

Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis, entitled **Diasporic Divulgence in the Select Novels of Bharati Mukherjee** submitted to the Bharathiar University, Coimbatore in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English** is a record of original research work done by **Geetha.S** during the period **2011-2013** of her research in the Department of English, at PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore, under my supervision and guidance and the thesis has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree / Diploma / Associateship / Fellowship or any other similar title of any candidate of any University.

Research Supervisor

Countersigned

Head of the Department

Principal

Declaration

I, Geetha.S, hereby declare that the thesis, entitled **Diasporic Divulgence in the Select Novels of Bharati Mukherjee** submitted to the Bharathiar University, Coimbatore in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English** is a record of original research work done by **Geetha.S** during the period **2011-2013** of her research in the Department of English, at PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore, under my supervision and guidance of **Dr. (Mrs). S. Lavanya M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of English, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore,** and it has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree / Diploma / Associateship / Fellowship or any other similar title of any candidate of any University.

Signature of the Candidate

Acknowledgements

I am immensely indebted to my guide and supervisor Dr. (Mrs). S. Lavanya, Assistant Professor in English, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore for her constructive suggestions. She has spent her valuable time in guiding me in a systematic manner.

I express my gratitude to Smt. R. Nandini, Secretary and Dr. (Mrs). N. Yesodha Devi, Principal, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore for providing me the opportunity to carry out my research in this esteemed institution. My sincere thanks to Dr.(Mrs). R. Padmavathy Dean Academic Support and Alumni Relations, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore, for her help and support. I am obliged to Mrs. B. Mynavathi M.A., M.phil., B.Ed., Head of the Department of English, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore, for her encouragement. I express my sincere thanks to all the staff members for their consistent support.

I am grateful to the librarians of PSGR Krishnammal College for Women and SCILET of American College, Madurai.

I am thankful to God, Almighty, who has enabled me to do this research work. I am obliged to my parents, my husband and my daughter for their love, generous help and moral support.

Abstract

Indian immigrant writers carry their Indian sensibility with them and this constant pressure creates an alien environment abroad. This is reflected as diasporic feelings in their writings. Expatriate writing adopts a variety of approaches within a multicultural tradition. The usual thematic core of expatriate writing is the conflict between the native and the alien, 'the self' and 'the other'. The term 'diasporic' denotes exile, voluntary or compulsory exile. Sometimes expatriates straddle two cultures while at other times, they fall between the two propositions. These kinds of diasporic feelings result in the dilemmas of identity, personal despair, cultural conflicts, frustration and a sense of rootlessness.

The dissertation attempts to reveal the different aspects of diasporic experiences and analyses how these experiences further diverge into preservation and appropriation under the sway of globalisation which happens to challenge cultural dichotomy. Bharati Mukherjee has recorded the diasporic divulgence of the expatriates significantly in all her fiction and she pictures the life of Indian immigrants intelligibly and interestingly to her readers. In her novels, the diasporic dilemma of belonging to the country of their birth or to the country where they have settled is presented in a touching manner. Mukherjee gives a psychological insight into the psyche of the immigrants torn between alienation and assimilation. Every culture has its own peculiarities and predilections, which evoke a mixed response when a person immigrates and settles down in a different cultural milieu. Immigrants quite often try their best to forge a workable synthesis between their native culture and that of the new set-up. This process is not an easy one, and more often, it results in psychological traumas and the immigrant finds himself alien to both the

cultures. Migration has become a global phenomenon today. It has induced a confused consciousness of nationalities in the psyche of the immigrants. This reality which has resulted in cultural hybridity is reflected in the works of Bharati Mukherjee.

Chapter I- Introduction defines the term diaspora and traces its various trajectory. It discusses the concept of Indian womanhood and the contributions of Indian women writers to the fictional realm. The cultural clashes suffered by educated Indian women who were trained on the basis of traditional moral codes that deny them separate existence are reflected in Bharati Mukherjee's writing. They are caught between different cultures and this feeling of in-betweenness or being juxtaposed poses them the problem of maintaining a balance between their dual affiliations. In the case of the immigrant women it is more pronounced and prominent, for they carry the burden of cultural values of their native land with them to the new country, thus making it more difficult and problematic for them to adjust. The history of immigration deals with alienation and its consequences. The effect of the cultural transfer is harsh upon the people. It transfers people from their traditional environment and transplants them in a strange soil where strange customs and climate prevail. The customary modes of behavior make the immigrants incapable of confronting the problems that arise in the new atmosphere. They are compelled to readjust and redefine themselves. With the old ties snapped the immigrant faces the enormous compulsion of creating new relationships, thereby giving new meanings to their lives.

Chapter II- Entitled "Cultural Transition-Mapping Identities in *The Tiger's Daughter, Wife, Leave It to Me and Jasmine*", shows the cultural plurality of the adopted land in Bharati Mukherjee's novels. Through her protagonists Mukherjee tries to unravel

the complicated layers of cross-cultural reality through a series of adventures which they undertake during their eventful journey. Their struggle symbolizes identity crisis which is expressed through the protagonist's restless quest for belonging, search for roots, a sense of isolation leading to depression. In *The Tiger's Daughter* Tara belongs nowhere she feels neither Indian nor American, later emerges as an Indian- American, and remains as a hyphenated individual. The protagonist Dimple Dasgupta in the novel *Wife* remains isolated and survives on the margins of neurosis, unable to connect with an alien culture. In the novel *Jasmine*, the protagonist evolves and acquires different identities in accordance with the changing situations. In *Leave It to Me*, the protagonist Debby, suffers identity crisis and is in search of her biological parents. Through Debby's search Bharati Mukherjee connects counter culture movement of America in the 1960's to India, thereby shows that past impinges the present in creating a person's identity. Mukherjee explores the problem of nationality, location, identity and historical memory in these novels.

Chapter III-Entitled "Retracing Historical Roots-Remapping Identities in *The Holder of the World, Desirable Daughters and The Tree Bride*" deals with Bharati Mukherjee's unique narratives of diaspora. This chapter explores the cultural confrontations of the two worlds America and India. It also deals with history in its multiple layers of transcultural spaces, and migration is inscribed as a key feature that ignites transnational connections. Thus Mukherjee elaborates historical narrative of diaspora and broadens the scope for historical rewriting. This chapter reveals that history can have the ripple effect on an individual's life; patterns of love, betrayal and redemption that keeps repeating generation after generation. The freedom to begin a new life offered by America is circumscribed by familial imperatives, by religious and

cultural tropes and by more primeval, subterranean forces that a protagonist tries to link her individual conscience with that of the collective consciousness.

Chapter IV- Summation explores Mukherjee's presentation of women as contender for achieving a fulfilling identity. Immigration enables the protagonists to undertake two journeys simultaneously transcontinental and psychological, In order to merge or to form a new identity in the alien land. The survey from Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* to Tara Chatterjee in *Desirable Daughters* highlights the perceptible changes in the phase of Indian womanhood. None of the protagonists belong to the all-suffering, self-negating women of the past. Even when incapable of changing the existing pattern they show remarkable calibre to question the existing cultural codes. Bharati Mukherjee accords the need of self-examination, self-reliance, and self-determination to maintain individuality without which women will be alienated. Throughout her fiction, Mukherjee explicitly presents the experiences of her immigrant characters who undergo various trauma in the process of merging the various cultural discourses, in the process of melding them together to create new subjects. By recovering the polygenetic origins of the American nation, its culture, and its individuals, Mukherjee acknowledges the dissolution of the national culture as a result of globalization, where the transnationality of individuals supersedes and breaks the geographical boundaries they cross and creates a conglomeration of various cultures thus formulating a hybrid identity among the immigrants.