

## Chapter II

### Cultural Transition-Mapping Identities in

#### *The Tiger's Daughter, Wife, Leave it to Me and Jasmine*

The words like expatriate and diaspora have become an inherent aspect in postcolonial literary scenario. Indian diaspora, today, has emerged with the multiplicity of histories, variety of culture, tradition, and a deep instinct for survival. The process of survival of the diasporic individual community in between the home of origin and the world of adoption is the voyage undertaken in the whole process from alienation to final assimilation.

Bharati Mukherjee, an Indian born Canadian American novelist, has made a deep impression on the literary canvass. Her novels, honestly, depict the issues of her own cultural location in West Bengal in India, her displacement from her land of origin to Canada where she was not much recognized as a writer and was insecure as a racial minority and her final re-location to USA as a naturalised citizen. In the novels *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife*, and *Jasmine* Bharati Mukherjee, explores the problem of nationality, location, identity and historical memory in Canada. This chapter aims to explore Bharati Mukherjee's sense of alienation in Canada where life as an immigrant was unbearable, that forced her to make an effort towards the process of economic, social and cultural adjustment.

The study of the texts by authors in diaspora has obviously included examinations of India as their motherland or homeland. Further, placing the texts in the diasporic context opens up many new areas for exploration. Emanuel. S. Nelson points out:

The application of the concept of diaspora offers a new paradigm to study Indian cultural productions outside the Indian center. .... Situating the texts in the diasporic context allows us to grasp more fully the unresolved tensions in the diasporic consciousness that shape those texts as well as the ethnographical significance of those texts. Furthermore, the diasporic framework creates space for a variety of comparative studies of the different traditions within international Indian writing in English. (Xi)

Expatriation is a complex phenomenon that involves not only geographical boundaries, but also an emotional severing of bonds with the homeland, followed by transplantation in a new, alien country and social environment. Immigrant writers and their narratives are interesting studies in reconstruction of identities in the emigrational paradigm. The search for an ethnic identity is grounded in the connection to the past. In the process of the ethnic transformation and translation of ethnic community within an alien culture, the ethnic community negotiates ways of reinventing ethnic identity using memories from their heritage. The changes, which the ethnic community undergoes in a diverse social milieu, get manifested in the creative writings of immigrant writers, especially in the genre of fiction. Such novels evidently portray hyphenated characters often presented with dual affiliations and hybrid cultural identity. Social psychology, attribute behavioral changes resulting from social interaction as a key factor in the psychological make-up of an individual, in an alien land. Most of the characters created by Bharati Mukherjee in her fictional narratives are prototypes of their own hyphenated selves.

The expatriates suffer due to cultural alienation. The tremendous difference between the two cultures leads a person towards depression and frustration. This is called cultural shock. When a person leaves his culture and enters another, his old values come into conflict with the new one. Bharati Mukherjee has claimed in her *Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalists*; "We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate ... My aim is to expose Americans to the energetic voices of new settlers in this country" (653-654).

Expatriates follow the pattern of multiculturalism which signifies that they form ethnic communities that remain distinct from the majority population in terms of language, culture and social behaviour. They form ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin.

Where a large number of migrants from one town or city, region or country live together in the same country of destination, they come together in formal diaspora organisations. These organisations focus their activities in development of their country of origin by sending them money, remittances and material goods. This virtual return of the expatriates through money transfer systems is a firm evidence of their emotional bond with the homeland.

The first generation migrants feel insecure in a new country. The feeling of alienation continues to linger in their sub-conscious. They remain deeply imbued with their past and feel responsible for the propagation of their culture and indigenization of their coming generations. As a result, they continue to preserve their indigenous values and teach their generations. Most of the migrants try to inculcate their values, traditions,

customs and most specifically language in their future generations, considering them to be the preservers and propagators of their ethnic identity.

On the other hand, the second and the third generation migrants seem to be dwindling between the two conflicting worlds: one at home and the other outside. They seem to be striking a balance between the environment they are born and bred in and the world they are stepping into for the rest of their lives. They no longer want to remain the objects of history as targets of western colonialism but join the west as movers and shakers of history.

While the first generation migrants experience economic, linguistic, educational, electoral and employment disadvantages, the second and third generations receive all the above advantages and are competent enough to stand on an equal footing with the host society. First generation migrants often have limited legal rights and suffer discrimination in the judicial system. They are often excluded from the civic participation of the host society. They suffer harassment in racial and religious matters. But their future generations remain safely secure from such negativities and enjoy all the freedom and rights as experienced by their contemporary host society. The descendants of immigrants have been largely successful in bridging the gap that their preceding generations could not cover due to the lack of foreign qualification, lack of language fluency and lack of experience. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha states that “the inderminates, interstitial zone or place of hybridity is a state of in-between-ness experienced by the colonized” (125).

According to Homi K. Bhabha, the noted theorist on post colonialism and diaspora criticism in his *The Location of Culture*, stressed the need to look for ambivalence.

The need to think beyond narrative of originary and the initial subjectivities and to focus on these moments or process that is produced in the articulation of cultural differences. There 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaboratory strategies of self-hood-singular or communal that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (172)

Mukherjee describes the American experiences as one of fusion and immigration a two-way process in which both the host and the immigrants grow by interchange and experiences. While in Canada, Bharati Mukherjee published two novels, *The Tiger's Daughter* in 1971 and *Wife* in 1975. The theme of expatriation is reflected in her writings in Canada.

The women characters Tara, Dimple, Debby and Jasmine in Mukherjee's novels are rooted in their native countries and possess apparently well-defined gendered identities based on issues of class, caste, religion, sexuality and education. When they migrate, they experience physical and psychological displacement from their homeland, they come into contact with difference and, then, they cross the borders and disrupt the definitions of gender roles and relations and their belief in supposedly stable identities. These disruptions and border crossings in identity can be related to the concept of diaspora or expatriation.

Bharati Mukherjee's first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* is a materialization of the diasporic community and hence alienated. Tara Banerjee, the main protagonist, belongs to 'the other', disjoined community who struggle to hook-on to the nationalised community by entering into the wedlock with an American, David Cartwright. The more Tara becomes cognizant of this point of divergence between- the Indian wife and the American husband, the more she is apprehensive of the verity that she is a detachable entity from the nationalised community. Bharati Mukherjee's first manifestation of alienation in a territory of immigration is through *The Tiger's Daughter*.

*The Tiger's Daughter* is a story that revolves around an upper class Bengali Brahmin girl who goes to America for higher studies. Even though she is not aware of the ways and culture of America she somehow tries to adjust and marries an American. She returns to India after seven years, and finds herself alienated from her own mother land. Thus, she realizes that she is no longer an Indian or an American. She is now caught in between two cultures. In *The Tiger's Daughter*, the protagonist named Tara Banerjee Cartwright is an autobiographical presentation of the author herself who is also married to an American. Several critics have pointed out the strongly autobiographical tone of this novel. Comparing Tara with Bharati Mukherjee, Maya Manju Sharma has commented:

When Tara/Bharati goes west, she undergoes a new birth in the womb of Vassar and growth in graduate school. The new birthed consciousness- birthed in dormitories and classrooms by a Western curriculum and consciousness- seeks to hold its history at its centre where the knowledge is visionless. Like Henry James' heroine, Isabel Archer, who goes to Europe/Britain, the source of her tradition, for vision in knowledge, so

Tara/Bharati must come to the source- the omphalos of all vision- the Catelli Continental. Thanks to Joyonto Roy Chowdhury, and her years away, Tara begins to exchange vision for insight. At the end of the novel, as she sits shivering in the Fiat, surrounded by a mob, wondering whether she will ever see her husband again, she sees the vision twinkling, pinching, pulling, slapping through the crowd that surrounds the hotel. Bharati Mukherjee is refusing to state what it is, invites a reader response in decoding the vision. (13)

The story begins on a rainy night in the year 1879. It was the day of the grand wedding ceremony of the daughters of Harilal Banerjee, the ‘Zamindar’ of the village Pachapara. Standing under a wedding canopy on the roof of his house Hari Lal Banerjee could have hardly imagined what future holds in store for his coming generations.

After Hari Lal Banerjee’s daughter’s marriage, he fell a prey to an unseen assassin. All the reputation and influence of Banerjee family died with him:

Years later a young woman who had never been to Pachapara would grieve for the Banerjee family and try to analyse the reasons for its change. She would sit by a window in America to dream of Hari Lal, the great grand-father, and she would wonder at the gulf that separated him from herself. (TTD 9)

This young woman is nobody else but Tara Banerjee, the great granddaughter of Hari Lal Banerjee and the daughter of Bengal Tiger, the owner of famous Banerjee&

Thomas Tobacco Co. Ltd. At the age of fifteen Tara is sent to America for higher studies.

This teenage girl when she reached America was full of fear and anger:

For Tara, Vassar had been an almost unsalvageable mistake. If she had not been a Banerjee, a Bengali Brahmin, the great granddaughter of Hari Lal Banerjee, or perhaps if she had not been trained by the good nuns at St. Blaise's to remain composed and ladylike in all emergencies, she would have rushed home to India at the end of her first week. (TTD 10)

Tara Banerjee, the key protagonist, is a Brahmin girl who travels to America for advance studies. In order to assimilate herself to her new surroundings she marries an American as Mukherjee herself did. They melting pot paradigm, takes a closer look at the process of migrants' integration in the case of New York City. Tara Banerjee evaluates her life and ethics with that of her husband's. Contrary to her cultural belief, her ethnicity comes to direct blows when her conjugal life which was supposed to be based on the standard code of union identified by her right from her childhood, was actually based on the principle of contract as identified by her husband.

The immigrants wistful, passionate sensitivity for her mother country is dashed to pieces when it comes into direct blows with reality. The Americanisation of her finer sensibilities; her unruffled and frosty response to her nickname 'Tultul'; her response to her relatives house which seemed elegant and chic to her previously looked shabbier afterwards, startle her. The character of Tara is aghast and horror-struck at this swing in response. Tara is an immigrant sandwiched between personalities and suffers the duality and conflict very divergent to her American life. The moral fiber of Tara's character, like



the novelist, suffers from the cultural dichotomy surrendering those thousands of years of pure culture. "The epidemics, collision, fatal accidents, and starvation"(TTD 97) of Calcutta, the omnipresence of her husband David in the midst of rioting rabble and her own westernisation over the period of seven years add to her anguish and misery. Mukherjee, like Tara, felt self-estrangement at the loss of identity.

Tara is sent to America at a tender age of fifteen for higher studies. In Poughkeepsie she feels stranded and nostalgic. "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" (TTD 13).

But soon the immigrant sensibility dawns upon Tara and in her desire to adapt, she marries an American named David Cartwright. She is still apprehensive about the fact that her husband is a foreigner who is unable to understand the nuances of her family background and culture. She irons the silk scarves and hangs them in her apartment to give it an Indian décor. Thus, the feeling of insecurity continues to cling to her until she plans a trip to India, after a gap of seven years, to erase all the shadowy fears of alienation and hesitation. But a journey back home doesn't help her find what she has lost and realises that she has lost her sense of belongingness.

Tara fails in the search for her roots. Once in her native land, she confronts the changed circumstances of her country with the eagerness of a foreigner. Later she realizes that seven years of Americanisation have drained fifteen years of Indianness out of her. She still wonders:

How does the foreignness of spirit begin? Does it begin right in the centre of Calcutta, with forty ruddy Belgian women, fat foreheads swelling under starched white head-dresses, long black habits intensifying the hostility of the Indian sun?" or did it "drift inward with the winter chill at Vassar, as she watched the New York snow settle over new architecture, blonde girls . . .? (TTD 37)

Tara's consciousness of the present is rooted in her life in the United States and when she looks at India with a new insight; 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, with a foreign spirit.

Tara Banerjee in *The Tiger's Daughter* is alienated in her American set of connections and also alienated from her native culture. She suffers the spasm of estrangement from her relatives. Her pain of alienation is evident not only in Canada and America but even in her indigenous terrain of Bengal and wonders "How does the foreignness of spirit begin?"(TTD 37). It is at that moment she excruciatingly realises that she is neither an Indian nor an American. With the advent of globalisation, and diaspora, in particular, has attained new connotations and significantly associated with global deterritorialisation, transnational migration and cultural hybridity.

While returning back to India, America looks like a dream land to her. Just a few days have passed since she left America but it seems to her that she had never been out of India, her old sense of pride comes back to her. " She had not thought that seven years in another country, a husband, a new blue pass port could be so easily blotted out" (TTD

25 ). To her, her husband David “seemed far less real than the flat- faced Nepali with extra sensory perception. She watched David’s healthy face disappear into the fleshy folds of the Nepali’s neck and the spider’s body” (TTD 26). As soon as she reaches Howrah Station, she is outraged by “the squalor and confusion of Howrah Station” (TTD 27). Though the station was crowded by relatives and by vendors ringing bells, beggars, and children coughing on tracks, Tara feels lonely. Everything seems to be unreal for her except Bengal Tiger, her father. She thinks that she might go mad. Even her father “seemed to have become a symbol for the outside world. He had become a pillar supporting a balcony that had long outlived its beauty and its function” (TTD 29). When she reaches home she experiences immense peace.

Tara longed for her husband’s love when she saw many events in India which moved her mind:

Tara thought she loved David desperately. How absurd that she had worried about sinking into Calcutta’s vast sadness! She saw a procession of children eating yoghurt off Park Street, rude men chasing horses in Darjeeling, a marcher subdued near the Catelli, and she whispered, “It isn’t possible in Bengal. We’re sensitive, we’re sentimental, it can’t happen to Bengalis. (TTD 197)

Tara is an expatriate geographically as well as in her mind and spirit. She shares the expatriate characteristics of being ill at ease both in the native culture and in the alien one. She represents the dilemma faced by the expatriates. Sivaramakrishna says in his *Indian English Novelists* about Tara that the "retention of her identity as an Indian is in

constant tension with the need for its renunciation if she has to acquire a new identity as immigrants". (74)

Bharati Mukherjee has deliberately avoided the immigrant writer's temptation to fall within 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's rootlessness is found, both in India and America. Tara finds herself at home nowhere. Tara finds alienated and irritated by the trivial and trivializing persons and attitudes. The psychological, social and cultural displacement that she suffers from makes her nervous and excitable.

*The Tiger's Daughter* reflected the confrontation between illusion and reality. The writer has adopted the technique of documentation to bring out the contrast between two worlds and differing attitudes. Immigrant away from home idealizes his home country and cherishes nostalgic memories of it. Tara's father packed her off at an early age of fifteen for America. Tara is homesick in Poughkeepsie. Little things bring nostalgia which pains her. She senses discrimination if her room mates do not share her mango-chutney, she finds herself in situations where she thinks it is her duty to defend her family and her country.

Bharati Mukherjee leads her heroine through a series of adventure and reconciliations. Tara's homesick eyes noticed many changes in the city of Calcutta. She was outraged and could not respond to these changes. She longed for the Bengal of Satyajit Ray, children running through cool green spaces, aristocrats despairing in music rooms of empty laces, what confronted her was a restive city, which forced weak men to

financial defence or dishonesty. Calcutta was losing its memories in a bonfire of effigies, buses and trams. "An appetite for grotesques and starvation stretching before her was the vision of modern India taken over the city" (TTD117). Tragedy was not uncommon in Calcutta, the news papers were full of epidemics, collisions and fatal quarrels.

The writer interlinks the events-like Tara's visit to a funeral pyre at the river bank, her meeting with a small beggar girl afflicted with leprosy, the vision of beggar's children eating off the street, the superficialities of the lives of her friends, the riots and demonstrations and her catastrophic rape by the politician, Tuntunwalla characteristics the trauma of Tara during her visit to India. Tara's visit to Darjeeling is also marred by ugly and violent incidents.

Tara visits a funeral pyre at the river bank with Joyonto Roy Chowdhury, the owner of tea estates in Assam and runs at the sight of the tantric who stretches his hands and asks for her palms. She fails to read his intentions and thinks that the man needs alms. It is a simple misunderstanding of tantric's intentions or it may be Tara's inherent fear and uncertainty of her life. It is clear that she does not want to show her palms to the tantric because she is conscious of her sin of marrying an American without matching her horoscopes. Tara loses her balance of mind, on seeing a little girl suffering from leprosy. She screams and becomes almost hysterical.

*Don't touch me, don't touch me!* ... In the car, revived by smelling salts the faithful chauffeur kept in the glove compartment for just such emergencies, Tara had worried about making a fool of herself. "I'm sorry I

ruined the trip for you people. I don't know what came over me. I saw that girl with leprosy and I just lost my head". (TTD122)

There are numerous scenes in the novel where one can find the typical spirit of Bengal. Tara Banerjee's habit of retaining her maiden surname after marriage symbolically reflects her subconscious mind, which is still deeply rooted in her native land and has not been able to forget it inspite of the changed destiny, an American identity adopted by her. The protagonist finds it difficult to adjust with the deteriorating situation and she is depressed and disgusted. Finally she wishes to go back to the U.S.A to her husband as she becomes a victim of violence in India. During those moments, when she is caught up in the violence, her mind is pre occupied with her husband David in America.

Bharati Mukherjee's description of Tara's meeting with David betrays her faith in the inevitable: "She did not know then that she eventually would marry that young man"(TTD 14). As it is typical Indian who is proud of her family and generosity, she defends her family and her country instinctively. She prays to Goddess Kali for strength. She is seized by a vision of terror. She complained of homesickness to her mother in letters: "who prayed to Kali to save Tara's conscience, chastity and complexion"(TTD 13).

Tara cannot communicate with her husband about the finner nuances of her family background and of her life in Calcutta. Her failure to do so is rooted in their cultural differences. David is hostile to genealogies and often mistakes her love to

overdependence. In India marriage is not simply a union of two individuals, it is coming together of two families as well and she feels completely alien in the new atmosphere.

The new Americanized Tara fails to bring back her old sense of perception and views about India but she perceives India as an onlooker with the keenness of a foreigner. And thus her entire outlook changes. Shobha Shinde in her *Cross Cultural Crisis in Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine and The Tiger's Daughter* refers to this expatriate weakness thus: "an immigrant away from home idealizes his home country and cherishes nostalgic memories of it"(17).

When Tara comes to confront the changed and hostile circumstances of her home country, all her romantic dreams and ideals crumble down. She realizes that she has drowned her childhood memories in the crowd of America. Tara makes a trip to India after seven years, she had admired the house on marine Drive, had thought them fashionable "but now their shabbiness appalled her "(TTD 18). In the train she happens to share the compartment with a Marwari and a Nepali. She thinks that both will ruin her journey to Calcutta.

Just a few days have passed since she left America but it seems to her that she had never been out of India, her old sense of pride comes back to her. To her, David seemed, fearless, real than the flat faced Nepali with extraordinary perception. Tara's experiences and character in Mukherjee's *The Tigers Daughter* seem to be a replica of Mukherjee's real life. Hence, Tara's journey from an expatriate to an immigrant is a fine manifestation of Mukherjee's own experiences. Mukherjee sees this transition as a movement away from the aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration.

Ideally though the expatriate should be able to write objectively and accurately about both countries, Mukherjee often becomes satiric in her portrayal of Tara. Juxtaposition is a technique that is adopted by the novelist to bring the two countries together. Tara's response to the same sight both before and after her exposure to the west shows the change that has come over her. Seven years ago she was full of admiration for everything Indian. The very houses on the Marine Drive which seemed fashionable on her way to the airport now outrage her with their shabbiness. The journey home is an occasion for experiencing the sliding of identities experienced by the expatriate. The drabness of the city which she never noticed before affronts now because her outlook has altered. The sickness she feels at the overcrowded railway station which seems to her "more like a hospital" (TTD 19) reminds her of David and thereby America. After years of acquaintance with planes, now contrary to her expectation, the train ride depresses her. Tara's efforts to adapt to American society are measured by her rejection and revulsion of Indian modes of life.

Her supercilious attitude in the air-conditioned compartment at Calcutta makes her critically and ironically observe the companions as destroyers of her journey. She is frightened by their capacity for anger on trivial matters. Her refusal to take any food or even coke on the train suggests her fear of getting polluted. The thought of her husband at such a moment reflects her Americanized attitude to Indian culture. The alien land has become more of a home to her that she is unable to discern which her real home is. Westernization has made her a critic of India. Her first experience in the native landfills her with disappointment. The deteriorating and social changes coupled with her own attitude to poverty and filth aggravates her discomfort. "The corrosive hours on the



Marine drive and the inexorable train journey make her embittered woman she now thought, old and cynical at twenty- two and quick to take offence" (TTD 25).

Tara's alienation in Calcutta is visible through her regular visits to Catelli-Continental Hotel, where she feels cut-off from the real India, burning with violent riots. She still "longed for the Bengal of Satyajit Ray, children running through cool green spaces, aristocrats despairing in music rooms of empty palaces" (TTD 105). Unable to find the innocence she left behind, she decides to go back to David, an evidence of her American identity, by keeping all her nostalgia aside.

Tara is in the midway through her identity reconstruction; and like an expatriate continues to cling to some shades of her ethnic identity. It is this vision of homeland that Tara is trying to locate in the midst of the alien host culture. As a result Mukherjee's protagonist in *The Tiger's Daughter* remains an expatriate, with dual affiliations and conflicting cultural amities. Her much anticipated return to the native land proves distressful and tragic. From her first revulsion, upon seeing the beggar in the Bombay Railway Station, right through her unhappiness with friends and relatives; together with her sexual abuse in the hands of a stranger; culminating in her imprisonment inside a car, amidst a rioting mob on Camac street, Mukherjee succeeds in portraying the psyche of a typical expatriate.

Multi-cultural confrontations bring about mutations in Tara's identity. These changes are irreversible and despite her earnest efforts she cannot locate the identity lost in her roots. It is her nostalgic quest for roots that takes Tara back to India. But the gap between the years of exit and reentry has created too wide a gulf to bridge. Tara is a

victim of biculturalism. She has not matured to respond to the demands of the two countries: one of origin and the other of habitation. Hence she retains a hyphenated identity, an Indian-American suspended between two worlds and rooted in neither. Torn between the newly adorned American spirit and the old unsalvageable Indian self the immigrant remains a split-psyche. Always troubled by the life she left behind, Tara remains a permanent alien.

In *Wife*, Dimple the protagonist is trapped between two cultures, and aspires to a third imagined world. In Dimple's imagination there is no place for mundane responsibility, struggle with day-to-day existence like water shortage, electricity failure, adjustment with her in-laws. But after her marriage, though she is very much interested in visiting America, Her anger and fear in the alien land overpowers her life. Dimple has been portrayed as a free and rebelling throughout the novel. She has no inhibition in expressing whatever she feels. Thus she watches T.V and considers fantasy and reality to be one and the same. As a result she is tormented without hope of either release or relief and finally kills her husband Amit.

Displacement often leads to alienation and search for self identity. Instead of focusing on nostalgia she stresses on the changing identities and the need for refashioning oneself. Dislodgement in the native and the alien environment leads to problems of adjustment. For an Indian woman marriage marks her first cleavage from the familiar. She experiences the pain of separation and her future depends on the attitude of her husband, her in-laws and the congeniality of the environment. Married to an engineer Amit Basu, Dimple Dasgupta transplants herself from Rash Baheri Avenue to Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road. Issues of adjustment start with the imposition of a new name and identity

'Nandini' which demands a repudiation of the past. Not only the inhabitants, but the apartment as a whole fails to satisfy her romantic dreams. To Dimple her second home becomes only a transit where she sojourns with no sense of belonging.

The novel *Wife*, tells about the life of a middle class married Bengali woman who migrates from Calcutta to New York. The novel opens thus: "Dimple Dasgupta had set her heart on marrying a neurosurgeon" (WF 3). Mukherjee quotes in the cover page of the novel, the Oxford English Dictionary definition of "Dimple" as- "any slight surface depression". Dimple is not like normal girls, she always think about marriage because, according to her marriage is a blessing. It will bring her freedom, fortune, and perfect happiness. "Marriage would bring her freedom, Cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, fund-raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love" (WF 3).

After marriage Dimple moves to Amit's residence. Dimple does not feel at ease there, she does not like her mother – in – law and sisters-in-law also. Her mother- in- law wants to call her by the name 'Nandini'. But Dimple thinks that all these problems would come to an end when they migrate to the foreign land. She frequently talks with her husband about foreign trip though "Thoughts of living in Africa or North America terrified her"(WF17).

Even after her marriage Dimple is not satisfied with her married life. She starts hating everything:" She hated the gray cotton with red roses inside yellow circles that her mother-in-law had hung on sagging tapes against the metal bars of the windows" (WF 20). Dimple thinks that marriage had robbed her off all romantic yearnings so tastefully nourished. One evening Amit takes her to Kwality's by taxi and orders chili

chicken, chicken fried rice and chicken spring rolls. She feels uneasy handling the chicken pieces with fork and knife and thinks that it would have been better if Amit had taken her to Trinca's instead:

He should have taken her to Trinca's on Park Street, where she could have listened to a Goan band play American music, to prepare her for the trip to New York or Toronto. Or to the discotheque in the Park Hotel, to teach her to dance and wriggle. (WF 21)

Amit was not the man whom Dimple had imagined as her husband. When Dimple was alone at home she starts creating the man of her dream " She borrowed a forehead from an aspirin ad, the lips, eyes and chin from a body builder and shoulders ad, the stomach and legs from a trousers ad and put the ideal man" ( WF 23). Dimple always had been living in a world of fantasy and was reluctant to face realistic situations. In her psychic world always fantasy and dreams merged and blurred the sense of reality. Dimple found it difficult to separate her subconscious desires from stark reality.

As the days passed on, Dimple becomes pregnant, and she vomits continuously. She was not able to do any work day and night. She feels a strange sensation: "The vomit fascinated her. It was hers; she was locked in the bathroom expelling brownish liquid from her body. She took pride in brownish blossoms"(WF 30).

Pregnancy is the greatest gift from God. Indian women think that if a woman fails to reproduce a child she is condemned and becomes an object of hatred in society. But Dimple hates pregnancy "She thought of ways to get rid of ... Whatever it was that blocked her tubes and pipes" (WF 31). Her killing of the mice which looked pregnant

also suggests that she does not feel happy with her pregnancy. She becomes almost hysteric in killing that tiny creature without any reason:

She pounded and pounded the baby clothes until a tiny gray creature ran out of the pipe, 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 gray head. (WF 35)

This act of killing is a manifestation of violence inside her. Dimple wants to migrate but she does "not want to carry any relics from her old life" (WF 42). She thinks that old things will remind her of irritations. She considers her pregnancy also as the old relics and decides to end it by skipping ropes. Her self- abortion is explained thus:

She had skipped rope until her legs grew numb and her stomach burned; then she had poured water from the heavy bucket over her head, shoulders, over the tight little curve of her stomach. She had poured until the last of the blood washed off her legs; then she had collapsed. (WF 42)

When Amit's confirmation for migration to U.S comes, Dimple's happiness is inexpressible. The long awaited day of migration comes and Mr& Mrs. Amit Basu reach Kennedy Airport where Jyoti Sen, Amit's former classmate at the I.I.T Kharagpur receives them. On the way he talks about the triple- murder case which happens to be the talk of the town. A guy murders three persons including the ice- cream vendor just for the

simple reason that the fellow doesn't have a chocolate ice-cream cone. The prevalence of violence in America terrifies Dimple as she has never been out of the Calcutta city.

At New York Dimple and Basu stayed at Sen's apartment. One day Dimple went to the market to get cheese cake. Though she is afraid to go out Meena Sen encourages her. When she reaches, the shop keeper starts staring at her. As the beef was hung around in the shop and every where there is blood smell, she could not bear the intolerable smell and repeats the same sentence to the shopkeeper. The shopkeeper at once asks whether she does not know the law and starts searching for something in his drawer.

The Shop man still stared. "You think I don't know grams, lady? She bit her lip."Grams, Pounds, you think I care? What I care about, lady, is breaking the law. Tell me-you want I should break the law?

"No I didn't know the law," she said. He was reaching under the counter, for a gun, Dimple thought. I've insulted him; I will stand here numbly and be shot. (WF 59)

Dimple was so afraid, she thought that the man would take out his gun and she left the shop soon. This incidence makes her to realize the difference between Calcutta and New York:" In Calcutta she'd buy from Muslims, Biharis, Christians, Nepali's. She was used to marry races; she'd never been a communalist" (WF 60).

Mukherjee stresses cultural performativity to emphasize the clash with the ideal vision of America as the land of opportunity that embraces change, development, and diversity. Mukherjee ultimately wants to identify Americanness as a cultural identity that

immigrants cannot perform; nevertheless, they try. Even before moving to the United States, Amit tries to prepare Dimple for their life in America. “She dislikes having to eat with a knife and fork, but prefers eating with her fingers, Bengali-style, in a restaurant, seemed terribly uncouth” (WF22). That one could learn to practice a culture, even in an alien land, without ever experiencing it, emphasizes deformity rather than character. Amit believes that urging his new wife to behave like an American initiates the Americanization process. However, for these characters, the concept of Americanization exists only in noun form. Actual Americanization implies change; instead, the characters cultivate an Indian identity that performs a fixed version of culture in the United States and call it Americanization. Neither Indian nor American culture actually interacts or develops, for they remain fixed. Amit teaches Dimple Western practices while they reside in India, he prepares for a future already defined and resistant to change.

Dimple finds herself trapped in a dilemma because of tension she experiences living between the American culture and the traditional constraints surrounding an Indian wife: between a feminist desire to be assertive and the Indian demand to be submissive. The colourful dreams of owning an American apartment also clashes with reality. She had expected American apartments to resemble sets in a Raj Kapoor movie. But the Khanna apartment is hardly bigger than that of the Basus in Calcutta. The nature of the parties they attend strengthens the feeling of the sectarian nature of life in America.

In *Wife*, Dimple’s community of Indians in America adheres to this model by privileging either Indian or American culture. At an Indian dinner party that the newly arrived Dimple attends with her husband and their host family, discussion centers on a comparison between all things Indian and American, down to the banality of chickens.

One guest asserts, "though our chickens may be smaller and thinner they taste far, far better. Everyone agreed with him"(WF 66), substantiating Dimple's impression that "among themselves, India could do no wrong "(WF 63). The drive to compare starkly separates both cultures and allows the Indian immigrants to boast their inherent Indianness, a quality they feel compelled to display and perform.

By comparing and privileging, the community avoids the sense of exile that troubles Dimple. Jyoti Sen, the man fostering Dimple and her husband Amit, said, "wasn't it wonderful that Indians abroad were so outgoing and open-minded" (WF 67). He alludes to the necessity of geographical displacement as a means of emphasizing difference not only between Americans and Indians but between Indians abroad and Indians in India. In so doing, Mukherjee evokes a past and creates a temporal history for her community of immigrant characters. We see the conflict between constructed past and immigrant present when Dimple and Amit first arrive in America and Jyoti Sen greets them at the airport dressed in a red shirt and bright white pants, something a Bombay film star might wear. Dimple cannot take her host seriously, either as an engineer or culturally as a friend. "She wouldn't have taken him for a Bengali at first sight" (WF 51). Confronted with the differences of American culture, Jyoti feels compelled to perform an idealized version of the Indian culture he has left, which intensifies or at the very least, maintains difference. Dimple, newly arrived to America, has not yet created her cultural past and therefore finds Jyoti unbelievable, who is an imitator of an Indian identity. The reminiscence of the past only emphasizes its unreality and widens the distance between past and present and, in the immigrants' case, between



India and America. It fixes the two cultures in time and space, making change impossible in the present.

Acquaintance with the West results a change in the attitude of the immigrant. Like Tara who finds herself disgusted with everything native, Dimple also reacts negatively to everything associated with home. She who had been confident of first-rate jobs for her honest and intelligent husband now feels less assured amidst the glamorous world of America. With her introduction to Ina Mullick who is "more American than most Americans" (WF 68), Dimple starts measuring herself against the scale of Ina and feels ashamed of her sari-swathed body. Ina familiarises her with new thoughts and styles of living. The dream of the body of Ina in Dimple's sari at the beach suggests her hidden impulses and fears. A magazine article exhorting people to express themselves to the surroundings inject hatred in her attitude to the Sen's apartment which she had found so lovely on arrival and which symbolized a surrogate India for the immigrant. Amit is now frustrated and hates everything Indian because he is now jobless. As the days passed on, he becomes more impatient and he gives up his confidence. Meanwhile, Dimple spends time with Meena Sen by helping her with domestic works and watching T.V or reading newspapers. She always lives with constant fear and everything terrifies her. She is constantly exposed to news relating to murder and violence.

Dimple starts thinking that marriage betrayed her and Amit is no more a man whom she visualized in her dreams. She cannot tolerate his snores and becomes insomniac. She suddenly realizes that "she hated the Sens apartment, Sofa-bed, the wall to wall rug "(WF 88).

Amit's unemployment was the root cause for the trouble. Dimple dislikes him because he was not the man whom she had dreamt before her marriage: "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 three-storey house in Bally gunge Park" ( WF 89 ). She thinks that her marriage to Amit as a failure of her dreams, and expectation:

She was bitter that marriage had betrayed her, had not provided all the glittery things she had imagined, had not brought her Cocktails under Canopied skies and three A.M. drives to dinzy restaurants where they sold divine kababs rolled in roti. (WF101- 102)

The dissatisfaction with everything native diffuses to Amit too who collapses inwardly in comparison with the T.V heroes. Mukherjee charts Dimple's movement from a mute resentment to an escalating disgust and intolerance which finally culminates in disaster. Uprooted from the solidity of her Bengal home and planked down in the hectic, liberal yet impersonal world of America, Dimple travails psychological fragmentation resulting from the clash of cultures and the disparity between aspiration and reality. In the first stage of migration, the immediate concern of an immigrant is shelter and a job. Her husband being unemployed and without an address for themselves Dimple experiences the pangs of rootlessness and identity crisis.

She feels less confident of her English and loses all confidence in the ambitious dreams of Amit in the competitive economic jungle of New York. The loneliness of an immigrant has the breadth of unfamiliarity and the painful depth of isolation. With no

affinity established with Meena Sen and her daughter Anjali, Dimple rots in her isolation. Worst affected by insomnia and suffering the pressures of a jobless husband, she starts brooding over "seven ways to commit suicide" (WF102). The security of a job does not guarantee peace. She becomes hard to please. The search for a place to live suggests her unconscious desire to have a sense of belonging. Despite a job and a house the third section of the novel begins on pessimistic notes. The image of the star collapsing inwardly suggests Dimple's mind set. Removal from the homely, by-now familiar atmosphere of the Sen's at Queens to the Mookerjees only increases her fits of insomnia.

Somehow Amit gets a job and they move to Marsha's flat, at Greenwich. Dimple always dreamt of a fully furnished apartment with all sorts of appliances. Marsha's flat is like a dream come true for her. But Amit feels lonely in the new apartment and felt comfortable at Sen's apartment. One day Dimple feels irritated and fights with Amit saying that "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"(WF 110). These words of Dimple shows that she is suffering from inferiority complex and thinks that Amit does not like her and hates her. Amit fails to satisfy her emotional needs. Dimple's whole world is limited to the four-walls of the apartment and media becomes her only friend. Amit suggests that Dimple should go out and make friends but Dimple is fast losing her hold on her sense of reality. Dimple's self is disintegrating as the margins between reality and dream gets blurred within her psyche.

The reaction to the deteriorating process can also be stark. And, considering the formidable danger of self-destructiveness, this reaction is

completely adequate as long as one continues to feel a helpless prey to these merciless forces. In dreams and associations, they may appear in many succinct symbols, such as a homicidal maniac, Dracula, monsters, a white whale, or ghosts. This terror is the nucleus of many fears otherwise inexplicable, such as the fear of the unknown and the dangerous depth of the fear, fear of the ghosts, of anything mysterious. (Horney 153)

When Dimple could not tolerate loneliness, she contemplates several ways of committing suicide. She seems to be in love with whatever is dark, evil, murder, suicide. She cannot trust anybody except media. Even “ her own body seemed alien to her, filled with hate, malice, an insane desire to hurt, yet weightless, almost airborne” ( WF117 ).

Ina Mullick brings her American friends to Dimple's apartment for a get together. “To Dimple they all looked alike; even their clothes were similar. She felt too shy to talk to them“(WF 146). Somehow she manages and starts going out with Ina and Milt. She wears Marsha’s pants and tries to taste the prohibited freedom. She seduces Milt and keeps it a secret from Amit. She turns neurotic and fails to differentiate between the violent scenes on the T.V screen and real life experiences. She has numerous complaints against life.

Life should have treated her better, should have added and subtracted in different proportions so that she was not left with a Chimera. Amit was no more than that. He did not feed her reveries; he was unreal. She was furious, desperate; she felt sick. 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 bug on the living- room wall and rug. The cataclysm embraced her. (WF 156)

Dimple thinks that, "Her life was slow, full of miscalculations" (WF 178). As she thinks that she fails in every thing, she decides to murder her husband. The idea of murdering her husband fascinates her. She thinks: "She would kill Amit and hide his body in the freezer. The extravagance of the scheme delighted her, made her feel very American somehow, almost like a character in a T.V series "(WF 195). The problem with Amit is that "he lacked extravagance; he preserved in the immigrant virtues of caution and cunning" (WF 195). The trouble with Dimple is that she loses touch with reality. She keeps everything secretive from Amit and this vexes her. She suffers from insomnia and at last kills Amit.

She sneaked upon him and chose a spot, her favourite spot just under the hairline, where the mole was getting larger and browner, and she drew an imaginary line of kisses because she did not want him to think she was the impulsive, foolish sort who acted like a maniac just because the husband was suffering from insomnia. She touched the mole very lightly and let her fingers draw a circle around the detectable spot, then she brought her right hand up and with the knife stabbed the magical circle once, twice, seven times, each time a little harder, until the milk in the bowl of cereal was a pretty pink and the flakes were mushy and would have embarrassed any advertiser, and then she saw the head fall off- but of course it was her imagination because she was not sure any more what she had seen on T.V

and what she had seen in the private screen of three A.M and it stayed upright on the counter- top, still with its eyes averted from her face, and she said very loudly to the knife that was redder now than it had ever been when she had chopped chicken and mutton with it in the same kitchen and on the same counter ... Women on television got away with murder. (WF 212-213)

Dimple suffers partly because of her own vague sense of freedom and partly from her hatred towards other immigrant Indians. For the Sens and the Vadheras America poses no problems for they confine themselves to the expatriate Indian community and hold on to the traditional culture. They harp on the dream of converting dollars into Indian currency and settle in India as millionaires. With no desire to be part of the melting pot, they shelter themselves behind the citadel of their cultural heritage. But Dimple, inspite of her linguistic and cultural differences, likes to converse with white America.

The attempt to merge with America leaves her traumatized because of her fragile sense of identity and the nature of the people she associates with. Dimple carefully maintained distance from Meena Sen and she gravitates towards Ina Mullick. Thus highlights change in Dimple the growing need for acculturation. The borrowed clothes only help Dimple in estranging from herself. She assumes that even her shopping carts and its contents are part of her disguise. With no cabbages or egg plants or orange, lentils it seems an American cart.

In Marsha's attire she feels she can risk anything and get away with it. Her borrowed identity and sexual adventure with Milt Glasser make her only "much worse, lonelier, and more cut off from Amit, from the Indian, left only borrowed disguises. She felt like a shadow, without feelings" (WF 200). Desperate attempt at endorsement leaves Dimple homeless. With the introduction to the two new Bengali couple from Calcutta she finds herself unfashionable according to the Calcutta standards. Thus unrelated to her husband, to the Indian community and the American society she ends up as a "pitiful immigrant among demanding appliances" (WF 86). Traumatized beyond the point of endurance she murders her husband in what she thinks of as an act of assertion, another proof of her slow and misguided Americanization.

Dimple does not wholly fail, though, because she acts and asserts her individuality apart from the role governed by a cultural history Individual initiative, that's what it came down to, she finally realizes, and "her life had been devoted only to pleasing others, not herself " (WF 212). Dimple grounds her identity in America, for despite its multiculturalism, Mukherjee still considers America the space most welcoming for transformation. Mukherjee acknowledges that Dimple's immigration has been one of "misguided Americanization" (qtd in Sharma 16), but in the end Dimple finally transforms not into an Indian in America, nor into an American, but into an American with an Indian past.

The expatriate dilemma portrayed in the character of Tara and Dimple is resolved in the exuberance of immigration, which Mukherjee celebrates through her later protagonists Debby and Jasmine, More than Tara or Dimple, Debby and Jasmine are the

best example of the hyphenated immigrant who learns to create an alternate reality which is neither purely ethnic, nor totally American.

If transnationalism is understood as the cultural logic of global capitalism, Mukherjee's novel telling of boundary crossings and international networks reveals a number of the effects of transnationalism on people and their fates. In *Leave It to Me*, the protagonist, Debby, originally christened Faustine after a typhoon, and adopted by a normal Italian American family and renamed, is embedded in the globalization of culture since her birth. As the novel gradually unfolds, her parents represent transnational networks peculiar to the 1960's and the early 1970's. Her "Bio – Mom" is a Berkeley – educated American hippie who deserts her child in India, and her "Bio – Daddy" a man of many transnational identities, a guru- turned- killer and a grandson of a Pakistani who had settled in India. Thus Debby is the product of changing names and national affiliations. Debby's father tried to kill her mother, whose confession had put him into jail for murdering a number of Western tourists.

In Bharati Mukherjee's fiction the quest for the definition of self and search for identity are the main features. *Leave It to Me* expresses the problem of identity crisis at another dimension of the immigrant experience. Having moved from one geographical and cultural space to another, from India to America, her writing speaks of the inevitable changes involved in such transitions. She has made important contributions to the multiethnic literary field of the United States. 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 for 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. (qtd in Naik 108)

Bharati Mukherjee's novels frequently redefine the process of immigration as a translation and as a new opportunity for the individual. Such a view has been articulated most strikingly by the protagonist Debby Dee of *Leave It to Me*. The presence of transnationalism in *Leave It to Me* is presented in the context of post – colonial theorizations of home and immigration. The novel maintains the idea of home, which is the signifier of individual and national identity, yet presented in a more flexible manner. In this novel, the emphasis is on the reconstruction of identity of its main character Devi Dee, originally, Debby Di Martino, the child of an American hippie mother and her Indo – European serial killer guru – lover, who is adopted as a baby by an Italian American family from an Indian orphanage run by Catholic nuns. Debby is in search of her identity she is seeking knowledge of her past and of her parent's story. Debby/ Devi, a 23 year old graduate, takes different lovers, explores different worlds and finds herself amidst the San Francisco entertainment industry. In San Francisco Debby locates, and loses, her parents, when a massive earthquake destroys the city. Thus the novel seeks to show how Mukherjee portrays the fixed idea of home peculiar to narratives of nation and replaces it with an idea of transformation as home.

Debby, the twenty three year old protagonist, leads a happy life with her adopted parents; but an urge to know her roots leads her to search her bio parents. Manfred and Serena Dimple Martino are the hardworking and religious couple who adopted Debby as

their child. She was adopted by her parents from some nuns in the late sixties. Wyatt, a twenty two year old graduate student, studying master's degree in social work insists Debby to search her real parents. Debby being a daring person takes up the mission of finding her bio-parents. She was called by different names at different places.

"Well, there wouldn't have been much more to tell you in person. I guess.

Our lawyer said the one thing we had in our favor was that the woman was an American citizen. That made you a citizen too. The woman told the nuns she'd sign the adoption papers if they got us to pay her airfare back to the states".

"So you saw her?"

"No, she had us buy a Delhi- San Francisco ticket. We didn't want to see her. We wanted to give you a clean start, that's why we changed the name nuns gave....." "Faustine?" (LM 51)

As Debby was very eager in search of her bio-parents, she enquires details to her adopted parents about her adoption. She asks every minute detail about her search. The nuns of the orphanage named her Faustine and her adopted parents call her Debby. There are number of characters in the novel who help Debby in various ways to search her bio-parents.

Mukherjee paints Debby her protagonist very attractively: "a tall girl in a small school, a beautiful girl in a plain family, an exotic girl in a very American town" (LM 16). Though she is smart and manipulative young woman she is bitter as she was disowned by her biological parents. Instead of enjoying her young age in the right

manner, she had nightmares and fantasies: "in place of memory, impressions of white-hot sky and burnt-black leaves, she had only bursts of longing"(LM16).She feels herself an outsider always. She is plagued by urges of violence, frightening over-reactions and dark mood-swings precipitated by both the actions of others and her unstable identity.

Francis A. Fong, a rich Chinese immigrant, helps Devi in her search for her parents. Anything connected with Asia has a great affinity for Devi. She feels a great difference in her after starting to live with Frankie. She feels that she can manipulate him as per her wish. Debby thinks that she was just an ordinary daughter from a normal life with a good life partner in Manhattan. She never had any firsthand knowledge of Asia but she knows that:

the country had gone to their dogs, and the cities had been taken over by crack- cocaine addicts, rapists, muggers and welfare queens. Frankie changed all that. For Frankie the new world was as green and crisp as a freshly counterfeited hundred- dollar bill. In the after Frankies months I became a news junkie, a fact hound. I started thinking like Frankie a concerned rat with options. And suddenly life became interesting. Suddenly I was sniffing out possibilities where the world saw only problems. (LM 32)

Frankie confides his success of realizing his dreams of the Fong Empire he had build by catering to American wants with Asian needs. She understood the truth of survival in America. "Americans convert needs into wants; Asians, wants into needs" (LM 35).The charm of Frankie Fong was the charm of foreignness of a continent but she

did not claim, and it threatened her. She burns the house given to her by Frankie, an incident of violence imbedded in her psyche. Debby then visits California in search of her bio-parents. She knew that: " ... if the world has finite supply of bad days and nice days, I owed it to myself to grab as many nice ones as I could. Go for bliss, dump pain, pity and rage on somebody else. Pursue happiness; that's the American way" (LM 61).

“Debby signs as a client with Finders/Keepers, a family reuniting service in Albany "(LM 49).She is very adamant in her search of her parents. To her:" it is not love wasn't enough in the face of the 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 50). She travels to San Francisco and then to India to find her genetic parents. As she indulges in her search of her parents she changes her name to Devi without knowing the Hindu origin of the name. Mukherjee expresses the immigrant sensibility through Devi. She claims to be no more an expatriate but makes an attempt to acclimatize herself in the country to which she is no more a newcomer. Even in San Francisco when people mistake her identity, Debby turned to Devi, envies them as they had an identity of themselves while she was in search of her identity. She had a life and the chance of a better life. She lost it due to her troubling psyche that prompts her to search her real identity. She then thinks: "For now why not be Devi, ... all allure and strength and zero innocence, running away from shame, running to revenge?" (LM 66-67). She adopts a new philosophy of her own to make a living, “when you inherit nothing, you are entitled to everything- that’s Devi Dee’s philosophy” (LM 67). The city seduces her and she gets intoxicated by it. Debby leads a very worst life and she sets herself to tapping businessman for fives and tens, 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 etc. As a result she gains more knowledge about the city by moving to many places. She encounters various colorful ex-hippies and learns their philosophy and understands their personalities.

Though Devi realizes the ill treatments of the hippie world, she doesn't mind any sort of changes that might happen to her by associating with them. Meanwhile Hamilton Cohan, who has come for shooting his film, helps Devi to reach her goal. Hamilton seems to be a man with more needs than wants. Fred Pointer, the expensive investigator, solves her problem. In order to achieve her goal she followed and adjusted herself to the new environment. As she says: "The bay area was good to me I intended to be good for it" (LM 99). With the help of one of his Indian friends in Bombay, Fred brings in information and tells her about "a sex guru serial killer and her harem of white hippies" (LM 105). The killer was supposed to have illegal relations with many of the hippies. The clues given by Devi to Fred matches to all the information gathered by him. Devi gathers more information and she thinks, "What choice does an orphan have? Ignorance is no choice" (LM 107). Many unnatural things like killing and threatening happens in San Francisco. So Devi thinks: "Convergence is coincidence, a daughter bumps into her runaway mother, what coincidence could be more natural?" (LM 110).

Fred's report told that fifty years before in India a sahib and some memsahibs had lived in a village called Devigaon and his living mates enjoyed dancing, drinking and sacrificing. Once those people had sacrificed a lady and a baby and that was to be Devi who is saved by the nuns. The Indian Government did not want any harm done to the fledgling tourist industry and so hardly showed any interest. After a long time one of the

lady belonging to the guru's harem lodged a complaint and accused him of strangling nearly seventeen men and women. The Interpol agents tried to track him in various countries through Turkey, Thailand, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka and finally arrested him in India. But she did not reveal the killings done in Devigaon. Romeo Hawk the guru confessed of killing five people but was convicted of killing nine. The women were also arrested on grounds of drug peddling charges. When the saved child named Devi was taken to the lady in the jail, she refused to identify it as her own child. So the Gray sisters had arranged for adoption of the child.

The 1960's hippie counter culture movement involved a variety of social concerns and beliefs. The hippies' primary tenet was to enjoy life to the maximum and they were not bothered about moral aspects of life. To them God was just a concept created by man, and they intended to enjoy the life by all means. Their attitude included little forethought nor concern for the consequences of their actions. Hippies were dissatisfied with what their parents had built for them, a rather strange belief that their parents had built the greatest booming economy the world had ever seen. They championed free love and sexual liberation, particularly for women. They also promoted the use of psychedelic drugs which they believed expanded their consciousness. Jess Du Pree and Hamilton were part of this Counter culture movement. They travelled throughout the world. When they came to India Jess became very much involved with the spiritual guru and stayed in India while Hamilton left for Canada.

Hamilton introduces Jess Du Pree to Devi. She is Hamilton's old acquaintance. Devi understands that Jess is a self confident woman who works for a media escort

agency by the name 'Leave It to Me'. Fred brings in the news that Jess Du Pree is the biomom of Devi. She joins the office of Jess to understand her from close distance.

Jess had dropped out of Baba Lalji's ashram and dropped into Asia in the late fall of 1968. She had hit all the usual hippie highs and lows in the next six years, and then it had happened. Karma, she called it. Her karma revealed itself in a village named Laxmipur. The year was 1974, Jess twenty-eight. (LM 153)

Jess had traveled many places through England and France, Greece and Turkey and Afghanistan, sharing rides with the world's waifs, strays, seekers, sickos, sensualists and stopped for a while in the Indian village of Laxmipur in a rainless month. There she came across the man of her life and felt wanton. Devi realised that:

... happiness is the consolation prize. Suddenly I understood, without wanting to, why I had run away from Frankie Fong. One day soon my God would touch down. My breathing would tighten. I would thrill to the shudder of zero in my spine. (LM 156)

Bharati Mukherjee thus brings in several characters that help Devi in many ways to find her parents. Devi symbolizes the individual's dilemma in the American multiethnic society. Devi also feels there is a world of difference between justice and vengeance and she sees with clarity that what she is seeking for, is justice. Unfortunately Fred meets an accidental death. Fred's death makes Devi aware of Berkeley culture; it is a place where everyone had a relation with everyone.

The arrival of Romeo Hawk in the disguise of the holistic nutritionist Ma Varuna to take revenge on Jess brings another turn in the story. Jess was responsible for his arrest in India and thinks he is dead. To find out the real fact Devi converse with him and understands that Jess had different names in different places. She had moved around cheating people with different passports. Devi is forced to show the hide out of Jess to Romeo. Devi realizes that Fred's death was not an accident but he was murdered by Romeo Hawk, Devi's biological father. She understands his cruelty when her father kills her mother and Hamilton. Devi is shocked by seeing her father's cruelty .She learns the object of truth in her life, the world one sees is not the world one gets. What she happened to visualize and she happened to experience was all cruelty and ugliness of life, fear and violence throughout her life, which forced her to be self destructive. Devi lives with a dispensable pain as she was orphaned by her parents. "Just a garbage sack thrown out on the hippie trail"(LM 13). The inherent violence in her mind and sense of revenge aggravates as she came to know that she just an unwanted appendage of her parent's past who was just abandoned. "the quarks and electrons that make up villians and heroes also make coffins we are laid to rest in, and the earth we molder in and the maggots we fatten and the stars that shine on us after our worlds vanish"(LM 239).

Your mother could be Jess DuPree of this city, currently doing million-dollar-plus business as CEO of a hot author-escorting agency. I showed Jess a copy of a court-room transcript Rajeev sent, and she said, 'Sweetdick, go fuck the Golden Gate, will you? (LM 146)

Fred in his report had noted that Jess Du Pree and Romeo Hawk seem to be Devi's parents. Romeo Hawk claims his daughter but Jess Du Pree denies and never accepts



Devi as her daughter until the end. Devi's search for her identity reveals remarkable similarities between herself and her bio-parents. Devi is left confused and disturbed.

Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* is a narrative that concentrates on the diasporic space, where in the character's try to shape their identity. It is like creating a new self by combining their real personality with the new values in the country in which they have transplanted themselves. They alter their personality to suit the new place and environment.

Self-perception, an act integral aspect to human identity formation, is in fact learned with the first few years of adjustment in an immigrant's life. This sense of duality also extends to one's surrounding environment, manifested in the fact that the reflected self exists in what appears to be a separate space. The environments in which we live not only influence one's self-perception, but also have the power to entirely transform one's very identity. In *Jasmine*, Bharati Mukherjee addresses the tensions that result from such changes in self-perception and presents the related paradoxes that emerge during the process of diasporic identity formation throughout the course of an immigrant's life.

The novel *Jasmine* is about a girl who in the hands of fate gets transformed into various characters from Jyoti to Jane. Jyoti, the fifth daughter to her parents, is born in a village of Punjab. Once Jyoti was prophecied by an astrologer, he said that she would become a widow and will go to a foreign country. But Jyoti out of anger shouts at the astrologer "You're a crazy old man. You don't know what my future holds! "(JAS 3).

On hearing these words the astrologer gets irritated and chucks hardly on her head and she falls on the ground getting a star-shaped scar on the forehead. She thinks that the

scar to be her “third eye” and feels like becoming “a sage” (JAS 5). As days passed on she gets married to a modern man called, Prakash Vijn and her husband wishes to call her by the name Jasmine, “ He gave me a new name: Jasmine, He said: “ You are small and sweet and heady, my Jasmine. You’ll quicken the whole world with your perfume” (JAS 77).

Prakash's renaming of Jasmine is a sign of her new and modern identity that represents her initial migration away from traditional Indian customs and culture to the city life. Jyoti and Jasmine are two distinctly separate selves, yet Jasmine finds herself occupying both identities, shuttling between them and trying to understand the manner in which they both conflict and connect until she eventually becomes Jasmine. The fact that Prakash names her Jasmine is significant, for it brings to light the question of self - identity. The psyche acts as an external force that prompts and develops Jasmine's new identity, rather than Jasmine herself experiencing an internal metamorphosis. While Jyoti is portrayed as a more liberated woman when compared with Jasmine, she is nevertheless lives in a large part of a male's construction, thereby resulting in a paradoxical sense of agency. Jasmine becomes a modern and freethinking woman, but this transformation occurs through the means of traditional Indian male dominance. The manner in which Prakash wishes to see and represent Jasmine results in the self that Jasmine eventually becomes, thus Mukherjee is depicting identity formation as a complex process that is dependent not solely upon the agency of the individual, but rather also upon patriarchy and other such agency.

Prakash’s strong wish is to secure admission in an American Institute of Technology. As they start dreaming about their life in America, accidentally Prakash was

shot by the Khalsa Lions, the rebels demanding a separate land of Khalistan for Sikhs. After her husband's death, Jasmine decides to go to America to fulfill her husband's wish; to burn his certificates and coat in the American soil and to immolate herself. Jasmine leaves for America not knowing what future holds for her. 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. (JAS 101)

Jasmine enters into a new world, new country as an illegal immigrant. The captain of the ship, , Half-Face who was an ugly man “had lost an eye and ear and most of his cheek in a paddy field in Vietnam” (JAS 104). The Ship's captain takes her to a remote motel at Florida and rapes her. Jasmine requests him that she is a Hindu widow and her “mission is to bring my husband's suit to America” (JAS 114), he laughs at her idea and rapes her. Jasmine goes to the bathroom and decides to die but later she decides to live. She extends her tongue and slices it, and blood started to flow like a river from her tongue. At that moment she looks like kali who destroys evil people. She murders the captain who raped her.

No one to call to, no one to disturb us. Just me and the man who had raped me, the man I had murdered. The room looked like a slaughter house.

Blood had congealed on my hands, my chin, my breasts ... I was in a room with a slain man, my body blooded. I was walking death. Death incarnate.

(JAS 119)

After the murder, Jasmine vows to start her own life in America, a life separate from the India and native identity of her past. Interestingly, Jasmine expresses more of a transformation of self after this incident with Half-Face than she ever did with Prakash, who had acknowledged her as an independent and autonomous woman. For Jasmine, the trauma of her rape results in the greatest change in her identity; the experience that breaks her down the most is also the one that builds her up and allows her to realise her potentials. Jasmine wanted to commit Sati, the practice of self-immolation in the funeral pyre of one's husband; a traditional practice of Indian widows. Identity is paradoxically formed not through constructions alone, but also destructions of her existing self. As the novel progresses, this paradox becomes a pattern, for Jasmine almost needs disruption in her life in order to evolve into a new self which would suit her new environment.

Jasmine's killing of Half-Face is the first evil which she faces in her life-time. After this violent encounter with the ugly world, Jasmine starts a new life. She feels hungry and thirsty. She is broken both in body and mind. Meanwhile she happens to meet Lillian Gordon, and after few days Gordon encourages Jasmine to go to New York to get a suitable job. Gordon writes a letter to her daughter who stays at New York to help Jasmine to get a job.

After she has collected herself and regained a certain degree of self confidence, Jasmine leaves Lillian to move in with a traditional Indian family in Hushing, New York.

Yet Jasmine soon finds herself stifled by the inertia of this home, for it is completely isolated from everything American. Jasmine feels as though she has simply wandered into a continuation of her former teenage days, and muses, "It was as though I had never left India ... I had traveled the world without ever leaving the familiar crops of Punjab"(JAS 128) India, though hundreds of miles away, has manifested itself in the idealized America of Jasmine's dreams, causing a tension between her new perception of herself as "Jazzy" and the "Jasmine" of the past which she believes to be extinct.

Thoroughly upset she progresses towards a new life; Jasmine intensifies her attempt to separate herself from all that is Indian by trying to forget her past completely. "In this apartment of artificially maintained Indianness, I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti like Jasmine builds her life in America, she longs to forget her past and all the horrific experiences that still haunt her"(JAS 145).She tries to forget the past, ironically she realises that her past is a part of her personality. She continues to create new identities, but her past nevertheless interferes with her current state of consciousness. While Jasmine creates a new identity for every new situation, her former identities are never completely erased, for they emerge in specific moments in the text and aggravate the tension between self-perceptions, thereby causing Jasmine to create yet another more dominant identity, different from all those that came before.

When the inertia of the Flushing home becomes simply too much for Jasmine to bear, she proceeds with her migratory pattern and moves to New York City. When Jasmine moves in with Taylor, his wife Wylie and their daughter Duff, she creates yet another identity based upon a new perception of herself. While living with the Hayes family, Jasmine begins to master the English language, thereby empowers herself to

further appropriate American culture. To fully learn a language is to appropriate a culture, for language affords the means by which the identity is expressed, thus as Jasmine becomes more fluent in English, discovering the intricacies of vernacular expressions, she becomes more American. Taylor begins to call her Jase and Jassy, Anglicized versions of her name that represent the emergence of her increasingly Westernized identity. Again, Jasmine is being renamed by a male figure, thereby suggesting that she does not have a great deal of significance in the creation of her new self since Taylor constructs it for her. However, the notion of identity becomes more complicated once Taylor and Jasmine become romantically involved, for Jasmine realizes that her transformation is for her own satisfaction.

Jasmine's comfort with English also provides her with a new perspective of America as well as a more familiar relationship with the culture as a whole. Language becomes Jasmine's key to understanding American culture and claiming it as her own, thereby allowing her to evolve as Jase, who possesses a completely different consciousness than the previous selves of Jyoti, Jasmine, or even Jazzy. The new consciousness of Jase is apparently more western and confident, filled with a desire to imbibe as much of American culture as she possibly can, without fear or regret. Jasmine's perception of her race also changes dramatically in her time with the Haynes family. Taylor and his friends understand that Jasmine is South Asian, and they are interested in the specifics of her racial identity.

Taylor's friends in New York used to look at me and say, "You're Iranian, right?" If I said no, then, "Pakistani, Afghan, or Punjabi?" ... They were strikingly accurate about most things, and always out to improve

themselves. Even though I was just an au pair, professors would ask if I could help them with Sanskrit or Arabic, Devanagari or Gurumukhi script. I can read Urdu, not Arabic. I can't read Sanskrit. They had things they wanted me to translate, paintings they wanted me to decipher. (JAS 33)

Jasmine's race is now recognized as belonging to the South Asian community, as opposed to Half-Face's racist generalization. Although she appreciates the efforts made by Taylor's culturally aware friends who try to engage her on a level of racial specificity, Jasmine nevertheless wonders as to the nature of her role as a South Asian woman. Taylor's friends essentialise Jasmine, falling prey to the orientalist habit of assuming knowledge of the other and expecting a certain details from her because of her South Asian background. Jasmine is expected to know languages associated with South Asia, regardless of whether it is in fact her specific dialect. Thus, while Jasmine is correctly perceived as South Asian, she is still discriminated against, but on a much subtler level. Taylor's friends are interested in her because she is South Asian, for what she can aid them with and for what she represents, which, in this case, is an entire set of cultures and nations. In stark contrast to Half-Face's grouping of all people of color into one category, Jasmine's specific racial difference is recognized and embraced in this community of people, but her racial identity is subject to the prejudice of incorrect distinctions instead of gross generalizations.

But even in the same apartment complex, Jasmine's perception of her race transforms according to the way in which people view her. But the other girls in the building," the other day mummies...assumed only that I was from 'the islands,' like they were .... Most of them had children back in Jamaica or Trinidad or Santo Domingo."

(JAS 178) In this particular situation, class politics exert a great deal of influence upon perceptions of Jasmine's race. While Taylor's friends view Jasmine as a South Asian woman and ask her to help them translate academic documents and paintings, the other women caregivers in the building assume that since she is in the position of a day mummy, she must also belong to their native country. Occupation becomes the marker of race, while skin color and ethnicity are suddenly of secondary importance.

Though Taylor is married, he and Jasmine begin a rather promising romance, which Jasmine enters into the relationship warily, avoiding physical contact while trying to discern the manner in which Taylor views her sexuality. As she falls in love with him, she desires to change herself in accordance with Taylor's exception:

The love I felt for Taylor that first day had nothing to do with sex. I fell in love with his world, its ease, its careless confidence and graceful self-absorption. I wanted to become the person (Taylor and Wylie) thought they saw....Not illegal, not murderer, not widowed, raped, destitute, fearful. (JAS 171)

Jasmine suppresses her sexuality because she associates it with the shame and dread of her rape by Half-Face. Instead, she attempts to bury it under a change of personality: a transformation into a woman who is confident and refined but somewhat asexual, and to a certain degree, the woman that she believes Taylor wants her to be.

As the relationship progresses, Jasmine cannot ignore her attraction to Taylor nor his to her. Taylor views Jasmine as a sexual being, and he embraces her different ethnicity but without orientalising her into an exoticised fantasy. Jasmine realizes that her



desire to change for Taylor was not only unnecessary, but also born out of what she believes to be her own desire to erase her associations with her sexuality. "Taylor didn't want to change me. He didn't want to scour and sanitize the foreignness ... I changed because I wanted to"(JAS 185). At this point, Jasmine appears to be expressing a change in the nature of her identity formation, she takes complete responsibility for the creation of her new identity. As compared to Prakash's creation of Jyoti, Jasmine thinks she is assuming a new identity because she wants to transform herself to face the complexity of her new life in America. While Half-Face did in fact elicit a desire within Jasmine to change, it was a desire born out of a violent response to her rape. In contrast, when she is with Taylor, Jasmine's transformation seems to stem not from a reaction, but rather from her very own yearning for personal change.

Because Taylor views Jasmine's sexuality as a positive aspect of her identity Jasmine begins to see her sexuality as something that she can be proud of and nurture. In the New York apartment, Jasmine bloomed from a diffident alien with forged documents into adventurous Jase. Jasmine chronicles the vast differences in her identities:

Jase was a woman who bought herself spangled heels and silk chartreuse pants ... Jasmine lived for the future, for Vijn & Wife. Jase went to movies and lived for today. In my closet hung satin blouses with vampish necklines, in my dresser lingerie ... For every Jasmine the reliable caregiver, there is a Jase the prowling adventurer. I thrilled to the tug of opposing forces. (JAS 176-177)

In becoming Jase, Jasmine is increasingly comfortable with her sexuality, but has not completely erased her past identity, for she retains elements of the "reliable caregiver"(Jas 176). The relationship between Jasmine and Taylor ends rather abruptly when the past creeps upon her once again, appearing almost as a retort to her self-perception. The past returns manifested in the guise of the murderer of her husband who has come to New York to find her. When Sukhwinder appears, Jasmine finds that her former selves of Jyoti and Jasmine begin to emerge all at once, and her life suddenly becomes distorted by the different consciousnesses through which she now experiences the world. Upon viewing Sukhwinder, Jasmine's reaction illustrates the collision of her various former selves: "I couldn't look behind me, couldn't open my eyes. I could hear Taylor's voice from a long way off ... I wanted to talk, but my throat had sealed."(JAS 188) Jasmine loses even her agency of self-expression when the past enters her present through the figure of Sukhwinder, and her self-perception is suddenly complicated by the emergence of a manifestation of her former identity. Due to the simultaneous existence of the past and present, memories of India and her current life in America, Jasmine is forced to view herself from the perspectives of Jasmine, Jase, and Jassy all at once.

Unable to live with this superfluity of conflicting identities and the self-perceptions associated with each, Jasmine flees to Baden County, Iowa to start a new life and to create a new identity. Jasmine creates her final identity when she moves to Baden and meets Bud Ripplemeyer, an American banker who instantly falls in love with her. They eventually marry and Bud renames Jasmine as Jane, which happens to be yet another evolution of her identity which is initiated by a man. Bud is reminiscent of Prakash in the manner in which he views Jasmine, for he sees her as a sexual being as

well as his companion. He encourages Jasmine to freely change roles, from caregiver to temptress whenever she feels the desire to do so. Yet Bud differs from all of Jasmine's previous lovers in that he is the first one to view her sexuality through the lens of his own orientalist fantasy. Jasmine knows this, and unequivocally states, "Bud courts me because I am alien. I am darkness, mystery, inscrutability. The East plugs me into instant vitality and wisdom. I rejuvenate him simply by being who I am"(JAS 200).The knowledge of Bud's Orientalism indeed frustrates Jasmine, but at the same time gives her sexuality a kind of power, for she sees herself as a desired sexual being. By simply being who she is, she helps the relationship move forward and for Jasmine this progression is worth the price of essentialist stereotypes, at least at this point in her life.

With each new identity, Jasmine believes that she is acquiring more confidence in her self- development. When Prakash renames her Jasmine, she describes this new identity as purely his creation, but with Half-Face, Jasmine begins to create a new self in response to her experiences, as it is expressed through her violent behavior that she later characterizes as a representation of the Goddess Kali. When Jasmine becomes Jase with Taylor, she emphasizes her self- perception of the new self. Kali is the Goddess of destruction and death in traditional Hindu mythology, and Jasmine's reference to herself being Kali when Half-Face represents her murdering of Half-Face as well as the destruction of the innocent Jasmine when she is with Bud, Jasmine describes the creation of Jane as a product of her desire to change: "Plain Jane is all I want to be. In Baden, I am Jane"(JAS 26) .While Jane appears to have gained agency throughout the course of her transformations, the word "almost" suggests that there still is an element of herself that she does not have the power to change.

Jasmine is disrupted, for destruction is the manner in which she ultimately transforms and recreates herself. Jasmine's life is a perpetual process of migration from one place to another, from one identity to the next. Jasmine lives her life in the interstitial space common to diasporic communities, a space characterized by continuous movement and ambiguity, in which nothing was rooted anymore. An American becomes as migratory as Jasmine herself, for while she once idealized America as the paradigm of unity and cohesion, she soon finds that each new city presents her with another aspect of American life, just as each new location results in the creation of another identity for her. Neither America nor Jasmine can ever be singular or whole, for they exist, multiply, with each state on the map representing the possibility of a new self. Mukherjee is recognizing that the relationship between environment and the diasporic figure are parallel and at the same time inextricably linked. As mentioned before, Jasmine's surroundings are liminal they are characterized by an ever-changing uncertainty just as Jasmine herself is. Jasmine articulates this sense of impermanence when she describes what she believes to be the diasporic experience:

We are refugees and mercenaries and guest workers; you see us sleeping in airport lounges ... taking out for the hundredth time an aerogram promising ... a passport, a visa, a laissez-passer ... We are the outcasts and deportees ... landing at the end of tarmacs ... roughly handled and taken to waiting rooms ... We are dressed in shreds of national costumes, out of season, the wilted plumage of intercontinental vagabondage. We ask only one thing: to be allowed to land; to pass through, to continue ... For us, there is only a slate and someone who remembers to write in chalk,

DELAYED, or TO BE ANNOUNCED, or OUT OF SERVICE ... What country? What continent? We pass through wars; through plagues ... The zigzag route is straightest. (JAS100 – 101)

The metaphors and language used in this novel are all allusions to travel, to the temporary nature of the diasporic experience. Life is never on time, but rather always on hold, delayed, or en route to where it is supposed to be. Airport lounges become familiar and almost home-like locations while passports represent the key to all possible opportunities and waiting rooms symbolize the process of living. Upheaval, insecurity, and ambiguity are the adjectives of the liminal state as well as the adjectives that describe Jasmine's ever-evolving identity. As she says:

I am caught between the promise of America and old-world dutifulness...We've stowed away on boats....We've hurtled through time tunnels. We've seen the worst and survived. Like creatures in fairy tales, we've shrunk and we've swollen and we've swallowed the cosmos whole. (JAS 240)

Such is the experience of Jasmine in America and the diasporic characters for Mukherjee is a never-ending sea of voyages whose non-existent ends promise opportunities but rarely deliver, it is a life of constant change and transformation. Although this particular portrayal of the diasporic experience may appear rather negative, there is a textual moment in which Mukherjee affirms the possibility of change for the diasporic individual. When Jasmine says, "we've swallowed the cosmos whole", (JAS

240) she suggests that the nature of the diasporic experience is not entirely negative, for the individual does in fact gain something positive from the experience itself.

Though the diasporic individual may travel a rather difficult zigzag route, this difficulty is precisely that which provides her with the strength to continue along the path towards a destination that is always within reach but rarely tangible. Indeed, the interstitial space is what allows Jasmine to create her new selves, for within this luminal position, identity is as malleable as location." In America, nothing lasts. I can say that now and it doesn't shock me, but I think it was the hardest lesson of all for me to learn... Nothing is forever, nothing is so terrible or so wonderful, that it won't disintegrate"(JAS 181). The interstitial space is fluid, uncertain and temporary, and must be since it is in between the stable poles of traditional temporal and spatial progressions. Jasmine exists within this luminal condition; identity within Jasmine is flexible, constantly evolving and completely unpredictable. A far greater portrayal of the diasporic experience presents the complexities of identity and perception in a less idealistic manner. Jasmine chooses completely to recreate herself in the face of conflict, resulting in multiple selves that do not exist simultaneously, but instead interact with one another at different junctures in the text, with a constant progression to the next identity.

Throughout her life, Jasmine has created many selves, and she is aware of the fact that she now has the power to continuously create even more identities. When Jasmine leaves Baden at the end of the novel, she embraces an uncertain future that parallels her identity. While Jasmine has, for the moment, ceased to be Jane Ripplemeyer, the reader does not know who she has become or who she will become next.

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 ... 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. (JAS 240 – 241)

Jasmine believes that she possesses the power to reposition the stars, to change her fate and consciousness as she chooses to, yet as we have seen throughout the text, this power is but an illusion, for Jasmine needs disruption and destruction of the forces in order to develop her various identities. Mukherjee's romantic ending to what is a rather great portrayal of the diasporic experience suggests that identity is created and recreated by one's surroundings, and not solely by one's will. Jasmine possesses an evolving identity that is unpredictable and filled with possibilities, forever growing and changing with her every new environment and each passing moment.

The self functions in the manner in which it is represented; it is comprised of the perceptions of others and thus a character views the representations of the self. In contrast, the typical bildungsroman portrays the self as the product of internal development within the individual, a process generated by the singular self. Jasmine's surrounding environments influence her formation of her identities, and as she navigates between temporal and spatial locations, her perception of herself changes, thereby resulting not only in double consciousness but rather a multiplicity of consciousnesses. These multiple consciousnesses create a tension within Jasmine, for she feels the need to reconcile these conflicting perceptions so that they do not wage a psychological war within her.

Jasmine's means of reconciliation is to reinvent her identity completely - to create a new self whenever she is confronted with contradictory self-perceptions. Jasmine does not simply perceive herself differently, but rather she becomes an entirely different person with each new environment she enters. For Jasmine, assimilation ceases to be defined as adaptation and instead transforms the definition to the creation of a new self. But regardless of Jasmine's various permutations of new identities, her past always remains to a certain degree; haunting her with its returns and disrupting the new life that she attempts to create.

Migrants like Tara, Dimple, Jasmine have a propensity to converge, and they gradually acquire new cultural identity to fit, to the standard of the natives. The constant reminder of language, physical differences and loss of the native land no longer problematises the exceptionally intricate endeavour of assimilation, rather, Jasmine's peculiarity of her personality adds to the mystic charm. Jasmine finally realises the transitoriness of human relationship in America.

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

Thus, Bharati Mukherjee in all her novels focuses on rootlessness and nostalgia and portrays her protagonists as an Indian immigrant who is unable to adjust to American culture. In *The Tiger's Daughter*, Tara undergoes painful situations that make her decide



that she would never again belong to the culture she has left behind. The protagonist Dimple Dasgupta in the novel *Wife* remains isolated and survives on the margins of American life, unable to connect with an alien culture. Dimple is an individual whose psychological demands and the reactions to them are governed by her experiences of life and her individual psyche. *Jasmine*, is about an Indian refugee who is empowered by the trials of assimilation, who herself had become an American citizen. In her struggle to remake herself, Jasmine does not resist several renaming by others, and moves fluidly among new identities that thrusts upon her. The next novel *Leave It to Me* tells about the struggles of a girl abandoned in India who seeks her identity by tracing her biological parents. The young protagonist Debby Di-Martino leaves her comfortable home and her Italian American foster parents and heads for California in search of her biological parents.

The novels *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife*, *Leave It to Me* and *Jasmine* shows the cultural plurality of the adopted land. Through her protagonists Mukherjee tries to unravel the complicated layers of cross-cultural reality through a series of adventures which they undertake during their adventurous journeys. 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.