of the immigrants, assimilate into a melting pot. The immigrants' contribution is palpable in every sphere of life, be it religion, politics, education, or arts; they have enriched the fabric of the nation. Bharati Mukherjee's characters do what the earlier immigrants did; only the demand of the time is different. In the fascinating portrayal of the immigrant experience of her characters, she has touched the chord in the hearts of the Americans; they recognize their own struggles and heart aches being replayed and relived. This is the reason why she has found place in the luminous world of American writers in such a short span of

time. Her article “Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalists” encompasses much of the argument regarding immigration that provides the framework for two novels *Jasmine* and *The Holder of the World*. She declares to American readers, “I am one of you now,” heralding her new identity as an American citizen and American author (*Traveling in Time* Review of *The Holder of the World* 10). These novels mark the beginning of maximalism's presence in Mukherjee's writing, where she began to work against the minimalism, which she pinpoints as the reason that “‘American fiction’ has become synonymous with the mainstream, big-advance, well-promoted novel or story collection, and that that American fiction - clever, mannered, brittle - has lost the power to transform the world's imagination” (*Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalist* 18). The minimalism is primarily concerned with social criticism. Conversely, maximalism defines itself similarly to Mukherjee's description of Mughal paintings. Mukherjee has explained that her novels seek to emulate the Mughal painting by giving multiple characters equal significance and putting multiple narratives together so that they are inextricably connected to one another (*The Holder of the World: An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee* 2). Similarly, maximalism places secondary characters and details of equal importance to main characters. Like Picasso's cubism, maximalism attempts to meld all angles into one image that attempts to be more reflective of its subject than more two dimensional views of cultural ancestry, especially that of American literature. Maximalism also provides enough overlapping elements to create a hybrid space, a “borderland” for immigrants and those labeled as Other. In this hybrid space immigrants move beyond the unwashed Ellis Island stereotype to experience more freedom to pick and choose which elements of culture to retain or adopt. Mukherjee's “New America” (as opposed to one comprised of mostly European immigrants) is portrayed in *Jasmine* and *The*

Holder of the World by female characters that embody many ideals Mukherjee ascribes to recent and mainly nonwhite immigrants:

[America is] a world, by definition, of doubles. Characters in this world have the density of 19th-century presences; like creations out of Balzac or Dickens, they pass before me leaving real footprints. They have all shed past lives and languages, and have traveled half the world in every direction to come here and begin again. They're bursting with stories, too many to begin telling. They've lived through centuries of history in a single lifetime--village-born, colonized, traditionally raised, educated. What they've assimilated in 30 years has taken the West 10 times that number of years to create. Time travel is a reality - I've seen it in my own life. Bionic Men and Women are living among us. (*Traveling in Time* Review of *The Holder of the World* 11)

Mukherjee's "Bionic Men and Women" in this quotation present a parallel concept to Haraway's "Manifesto for Cyborgs." Most literary critics who have written about *Jasmine* or *The Holder of the World* examined these works as an exploration of the American immigrant as a hybrid, usually citing Bhabha when doing so.

Diaspora works enable globalization, dissemination of information and even proffer solutions to problems. Indian Diaspora fictions reinvent the unity and comprehensiveness of India. These works bridge the different regions of India and also India with all other nations. Diaspora view makes it feasible to thwart the past estrangement and loneliness which resulted in prejudice and violation of human rights. It also proves to be a vent to the unexpressed fervours, emotions supplying an outlet to injustice and resent. The wellbeing and happiness of the immigrant Indians, a feeling of safety and concern for them is manifested through these works. The

Diaspora fictions have also aided in creating a new ambience in the globe for India and have also facilitated in building a new figure for India overseas. This further strengthens the ties between different nations which begin to link through political, cultural, conventional and financial bonds. India is a nation remarked for its unity in diversity. The rich and varied cultural heritage, customs, rites, languages, dress and food of India makes it unique. India has ever been a repository of knowledge and information and holds honour through the contributions to the fields of science, technology, mathematics, medicine and several others.

Bharati Mukherjee, as a Diaspora writer, has undergone the three-stage-transformation of “Adopt, Adapt” and “Adept”, explained by Peter Barry in his book *Beginning Theory*.⁽¹⁸⁾ During the first phase, she was influenced by Jane Austen and E.M.Forster and produced *The Tiger’s Daughter* and *Wife*, during which she adopted to Eurocentric culture. Later with *Jasmine* and *The Holder of the World*, she crossed the adapt phase, mentored by Bernard Malamud and Isaac Babel. She started narration in her own voice and began experimenting cross-cultural themes when she reached the adept stage and published *Leave It to Me*, *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*. The life of the Indian immigrants in the USA is the theme of most of her novels and she attempts to portray the image of women facing the cross-cultural problems who trying to assimilate the alien culture while losing the sustenance to the Indian cultural heritage. The author’s primary concern has been the life of South Asian expatriates and the problem of “alienation and assimilation”.

“In her fiction Mukherjee handles the Western themes and settings as well as characters that are westernized or bicultural. Yet she is forced to admit that the very structure of her imagination is essentially Hindu, essentially moral.” (*The Inner World of Bharati Mukherjee* 18) Mukherjee has built up the credo for the new immigrant

voices as a “Maximalist” to introduce diversity to America’s stagnant “Minimalist fiction”. She deals with Indian characters in search of American citizenship but enjoying American materialism. Bharati Mukherjee mentions this in her novels:

We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate. Many of us have lived in newly dependent or emerging countries which are placed by 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 country. (“Passage from India: Award Winning Novelist Bharati Mukherjee” 219)

The feeling of rootless and expatriation are constantly being subjected to artistic execution and treatment in her works. An immigrant rejuvenates in the new environment, discovers a new identity there and slowly forgets the native culture. In her earlier works, Mukherjee presented the holding of one’s own culture amidst residing in an alien land as an unsuccessful immigrant. On the contrary, she embarks on the alternative ways to belong. Furthermore, she brings in cultural hybridity, simultaneity and third space of enunciation, the clearly pronounced markers of post-colonial existence. She admits that feminism is her major theme and very much concerned with the issues of cross cultural encounters confronted by Indian immigrants especially women.

“Feminism is a major theme throughout Mukherjee’s fiction, from Dimple, the protagonist of her second novel who murders her husband, to Tara, the main character of her most recent two novels who divorces and takes a lover. In her

essay “A-Four-Hundred-Year-Old Woman,” Mukherjee reflects on her inherited position: “I was born into a religion that placed me, a Brahmin, at the top of its hierarchy while condemning me, as a woman, to a role of subservience.” (Interview with Bharati Mukherjee by Carb Alison x) Mukherjee’s notions of feminism are rooted in her upbringing and the example set by her mother” (Interview with Bharati Mukherjee by Carb Alison xii). Similar to her present-day feminist writers Mukherjee sustains the grounds of women, but she varies from others due to her primary concern to mark out the issues of cross cultural encounters confronted by Indian immigrants especially women. Her women protagonists go through double colonization earlier by patriarchy and later by expatriation. As she is also an immigrant she has been obsessed with women and their concerns of adapting to the American culture. Her tales represent protagonists who are none but the illustrations of her own self. As she is the native of the Indian culture, she is apparently a spectator of the limitations and atrocities imposed upon women in Indian society. She is also conscious of restricted future outlooks for Indian women who are taken over by Indian myths. Hence, she is able to discern the chaos and hurdles for the modern women with western education juxtaposing their conscience occupied with traditional customs and values. Celia McGree is right in her assessment of the novelist: “Like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Suraiya, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Prewar Jhabwalla and Gita Hariharan Mukherjee expose many facets of feminism, encompassing agitation for equal opportunity, sexual autonomy and right to self determination”. (“Foreign Correspondent”³) For instance, Tara Banerjee in *The Tiger’s Daughter* is a privileged daughter of the Bengal Tiger, a patriarch but her western experience makes her daring to marry off an American. Instead her standing as the daughter of

the Bengal Tiger pardons her of the sin of cultural transgression. Above all, her implicit compliance to Tuntunwala's seduction is attributed to her adherence to American culture of liberty and modernization. Tara is supposed to do it to claim her status as an 'Americawali' and it is not a matter of compulsion. Dimple Das Gupta in *Wife* undergoes partial transformation after moving to America. She is caught between the eastern and western values and norms. As she hails from a middle class family she is inhibited from completely transgressing her culture but her efforts to assimilate into the host culture makes her condition pathetic. She ultimately yields to the western fascination by involving in an extramarital sexual encounter with Milt. In *Jasmine*, Joyti's makeover from a rural girl to a self-assured Jasmine is achievable only after she goes to America. As she has nothing to lose she gains the merit of transforming herself in a chameleon like fashion and transgresses the confinements of caste, religion and gender. She continues shifting her identities to survive in the foreign culture. Hannah Easton in *The Holder of the World* encounters various problems. Her arrival at India emboldens her to defy the patriarchal norms of the puritan society. She does endorse daring transgressions, rebuffing her American identity and changes into the Salem Bibi of Raja Jadav Singh. She counteracts the cultural, linguistic, religious differences and exhibits tremendous adaptability in the host land. She defies the ethnic as well as gender bias audaciously. In *Leave it to Me*, Debby cannot admit her provided identity; instead, she sets off on a mission to find her biological parents. Her journey does not encompass the travel across countries but protects herself from the feeling of isolation. She is definitely a person who does not succumb to fate and destiny. In her quest, she unravels her real self and turns out to be an independent and assertive girl. Tara Chatterjee in *Desirable Daughters* is not bold enough to wade

off the gender bias in India but the American freedom stimulates her to embark ignorance of notions of an ideal wife and to settle on an American divorce. Her sister Padma has also transcended traditions by marrying a divorcee of other caste and eradicating the gender role taking up the responsibility of a bread winner for her family. She also has a premarital liaison and son out of it. In *The Tree Bride*, Tara Lata Gangooly is a miserable victim of the patriarchal oppression at an early age of five and obliged to marry a Sundari tree to wash out the evil spirits which may destroy the house of her father. She does not give in to the tyranny; instead she educates and authorizes herself. She emerges as a universal mother who is worshipped as 'Tara ma' by the people of Mistigunj. She grows to be an epitome of Indian freedom fight and dreadful rival of the British atrocities. At last she sacrifices her life for the country and the people.

Interestingly, by weaving women-centered plots, Mukherjee proffers the women's viewpoint on matters of societal concern - family, marriage, dowry, ethnic roles as wife and mother, cultural conflicts, gender bias and conventional attitudes of the society. Patriarchal dominance preponderate the novels *Wife* and *Jasmine*. Dimple has inculcated her societal notion of emulating the idol Sita in her married life. Dimple permits Amit to choose her dresses, drinks at parties and also whether she should go for job and even whom she should befriend with. He dislikes the behaviour of Ina Mullick and warns Dimple to avoid friendship with her. However, persisting in a western world of individualism and freedom, her psyche demands to evade the traditional ties. The clash between two negating cultures weakens the already fragile psyche of the immigrant. At the close of the tale Dimple is seen stabbing her husband. Society is liable for the turmoil of the immigrant's psyche. Mukherjee underscores Dimple as an epitome of female

powerlessness; by refuting self-esteem and also projects her as an archetype of female psychosis – “a victim of patriarchal oppression seeking ineffectually to integrate a lost and divided self”(W 140).Dimple's expedition is to triumph as a real self against gender roles. But she fails in her mission of renovating herself within the conflicting host culture. Her incapability to endure and to state her individualism brings about the act of murder. As Rigney has put forth, “female insanity in a majority of cases be explained by the oppression of women in a power structured, male supremacist society” (*The Immigrant Sensibility* 6). Dimple's action of killing her enemy, instead of herself, as is the regulative sociology for Indian woman, reveals the new self-hood germinating within her after her exposure to American society.

Instead of committing suicide, which is what most Indian women would do under the circumstances; by killing Amit, Dimple exhibits an assertive personality, which hitherto has been a victim and not the aggressor. In this way Dimple's struggle to evolve into a whole new entity ends in catastrophe (*A Study in Immigrant Sensibility* 12).

The narratives of Bharati Mukherjee portray the intense fidelity and self-sacrificing temperament of the Asian wives despite their rebellious attitudes. For instance, the self-sacrificing mind-set of the Indian-Hindu wife is clearly manifested in Jasmine. Soon after the sudden death of her husband following a transient married life, the young nineteen-year-old Jasmine plans to perform Sati in the American University campus where her husband Prakash has secured admission. Jasmine however does not accomplish her mission and this brings about the feminist perspective to the story. Her husband trains her to fight and desire for herself. She follows this advice, which enables her to adapt in a foreign land. With

the death of her husband, her journey towards the fight, desolation, aggression, marvel and transformation begins and she becomes the narrator of her own story. The impetuous assassination of her rapist does not affect her or make her feel guilty. From a devout widow and a victim of a brutal rape, Jasmine materializes as a retaliating female murderer who rebels male authority and lust and also the patriarchal commands of her native society. Her novels ascertain the fact that the conventional education system in India serves as a potent agent to propagate patriarchal dogma. In this regard, Bhaskar Chatterjee considers:

Gender disparity in education are directly linked with gender inequalities existing at the level of the family, educational institutions and society...It is difficult to achieve gender parity in education without moving towards equality between sexes in terms on entitlements, opportunities and experiences. Further, socialization in the context of women is dominated by tradition and dichotomizing of masculine and feminine roles. (*Education for All: The Indian Saga* 73)

Mukherjee narrates two instances where girls exploit education for their self-empowerment. Tara Lata, the tree bride is not fortunate to receive formal education but teaches herself to read and write and is capable of astonishing her opponents by her perceptions and alertness of recent political events up to date. She annuls the gendered role of women and carves her victory as an organizer in the Indian freedom struggle. Female sexuality has also been explored in the fictions of Bharati Mukherjee. Her novels emphasize a review of a patriarchal definition of female sexuality in Indian milieu. Though she does not reveal the

particulars in which her protagonists deflate the social, cultural and gender ideologies but the suggestions originating from the radical rebellions endorsed by the protagonists surprise the readers. It is also remarkable that all the male counterparts have not been given considerable attention compared to female protagonists; instead the female characters are assisted by the males in claiming their sexuality and individuality. Tara Chatterjee receives benefaction from her father, The Bengal Tiger; Dimple attains comfort with Milt, Jasmine is trained by Prakash, Prof Vadhera, Tylor and Bud, Hannah finds solace in love with Raja Jadav Singh, Debbi is assisted by Fred in her exploration for her bio-parents. Tara Banerjee is backed up by Andy during her times of grief; 'Tara Ma' realizes the intention of her life through the rational ideologies and progressive thoughts of John Mist.

Bharati Mukherjee asserts her place as the real advocate of women's cause through her fictions. She denies the soubriquet of being 'feminist' but scrutinizing her novels, the tag of 'feminist' seems to be apt for her. In spite of her inclination of being branded as an American writer does not daunt to declare her as an Indian writer in English. She has retained her Indian receptivity besides her adaption in a foreign country. Mukherjee exemplifies the courage of modern women as Fleski in her article, Visions of the New: Feminist Discourse of Evolution and Revolution" rightly points that the modern women, "epitomize a new spirit, refusing the dead weight of the past and tyranny of the present in a quest for a more liberating and emancipated future"(*Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist literature and Social Change* 158).

The oeuvres of Mukherjee are prototypes of feminist writing in Diaspora fictions. In her selection of themes, plots and characters, she puts forth feminist concerns and outlooks; she describes the domination of women provoked by patriarchy prevailing in all countries and cultures. Marilyn French asserts that all feminist literatures inevitably represent patriarchy; but do not endorse its standards. Her writings even though portraying patriarchy as obliterating a character or a world “does not approve of the destruction” (“Is there a feminist aesthetic?” 69). Bharati Mukherjee does not go deep through the Indian patriarchal family setup in her stories and emphasizes more about gendering of female identity.

Bharati Mukherjee, an advocate of immigrant sensibility manifests the ambivalences resulting due to the abrupt change over from the common to the bizarre. A significant apprehension of postcolonial fiction is concerned with environment, dislocation and relocation. Displacement or dislocation, time and again directs to a feeling of devoid of a home and identity crisis. Deracination and transplantation to a new place makes the individual to sway the images of the self, between a past that is alive within the inner psyche and the present in an alien country which is now denoted as the host country. Aloofness, desolation, rift from domestic grounds and their own irrelevance in the new territory irk the migrants. Diaspora writing expresses remarkable distinction from that of immigrant or expatriate writing. Differentiating clearly between an expatriate and an immigrant, Mukherjee declares that an expatriate strives hard to stay in his past while immigration is a phenomenon of makeover and net gain. Her life itself is a renovation from the “aloofness of expatriation” in Canada to “the exuberance of immigration” (D 2-3) in America. It deviates from immigrant writing in its obsession with affection to the homeland. Immigrant writing throws light on the

contemporary experiences in the assimilated country. While exile or expatriate writing is more engrossed in the circumstances at home and the situation that extends the individual's exile or expatriation than his association with the host society, immigrant specifies a proactive attitude.

Through Tara Catright Banerjee, the protagonist of *The Tiger's Daughter*, Mukherjee impressively depicts an enthralling study of a banished person in native as well as strange soil. Cultural dislodgement renders a remarkable blow to the immigrant's mentality. Culture embraces an approved value system or behavior prototype counting rites and traditions. An individual's cultural background confers him an identity as it becomes almost a second temperament to him. Hence, the pressure to incorporate a strange culture hones one's existing latent approach to his own culture and it turns out to be a hindrance to his adaptation. When the new locale is unable to be acquainted with him, the individual turns to be an exile. The immigrant sensibility is constantly caught in between the two incompatible socio-cultural milieus.

The foremost concern of an immigrant in the alien land is shelter and a job. Without a job for her husband and a residence for themselves, Dimple suffers from the twinges of rootless and identity crisis. She feels uncomfortable with her English and loses all hopes in her husband's futile job hunt. As he cannot develop an affinity with Meena Sen and her daughter Anjali, Dimple ruins in her loneliness. Severely affected by insomnia and enduring the pressures of a jobless husband, she begins brooding over "seven ways to commit suicide in Queens" (W 102). However, the job security and a possession of a house do not guarantee peace to her. Despite a job and a house, the third part of the novel opens with pessimistic

notes. The figure of the star collapsing inwardly is now become a metaphor for the representation of her psyche. Dislocation from the homely, by-then acquainted ambience of the Sens at Queens to the Mookerjees merely enhances her ailment of insomnia.

Cultural clash does not collapse the immigrant consciousness of Jasmine. Her psyche adapts to America for she desires to become a successful immigrant. Contrasting Dimple, she does not allow chaos to disorient her as she is eager to accept the fact that life in America is quite unlike her past. Displaying remarkable pliability that facilitates her to get used to every altered situation, Jasmine regards her past as a net, the type of safety net used by trapeze artists. She still lingers to Indian ethos which is evident from the stories of demons and mortals she tells Duff as the Day Mummy. She confides that Bud has courted her because she is alien, darkness, “mystery and inscrutability” (J 200). Jasmine never eats before him and takes care of him like conservative Indian wives. Yet the spitefulness of her foreignness encounters her for the first time when another woman at the infertility clinic repetitively intimates her non-American nature by the comment, “you probably don't know what a Ricky Roll is” (J, 33). Jasmine’s pregnancy without marriage while living with Bud does not bother her by then changed attitude. Jasmine does not let the battle of cultures to supplant the desire for assimilation. The conventional traits of the Indian wife and widow are withered despite the sporadic memory of the astrologer's forecast that arises with every displacement. The sacredness of marriage and maternity does not hamper Jasmine as she glides into the lives of Bud and Taylor at ease. Eliminating all the restraining aspects of the past she makes over from vulnerability to authority.

The matrix of immigrant writing is shaped by isolation from home, cultural trauma, problems of estrangement and assimilation. The extent of estrangement, basically individualistic depends on several factors such as education, background, country and culture of the immigrant and also the acceptability of the host country. Those who establish new ties get successfully transplanted in the host culture but those who fail to do so remain as eternal aliens. The novel *Desirable Daughters* portrays the immigrant experiences of the two sisters Padma and Tara who actually adopt completely different strategies of survival in the adopted land. Padma seems to be an expatriate showing resistance to assimilation in the alien culture, whereas Tara reveals a successful immigrant who has the desire to blend with the host culture. Like Mukherjee her protagonists in successive novels have transformed from ailing expatriates to successful immigrants.

In Hindu mythology, potent female goddesses like Durga, and Kali exist which Mukherjee stirs up in her novels *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Jasmine* and *Leave It to Me*. The reverence of these goddesses underscores the adoration of women, not as uplifting beings, but as the embodiment of natural phenomena. Benignly signified the forces of life and passion authorize women as healers and care givers. For instance, Jasmine is 'care giver' to Taylor, Wylie and their daughter. She is a live-in-companion to Bud Ripplemeyer even after an accident that crumbles and detains him to a wheel chair. Jasmine offers motherly care and affection to Du, the adopted son of Bud. When the forces of life become malicious women exercise their powers as devils, seductress, and killers. This is clearly explicated by Mukherjee in the novels *Jasmine* and *Leave It to Me* when the female protagonists enact the roles of Goddess Kali to punish the wrong-doers. She does not adopt a specific traditional work but her diverse themes are much more positively

correlated with the issue of gender and its social inferences. Myth, one of the literary devices deployed by Bharati Mukherjee does not possess a purpose of its own and on the contrary consists of an argument, as a result of which it is made use of within a specific narrative. Mukherjee reinterprets the conventional myths thereby delivering a feminist concern in their stories. Mukherjee's obsession with Hindu idols of worship puts forth her cultural bequest, which she eagerly deploys in her tales through Hindu motifs, legendary tales and myths. Jasmine's reincarnation commences with her Kali-like transformation from a victim to a delinquent, inflicting revenge upon the wrong doer. Likewise in *The Holder of the World*, where the protagonist, Hannah is an American, Mukherjee brings in Hindu mythological plots of Rama, Sita, Hanuman, and Ravana through the Hindu maid Bhagnati. *Leave It to Me* sets in motion with reference to Goddess Durga and concludes with Debby taking up the name Devi. Mukherjee's novels envisage diverse types of arbitration of culture, history and geography. Indian culture, Hindu religion, gods, goddesses of Bengali Brahmins, Hindu mythological legends, myth etc encompass her novels through the culture of the ethnic. Mukherjee uses myths, images, legends from Hindu folklore including the Rama-Sita- Ravana legend, Bengali Hindu idols like goddess Kali, Durga, and other Hindu Gods such as Ganapati, Hanuman, Vishnu, Vedanta philosophy and the archetypal Bengali way of life and marriage arrangements (*Wife*) with which she is more acquainted with. The religious customs of Bengali Brahmins are illustrated through the character of Mrs Aarti Banerjee, Tara's mother in *The Tiger's Daughter*. Mukherjee narrates the design and furnishings of those prayer rooms in Bengal: "bright, airy, and curtain less, floor of white marble, streaked gently with grey. Tara's mother strictly maintains the wholesomeness of the puja room and entry is denied to any non-

Brahmin” (W45). In her novels, she has probed the means in which her immigrant women characters despite discarding their external connections with India bear a set of myths and beliefs in their inner psyches, which serves as a standard to measure all their new experiences in America. Her protagonists take along “conservative” Indian and female attitudes within them and they yearn to evade the patriarchal myths of their village upbringing.

Inter- textuality is observed in *The Holder of the World* where mention is made to *Scarlet Letter*. The daughter of Raja Jaydev Singh and Hannah is named as ‘Pearl’, reminding the character Pearl in Hawthorne's novel. Another literary method installed by Mukherjee in her fictions is the introduction of the motif of fire burning to spot a transition from the old to a new life. In *Jasmine* the burning, of Prakash's suits, books, Jasmine's widow sari in a fire, an indicative of a Hindu funeral pyre is the death of Jasmine. Similarly, as she goes away from the fire started in the motel backyard, she envisions a new life, and a new-fangled opening in America. She finally acquires the name Jase/ Jane with subsequent men in her life. The fire implies the extermination of a domineering gender distinctiveness; the concept of both purity (the moral woman), and impurity (the raped woman) is destroyed (*Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives* 188).

Metaphors apparently become a noteworthy literary device exploited by Bhartai Mukherjee in her fictions. In *The Tiger's Daughter*, Hotel Catelli Continental is referred to as ‘navel of the universe’ which symbolizes rootless existence and expatriate sensibility of Tara (TD 3) In *Wife*, the cage is a remarkable symbol that signifies a secure but controlled existence, for segregation and a refutation of liberty. It is also noted that Dimple stabs her husband motivated

by a TV programme in which a bird cage appears significantly. The novel *Desirable Daughters* portrays the immigrant experiences of the two sisters Padma and Tara who actually adopt completely different strategies of survival in the adopted land. Padma's attitude seems to be an expatriate showing resistance to assimilation in the alien culture, whereas Tara reveals a successful immigrant who has the desire to blend with the host culture. Mukerjee is conscious of the dilemma of the immigrant settlers- to assimilate or to assert and her novels reflect this. She carves her protagonist *Jasmine* in *Jasmine* as a "fighter and adapter" (J 40) who is forever in the act of transforming herself and her fortune. Mukherjee makes use of the image or motif of the broken pitcher in *Jasmine* to signify the transient nature of one's life journey with in the Hindu cycle of renaissance. It also denotes the frailty of defined boundaries, whether of the person, the family, or the country, Jasmine's thorny "Odyssey" (J 101) to America and her preliminary experiences in a new society match the materialization of anew selfhood in spite of the susceptibility of her youth and material situation. Her "defilement" (J 117) does not result in death like that of all other rape victims. On the contrary, she is inculcated with the vicious power of the goddess Kali, and assassinates her rapist who symbolizes the "underworld of evil" (J 116) and begins a fresh "journey, travelling light" (J,121).

Mukerjee's marriage to a Canadian-American writer Clarke Blaise, has according to Mukherjee, aided a lot to grab a style which would otherwise be inaccessible to an Asian immigrant. Mukherjee divulges the change in her style of writing as she turns more Americanized with every passing year. The commitment to language, as appropriate to the character has reached an extreme level in her novel *Leave It to Me* that depicts the life of a half-American character, Debby

DiMartino, who is the most Americanized character shaped by the novelist. Mukherjee's art of ventriloquism that abets her to choose instinctively nuances and varieties of language, has allowed her to speak like a native of wherever she is in at the moment. The tedium of language is shattered as her works leap into life in the precise time and setting in which it has been written. Mukherjee confesses to adopt a compressed style incorporating a plenty of things in a single sentence because of her experience through a variety of events, circumstances and regions of the world. Her narratives revolve around immigrants who have "lived through centuries of history in a single lifetime." According to Mukherjee, "what [they have] assimilated in thirty years has taken the west ten times that number of years to create" ("Desirable Daughters: A Cross Cultural Wars" 29). This makes her novels to be fast moving, full of events. She asserts to Sybil Steinberg: "Mine is not minimalism, which strips away, but compression, which reflects many layers of meaning" (Publishers Weekly 46).

Mukherjee's first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* has an omniscient narrator but she has withdrawn this strategy in the subsequent novels. By transcending the circle of characters from her past, Mukherjee wanders away from the core narrative strategy. The plot depicts Tara Banerjee Cartright, a Western educated, and Hindu Bengali woman, married to an American. Tara's peevishness and anxiety concerning her role as the Bengali wife of an American, meeting her family in Calcutta, outshines her tremendous efforts to comprehend her world of varied cultures. Tara's Calcutta is a city which is incessantly on the edge of, or amidst political hostility. The tale is narrated from the perspective of a young immigrant woman who is bounded by diverse ideas, ideals, cultures--all sensed with rage. Mukherjee has adopted her own fears and efforts, as well as of many women

characters' who are being voiceless to utter the immigrant experience, and brings forth some of the more brutal and ugly aspects of cultural collisions.

Bharati Mukherjee as the author of immigrant stories emphasizes the reinvention of the oral tale revolving around a woman both in the narrative structure and thematic concern of *Jasmine*. Pushpa N. Parekh in her essay as a part of *Critical Perspectives* feels that "Jasmine - Jane, in realizing her potential as a 'speaking person' and 'teller of tales,' creates the new voice and vision of the immigrant woman defining her 'changing into' and 'transforming of' the world around her" (122). She becomes accustomed to the oral method of passing knowledge and wisdom through precise, perceptive self made proverbs drawn around vicious honesty and sharp frankness. Parekh opines, in *Jasmine* "Mukherjee unravels the triple voice-strands in the complex trial of the Jyothi-Jasmine- Jane persona" (Critical Perspectives 123). Mukherjee, hence accomplishes an intricate blending of traditional and modern strategies. Mukherjee in an interview with Carb reveals this aspect of her technique. "As a Hindu, I was brought up on oral tradition and epic literature . . . I believe in the existence of alternate realities, and this belief makes itself evident in my fiction" (*Interview with Carb* 651)

Bharati Mukherjee became much more defiant after her marriage with Clarke Blaise with whom she moved to his native country Canada and faced the issues of racialism and multiculturalism there. She is conscious of racial discrimination prevalent in Canada. She ultimately chose to live in U.S.A. as an immigrant than to tussle to be recognized as an expatriate writer in Canada. Mukherjee's sabbatical stay at India made her realize that the immigrants will ever retain their old perspectives towards their native land but in fact if they revisit, they

will be aliens in their own home as the entire state of affairs will be changed. Clark Blaise, her husband has been a great source of inspiration for Bharati Mukherjee with his critical reviews and suggestions. Mukherjee's outlook towards exile, expatriation and immigration has also transformed with time. Although she now enjoys as an immigrant, living in USA, she had at first sensed like an exile, or at best an expatriate. As on exile, Mukherjee is compelled from time to time to evaluate the nature of her ties to her "home." In America, she became a part of the melting pot as she was not discriminated or abused in New York unlike Canada. Her stories convey: "She was never expected to become part of Canada, she was never welcome". (Introduction to *Darkness*, 3) She looks at the book as her reincarnation as a writer: "It was a breakthrough in material for me... It's about characters who know they are stranded or shored up on this continent and who respond to that with varying degrees of enthusiasm." (The Melting Pot Lady, 28) The title discloses that the theme is still exile. Out of the twelve stories, four stories—"The World According to Hsu", "Isolated Incidents", "Courtly Vision" and "Hindus" were written earlier in Montreal and Toronto while the remaining eight were written at Atlanta, Georgia in a three month period. Mukherjee perceives the immigrants "were lost souls, put upon and pathetic" (*A Literary Perspective* 80). In an interview with Geoff Hancock in *The Canadian Fiction Magazine*, she says,

I don't think about my fiction as being about alienation...on the contrary, I mean for it to be about assimilation...My stories are about conquests and not about loss...My characters choose to uproot themselves from their native countries. For my characters breaking away is a part of maturing. (*Interview with Geoff Hancock*, 17).

In three of her novels Mukherjee, protagonist's journey is from India to USA and the tales are first person or third person narratives. The first two female protagonists (Tara and Dimple) are expatriates but the third (Jasmine) is an immigrant. They are typical representatives of Mosaic Model and Melting pot model of America. The principle behind transformation is to cross the border of being minority in America, despite melting into the culture to merge with America. Acclimatization to the new, instead of being nostalgic renders each character to lead a life as per own belief. Some of the characters get through the adaptation easily but some other like those in *Darkness* cling to their past and senses the life to be abnormal. Hannah Easton, the female protagonist of *The Holder of the World* is a real American character, product of (im)migration and transformation. Hannah, the character with more resemblance to Jasmine in *Jasmine*, migrates from Puritan Salem to England and then to colonial India before settling in America for the rest of her life. Hannah takes a process of rebirth all the way through these travels and, like Jasmine, expresses herself to be a care giver. The task of caretaker also permits her to begin constructive transformation in the other as rebirth changes her identity. Hannah reveals an expertise of equating her want to hold her new selves in India with the wish to put forth a fostering effect. As Jasmine exhibits an Indian arrival to an intricate and a mixed perceptive of self through America, *The Holder of the World* turns round the stream of influence. Hannah denotes the bonds between England, America, and India; each of them has been a "Holder of the World" in its own sense (*The Narrative Act :Point of View in Prose Fiction* 76).

The multiple voices, conveying multi layered subjectivities and diverse consciousness form the basis of ethnic writing and it is a literary tool that is ascribed to the work's aestheticism. Mukherjee's *Jasmine* has a single narrator. The

novel at times seems to be the first person narrative, at other times narrated in the third person voice or voice of an omniscient narrator. However, the shift in voices of narration deals with the single subject *Jasmine*. On the other hand, another novel, *The Holder of the World*, includes multiple narrators- Beigh, Hannah, Bhagmati, and Hester. This novel is skilfully written to facilitate two plots to run concurrently – the narration of Beigh and the narration of Hannah. Towards the end of the novel, Bhagmati takes up the person of Hester and narrates the story. *Leave It to Me* and *Desirable Daughters* are first person narratives while *The Tree Bride* is a multiple narrative. Her novelist technique is quite admirable.

The novel *Desirable Daughters* is a first person narrative, narrated by Tara, the protagonist. She begins the story in a peculiar way, with a tale about her namesake Tara Lata, also referred as the Tree Bride - a notable figure who became well-known in the Indian freedom fight. The story is driven deeply to the past and then only Tara progresses into the story about her and her sisters. At the end, the plot returns back to India and the legend of Tara Lata, the Tree Bride, but this device doesn't quite work either. In fact, the entire story is sensed to be artificial to attain its complete potential as a family saga. *The Tree Bride* oscillates between time and across continents to locate connections and convergences and not mere coincidences of the past and present. In *The Tree Bride*, Mukherje uses Text-to-Text connection while telling the story of the Tree Bride. The text is entangled with Hindu philosophy and mythology. The plot ends with the chanting of Ram! Ram! , recollecting the final moments of Mahatma Gandhi.

Mukherjee has employed the literary device of epigraph to the individual sections of her novels. *Jasmine* begins with an epigraph taken from James Gleick,

Chaos: “The new geometry mirrors a Universe that is rough...twisted, tangled, and intertwined”. Chaos theory or non-linear dynamics used by Mukherjee in *Jasmine* is a relatively new trend in literary criticism. Antonio Benitez-Rojo has associated chaos theory and Caribbean writing : “For a literary critic who wants to find cultural specificities that might differentiate one region from another, the Chaos perspective offers great advantages; its way of looking right at noise and turbulence to find common dynamics... allows us to appreciate that...textual signifiers is neither wholly disorganized unpredictable; rather it responds to... certain regularly repetitive and self-referential figures” (*The Repeating Island* 269). Likewise, *Jasmine* is crafted in a series of "twenty-six short takes fast -moving and varied” (*A Conversation with Bharathi Mukerjee, Iowa Review*, 29). Quite a lot of key features of Chaos theory are formally and thematically there in *Jasmine*: an astonishing absurdity between causes and effects, nonlinearity into various senses, recursive symmetries, fractal forms and feedback mechanism, in which output from the system feeds back into the system as input. Four areas, which are imperative points of contest in Chaos theory particularly, influence the novel: determination, individuality, woman and the connection of local to global.

Like the protagonist in *Wife*, Mukherjee too hails from Ballygunj in Calcutta. During the eight years that she lived with her parents in a joint family, Mukherjee was a ‘wavy haired’, ‘narrow-shouldered child’, afflicted often by ‘sick headaches’ which were often induced to escape into the privacy of their family bedroom. Mukherjee in *Days and Nights* confides:

I loved my headaches. . . I added to that a love of vomiting, of slipping a long delicate finger over the rough-grained tongue and

down the silky, fleshy walls of throat and gullet until I was rewarded by an arc of fluid which I watched splatter against the rusty grid of the old fashioned bathroom drain (DNC,222).

This is indicative of Dimple's fascination with vomiting in the novel *Wife*. Similar to Jasmine, Mukherjee also, perceives her life in three unequal parts: until the age of eight she lived in the archetypal joint family, "indistinguishable" from her Bengali Brahmin girl cousins. From eight years till the age of twenty-one she lived as a single family with her parents enjoying for a time wealth and confidence. "Since twenty-one years, she has been living in the west. Each phase required a speculation of previous avatars; an almost total rebirth" (DNC, 179).

Mukherjee quotes consistent references to the Indian food preferences of the Indian immigrant community as are mark on their ethnic traits. Food preferences stand for features of individual as well as that of community and the combined tastes. For instance, in *Wife*, at a party hosted by an Indian in Manhattan, the women seem to be excited about the servings of mutton briyani and chicken tandoori. The Indian community discusses and opines that "Indian chicken may be thinner and smaller than the American chicken but they taste far, far better (W66). Notably, the protagonist Dimple stabs her husband Amit when he is crunching cereals in the kitchen; he speaks last before his death about food only "We should have more potatoes and less frozen broccoli. You're too extravagant?" (W 212). This reflects the notion that immigrants strive to gain maximum money within a short period as most of those first generation people like to go back to the native and then to lead a comfortable life. Amit's reproach of Dimple on her

preference of expensive food, for instance, frozen broccoli is to be viewed in this context.

Mukherjee shows her serious concern for women in immigrant countries. Asian immigrant women face much more difficulties in the alien land than their male counterparts. Mukherjee's female protagonists vary in the range of their renovation through migration. Whether it be Jasmine, Hannah or Debby it is only after fighting impudently with their individual conventional images and the features of their selves which they aspire to turn out into. Even before their migration, these characters have to combat another battle; the grasp of their female identities transgressing the traditional typecast image. Jasmine and Hannah assert their feminist identity by not allowing their widowhood to lock up and confine their individuality. Both of them are able to emerge as successful immigrant women: Jasmine becomes an American citizen and constantly takes up different names and lovers and Hannah, marches ahead with her own instincts and becomes the Bibi to King Jaydev of Devgad. Mukherjee's characters somehow feel gratified to choose between traditions and modernization. In fact, the women protagonists do not defy their conventional roles but are unable to cope with their altered circumstances. This is well illustrated in the narrative of Hannah. At times, the subsequent aggravation emerging out of their powerlessness to develop a new-fangled, different model, impels the protagonists to retort with violence on themselves or on their live in companions, which is exemplified through Dimple. Tara and Dimple finish their lives ironically as they lack self realization or assimilation. However, Jasmine endures both death and migration. Likewise, Hannah also runs off death in Brokefield, before migrating to India with her husband Gabriel Legee. Both Jasmine and Hannah consider it vital to bump off

almost their past, true selves. Therefore, Jasmine's denial of a Sati-like death or; Hannah's denunciation of widowhood, are suggestive of a survivor archetype and examples of construction of female identities. Both of them permit an absolute rebuilding of their identities to fit into the alien country and culture.

CHAPTER-V

CONCLUSION

The contemporary Indo English literature is now being enriched primarily by fictions of women writers who narrate from a woman's perspective. This has been brought about by the Diaspora writers of India as they are fortunate enough to learn and embed diverse narrative techniques such as magic realism, meta-fiction. The transformation of purely regional form of Indian literature to the global and transnational type is attributed to the oeuvres of the Diaspora writers. As these writers have produced fictions which transcended boundaries, they are able to depict the cross-cultural conflicts adeptly from a changed perspective. The study of Mukherjee's novels reveals that her writings greatly focus on problems faced by the immigrants that question the long-established notions like home, nation, native and alien. The novelist seeks to handle new themes and also attempts to impose an ethnic dimension to the themes instead of writing to fit into the philosophical or critical perspectives. The study reveals that Bharati Mukherjee is a renowned novelist who shares her interesting immigrant experience with her readers. Also, the novels of Mukherjee can be interpreted as ethnic tales of Asian American protagonists who come to America with dreams of bliss and affluence but identify themselves as victims of abuse, aggression, eccentricity and incarcerations; and by diligence and perseverance, adapt and continue to exist in the alien country. Bharati Mukherjee narrates simple stories, but through explicitly authorial practices, where the author is connected with the narrator, to literally present themselves in a very remarkable manner and she has established an authorial voice within and against the narrative and social principles of her time and place. The events in the narrative of Bharati Mukherjee novels are

observed from the viewpoint of one or more of the characters, with great importance on the characters' personal responses to people and events: this is subjective narration from a character's perspective. The strong autobiographical factor that spreads through the fictions of Mukherjee is a trait of the confessional, testimonial narration, often exploited by ethnic women writers in the U.S. It is an outcome of the excruciating subsistence and experiences through which they negotiate the process of immigration into the foreign land. (*The Inner World of Bharati Mukherjee* 5-6)

The conflict between illusion and reality is the theme of the novel *The Tiger's Daughter*. The novel *Wife* as an expatriate experience comprises several well illustrated themes such as, adjustment to new society, job hunting, frustrations and shattering of a dream. The state of exile, a sense of loss, the pain of separation and disorientation makes Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* a quest for identity in an alien land. *The Holder of the World* deals with the quest for identity, transformation and translation of personality of the protagonist, imbued with stressful circumstances. *Leave it to Me* continues the theme of immigration and it is the third of the third trilogy series along with *Jasmine* and *The Holder of the World*. Furthermore, she brings in cultural hybridity, simultaneity and third space of enunciation, the clearly pronounced markers of post-colonial existence in *Desirable Daughters*. Mukherjee's Diaspora Indian characters are all the times struggling with the cultural codes of their native and host countries. She describes them as existing between two cultures, frequently travelling around new meanings and craving new identities. In *The Tree Bride*, the writer provides a post-colonial view of British rule in India since 1833. Mukherjee's women characters perform like Americans but they reflect Indian thinking. Jasmine is portrayed as a woman who never looks backward and eagerly waits for the future. She crumbles on emotional, cultural and physical planes like a

pot as she has the determination to survive. Her fluidity of identity represents her reincarnations without negative implications. The novels of Bharati Mukherjee are women centric and replete with the woman's queries. She portrays her female protagonists' readiness to be assimilated in the alien culture. The questions of identity, settlement and survival of the immigrant women in the host country are the key issues in the first phase of writing which includes *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife and Jasmine* (*The Expatriate Indian Writing in English* 80).

The protagonists of Mukherjee - Tara, Dimple, Hannah and Debby display glimpses of Mukherjee's own life and dilemma. The cultural dilemma of Tara, the itinerant life of Jasmine, or the adaptation strategies engaged by Jasmine and Hannah, backed by the exile in Debby are diverse facets of Mukherjee's fluid, flexible character. She talks to Edward Said in an interview:

My background is a series of displacement and expatriations which cannot ever be recuperated. The sense of being between cultures has been very very strong for me. I would say that's the single strongest strand running through my life; the fact that I am always in and out of things, and never really of anything. (Edward Said's Interview with Mukherjee, 128).

Mukherjee manifests the violence wreaked on women in terms of child marriage, forced arranged marriage, and subtle outgrowth of career for brilliant girls such as Padma and Tara in the plot of *Desirable Daughters*. Conventional marriage in Indian set-up has been the major aspect of criticism in Mukherjee's novels. Her protagonists Tara Chatterjee and Padma Banerjee abandon the patriarchy as they decide their marriages. Nevertheless, the characters such as Dimple, Joyti, Hannah, and Tara Banerjee at first admit the match chosen by their parents but later furiously

transgress the part of a perfect wife displaying their opposition to arranged marriages after acquiring their individual awareness and selfhood. Dimple's extramarital relationship with Milt, Joyti's denial of the life of a widow, Hannah's affair with Hindu Raja Jadav Singh and Tara Banerjee's divorce and liaison with Andy express the degrees of their dissident actions that seem to be improbable for girls living in a patriarchal society. Education system in India also comes under attack in Mukherjee's fictions. (*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* 54-58)

Bharati Mukherjee in her novels makes a concerted effort to conceptualize the image of the immigrants, who assert their claim to an American identity by struggling heroically to reinstate them-selves successfully in a new cultural landscape. Here, they strive to find niche and give themselves a second chance to build their lives. She sees in immigration an opportunity to redefine herself as an artist in an immigrant tradition, and not as an aloof and alienated expatriate writer, concerned only with the subversive potential of life on the margin. Mukherjee's protagonists are never at confrontation against their family and traditions in India. They are apparent as finely placed and are generally submissive in the native milieu till their displacement in a foreign land. Hence, Mukherjee's standing as a daughter of an elite Brahmin father who offered her best comforts and education and accepted love marriage with a westerner makes her to fall short of comprehending the realities of other women. Therefore, she does not succeed in depicting family as a location of patriarchal tyranny; relatively the characters, Tara Banerjee and Dimple Das Gupta crave for support from the family even at America. The logic of reversing the gender roles arises only when the characters confront a violent attack for instance, the devout wife, Jyoti could hitherto never have been evolved into Jasmine if her husband has not been assassinated in a bomb blast and has not raped by the shrimper captain. Hence, it is at

all times the external agent, circumstances or catastrophe that awakens the feminist realization of Mukherjee's characters.

Adaptation and transformation are Mukherjee's weapons right from her early age. In her fictions, she produces a showy, versatile world about transformation and also the problems encountered by the immigrants to establish their identities in the alien world and hostile circumstances have also been dexterously handled in her novels. A notable unrelenting feature of fictions of Bharati Mukherjee is that they portray the women immigrants in an alien land undergoing mandatory metamorphosis and transformation into self-liberated, self-assured persona. Exceptions are there, but the male protagonists tend to sweep between the two different cultures, and in spite of their patriarchal domination are apparently dwarfed and demeaned compared to their female counterparts. Her female protagonists go in search of female identity in alien lands. By choosing her protagonists from all parts of the world having divergent ethnic, religious and cultural preoccupations, she has attempted to explore the multiplicity of this theme which is centered in their struggles to outgrow inherited values. With her evolving creative vision the canvas of her thematic content enlarges and the complexity of cultural assimilation acquires a new dimension. Mukherjee invariably focuses upon sensitive protagonists who lack a firm sense of cultural identity and, are natural victims of racism, sexism and numerous forms of social oppression. The greatness of her fiction lies in its being informed by her personal experiences. A peculiar sense of involvement bordering on total identification with the characters lends her novels a flavor rarely found among expatriate writers. She achieves a dispassionate objectivity through understatements and ironic observations. She feels for her suffering protagonists, at times empathizes with them but seldom fails to underline their human vulnerability. Though she has herself undergone the

traumatic process of acculturation; she has not allowed her prejudices to infect her art. The majority of Mukherjee's fictional characters display an undying drive to build up life with fragments, howsoever fragile they might be, and thus they express their affirmation to life. In trying alternatives they do sometimes appear abnormal in their behavior but this trait should be viewed from the angle of their innate bid to live life on their own terms. Writing in an atmosphere marked by sex and violence Mukherjee's works, seldom border on obscenity which again explains the constraints of her Indian roots despite avowed links with traditional American writers. The nuances of Indian cultural life provide a living ambience to Bharati Mukherjee, sometimes accepted, and at times, even revolted against but they are invariably her terms of reference to perceive and penetrate the Western ethos. (*Contemporary Novelist* 33-58)

Bharati Mukherjee's characterization of Dimple lends a divergent and an intricate perspective to the theme of immigration and subsequent alienation. Bharati Mukherjee in her novels *Jasmine*, *Wife* and *The Tiger's Daughter* persuades her women protagonists to present a "frontal challenge to patriarchal thought, social organization and control mechanism" (*Bharati Mukherjee, Publishers Weekly* 47). The women protagonists in the novels *Wife* and *Jasmine* demonstrate a remarkable similarity in their reactions and actions, despite the vast differences between their disposition and situation. Both of them undergo convoluted physical and mental torture upsetting their whole being to such a level that they are motivated to violence. Jasmine begins her life in the United States with a murder, while Dimple in the novel *Wife* ends her stay there with a murder. Thus, when social, familial and internalized fetters are devoid of power, and when the character is marginalized or she opts to evade her role, Bharati

Mukherjee employs violence for the female characters as a line of defense and attack for the constraints imposed on female activities.

The study reveals that Mukherjee's *Jasmine* is a feminist novel where the protagonist rebels not only against age-old superstitions and traditions, but also affects a proper balance between tradition and modernity. The novel is a celebration of the strength of a woman, not her weakness. The novelist has articulated the many sided pathos and rebellion of contemporary Indian Woman, not only in India but also in New World. The conflict between duty and desire is inherent in *Jasmine*. Desire is the root of American fairy lands, desire for riches, and desire for fame while duty suppresses the desire. *Jasmine*, the Punjabi woman, debates if to act according to desire or duty. The Indian consciousness, embodied by her grandmother Dida, supports duty while the Western consciousness embodied by employers Taylor and Wylie encourages desire. She voluntarily undergoes transformation of the self from Jyoti to Jane to *Jasmine*. It is not the uncertainties of the new continent that challenge her but the uncertainties of her life in an unknown land. Mukherjee also shows her woman protagonist repudiating centuries – old ugly Indian tradition of checking the boy's horoscope. The second archetypal image that Mukherjee uses to bring out the protagonist's feminist trait is that of Kali, the Goddess of Destruction. ("Feminism and Feminist Criticism" 272-288)

Again, the *Holder of the World* (1993) is a feminist novel, dealing with the story of the trauma of dislocation and joy of transformation arising out of the union of two cultures. All through the narrative, the novelist concentrates on the immigrant women and their efforts to gain freedom as individuals. The novel gains a broader perspective as the women characters are utilized now to explore the affinity between different cultures. *Leave It to Me* carries on with the theme of immigration thus

completing the trilogy begun with *Jasmine* followed by *The Holder of the World*. The narrative is the conflict between the Eastern and the Western worlds as well as the mother-daughter relationship. This novel makes the predicament of the protagonist crystal-clear, Mukherjee deals with the reality of “Time-Travel”. In the novel, Mukherjee reverts to her earlier obsession with an exile’s agony.

The Desirable Daughters, scattered over twelve decades, follows the diverging paths taken by three Calcutta-born sisters as they come of age in a changing world. Their subsequent rebellion will lead them in different directions to different continents and through different circumstances that strain yet ultimately strengthen their relationship. The novel that is both the portrait of a traditional Indian Brahmin family and a contemporary American story of a woman who is in many ways broken with tradition but still remains tied to her native country. It is an interesting tale about how life puts us in different circumstances. The novelist demonstrates the positive gigantic energy of her women characters. *The Tree Bride* once again embarks on an in depth exploration of the life of Tara Lata Gangooly, an East Bengali ancestor who according to legend, married a tree at the age of five after the tragic death of her bridegroom. In the years that ensued Tara developed tree like characteristics herself. For instance, she was rooted in her father’s house and silent like a tree. She searches her roots and suspects that the mystery has a link to some complication of her family history. The novelist propels Tara to go into re-examination of her life. Each time she comes to the conclusion that she cannot segregate herself from her roots, i.e. her essentially Indian upbringing. Through the life story of Tara, Mukherjee creates a palpable and personal history of British colonial rule in India. The novel *Desirable Daughters* belongs to that genre of American literature which deals with issues of immigrant life and cultural assimilation. There are sufficient works in this genre that

represent Hispanic, African and Chinese ethnic minorities in the United States, but relatively few that speak for South Asian immigrants in general and Indian Americans in particular. Bharati Mukherjee's work fills this void in the American literary canon. One can say that the novel is written by a woman for a woman audience, as the story's central characters are women. There are also elements of feminist thought that is woven into the passages of the novel, although, in its entirety, the novel is not meant to propagate the idea of feminism. ("Diasporic Writings: A View" 53-60)

In *The Tree Bride*, John Mist, a British official in colonial India considered Bengal, as his home and Bengali his native language. He went on to the extent that he renounced his language, thus stated, "I no longer speak English" (TB 138). "He found himself a clearer thinker and better negotiator in his adopted language" (TB 138). He thus became an embodiment of hybrid perfection and led a new life free from his past crimes and guilt. Vertie Treadwell is an uprooted English officer in India, is cruel, perilous and cold-blooded in his dealings. His state of expatriation makes him to show his intrusive rage on unsuspecting victims. John Mist on the other hand, discards his past to acclimatize in the new host conditions and acquires the status of an immigrant, contrary to Vertie Treadwell. He hides his identity and delivers his best to the culture he resides.

Vertie Treadwell emphasizes the fact that a person should welcome the new culture with an open mind and there should be a sense of responsibility towards the culture that has embraced one with open arms. In fact, John Mist is born to unknown parents, brought up in an orphanage called the Orphans and Foundlings Trust situated in east London. He is rescued from the labor by Tom Crabbe, a sailor of the Indiaman Malabar Queen and migrates to India. He is apparent as a rebel and an exile living as a Moghul in the deep interior of Shoondari Bon. He founds a village in the adopted

land called George's Bight, which is later known as Mishtigunj and Razakpur on the bank of the river, George. He develops an incredible relationship with Jai Krishna Gangooly, Tara Lata's father and Rafeek Hai. Eventually, he is hanged publicly by the British rulers. John Mist is regarded as a British-turned Hindu and the maker of a perfect social order. As a British Hindu, he stands for the Hindu-Muslim unity as his philosophy of governance includes the harmonious combination of 'two', which implies occupation and employment for both Hindus and Muslims in an unbiased proportion.

The study reveals that the narrative structure of the novelist also reflects a three-stage transformation. Mukherjee begins with the use of the omniscient point of view. Influenced by V.S. Naipaul's 'expatriate' sensibility she uses irony as a technique extensively. The use of language is controlled without any attempt at excessive use of new expressions or coinages. Mukherjee continues the same technique of omniscient narration in her second novel *Wife*. In her collection of short stories *Darkness and the Middleman and Other Stories* Mukherjee establishes her mastery of the language. She has given up the omniscient point of view and exploits the short story form thoroughly to present her perspective of the themes handled. A remarkable change in her style of writing is evident in *The Middleman and Other Stories* as her language has become more Americanized. A study of her novels reveals that Mukherjee's style of writing is special as it differs according to the sensibility she manifests. Two of her novels she express her expatriate sensibility; naturally her narrative style does not reveal much enthusiasm. With the publication of *Jasmine* her writing becomes very confident and emphatic. She uses the first person narration with ease. The language used in *Jasmine* shows the exuberance of 'immigration'. In *The Holder of the World* Mukherjee uses an American narrator who simultaneously

narrates her story and the story of Hannah Easton, She has sprinkled a lot of Indian words, while depicting the colonial India. She has also used the scientific concepts of time-travel and virtual reality as narrative techniques. Mukherjee's reconstruction of British colonialism and Mughal period through her reading of diaries, journals and records in museums and archives is remarkable. Besides, the blending of Islamic and Hindu art results in 'syncretic narrative strategy'. Mukherjee uses the accepted cultural models to subvert them and promote a totally different value system. The first-person narration continues in *Leave It to Me*. With tremendous confidence Mukherjee uses American expressions and makes references to American popular culture. She frequently uses similes and metaphors in her novels. Travel also seems to be a metaphor for the route from wisdom to insanity as observed in the novel *Wife*. The novel rounds up the protagonist as a neurotic and a murderer. *The Tiger's Daughter* probes the metaphor of travel to state the course from adolescence to experience as Tara climbs out of her sheltered hub at Calcutta to study at Vassar, New York. The Janus-like figure of the door man which begins *The Tiger's Daughter* is a category of metaphor to explain Mukherjee's disconnected surveillance on the events in Calcutta. Mukherjee has also deftly depicted the metaphor of reincarnation in *Jasmine*. The reincarnation metaphor is so significant that Mukherjee underpins it with the motif of the floating dog carcass. The stink of the dog carcass in the river insists throughout the novel that is poorer than death. Jasmine imagines the eternal human soul as a music record and adopts it as a metaphor. In *The Holder of the World*, the protagonist's visit to India in the seventeenth century results in her 'translation' The discovery of individual identities by modern immigrant and ethnic American women writers discloses the intricacies and probable prototypes of self invention via the metaphor of translation. Manju Kak writes: "Salem Bibi is a

metaphor of man's spirit that must roam. Mukherjee tries to unravel this quest; why one world is not enough to contain the spirit of some; they must always search for new boundaries, travel to the utmost shores. (*Travelling in Time* 25).

Another successful metaphor that Mukherjee employs in *Desirable Daughters* is the cracking and splitting effect of earthquakes, forming fissures. Tara's son leaves home and her lover Andy comments:

He is on the edge, babe. All this fighting is just piffle and puffle.

That's what thirty years working construction has taught me: It's piffle and puffle. I fix the piffles and I look for the puffles. 'A PIFL is a previously identified fault line.'[. . .] A PUFL, a Previously Unidentified Fault Line, is a killer. (DD, 92)

By giving her novel American in tone and even perception she finds a sure accommodation for Indian immigrant writing in the body of contemporary American fiction. The multidimensional craft of her writing is evident when she changes words, grammatical structures, and syntax to suit the characters she describes. Andy uses American slang as freely as Rabi. Tara is comfortable both in the use of American Slang and Indian expressions. In her description of Padma, an Indo-American, Mukherjee uses a kind of English which is a mixture of American and Indian English. Her use of language, narrative techniques, descriptions, images and the use of myth both Hindu and Greek demonstrate her evolving immigrant sensibility. It is interesting to observe that Mukherjee's oeuvre begins with Tara Banerjee's exilic search for roots in *The Tiger's Daughter* and comes full circle with Tara Chatterjee's typical American 'roots search' for Tara Lata, her ancestors in *The Tree Bride*. Novels of memory are usually character-

oriented and not plot-oriented. Bharati Mukherjee like most other women writers prefers the narrative mode of communicating interior events through her characters. Mukherjee highlights the lives of Asian immigrants in American culture, where some of her female characters are observed to be suffering in a culturally intimidating environment. Though some of them turn to be survivors, others become victims of psychological woes. Mukherjee's plots travel around the psychological vibrations occurring within the immigrant expatriate. *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife*, *Jasmine* and *The Holder of the World* provide a view of the protagonist: their clashes, chaos, anxieties, wishes, and hopes. Mukherjee's narrative style accommodates well in the realistic customs owing to a "particular apprehension of a relation between individuals and society....," (*The Sense of the Past* 584). In fact, Mukherjee's exploitation of the genre of Gothic novel can be comprehended as a subsidiary of emotional pragmatism. Mukherjee's novel *Wife* deploys the exclusive Gothic style which though born in medieval settings, in its contemporary practice fits into a menacing atmosphere of obscurity and terror that is often morbid or exaggeratedly violent, edging on anomalous psychological states. Originating from a European tradition, genre of Gothic style has been adopted by American women writers from Ann Radcliff and Monk Lewis to Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Katherine Ann Porter and more recently Shirley Jackson. Gothic style is employed by Mukherjee, too, to depict the behavior of Dimple in *Wife*. But in the cross-cultural milieu, the Indian protagonist's suffering is apparently more because of her uprootedness and cultural alienation. In other words, the female gothic turns out to be a material for cultural clash in the American world, which is obvious through various gothic elements. The context of crime and racial tension strengthens the Gothic atmosphere in the immigrant

novels. References to muggings, peculiar killing on the streets, and violence against women by foreigners are the qualms which overwhelm Tara and Dimple in America. With the American culture packed with violence and crime, the female Gothic seems increasingly realistic there. *Wife* and *Jasmine*, aesthetically exercise the Gothic elements both in the atmosphere as well as in the characters to manifest the violence-centered plots, and seek alternate strategies for portraying an increasingly frightening reality.

Violence seems to dominate the novels of Bharati Mukherjee. In *The Tiger's Daughter* the violent clashes between the Muslims and the Hindus find expressions. In *Wife*, it is more of psychic violence rather than physical violence that find a place in Dimple's days in Calcutta. However, Dimple's life in America is highly influenced by the pervasive violence found in the United States. Violence finds a place in *Jasmine* in the form of brutal killing of Prakash at the hands of Khalsa Lions, rape of Jasmine followed by the murder of Half-Face, maiming of Bud and the suicide of Darrel. At each point in the story, violence is interwoven into the narrative. Actually Jasmine's reincarnations happen amidst travails of violence. Jasmine transfigures into Kali in order to kill Half-Face which in turn ushers her into the American society. In *The Holder of the World* violence is seen in the Nipmuc siege of Brookfield, murder of English Factors in suspicious circumstances, cutting of Tringham's nose, and the brutal war between Jadav singh and Aurangzeb. In *Leave It to Me* violence is seen in Loco Larry's killing spree and the final melodramatic scene when the whole boat is littered with corpses. Killing of Jess Du Pree, decapitation of Ham and Romeo Hawk's death at the hands of Devi Dee are violent episodes in the novel. The destruction brought about by earthquake is also seen in the final scene of *Leave It to Me*. Debby Di Martino grows up in Schenectady thinking herself no different from

her adopted family, until after college, when her telemarketing skills suddenly earn her the attention of her Asian boss. Debby's thirst for her knowledge of the Far East after becoming his lover forces them both to realize that she is more than she appears--an understanding that's borne out when he dumps her and, furious, she burns down his Sarasota mansion. Desperate to find out more about the impulses behind her lethal behavior, which she believes must lie in her past, Debby flees. Knowing only that her real mother was a flower child from Fresno and that she gave birth in India, she heads west. Ending up in San Francisco, she quickly changes her name to Devi and slips easily into that city's street culture. An encounter with a well-connected movie-location Romeo, also a '60s type, allows her to make fast progress in her quest. In *Desirable Daughters*, the threads of violence are manifested in the stalking of terrorists like Abbas Sattar Hai, the bombing of Tara's house and the maiming of the Bishwapriya. As San Francisco lies on the fault lines of the world, the havoc created by earthquakes adds another dimension of violence. In *The Tree Bride*, the tragic death of Dr. Victoria Khanna, and the ubiquitous presence of Abbas Sattar Hai throughout the story sustain the thread of violence. Violence is the stark reality in the contemporary world and therefore it forms an integral part of Mukherjee's fictional world too. Moreover, violence has close connection with all the immigrants because transformation is a violent process in the lives of immigrants.

Mukherjee's works focus on the phenomenon of migration, living far away from their native and being discriminated on grounds of race, colour or creed and the feeling of alienation often experienced by expatriates as well as on Indian women and their struggle. Her own struggle with identity first as an exile from India, then an Indian expatriate in Canada, and finally as an immigrant in the US has lead to her current contentment of being an immigrant in a country of immigrants. Therefore, her

writings largely reflect her personal experiences in crossing cultural boundaries. Her novels chart the dramas of entrance into a new land, adapting to a new way of life, in personal, social and historical terms. On personal level, this adjustment acquires a magnitude that can only be understood in terms of cultural heritage and personal history. Major adjustments have to be made in the philosophy of life itself, which governs the protagonists' considered behavior as well as the response to the most trivial situations. Though Mukherjee's protagonists are keen to leave India owing to various motivations and impulses, yet they find that the act of changing one's country is not as simple as they imagined. Even changing a house in one's own city requires major adjustments. These cross cultural concerns are presented in her novels through her themes and characters. ("Reading Group Guides"1)

On the other hand, the short story collections of Bharati Mukherjee are constructed around the deep-rooted racism in Canada. The stories in *Darkness* commemorate the changes of 'Aloofness of expatriation' to the 'exuberance of immigration'. The conservative theme of Diaspora of exile and immigration, prerequisite of all acts of courage and will and all the shocks, satires and failures associated engross the plots. *The Middleman and Other Stories* is a collection of short stories that describes the consequences of encounter of the third world and the first. The author exploits her native background to decode the American experience, as apparent from the shift of her nostalgic themes to exuberance of immigration. Mukherjee does not write from the vantage point of an Indian expatriate. The study reveals that she consciously positions herself as a writer in the tradition of other American immigrant writers like Bernard Malamud and Isaac Babel. Her writing has a close resemblance with the writing of Bernard Malamud, in spite of the fact that he describes the lives of East European Jewish immigrants and she talks about the lives

of newcomers from the Third World. Like Malamud, she writes about a minority community which escapes the ghetto and adopts itself to the patterns of the dominant American culture. Like Malamud's, her work seems to find quite naturally a moral centre. (*Critical Perspectives* 88)

The female protagonists are centers of focus in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee and the male counterparts, are subordinated. Mostly her characters are autobiographical portraits of her own self. The striking aspect of her style is that she is able to bring forth the mental and physical interface of female psyche through her characters. Bharati Mukherjee underlines transition in each of her characters, emphasizing twists and turns, mishaps and pains, to enable the readers feel the sufferings of the immigrant. Each character of Bharati Mukherjee be it Dimple, Jasmine, Hannah Easton or Debbie have dual personalities. Each of the character of Bharati Mukherjee has its own voice giving a new meaning to life. The ethics behind the characters is that each one is treated individually, and as a whole, to bring about everyone's evolution. It is interesting to observe that Mukherjee has not created even a single male character who is admirable or worthy of emulation. The gallery of male characters like The Bengal Tiger, David, Prannoy, Amit, Jyoti Sen, Milt Glasser, Prakash, Jadav Singh, Gabriel Legge, Ham, Frankie and Bishwapriya, Andy and Dany look pale in comparison with women characters who have been created with remarkable shrewdness, sensitivity and skill.

Bharati Mukherjee had to state her own identity in host countries, embarking upon the conflict between two different cultures. Also, she had to fight against racial prejudice while she was in Canada. Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* to Debbie in *Leave it to Me*, Dimple Dasgupta in *Wife* to Hannah Easton in *The Holder of the World*, exemplify a part of the author's early and late life, first as an expatriate and then as an

immigrant. Jasmine of *Jasmine* is the juncture rather than the travel character which provides equilibrium to the characters of early and late novels. Jasmine is a perfect mix of characteristics of feminine idols Sita and Kali; regarded as an epithet of feminism and a human being aware of self; her self-government and self-confidence are exemplary. Tara Chatterjee in *Desirable Daughters* is concurrently an Indian and an American and she has attained the third space of enunciation. Padma is a hyphenated immigrant and Parvati is the symbol of a traditional Indian wife. Both Tara and Padma interrogate their identities and are self-empowered despite being rootless. Though Tara is comfortable with her American identity, still she clings on to her belonging to India. Tara is alike Hannah of *The Holder of the World* who attempts to revive her present. ("The Melting Pot Lady"5-7)

Mukherjee's style has steadily developed from postcolonial to the American vernacular. Mukherjee's art of ventriloquism has facilitated her to speak like a native of wherever she is in at the moment. Mukherjee's novels envisage Indian culture, Hindu religion, gods, goddesses of Bengali Brahmins, Hindu mythological legends, myths. She thinks that her narrative structure influenced by the Hindu imagination can make her fictions radically different from the western writer. Similar to her contemporary feminist writers, Mukherjee is able to discern the chaos and hurdles for the modern women but differs from others due to her major attempt to emphasize the problems of cross cultural conflicts faced by women immigrants. Owing to their diasporic movements, the protagonists of Mukherjee's novels desert the gender roles that they were well-informed to carry out in their homeland and undergo changes in their subjectivities. Tara Banerjee's acquiescence to Tuntunwala's seduction in *The Tiger's Daughter* is due to her loyalty to American culture of free will and modernisation. Dimple in *Wife* hails from a middle class family and hence cannot

completely transgress her home culture initially but she ultimately falls prey to the western fascination by developing an extramarital sexual encounter with Milt. In *Jasmine*, Jasmine discards the limitations of caste, religion and gender and becomes a successful survivor. Hannah Easton in *The Holder of the World* is able to rebel the patriarchal norms of the puritan society. She throws away her American identity and transforms into the Salem Bibi of Raja Jadav Singh and defies the ethnic as well as gender bias audaciously. Debby in *Leave it to Me* is undeniably a person not succumbing to fate and destiny. In her mission, she unravels her real self and turns out to be an independent and assertive girl. Tara in *Desirable Daughters* is not courageous to protest gender bias in India but the American liberty motivates her to ignore the notions of an ideal wife and to settle on an American divorce. Her sister Padma has also transgressed by marrying a divorcee of other caste and by being the bread winner for her family. In *The Tree Bride*, Tara Lata Gangooly is a dejected victim of the patriarchal oppression at an early age of five but she does not give up; instead she educates and empowers herself. She becomes a universal mother who is worshipped as 'Tara ma' by the people. By constructing women-centred plots, Mukherjee provides the women's perspectives on family, marriage, dowry, roles as wife and mother, cultural conflicts, gender bias and conservative attitudes of the society. Patriarchal dominance is visible in the novels *Wife* and *Jasmine*. Mukherjee's fictions also represent the devotion and self-sacrificing attitude of the Asian wives despite their rebellious attitudes as clearly manifested in *Jasmine*. From a pious widow and a prey of a brutal rape, Jasmine turns up as a revenging female murderer who protests male authority and lust and also the patriarchal domination. Mukherjee's protagonists like Tara Chatterjee, Padma Banerjee dump the patriarchy as they settle on their marriages. However, the characters such as Dimple, Jyoti, Hannah, and Tara

Banerjee initially approve the match chosen by their parents but later transgress after obtaining their individual awareness and selfhood. Dimple's extramarital affair with Milt, Jasmine's ignorance of the life of a widow, Hannah's liaison with Hindu Raja Jadav Singh and Tara Banerjee's divorce and relationship with Andy underline the degrees of their rebellious actions that are normally improbable for girls in a patriarchal society. Mukherjee also blames the education system in India in her novels as she thinks that the conventional education system in India is responsible to promulgate patriarchal dogma.

Female sexuality has also been explored in the fictions of Bharati Mukherjee. In her endeavor to investigate the afflictions of her race, gender, and class, Mukherjee relies on an additional acute form of gender cruelty: that of sexual abuse ending up in seduction or rape. Mukherjee's first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, explicates an obnoxious and harrowing seduction of the expatriate Tara by Mr. Tuntunwala who is a politician as well as an adroit womanizer. Tara happens to slip into the situation that has been schemed and executed well by Tuntunwala. Finally, he has shattered all her mild efforts of opposition. Afterwards she accepts herself sorrowfully, that her western life has taken away her innate cautiousness, which every Indian girl has known well from childhood: panic of male lust and anger. Tara's foreignness makes her naive and a sufferer of this unlikeable event. Tara Chatterjee receives patronage from her father, Dimple gets comfort with Milt, Jasmine is trained by Prakash, Prof Vadhera, Taylor and Bud, Hannah is comfortable in love with Raja Jadav Singh, Debbi is helped by Fred in her search for her bio-parents. Tara Banerjee is supported by Andy during her times of sorrow and 'Tara Ma' follows the rational ideologies and progressive thoughts of John Mist. Bharati Mukherjee claims her place as the real supporter of women's cause through her fictions. In spite of her assimilation in

American culture and preference of being labeled as an American writer she has retained her Indianness. The reversal of gender roles occurs only when the characters undergo a violent attack for instance, the dedicated wife, Jyoti could hitherto never have been transformed into Jasmine if her husband has not been killed in a bomb blast and she has not been raped by the shrimper captain. Therefore, it is at all times the external agent, circumstances or disaster that stimulates the feminist realization of Mukherjee's characters.

Known for her playful and developed language, Mukherjee rejects the concept of minimalism, which, she says, is "designed to keep anyone out with too much story to tell." (*The Immigrant Sensibility* 97). Rather, she considers her work a celebration of her emotions, and herself a writer of the Indian Diaspora who cherishes the "melting pot" of America. Her main theme throughout her writing discusses the condition of Asian immigrants in North America, with particular attention to the changes taking place in South Asian women in a new world. While the characters in all her works are aware of the brutalities and violence that surround them and are often victimized by various forms of social oppression, she generally draws them as survivors. Mukherjee has oft been praised for her understated prose style and her ironic plot developments and witty observations. As a writer, she has a sly eye with which to view the world, and her characters share that quality. Although she is often racially categorized by her thematic focus and cultural origin, she has often said that she strongly opposes the use of hyphenation when discussing her origin, in order to "avoid otherization" and the "self-imposed marginalization that comes with hyphenation". Rather, she prefers to refer to herself as an American of Bengali-Indian origin. Mukherjee has chosen to express herself as an "American" writer and has declared through various forums that it is the cultural narrative of America that has

offered the possibility for transformations of her own identity and for those she used to commemorate in her fictions. Bharati Mukherjee has contradictory experiences of Diaspora in Canada and the US which had definite impact on her as well as her literary works, leading to imaginative textual and cultural negotiations. Diaspora dream figures are present significantly in all the fictions of Mukherjee comprising different moods of expatriation such as nostalgia, frustration, ambiguity, and dejection. Her characters of Diaspora are hence with emotional ties to a remote homeland but no actual longing for permanent return. ("Third Space" 23)

Alienation is a part of the experience of the Indian Diaspora and even if people are at home in any part of the world it does not mean that they will not become victims of the sense of alienation. Increasing acceptance into the host society does not indicate that the Diaspora characters can feel at home. Social alienation is replaced by metaphysical alienation. Bharati Mukherjee has widely been acknowledged as a 'voice' of expatriate- immigrant sensibility and her novels bear testimony to this. Mukherjee creates various prototypes of immigrants through different strands of immigrant experiences portrayed in her novels. She turns to be an artistic expression of both cultural loss and gain, a redefined cultural identity, cultural syncretism and a certain envisioning of the American identity. Mukherjee opines that writers view literary text as a process while readers consider it as a product ("Is there a Feminist Aesthetic?" 69) As her immigrant ideology gets evolved and her immigrant politics is also transforming ever with the growth of her personality and the artist, this extensive research of her novels has attempted to comprehend her fictions as a process and not as a reduced product. Her writings are based on her immigrant experience, particularly at the USA and Canada and the novelist has not completely cut off her link with India. She presents the immigrant problems of her women

protagonists who seek female identity in immigrant countries and emerges as the authentic voice of expatriate immigrant sensibility describing the mental and physical interaction of the female mind and complexities of the human feeling through her characters. It is hoped that this thesis will provoke further reading and discussion and bring to light several new features of her novels.

WORKS CITED

- Alam, Fakrul. *Bharati Mukherjee*. New York: Twayne, 1996. Print.
- Almeida, Rochella. "Representations of Ethnic Femininity: Evolution in Bharati Mukherjee." *The Expatriate Indian Writing in English*. Ed. T. Vinoda and P. Shailaja. Vol.1. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2006. Print.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. Print.
- Basu, Rangita. "The Novel Status," *Times of India Sunday Review*. (Aug. 27, 1992). Print.
- Benitez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and Post Modern Perspective*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP., 1992. Print.
- Bhabha, Homi. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*. Eds. Gaurav Desai and Supria Nair. Oxford: Berg, 2005. Print.
- Bhatt, Indira. "Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*: An Immigrant's Attempt at Assimilations," Ed. Suman Bala, *American Literature*. North Carolina: Texas U, 1999. Print.
- Bhikhu, Parekh. "Some Reflections on the Hindu Diaspora". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol 20, ISSN. 4, 1994. Print.
- Brandmark, Wendy. "Looking for Devi Dee." Rev. of *Leave It to Me*. *The Times Literary Supplement* 4920 (July 18 1997). Print.
- Bard, Rigney. Bharati Mukherjee : The Immigrant Sensibility." *Span* XXXI 6, June 1990. Print.
- Carb, Alison B. "An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee." *Massachusetts Review* 29 (1988): Print.

Caruth, Cathy. *"Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History"*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1996. Print.

Chatterjee, Bhaskar. *Education For All: The Indian Saga*. New Delhi : Lotus Press, 2008. Print.

Choudhary, Enakshi. "Images of Woman in Bharati Mukherjee's Novels"
Ed.S.Anand, *Literary Voice*. Oct. 1995. Print.

Connell et. al.,ed. "An interview with Bharathi Mukerjee." *Iowa Review* 20 (1990).
Print.

Dayal, Samir. "Creating, Preserving, Destroying: Violence in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*," Ed. Emmanuel S.Nelson, *Bharati Mukherjee:Critical Perspectives*, New York: Garland Publishing, 1993. Print.

Felski, Rita. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989. Print.

French, Marilyn. "Is there a Feminist Aesthetic ?" *Hypatia* 5.2 (1990).Print.

Gilroy, Paul. *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures*. London: Serpent's Tail, 1993. Print.

Grice, Helen. *Negotiating Identities: An Introduction to Asian American Women's Writing*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002. Print.

Gupta, Shalini. "A Kaleidoscopic Wheel," *The Hindu* (Sunday), 19 Oct 1997, p.XX
Print.

Hancock, Geoffrey. "An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee." *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 59 (1987). Print.

Inamdar,F.A. "Immigrant Lives: Protagonists in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Tiger's*

- Daughter and Wife*, " Indian Women Novelists, Ed. R.K.Dhawan , New Delhi: Prestige, 1992. Print.
- Ions, Veronica. "Indian Mythology." *Library of the World's Myths and Legends*. New York: PeterBedrick, 1984. Print.
- Iyer, Nalini. "American/Indian: Metaphors of the Self in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World*." *Ariel* 27 (1996). Print.
- Jain, Jasbir. "Foreignness of Spirit : The World of Bharati Mukherjee's Novels", *Journal of Indian Writing in English*, 13, 2 (1985). Print.
- Kak, Manju. "Travelling in Time." Rev. of *The Holder of the World*, by Bharati Mukherjee. *Indian Review of Books* 3.5 1994. Print.
- Kivisto, Peter. *Multiculturalism in a Global Society*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002. Print.
- Kumar, Amitava. *Away: The Indian Writer as an Expatriate*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Kumar, Nagendra. *The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee: A Cultural Perspective*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2001. Print.
- Lanser, Susan Sniader. *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1981. Print.
- Levin, Martin. "Wife", *New York Times Book Review*, (June 8, 1975). Print.
- Mason, Deborah. "Desirable Daughters: The Cross-Cultural Wars." *The New York Times. Book Review*. 28 April 2002: 711. Print.
- McGree, Celia. "Foreign Correspondent," *New York Times*. (Jan 30, 1989). Print.
- Meer, Ameena: "Bharati Mukherjee," *BOMB*. Fall V.29. 1989. Print.
- Mishra, Sudesh. "From Sugar to Masala: Writing by the Indian Diaspora" from *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*, Ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003. Print.

Moline, Karen. "Passage from India: Award Winning Novelist Bharati Mukherjee,"

Harper's Bazar (Australia), Autumn 1990. Print.

Mukherjee, Bharati. *The Tiger's Daughter*. Boston: Houghton, 1972. Print.

... *Wife*. Boston: Houghton, 1975. Print.

... *Darkness*. New York: Penguin, 1985. Print.

... *Middleman and Other Stories*. New York: Grove, 1988. Print.

... *Jasmine*. New York: Grove, 1989. Print.

... *The Holder of the World*. New York: Knopf, 1993. Print.

... *Leave It to Me*. New York: Knopf, 1997. Print.

... *Desirable Daughters*. New York: Hyperion, 2003. Print.

... *The Tree Bride*. New York: Hyperion, 2004. Print.

... "Introduction," *Darkness*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1990, p.3. Print.

... "Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalist." *The New York Times Book Review* 28 August 1988: Print.

... Clark Blaise, *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, New York,
Doubleday, 1977. Print

Naik, M.K and Shyamala A.Narayan. *Indian English Literature 1980-2000, A
Critical Survey*. Delhi: Pencraft International, 2001. Print.

Nair, Hema. "A Puritan in a Mughal Court" *The Toronto Review* 12, 2(Winter-
Spring) 1994: 106. Print.

Nayak, Bhagabat. *Contra-acculturation in Immigrant Sensibility: A Study of The
Namesake*. Delhi: Pencraft International, 2001. Print.

- Paranjape, Makarand. "Triple Ambivalence: Australia, Canada, and South Asia in the Diasporic Imagination" from Journal of the Department of English, Volume XXXII, Numbers 1 & 2, Eds. Sanjukta Dasgupta and Jharna Sanyal, Kolkata: Calcutta University, 2005-2006. Print.
- Parekh, Pushpa N. "Telling Her Tale: Narrative Voice and Gender Roles in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*." *Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Garland, 1993. Print.
- Pearson, Carol S. *The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By*. San Francisco: Harper, 1989. Print.
- Radhakrishnan, Rajakopalan. "Ethnicity in an Age of Diaspora." *Theorizing Diaspora*. Ed. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003. Print.
- Ralph J. Crane. "Mukherjee, Bharati" *Contemporary Novelists*, Ed. Lesley Henderson Chicago & London: St. James Press, 1991. Print
- Rao, K.S. Narayana. "Review of Wife," *Books Abroad*, Spring 1976. Print.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Signs* 5.4 (1980). Print.
- Roy, Sumita. "Jasmine: Exile as Spiritual Quest," *Indian Women Novelists*, Ed. R.K. Dhawan, New Delhi: Prestige, 1991. Print.
- Rushdie, Salman. "Imaginary Homelands" from *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981 - 1991*, London: Granta Books, 1991. Print.
- Rustomji Kerns, Roshni. "Expatriates, Immigrants and Literature: Three South Asian Women Writers," *Massachusetts Review*, winter 1988-89. Print.
- Rutherford, Jonathan. "Third Space." *Identity, Community, Culture, and Difference*, New Delhi: Atlandic, 1999. Print.

- Said, Edward W. "*Reflections on Exile.*" *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays*. By Edward W. Said. London: Granta, 2001. Print.
- Sampat , Manju. " Expat Exuberance." *Rev of Desirable Daughters. Biblio: A Review of Books* 7.7 &8 (July- Aug.2002). Print.
- Sandler, Linda. "*Violence as a Device for Problem Solving.*" *Saturday Night* 90.5 (Oct. 1975). Print.
- Sattar, Arshia. "*A Review of The Holder of the World.*" *The Sunday Times* 20 March 1994: 6. Print.
- Shakunthala Bharvani, Bharati Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World*. New Delhi: Prestige, 1995, 3:190. Print.
- Sharma, Maya Manju. "The Inner World of Bharati Mukherjee: From Expatriate to Immigrant," Ed. Nelson Emmanuel S.. *Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives*, New Delhi: Prestige,2001. Print.
- Shinde, Shoba. "Cross Cultural Crisis in Bharati Mukherjee's "Jasmine" and "The Tiger's Daughter," Eds R. K. Dhawan and L.S. R. Krishnasastri. *Commonwealth Writing: A Study in Expatriate Experience*. New Delhi , Prestige Books, 1994. Print.
- Shyam M. Asnani *et al.* "Identity Crisis in *The Nowhere Man and Wife*," *Language Forum*, 1-2 (Jan-Dec 1992). Print.
- Singh, Vandana. *The Fictional World of Bharati Mukherjee*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2010. Print.
- Sivaramkrishna, M. "Bharati Mukherjee," *Indian English Novelists*, ed. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1982. Print.
- Steinberg, Sybil. "Bharati Mukherjee." *Publishers' Weekly*. August 25 (1989). Print.

Stephen, Stanley. M. Bharati Mukherjee: *A Study in Immigrant Sensibility*. New

Delhi: Prestige Books, 2010. Print.

Stimpson, Catherine R. "Feminism and Feminist Criticism." *Massachusetts Review*

24 (1983). Print.

Tandon, Sushma." Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction- A perspective" New Delhi: Sarup &

Sons, 2004. Print.

Umarsharif, Shaikh Naushad. "*Diasporic Writings: A view*" AKI's Poona College of

Arts, Com. & Sci. Camp, Pune. Print.

Uma, Alladi. *Woman and Her Family - Indian and Afro-American: A Literary*

Perspective. New Delhi : Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1989. Print.

Vignisson,Runar. An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee. *Diasporas, Span*, Nos.34-35

(1993). Print.

Yanofsky, Joel. "The Melting Pot Lady," *Books in Canada* (Jan-Feb, 1990). Print.

Web Source

Chen, Tina and X.Goudie *The Holder of the World* “an interview with Bharati Mukherjee”. Jouvert 2 Feb. 2002

<http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/vlil/bharat.html>

Grice, Helena. ‘Who Speaks for us?’ *Bharati Mukherjee’s Fiction and the Politics of Immigration*,

<http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journals/detail/issue/sample/a03170.pdf>.

Hogan, Ron.”Outside Looking In, Insider Looking Beyond.” Beatrice.com 20 Apr 2004.

<http://www.beatrice.com/interviews/mukherjeehtml>

Moyers, Bill. “Bharati Mukherjee: Interview by Bill Moyers.

<http://www.pbs.org//now/>

Transcript/[5/20/03]transcript_mukherjee.html.

Mukherjee, Bharati. “Two Ways to Belong in America.” New York Times 22 Sep. 1996. Sawnet 15 Aug. 2000

http://www.umiacs.umd.edu/user/sawweb/sawnet/bharati_m.html

...“American Dreamer,” *Mojowire*, <http://www.mojones.com>

motherjone/JF9/mukherjee.html

Welch, Dave “Bharati Mukherjee Runs the West Coast Offense.”

<http://www.powells.com/>

authors/mukherjee/html. 13th Oct.2004.

‘Being a Woman Writer,’ Her Story/BBC World Service

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/arts/feature/womenwriters/mukherjeework.html>

Conversation with Bharati Mukherjee. “Reading Group Guides “18 Mar. 2002.

<[http:// www.readinggroupguides.com/guides/leave-it-to-me-author.asp/interview](http://www.readinggroupguides.com/guides/leave-it-to-me-author.asp/interview).