

Chapter I

Introduction

India has made tremendous progress both in education and in literary creation. Nineteenth century is termed as a period of transition from medievalism to the modern age. Independence brought new confidence to Indian writers, and Indian writing in English flourished by leaps and bounds in India. Till the end of nineteenth century, fiction was written mainly in vernacular. Today, novel has become the dominant literary form. Indian writers conformed themselves to the sensibility of English for creative writing. Singh, R.A and V.L.V.N. Narendra Kumar state that:

The Indian writers of post-independence era adopted English as a tool and employed it in diverse ways to express widely differing cultural experiences. Their creative imaginative use of the colonizer (as illustrated in Rushdie's, *Midnight's Children* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*) is akin to Caliban's poetic gift. They use it as a dynamic medium to explore the complex Indian reality. (2)

Momentous developments have taken place in literature written in English in many parts of the world, not only in England and America but also in India, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and West Indies. Literature written in English has developed in a remarkable way and has established its own identity. At present, it is known as American Literature, Common-Wealth Literature, and Indian English Literature. Non-English novelists, poets and essayists have added new magnitude to English Literature through translation. In India, English language has taken deep roots

through fiction, drama and poetry written in English by the Indian writers. The Indian English literature has introduced the glorious culture and heritage of Indian life and society to the western world.

A host of writers like Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Nirad C.Choudhary and other dedicated generation of Indian novelist such as Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Bharathi Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Shobhaa De, Chitra Banerjee and others have expressed their creativity through the form of fiction and acquired global reputation. Immigrant writers while representing diaspora , tried their best to capture the duality of the immigrant psyche which fluctuates between native culture and their adopted culture to which they have to assimilate.

The contemporary Indian English novelists expose the recurring patterns of life. Every novelist's heart is in India and even when westernized life style is presented, the locale is India, Indian culture and tradition. Sunanda, Mongia comments thus:

India functions as a central metaphor frame work, even when a novelist, for example Bharathi Mukherjee, refuses her Indian roots and prefers to call her novels examples of "New American cultures"- Inevitably, whether an Indian or an expatriate, the novelist obsessively return to India, as a concept an actuality, a symbol, a network of cultures, myths and relationship which ensnares every author. (218)

Each novelist in his own way investigates the contemporary existence through his ideological stance objectively. The pioneer writer in 1930s is Mulk Rai Anand. His first novel *Untouchable* (1935) describes the life of Bakha, a young sweeper from the out

casts colony and reflects the problem of caste and poverty, ignorance and superstition. In his two chronicles, *Coolie* (1936) a picaresque novel and *Two leaves and a Bud* (1937) a dramatic novel, Anand narrates his story from a village which is a succession of grim tragic events occurring one after the other. In the field of literary art, Raja Rao is one of the 'Big Three' who moves from simple narration to complete analysis and metaphysical musings in his novels. His novels *Kanthapura* (1936), *Comrade Kirillvo* (1976), and *The Chess Master* (1988) etc., are the symbol of great work of art. Kamala Markandaya, R.P.Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Nayantara Saghil are some of the notable women novelists, in Indian English Fiction. The third generation from 1970 onwards includes novelists like Chaman Nahal, Sasthi Brata, Shashi Deshpande, Arun Joshi, Salman Rushdie, Bharathi Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy, Anjana Appachan and other writers are renowned worldwide for their creative writing and are recognized as reputed writers.

The post-independence era brought Indian women out of their sheltered, protected existence to prove their distinctiveness. The first important woman novelist to enrich Indian fiction in English was Kamala Markandaya. Personal relationship forms an important segment in her novels. Her novels include *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1957), *A Silence of Desire* (1961), *Possession* (1962) *A Handful of Rice* (1966) etc.

Indo- English writers explored their views, opinions and suggestions in their work of art and English language gave its helping hand and succeeded. Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man* (1972) is about the un-accommodated colored person who feels a great deal of hostility and experiences intense loneliness in the country of his adoption and self-exile.

There are galaxies of women writers who have contributed to the development of Indo-English works. Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu were the path makers who provided inspiration to the new generation of writers. The poetry of Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu is a fine amalgamation of Indian artistic sensibility and western literary genres. Women writers comprise a sizeable segment of Indo-English writers. Indo-English group of writers have portrayed the fears and hopes of men and women in their search for identity, equality and freedom. English language has helped to direct the flow of new ideas, principles, and theories into the Indo-English literature.

A unique feature of the creative writing by women has increased the awareness regarding the exploitation of women. A major part of the creative work by women writers is preoccupied with the suppressive traditions of the patriarchal society. Writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Sashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee reveal a common concern for emancipation of women from patriarchal dominance and have recorded their experience as women and as writers. They portray the tortured consciousness of the urban, middle or upper class women, who, in quest of their identity undergoes a transmutation from a silent sufferer to a hard-core rebel, breaking with the age old and restraining ethics of the male dominated world. The post-modern scenario is reflected in the English novel in India through the modern and young writers. Iyengar, Srinivasa observes:

After independence, however, the writer in India hopes to express through his novels and stories the way of life of the group of people with those psychology and background he is most familiar and he hopes that this

picture will not only appeal to his own circle but also to a larger audience outside. (360)

In the post-independent era Indian writers used their literary caliber to snub the traditional values that were practiced in the name of orthodoxy and patriarchy. Modern novels focus on neurotic individuals who have been alienated from society. Protagonists in the modern fiction swab the traditional taboos and set a new trend and pave a new path. Indian writers have a tremendous potential to establish themselves as an independent entity. Indian women writers of the second generation imported the changed psychological realities of Indian life after independence in their writing. Their wide acquaintance with and observation of life gives a human touch and a psychological depth to their novels.

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 two propositions. This kind of diasporic feelings end with the dilemmas of identity, personal despair cultural conflicts, frustration and a sense of rootlessness.

Bharati Mukherjee has recorded the diasporic divulgence of the expatriates significantly in all her fiction and she pictures the Indian life intelligibly and interestingly to her readers. In her novels *The Tigers' Daughter*, *Wife*, *Jasmine*, 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.

Mukherjee records the immigrant experience in most of the stories especially in *The Middle Man and Other Stories*, a collection of short stories which won her the National Book Critics Circle Award for Best Fiction. These stories explore the confrontation of East and West through the immigrant experiences in the U.S and Canada. Eminent writers like Shashi Tharoor, Gita Mehta, Shashi Brata, Saros Cawasiee and others have dealt with expatriate sensibility in their works. Prafulla Mohanta's *Through Brown Eyes* (1988) is about an expatriate living in England as Mohanti himself does. It is almost an autobiographical novel, where the protagonist wants to save England from the horrors of industrialization but is quite clear about his own identity, for he believes to belong to his village in India. He therefore returns home and works towards the development of his village.

Anita Desai's novel, *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*, published in 1971, portrays the plight of Indian immigrants in London. Dev arrives in England for higher studies, stays with Adit and Sarah. He is perturbed when he finds Indians are humiliated in public. Later, Adit develops home sickness and leaves for India.

Culture is an integral part of a nation and an individual. Culture is generally understood as a means of constituting the way of life of an entire society that includes codes of manners, dress, language, rituals, social customs and folklore of a nation. Every nation has a distinct culture of its own. But when an independent country becomes a

colony, the native culture undergoes a radical change. Nations are defined by their boundaries and boundaries are geographical, but culture defines the psychological boundaries of a community or race. The people born under a particular national boundary acquire genetic features, colors, food habits, and become the sons and daughters of the soil and they imbibe the features and mindset of the nation.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines culture as “a particular form or type of intellectual development in a society generated by its distinctive customs, achievements and outlook”. When a country comes into contact with an alien culture, a process of change is initiated, and this process, in the course of time, destroys the traditional culture. Indian literature had been discussing and recording such cross-cultural encounters.

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. People 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.

T.S.Eliot in his *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* observes:

Culture is too vast and baffling a term to be precisely defined. Culture is a quest for good but it is not good if the quest is not free choice. The quest and the choice are, therefore, the two ingredients of culture and the tradition is formed by the culmination of centuries of history, or a tradition may be defined as a passage, in which there is both persistence and renewal. (21)

Today people migrate to foreign countries in search of education and economic prosperity. Migration has become a global phenomenon today. Unable to adjust with the sheltered economy in their own country and pressured by joblessness and poverty, people belonging to many nationalities decided to migrate to America in an attempt to get remunerative jobs. It has induced a confused consciousness of nationalities in the psyche of the immigrants. This cultural reality is reflected in the works of the immigrant writers.

Cross-cultural transaction is an interactive, dialogic, process rather than a simple active-passive one. It is a process involving complex negotiation and exchange. In the post modern scenario, America has become a 'melting pot' for different cultures. The need of assimilation into American culture has passed; today the American attitude towards ethnicity and foreigners has changed. Ethnic difference is no more a matter of embarrassment. It is a matter of pride, instead. The metaphor of the 'melting pot' has been replaced with that of a mosaic – an image used by Joan Morrison and Charlotte Fox Zebusky in their book *American Mosaic The Immigrant Experience in the Words of Those Who Lived It* (1980) and they perceived alien, and ethnic as part of the larger whole. In fact, the class, which moves out of its cultural contours, has no love lost for its motherland. Moreover there is so much of cultural mixing in the post-colonial era has given birth to 'hybrid-culture' which is expressed in diasporic literature.

Canadian multiculturalism is guided by view that cultures are fixed, stationary and mutually impermeable. This conception of multiculturalism denies the presence of ambivalence or hybridity through its assertion of superficial pluralism and its belief in the existence of clear boundaries between cultures. In such a multicultural nation,

differences are organized into neat, virtual grids of distinct ethnic communities, each with its own culture, Homi K. Bhabha elaborates:

Multicultural policy entertains and encourages ... cultural diversity, while correspondingly containing it. A transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says that these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them with over own grid.
(208)

In ancient Greece the term 'Diaspora' meant the 'scattered' referring to citizens who migrated to a conquered land. The term became more widely assimilated into English by the mid 1950s with long-term expatriates in significant numbers from other countries being allowed to be mentioned as the Diaspora. As an academic field, diaspora study has established itself by relating to this contemporary, sense of alienation suffered by the immigrants throughout the world.

The use of 'diaspora' is an important conceptual tool today in sociology, anthropology, geography, literature and international migration. The word was used specifically to indicate the experience of the Jew's exile to Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar's conquest over Jerusalem in 587 BC. Though as a concept this attained different meanings and interpretations since its early usage, it is currently employed to imply a wide verity of contexts, ranging from dispersion diaspora to trade diaspora and worker or immigrant diaspora. These terminologies are increasingly used in contemporary transnational studies. There is a typology of diaspora, each of which has been caused by a different set of precipitating circumstances. This, in turn, results in a

variety of social contexts, mythologies and definitions of solidarity. These are victim diasporas, labours and imperial diasporas, global and de-territorialized diasporas.

The term diaspora carries a sense of displacement. The population so described finds itself for whatever reason separated from its national territory. Usually it has a hope, or at least desire to return to its homeland at some point. Some writers have noted that diaspora may result in a loss of nostalgia for a single home as people re-root in a series of meaningful displacements. In this sense individuals may have multiple homes throughout their diaspora, with different reasons for maintaining some form of attachment to each other.

The Indian diaspora boasts of its significant presence in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. It also forms a substantial minority in other Asian countries and in East and South Africa. The largest Asian diaspora in America and Europe is the Indian diaspora. The overseas Indian community estimated at over twenty five million is spread across the world. It constitutes a diverse heterogeneous and eclectic global community representing different regions, languages, culture and faiths. The common thread that binds them together is their feeling of oneness as Indians and their intrinsic cultural values. The diaspora gives them a feeling that they are a unique groups which gives them a feeling that they are a part of a larger mosaic. The immigrants form a close knit group to interact with other ethnic community and their sense of solidarity reveals their agony of homelessness.

The relationship of any diaspora with the homeland or motherland falls under the broader domain of international relations, as it involves at least two countries to formally

permit their subjects to interact with each other. Even in the absence of such formal understanding and other constraints, relations of an imaginary kind could exist through building structures and institutions that recreate the places of origin by diasporic communities. Today, the diasporic communities go beyond the host-nation state and motherland to create a network with their communities dispersed around their globe. The emergence of such networking of communities cutting across several countries is most appropriately described by the term 'Transnationalism'.

Immigration differs from colonization in being a coherent mass-movement composed of individuals or families not framing a coherent association. Today people are leaving their countries willingly under certain motives for the satisfaction of some personal ambition. But in early times, it was not migration at all. It was the transportation of third world people as labourers. Therefore it was a total culture that moved away.

The era of globalization has opened up ample opportunities for an improved and comfortable living. Indian professionals are constantly migrating to other parts of the world in pursuit of wealth. This has been repaid through the growth of multinational companies, flexible immigrant policies, facilitated modes of transport, media exposure and the funds allocated for the care of the ethnic groups have allowed them to experience temporary, seasonal and permanent migration.

The people who are on the move are labour migrants, both documented and undocumented, highly qualified specialists, entrepreneurs, refugees and asylum seekers, or household members of previous migrants. The linkages and networks between these groups are established though sharing the news and information of both home and host

countries. Thus, a major paradigm shift has occurred in the academic field that has moved beyond the discourse of migration and ethnicity of diaspora.

The immigrants who migrated from India to the United States are concerned with the phenomenon of rootlessness, the insecure sense of being new immigrants and are threatened by a sense of alienation. The Indian diasporic community encompasses diverse countries and cultures. In the United States the Indian community enjoys considerable privilege. The sharp decline of economy in recent years and congregation of Indians in groups have made them the targets of racial attacks.

One of the striking features of these transnational immigrant communities today is their multiple allegiances to places. As a result of their multiplicity of existence, the meaning of 'home' for them becomes complex and multi-dimensional in comparison to the earlier immigrants. Secondly, these transnational immigrant communities maintain economic, political and social networks that span several societies. Members of transnational communities retain a collective desire to return to the homeland.

The immigrants are made to feel that they are disintegrated at all levels. Alienated from his homeland; his people and his family, he feels the wrench of separation. The immigrants have been pushed violently from the nest of his birth. Immigration proves a shattering experience and he longs to be back to his home country yearning for the security and the warmth of a feathery place. In his struggle to spread his wings, he ventures to far off places, sees new people, new places but could not cease to dream of home, could not cease to regret the loss of security.

The prism of nostalgia distorts the hopes and aspirations of the immigrants. The immigrants contribute their labour to the development of the host nation. The disintegration happens between children who imbibe the host culture and parents who are following the traditions of their native culture. Alien customs and practice bring about domestic conflict. Thus the immigrants happen to lead disintegrated lives in the process of assimilation.

The immigrants start feeling psychologically isolated, although they are practically settled in foreign land. The feeling of self-alienation, combined with the realization that they can never cast off their native physical traits and cultural habits, reaffirm their sense of identity with their native culture. To combat the feeling of self-alienation, they are drawn towards their ethnic communities. To reaffirm their identity they try to evolve a new means of integration in their fight for survival.

The experience of adapting to a new society is a process unique for each person. The degree of adaptation and assimilation is affected by individual needs and the possibility of participation in the new society. Once the impact of shock and transfer are over, the process of establishing new roots and starting life begins anew. For children, it is an easier process to assimilate into a new cultural set up than others. The process of migration to America started in mid nineteenth century and has reached a new height in terms of immigrant population with its span of one hundred and fifty years.

The young ambitious professionals from the third world countries are making an unabated flow to Western countries. This flow of divergent races, classes and cultures has changed the face of America. The migrants who have become victims of circumstances

are forced to lead worse lives than the ones they left behind. Those who experience success in the process of acculturation praise the country of their adoption.

Multiculturalism is seen as a policy for the ethnic minorities who have little to do with the mainstream Canadians. Multiculturalism has come to be termed as 'mosaic madness'. The immigrants are like plants that are uprooted from their native soil and planted on an alien ground. They need nourishments such as love, warmth, friendship, identity, acknowledgement, recognition, cordiality and congeniality. If these are denied, like the plant that wilts and withers in a climate that is not conducive to its growth, the personality of these people gets disintegrated. Here the survival instinct operates and those who have the zest for life would overcome the hurdles and surface up and others would succumb to the pressure.

The survivors of this inevitable phenomenon of acculturation emerge with new personality, new identity and a new being as though they are re-born or reincarnated. In the collision of cultures, the less forceful culture yields to the strong. The immigrants lose their cultural mooring and struggle initially. Then they look for a strong hold elsewhere. They may either totally disown their culture and embrace the new one or strike a via media combining the best of both cultures, and bring forth entirely new culture. These immigrants simultaneously cherish a nostalgic attitude towards their native culture, thus glorifying their home land. Owing to this kind of conflict among the immigrants, cultural assimilation or dislocation is never total. They are dislocated and, at the same time, assimilated.

Mukherjee's immigrants seek to solidify their identity by propelling Americans out of their stagnancy or isolationism in an increasingly globalized world. This relationship is one of constant negotiation between the individual and the nation and between the nation and the world. Mukherjee asks the immigrants to re-evaluate themselves and their nation through a return to their mythological roots and a re-imagining of their national identity. Mukherjee claims the immigrant's rightful and vital place within America and the nation's resilience in a continually evolving world. Radical social changes in the twentieth century forced America to acknowledge its shifting relationship to nations across the globe and to redefine itself culturally to accommodate its growing contact with peoples across the world. Advances in transportation and communication technology connected America to the world, expanding American culture to the globe but also bringing the world into America. European powers relinquished or lost their imperial holdings. Immigration boomed at the turn of the century with an influx of typically white Europeans and again after 1965, when the national origins quotas of previous U.S. immigration policies were lifted, resulting in a new wave of typically non-white immigrants from the Third World. By 1990, almost eight percent of Americans were foreign-born, forcing Americans to acknowledge other cultures as they literally moved next door.

The migrants initially achieved the standard of living they could never have hoped for at home, but the hostility and rejection in the host country produce in the immigrants a deeper sense of consciousness about their oppressed condition. The immigrants become disintegrated and make a frantic search for their roots and identity. This situation results in various psycho-sociological problems such as nostalgia, rootlessness, alienation, and

other indefinable feelings in them. Despite adjusting between two cultures, their dilemma, whether to stay in the host country or to return to their homeland persists.

Expatriate writing enjoys a momentous position between countries and its cultures. It construes a novel identity paving the way by generating theories and defining positions as it surmounts boundaries. It also relates to various temporal and spatial metaphors. Culture establishes or dislocates an individual with the mainstream culture. Expatriate writers are on the fringe of two societies and cultural theory is being redefined by them. Whatever facilities an immigrant gets may not really give him real happiness as his home town. Home is a golden text where one can share his dreams and aspirations.

Caught between the two worlds, the expatriate negotiates a new literary space. An anxious sense of dislocation is characteristic of expatriate writings. The shifting designation of home and the attendant anxieties about homelessness boomed and the impossibility of going back are perennial themes in the literature of the diaspora. All the immigrants get themselves acclimatized to the new land, uncritically accepting its protruding edges and glaring margins. But the picture that emerges while reading the immigrant literature is often different and disappointing. Pain, failure and nostalgia govern the life of the immigrants. Only a few of them show their mettle by integrating themselves with the new land, whereas many others fall a prey to frustration, despair and loneliness.

The expatriate sentiment is one of the reasons for the disintegration of the immigrants in an alien country. Uma Parameswaran in her *What Price Expatriation?* Explains the phrase the expatriate sensibility as a legitimate literary term in the context of

today's Commonwealth Literature. Christine Gomez gives a still more perceptive definition of the term 'expatriation' in his *The on Going Quest of Bharati Mukherjee From Expatriation to Immigration:*

Expatriation is actually a complex state of mind and emotion which includes a wishful longing for the past, often symbolized by the ancestral home, the pain of exile and homelessness, the struggle to maintain the difference between oneself and the new unfriendly surroundings, an assumption of moral and cultural superiority over the host country and a refusal to accept the identity forced on one by the environment. The expatriate builds a cocoon around herself/himself as a refuge from cultural dilemma and from the experienced hostility or unfriendliness in the new country. (72)

Bharati Mukherjee herself being an expatriate and an immigrant has felt the pangs of disintegration and her hopes and expectation in the process of the emergence of a new life; therefore diaspora has become a popular theme in her works. Her writings largely reflect her personal experience as a woman. Caught between two cultures, Bharati Mukherjee, an Indian born American novelist has received considerable critical attention from almost all the quarters of the globe in a relatively short period of twenty years. She had been widely acknowledged as the voice of expatriate – immigrant sensibility.

Bharati Mukherjee was born on 27 July 1940 in a Bengali, Brahmin family of Calcutta. Her father Sudhir Lal Mukherjee was a pharmaceutical chemist and her mother; Bina Banerjee Mukherjee was a housewife. She spent her first eight years as a member of

a large extended family. Shortly after India gained independence, she lived with her parents and two sisters in London where she became fluent in English. In 1951 the family returned to Calcutta, and Mukherjee joined the English speaking Loretto Convent School, run by Irish nuns. She lived with her parents in a fairly comfortable circumstance since her father was a co-owner of a pharmaceutical factory. It was a spacious house tastefully furnished with furniture and artifacts, quite typical of the post-independence era; there were rolls top desks, Victorian love seats, carved tea tables and ornate lamps. In view of her privileged childhood, Mukherjee and her sisters were chauffeured to school, which was a quite characteristic of high class Bengalis. The family was westernized in the sense that English education was valued, and literature, philosophy, social principles got transmitted through the language. Bharati Mukherjee completed her B.A (Honors) in English from the University of Baroda in 1961.

Sensing his daughter's creative work, Mr. Mukherjee encouraged her to join creative writing program in the United States. She obtained Ph.D; in English and Comparative Literature in 1969. It was during her stay at the University of Iowa that Mukherjee met Clerk Blaise, the Canadian novelist, professor and journalist and married him in September 1963. In 1966, the couple moved to Canada and lived there as Canadian citizens, till 1980, first in Toronto, then in Montreal, a period that Mukherjee looks back with pain and anger. They took a decision to move to USA in 1980 and since then they have been living there as US citizens. After moving to Canada and before setting down finally at the University of California, Berkeley, where presently she is a Professor of English, Mukherjee worked on several teaching assignments. She worked as

lecturer in Mc Gill University in Montreal, Auebecs from 1966 to 1969, where she was elevated to Assistant Professorship in 1969 and to Associate Professorship in 1973.

Mukherjee's works correspond with biographer Fakrul Alam's categorization of Mukherjee's life into three phases. Her earlier works, such as the *The Tiger's Daughter* and parts of *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, are her attempts to find her identity in her Indian heritage. *The Tiger's Daughter* is a story about a young girl named Tara who ventures back to India after many years of being away only to return to poverty and turmoil. This story parallels Mukherjee's own venture back to India with Clark Blaise in 1973 when she was deeply affected by the chaos and poverty of India and maltreatment of women in the name of tradition. She feels "what is unforgivable is the lives that have been sacrificed to notions of propriety and obedience" (Blaise 217). Her husband, however, became very intrigued by the magic of the myth and culture that surrounded every part of Bengal. These differences of opinion, her shock and his awe, are seen in one of their joint publications, *Days and Nights in Calcutta*.

The second phase of her writing, according to Alam, encompasses works such as *Wife*, the short story collection *Darkness*, an essay entitled *An Invisible Woman*, and *The Sorrow and the Terror*, a joint effort with her husband. These works originated due to Mukherjee's own experience of racism in Canada, where despite being a tenured Professor, she felt humiliated and on the edge of being a "Housebound, Fearful, aggrieved, obsessive, and unforgiving queen of bitterness" (Alam 10).

After moving back to the United States, she wrote about her personal experiences. One of her short stories entitled *Isolated Incidents* explores the biased Canadian View

towards immigrants that she encountered, as well as how government agencies handled assaults on particular races. Another short story titled *The Tenant* continues to reflect her focus on immigrant Indian women and their maltreatment. The story is about a divorced Indian woman studying in the States and her experiences with interracial relationships.

In her third phase, Mukherjee seems to have accepted being “an immigrant, living in a continent of immigrants” (qtd in Alam 9). She describes herself as American and disregards the hyphenated Indian- American title:

I maintain that I am an American writer of Indian origin, not because I’m ashamed of my past, not because I’m betraying or distorting my past, but because my whole adult life has been lived here, and I write about the people who are immigrants going through the process of making a home here... I write in the tradition of immigrant experiences rather than nostalgia and expatriation. That is very important. I am saying that the luxury of being a U.S citizen for me is that can define myself in terms of things like my politics, my sexual orientation or my education. My affiliation with readers should be on the basis of what they want to read, not in terms of my ethnicity or my race. (Basbanes)

Mukherjee continues writing about the immigrant experience in most of the stories in *The Middle Man and Other Stories*, a collection of short stories which won her the National Book Critics Circle Award for Best Fiction. These stories explore the confrontational meeting of East and West through immigrant experiences in the United

States of America and Canada along with further describing the idea of the great melting pot metaphor for culture in the United States of America.

Bharati Mukherjee's academic and professional career won her many laurel. Twice she availed herself of grants from MC Gill University in 1968 and 1970, besides winning Canada Arts Council Grant twice in the years 1973-1974 and 1977. She was also awarded the prestigious Shastri – Indo-Canadian Institute Grant during the year 1976-1977. She was a recipient of Guggenheim Foundation Award in 1978-1979.

She also won the first prize from Periodical Distribution Association in 1980 for her short story *Isolated Incidents*, Mukherjee has also been awarded with the National Book Critics Circle Award for her short story collection, *The Middle Man and other stories* in (1989). Her creative talent comprises five novels. *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972), *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the world* (1993) and *Leave it To Me* (1997) and two collections of short stories *Darkness* (1985) and *The Middle Man and other stories* (1988). She has also co-authored with her husband two non-fictional works.

Mukherjee's writing career began in 1970, with *The Tiger's Daughter*. Her popularity shot up when *The Middleman and other stories* bagged the 1988 National Book Critics Award in America. After staying fifteen years in Canada Bharati Mukherjee, felt an expatriate and became an immigrant as she became one with the Americans. One needs a theory to realize and evaluate the corpus of her writings, since she declares herself an immigrant and writes about immigrants. She has dealt with Indian life realistically and poignantly in her fiction, depicting the immigrant's problems and heartaches with irony.

In the process of disintegration and in the course of developing adaptability to an alien culture, the immigrants develop a peculiar sensibility. This aspect of the immigrants makes an interesting study and a horde of writers in the present day have specially committed themselves to study the interesting stages of the sensibility of an expatriate. Like the eponymous narrator of her novel *Jasmine*, Bharati Mukherjee has changed citizenships and lived in various cultural milieus with disorienting rapidity during her Odyssey as writer for almost three decades. Her creative sensibility has evolved into a multifaceted pain reflecting various spheres of life.

Her writing portrays ongoing quest of the expatriates and immigrants. Her major concern as a writer has been in picturing the life of South-Asian expatriates, immigrants in U.S.A and Canada and deals with the problem of acculturation and assimilation. An examination of the works of Mukherjee reveals a movement from expatriation to immigration. This movement coincides with her immigration from Canada to U.S.A. Mukherjee's interpretation of and reaction to her experience in Canada lead her to see herself as an expatriate and this theme of expatriation is reflected in her writings in Canada. In the U.S.A there is a growing recognition of herself as an immigrant with an increasingly strong attachment to America and this experience of immigration is reflected in her writings.

The movement from expatriation to immigration is also reflected in the choice of the writers who shaped Mukherjee's creative sensibility. After outgrowing and discarding the posture of an expatriate, she rejected Naipaul as a model and chose Bernard Malamud whose central concern was the life of minorities and their problem. Though partially influenced by Isaac Babel, Conrad and Chekhov, she followed Malamud and his writings

instilled unusual confidence in her. She says in one of her interview with Alison B Carb, in *The Massachusetts Review*:

Immersing myself in his work gave me the self-confidence to write about my own community. Like Malamud, I write about a minority community, which escapes the ghetto and adopts itself to the patterns of the dominant American culture. (31)

Malamud's literary style has inspired Mukherjee to overcome being viewed as 'the other' in a diagonally different cultural milieu. While Malamud's immigrants are from poor class, humble shoemakers, tailors and bakers; Mukherjee's immigrants are doctors, University professors, businessmen and women married to upwardly mobile professionals. Both address themselves to the diasporic experience of cultural alienation. The immigrant characters of both the authors dream westward, especially to immigrate to California, the further geographical distance from the eastern roots. It was this indebtedness to Malamud that prompted Mukherjee to dedicate her first collection of stories *Darkness* to the great Jewish writer.

In the collection of the stories entitles *Darkness* published in 1985, is set in Canada, in Montreal and Toronto. They are *The World According to Hsu*, *Isolated Incidents*, *Hindus* and *Courtly Vision*. They are uneasy stories about expatriation. In *The World According to Hsu*, Ratna of Indian origin and her husband Graeme Clayton a Canadian Professor of Psychology are on a holiday trip. Three incidents of violence against Indian women and children are reported in the story.

In the short story *Isolated Incidents* the expatriate is viewed from the point of view of native Canadian. Cases of discrimination or hostility towards the visible minority is related to racism but always ignored as *Isolated Incidents*. Here the implied authorial stance is that of the injured expatriate. In *Hindus*, Mukherjee juxtaposes an expatriate against an immigrant to draw out the contrast. The story, though written in Canada, reveals the movement of expatriation to immigration.

In the next collection *The Middleman and other stories* all the eleven stories deal with Asian immigrants though some are narrated by native-born Americans who feel the impact of these immigrants on their lives. Eight of the eleven stories are in the first person narrative. The theme of all the eleven stories is on immigration and the reciprocal effect of the immigrants.

There has been a definite development in the art of Mukherjee as a novelist. A study of her works shows us the transformation of the novelist from an immigrant author to an American writer. *The Middleman* and *Jasmine* truly reflect the stages of development, of Mukherjee as a writer. America is the center of her heart. In 1900, she toured India and participated in several seminars and literary meets. The title story, *The Middleman*, has its protagonist, Alfie Judah, a quintessential immigrant, energetic resilient, opportunist and capable of quietly adapting himself to any situation. The story reveals his ability to bounce back to life even after traumatic experiences. The short story entitled *Wife* is a first person narrative by Panna Bhatt, a Gujarati woman doing her Ph.D. The change brought out in the immigrant by the American way of life is explored here.

A literary work which utilizes one's experiences, expectations, dreams, doubts and dilemmas to look at the world in a different light with the intension of creating a better, more prosperous and more peaceful world stands a better chance of being accepted and acknowledged. Such a work not only draws the attention of the people but it attains their approval and appreciation and recognition.

A creative writer has the discernment and analytical mind of a sociologist and psychologist, who provides an exact record of human life, society and social system. Bharati Mukherjee's fiction truly reflects the temperament and mood of the present American society experienced by immigrants in America. The expatriate writers face a multi-cultural situation, which may be combined with the personal anguish due to racial discrimination. These writers are able to project the cultural confusion and confrontation of a multi-racial society. The clash of culture and the need for adaptation is a part of expatriate experience.

The major theme of Bharati Mukherjee is the expatriate experience. Her first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* (1973) is about Tara's effort to adapt to American society and her rejection and revulsion of Indian mode of life. There is a strange fusion of the American and Indian psyche in Tara. In *The Tiger's Daughter* Bharati Mukherjee has shown dual cultural shock. This migration or cultural transplant leads to a crisis of identity and a final reconciliation is the choice. She has deliberately avoided the immigrant writer's temptation to fall into the trap of glorifying the native country and to belittle and degrade the adopted country. She has presented a fascinating study of a displaced person in America whose roots are found in India. Tara remains rootless is

found, both in India and America. Tara finds herself at home nowhere. Tara finds alienated and irritated by the trivial and trivializing passions and attitudes.

Her second novel, *Wife* (1975) deals peripherally with the social and cultural problems inherent in the situation of the Indian immigrant in America. Dimple never seems wholly in touch with reality, which perhaps confuses her and leads to the act of murdering her husband as a result of the endless scenes of violence she has watched on television. After a few pathetic attempts to merge herself into the new culture, Dimple experiences total estrangement from herself and her surroundings. Caught in a whirlwind of traumatic emotions, Dimple kills Amit almost like a character in a television soap opera.

Transformation is the major theme in the novel *Jasmine*. Jyoti, the heroine, born in a traditional family, married to Prakash, an ambitious youngman, becomes a widow within two years. In order to fulfill her husband's ambition, she migrates to the U.S.A and faces a series of adventures. Her journey through life leads Jasmine through many transformations such as: Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane. At every step, she revolts against her fate and the path drawn for her. Jasmine, like the true immigrant, is tossed between a desire for remembering her past and equally pressing urgency to forget it: "I feel at times like a stone hurtling through diaphanous mist, unable to grab hold, slow myself, yet unwilling to abandon the right I'm on. Down and down I go, where I'll stop, God only knows" (JAS 138-139).

Mukherjee's world of immigrant and their desperate need to belong to the new world brings a sense of cross-cultural adventure to her novels. *The Holder of the World* is

an attempt to discover the cross-cultural consciousness, which has universal relevance. This is the story of two women, one living in the seventeenth century, and the other in the present one, who becomes obsessed with retracing the former's transformation from a puritan girl brought up at Salem, in Massachusetts, to the 'bibi' of a Hindu king. Her own personality undergoes a sea change during her restless moves from Salem to Stepney:

In one rainy season, Hannah Legge had gone from Woolen Clad English married woman on the Coromandel Coast to pregnant Sari-wearing bibi of a raja; a murderer, a widow, a peacemaker turned prisoner of the most powerful man in India .(HW 271)

Mukherjee explores other ramifications of cultural confrontation in *The Holder of the World* (1993). It is also a tale about dislocation and transformation arising when two cultures come into contact with each other.

This novel has a wide canvas that sweeps across continents and centuries, cultures, and religions. Immigration, exile, alienation and foreign lands have always been the color of Mukherjee's palate and with *The Holder of the World*; she uses the familiar tones and shades to create a universe of infinite possibility and eternal time. (HW 6)

Here one can witness an unlikely and intriguing meeting of the two worlds, the puritan seventeenth century and early eighteenth century American world trying to come to terms with the Mughal view of Indian life. Mukherjee lights up the making and the very nature of the American consciousness in this novel through the commingling of

history and imagination. The inspiration behind this fantastic story happens to be historic root search, which has become an aspect of diasporic writing.

In *Leave it to me*, Mukherjee takes the themes she has previously explored a step further. Destroying the concept of ethnicity altogether, she creates a complex, new, transnational definition of self. The protagonist is a Eurasian orphan, Debbie Devi, who is adopted by an upstate New York family of Italian origin. Born in India and raised as an adopted child, Devi Dee travels throughout America to find her bio-mom. By the time, she arrives in San Fransisco and takes up with a band of aging exhippies and a psychotic Vietnam vet, her identity crisis looms large. Twenty three years later, having graduated from Suny, Albany, she sets out to seek her bio-mom in offbeat California. Mukherjee recalls the Berkeley counter culture movement and captures the alternative lifestyles and self-serving rationales with which exhippies defend their current lives. Her most impressive feat however is in rendering her self-destructive heroine with brilliant fidelity to the American vernacular relating to the contour culture movement.

In *The Desirable Daughters*, Tara leaves her respective country in search of her dreams. This migration or cultural transplant leads to a crisis of identity and a final reconciliation to the choice. Bharati Mukherjee has deliberately avoided the immigrant writer's temptation to fall in the trap of glorifying their native country and to belittle and degrade the adopted country. She has presented a fascinating study of the problem of a displaced person in America. The narrative shifts between the past and present, between India of her earlier life and America of the present.

The novel *Desirable Daughters* ends, when Tara the thirty six -year old narrator, returns to her native village with her teenage son. Tara Bhattacharjee is the youngest of three sisters of a Brahmin family. Although they grew up in Calcutta, Tara and the oldest sister now live in America while the middle sister lives in Bombay. Tara was married at the age of 19 to Bish Chatterjee, a genius who makes a fortune from a cutting- edge computer process. Tara and her husband are estranged when the novel opens.

Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*, the sequel novel follow the same track of search for roots and thus creating an identity that transgresses boundaries and analyses history in order to give the expatriate consciousness a new recourse.

By doing so, Mukherjee writes a third kind of history. One in which the echoes of written and spoken histories are assimilated into the production of the multi- layered histories of a South Asian American woman, whose identity always works in terms of multiplicity.(Hasanat 270)

Mukherjee portrays a new kind of history through the narratives of Tara, the protagonist in *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride* and how the female protagonists writes, revises and then re-examines her text in her effort to write the history of her diasporic identity. Quoting Shawn Hsu, Helen Grice writes that “identity is a word full of home” (31). “ In the shifting consciousness of diaspora, home is where one does not belong; the diasporic identity is, therefore, a word originating in the nostalgic feeling for home”(Hasanat 271).

Desirable Daughters starts and ends in Mishtigunj, Tara's ancestral hometown. Tara's real home is in Calcutta and her adopted home is in California. Mishtigunj is her ancestral home where she could never be or never belong: belonging now poses a geographical limitation because Mishtigunj is a part of Bangladesh, a country that is not her country. Diasporic identity is always gendered and women's experiences regarding displacement are much more revealing. Tara in the two novels finds herself caught between patriarchal histories and legends of her past home and the rationality imposed by her husband in the acquired home. As her quest for diasporic consciousness progresses from *Desirable Daughters* to *The Tree Bride*, Tara ends up accepting her Indian identity and values.

The protagonist in Bharati Mukherjee's, *The Tree Bride*, is Tara Lata who was married to a tree as a child since her husband died of snake bite. More than a century later, San Francisco resident Tara Chartterjee researches the history of this distant relative Tara Lata, discovering hidden links between her history with *The Tree Bride*, and the people she knows in the present.

When I realized that Tara Lata had been an actual little girl who grew up surrounded by other little girl servants and had taught herself to read Bengali, English, and Persian, it seemed to me a miracle on the order of Helen Keller. The fact that she then taught the language to the girls and boys of the village made her an Annie Sullivan, and that she had fought against the colonial authorities on the side of the Indian nationalists, a Joan of Arc. It became my dharma, my duty, to set her story down. (TTB 37)

Tara is the narrator of Mukherjee's last novel, *The Desirable Daughters*, and the two novels are part of a proposed trilogy. *The Tree Bride*, starts from where the previous novel left off, following the attempted murder of Tara and her husband Bish Chatterjee by a firebomb in their home. It was assumed that Bish a co-founder of a hugely successful communications technology company was the target. He has considerably less money, and is confined to a wheelchair as a result of the bomb blast. After moving back to the United States, Tara who is pregnant wrote about her personal experiences and wrote a book about her relative Tara Lata.

One of her short stories entitled *Isolated Incidents* explores the biased Canadian View towards immigrants that she encountered, as well as how government agencies handled assaults on particular races. Another short story titled *The Tenant* continues to reflect on her focus on immigrant Indian women and their maltreatment. The story is about a divorced Indian woman studying in the States and her experiences with interracial relationships.

Mukherjee's works focus on the status of immigrants, and the feeling of alienation often experienced by expatriates and particularly by Indian women and their struggle. Bharati Mukherjee's own struggle with identity first as an exile from India, then as an Indian expatriate in Canada, and finally as a immigrant in the United States has lead to her current contentment of being an immigrant in a country of immigrants.

Mukherjee's fiction became more accessible to the American reader because of her identification as an American of Bengali origin. Mukherjee's cosmopolitanism co-existed easily with her belief in the nation – state as the guarantor of rights and privileges

as well as with a stable ethnic identity that was not seen as conflicted with her American identity. Mukherjee has repeatedly affirmed her status as an American citizen, both by law and in literature. Mukherjee labels herself neither Indian- American nor Asian-American but distinctly and solely American.

She has made important contributions to the multiethnic literary field of the United States of America. She realizes the fact that she is no more an Indian writer or an exile or an expatriate. Her ambition is expressed thus:

I am an American writer, in the American mainstream, trying to extend it.
This is a vitally important statement from me. I am American not an
Indian writer, not an exile, not an expatriate. I am an immigrant; my
investment is in the American reality not the Indian. (qtd in Naik 108)

The dissertation attempts to exemplify identity crisis, psychological trauma, and search for roots in Bharati Mukherjee's fictions which deal with the theme of diaspora. A survey is made regarding identity issues of this cross – cultural author in her works. The different aspects of diasporic experiences and how these experiences further diverge into preservation and appropriation under the sway of globalisation which happens to challenge cultural dichotomy is analysed. 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.

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.