

## Chapter III

### Retracing Historical Roots - Remapping Identities in

#### *The Holder of the World, Desirable Daughters and The Tree Bride*

The displacements and relocations generated by diaspora open space for different relationships that the migrants have with the specific spaces they inhabit, by comparing and contrasting their homeland with their host land. The last few decades have witnessed a remarkable change in the perspective of women in Indian English fiction and it has been mainly because of numerous women writers in India who view diaspora in their own unique way. They have transformed the stereotypical suffering woman to an aggressive or independent person trying to seek an identity of her own through her various relationships within the family and the society.

The cultural clash suffered by educated Indian women trained on the basis of traditional moral codes are reflected in Bharati Mukherjee's writing. They are caught between different cultures and this feeling of in-betweens' or being juxtaposed poses them the problem of maintaining a balance between their dual affiliations. In the case of the immigrant women it is more pronounced and prominent, for they carry the burden of cultural values of their native land with them to the new country, thus making it more difficult and problematic for them to adjust.

The history of immigration is a history of alienation and its consequences. The effect of the transfer will be harsh upon the people than the society they enter. It transfers people from their traditional environments and transplants them into a strange soil where strange customs and climate prevail. The customary modes of behaviour make the immigrants incapable of confronting the problems that arise in the new atmosphere. They

are compelled to readjust and redefine themselves. With the old ties snapped the immigrant faces the enormous compulsion of creating new relationships, thereby giving new meanings to their lives. In the introduction to *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, Brah presents the concepts she deals with in the book and points to the relationship between home and diasporas. Brah claims:

I suggest that the concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins while taking account of a homing desire, as distinct from a desire from a homeland'. This distinction is important, not least because not all diasporas sustain an ideology of return. (16)

According to Brah, the new diaspora does not necessarily imply one's necessity to go back to her homeland or home-country. Instead, the subject may present a homing desire, that is, the desire to transform particular locations into home. Displacements, however, may occur even in their home country even before migration. As Friedman claims:

the displacement of diaspora begins before the journey from home to elsewhere, begins indeed within the home and homeland and travels with the women as they face the difficulties of negotiating between new ways and old ways of living. (23)

Thus, even before leaving home the subject may go through oppressing and even violent experiences which forces them to find space elsewhere. The memories of the displacements suffered at home may accompany the subject to his or her new location and be determinant in their life at the new home.

In *The Holder of the World*, Bharati Mukherjee's unique narratives of diaspora take shape through the migration of her heroine. In the course of the story Bharati Mukherjee makes the readers cross and re-crosses the multiple borders of history, race, time, language, and culture. Elaborating the concept of migration, *The Holder of the World* virtually functions in a multifaceted border space between the East and the West. In this novel while discussing migration from a historical perspective Mukherjee reinvents the identity of America. She recreates the Puritan New England with a renewed focus on the racio-cultural fluidity. Discussing migration, the novel places special emphasis on the dialogue between cultures which is the focus of the novel. By portraying the past, present and future Bharati Mukherjee has created a unified sensibility which leads to the narrative rethinking and reconstruction of canonized meaning of history.

The title of the novel *The Holder of the World* is named after Aurangzeb, the Mughal Monarch of India who was also called Alamgir in Urdu and the World-holder in English. Fictional characters, incidents and events unite with historical personages, places, events and incidents to give it a local colour and habitation like the historical plays.

The Grecian urn that Keats depicts draws the reader's attention to the free and frozen temporality of its images description of the impossible, absent object, which is perpetually invoked, and forever suspended. Keats's poem is then seen through Mukherjee's evaluation of the Mughal painting. Beigh Masters, a modern American researcher claims her affinity with Easton family, comparing the circumstances of her own life with that of Rebecca and Hannah Easton. With the Keatsian urn and the prismatic quality of the miniature painting, Mukherjee formulates her historical writing.

Her vision of history is based on her understanding of the multi-faceted aspect of life and art.

LIKE REBECCA, I have a lover. One who would seem alien to my family. A lover scornful of our habits of self effacement and reasonableness, of our naive or desperate clinging to an imagined continuity. Venn was born in India and came over as a baby. His family are all successful; there was never question of anything different. He grew up in a world so secure I can't imagine it, where for us security is another kind of trap, something to be discarded as dramatically as Rebecca stepped out of dog-blooded widow's weeds into a life of sin and servitude. (HW 31)

Hannah Easton moves from the puritan world. It is like an escape from the rule bound, puritan world. She says:

a twelve year old puritan orphan who had never been out of Massachussets imagined an ocean, palm trees, tached collages, and black skinned men casting nets and colorfully garbed, bare- breasted women mending them; native barbs and on the horizon, high masted schooners ... through bright-green foliage, a ghostly white building it could even be the Taj Mahal- is rising. (HW 44)

Beigh also searches more details about Edward Easton, who had been an East India Company man. Beigh goes through the company's' ledger books, letters, books and papers in the Indian office in White hall. She finds that Edward settled in many places

first in Billerica, then in Chelmsford, then in Lancaster. Beigh was very proud of her discovery and says that:

I was, perhaps the only scholar in the world who had traced the work of an obscure clerk from London to Massachusetts. I could sense all the movements in his life, his determination to remark his life before it was too late, to go west to the colony instead of east, where surely his East India clerkship could have led him. I felt the same psychic bond with Edward Easton that Keats did with revelers on the Grecian Urn. (HW 25)

Beigh Masters is an American lady and Venn Iyer, is an Indian national; the couple have lofty research goals. Beigh, is an American asset hunter, she searches for a legendary diamond named the Emperor's Tear. By researching and recreating the history of Hannah Easton Bharati Mukherjee has proved that diaspora is not a twentieth century phenomenon but a historical continuity. Venn, an Indian immigrant, works to construct X2989, a program that will make virtual time travel possible. Beigh was motivated by art and Venn her lover was motivated by technology.

Beigh's project is personal, and she was inspired by her participation in a Yale seminar and the project proved that she was a distant blood relation of Hannah Easton and her project focuses on recreating the life of Hannah. Venn's work, in contrast, contains information of all the world's newspapers, weather reports, telephone directories, satellite passes, every arrest, every television show, political debate, airline schedule into a virtual reality program to create a general sense of time travel where the division of past and present is united. Despite their apparent differences, their projects

converge by allowing Beigh to travel across time to hold the Emperor's Tear, but in their ability to collapse time and space to reveal complex relationships between individuals, nations, and global cultures.

Bharati Mukherjee uses the protagonist Beigh Masters to show her intentions in the very beginning of the novel: "I live in the three time zones simultaneously, and I don't mean Eastern, Central and Pacific. I mean and the past, present and the future" (HW 5).

The novel explores the cultural confrontations of two worlds America and India, during the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The theme of the novel is about Hannah an American who try to comprehend the Mughal view of Indian life. This is the story of two white women, one living in the seventeenth century and the other, in the present one, who becomes obsessed with retracing the formers transformation from a puritan girl brought up at Salem in Massachussets to the bibi of a Hindu King.

The novel ambitiously crisscrosses the historical and the contemporary cultures of the U.S. A and India with the cultural cartography of colonial America intertwined with the seventeenth- century India. Postcolonial narratives that join the histories of Puritan America and colonial India cast a remapping of cultural *mélange* in which multiple cultures meet. This novel explores history in its multiple layers of transcultural spaces, and migration is inscribed as a key feature that ignites transnational connections, thus Mukherjee elaborates historical narrative of diaspora and broadens the scope for historical rewriting.

Beigh is the narrator of the story. While she was reading a trade magazine Auctions and Acquisitions, with her lover Venn Iyer, an Indian Computer Scientist, she

learns from the book that though people and their property get separated from one another, "Nothing is ever lost, but continents and centuries sometimes get in the way" (HW 5). She gets a clue about a large gem acquired by a small museum situated between Salem and Marblehead. She tries to locate the most perfect diamond in the world, 'The Emperor's Tear' which belonged to the last of the great Mughal Kings, Aurangzeb, and was stolen from him during a battle against Raja Jadav Singh, the Hindu lover of the Seventeenth Century Puritan Woman Hannah Easton. As Beigh tries to trace the diamond she gets obsessed with Hannah's life more than the diamond itself: "It isn't the gem that interests me. It's the inscription and the provenance. Anything having to do with Mughal India gets my attention. Anything about the Salem Bibi, precious-as-pearl feeds me" (HW 5).

Both Beigh Masters and her lover are dealers in the things of past. They claim "The past presents itself to us" (HW 6). Beigh lives with her lover and, "He animates information. He's out there beyond virtual reality, re-creating the universe, one nanosecond, one minute at a time" (HW 5). The use of the time travel helps Beigh unravel the mystery of 'The Emperor's Tear'. Venn is of the view that:

Every time-traveler will create a different reality-just as we all do now. No two travelers will be able to retrieve the same reality, or even a fraction of the available realities. History's a big saving bank, says Venn, we can all make infinite reality withdrawals. (HW 6)

Beigh researches around museums, East India Company documents and colonial literature. She travels to India and attends auctions all over the world. Beigh undertakes

the task of reconstructing a daring woman's odyssey. Beigh finds more details about Hannah Easton; she discovers that Hannah is her close relative. As she proudly claims: "I'm part of this story, the Salem Bibi is part of the tissue of my life" (HW 21). She finds out that "Rebecca Easton nee Walker's grandmother was a cousin of Charles Jonathan Samuel Muster's father" (HW 21). She presents a detailed description of the settlement and adventures of the Musters on the Ellis Island and their coming to terms with the Easton:

The first Masters to scorn the strained stability of his lot was one Charles Jonathan Samuel Muster, born in Morpeth, Northumberland. In 1632, a youth of seventeen, C.J.S. Muster stowed away to Salem in a ship heavy with vision he must have had, to know so young that his future lay beyond the waters ... at the mercy of heathen Indians and the popish French. By 1640 he was himself the proprietor of a three-hundred acre tract that he then leased to an in-law recently arrived, and then he returned to Salem and the life of a sea trade, Jamaica to Halifax. Curiosity or romance has compelled us to slash, burn, move on, ever since. (HW 10-11)

During the same time a noble woman in India died in child birth. The young Charles Muster in England hid himself among the livestock aboard the ship and reached America. The noble woman was the wife of the famous Mughal King Shahjahan, Mumtaz Mahal, in whose memory the king built the Taj Mahal, a symbol of love. Three years later when Jonathan was barely twenty:



he abandoned the country and built the first of many houses on a overlook commanding a view of the sea and the spreading rooftops of Salem. For the rest of his life he scuttled between civilized Salem and the buck skinned fringes of the known world, out beyond Worcesters, then Springfield, then Barrington, gathering his tenant's tithes of corn and beans, salted meat and barrels of ale, selling what he couldn't consume and buying more tracts of uncleared forest with the profit..... He was a New World Emperor. (HW 11-12)

In the Museum of Maritime Trade, Beigh finds: "the curator's note cards celebrate only Puritan pragmatism. There is no order, no hierarchy of intrinsic value or aesthetic worth; it's a fly's eye view of Puritan history" (HW 12), and she wonders over the gulf between two worlds:" What must these worlds have thought, colliding with each other? How mutually staggered they must have been "( HW 12).

The opulence of the Eastern world, their love for gold, diamond and jewelery drives the Westerners to despair. But this sense does not permit them to bow before the Eastern culture. They raise the roof in their own pride and this is obvious from one of the inscriptions in the museum.

We beat those Asians because ours pots are heavy and black and our pothooks contain no jewels. No paintings, no inlays of rubies and pearls. Our men wore guarded by bonnets and capes and full skirts. Those Indian guys wore earrings and dresses and necklaces. When they ran out of space on their bodies they punched holes in their wives' noses more gold and

pearl chains. Then they bored holes in their wives' ears to show off more junk, they crammed gold bracelets all the way up to their elbows so their arms were too heavy to lift, and they slipped new rings on their on their toes and thumbs so they could barely walk or make a fist.(HW 12-13)

Beigh Masters carefully gathers every minute detail about Hannah and she knows: "Traces of Salem Bibi pop up from time to time in inaccessible and improbable little museums like this one. They get auctioned and sold to anonymous buyers. I believe I know her identity, and the anonymous donor" (HW 14).She is very confident in her research that she will surely succeed in her goal, as she says:" There is surely one moment in every life when hope surprises us like grace, and when love, or at least its promise, landscapes the jungle into Eden" (HW 15).

She is confident of finding this Eden, passing through the jungle like obscure museums and auctions around the world. As she goes through the photographic records of Hannah's life in a museum in Massachusetts she gets the vision of the Old World, its exotic inhabitants:

In a maritime trade museum in Massachusetts, I am witnessing the Old World's first vision of the New, of its natives, of its ferocious, improbable shapes, of its monstrous women, that only the Salem Bibi could have described or posed for. (HW 16)

The largest painting catalogue in the museum is named 'The Apocalypse' but the narrator calls it 'The Unravish'd Bride'.

... beautiful Salem Bibi stands on the cannon- breached rampart of a Hindu fort ... Salem Bibi's lover, once a sprightly guerilla warrior, now slumps against a charred tree trunk. He grasps a nephrite jade dagger hilt carved in the shape of a ram's head and, with his blood-clotted breath, pledges revenge. (HW 17)

Salem Bibi becomes very important in Beigh's life. She always whises to go: "Fly as long as hard you can my co-dreamer! Scout a fresh site on another hill. Found with me a city where lions lie with lambs, where pity quickens knowledge, where desire dissipates despair" (HW 19). Beigh was confident that she knows Hannah's life fully and exclaims that:

I know her like a doctor and a lawyer, like a mother and a daughter. With every new thing I've learned. I've come imperceptibly closer to the Emperor's Tear.... Three hundred years ago, it existed in her hands: I know where she came from and where she went. I couldn't care less about the Emperor's Tear, by now. I care only about the Salem Bibi. (HW 19)

Beigh learns from her research that Hannah was the daughter of Edward Easton, a former employee of the East India Company in England who left his old life behind to become a farmer in Massachusetts:

What I hadn't figured on was the secret life of a Puritan woman an emperor honored as Precious-as-Pearl, the Healer of the World. SHE WAS Hannah Easton, only surviving child of Edward and Rebecca

Easton, nee Rebecca Walker of Brookfield, in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. (HW 20)

Hannah's mother was Rebecca Walker, a high-spirited young woman who married Edward when she was fifteen years old and takes an Indian lover after Edward dies from a bee sting. Hannah was born at Brookfield, Massachusetts, a small town at the outermost edge of the territory then held by the Puritans, with Nipmuc Indians as neighbours. A touching episode tells of a Nipmuc man bringing the toddler Hannah home as she wanders too far into the forest and is lost. But, during the hot, intensely dry summer of 1675, the Nipmucs besiege Brookfield, and in the following massacre, Rebecca is thought to have been killed, her body carried off by native attackers. The child, however, witnesses a far different sequence of events; her mother elopes with her Indian lover during the raid. This orphaned girl keeps the secret afterward.

Robert and Susannah Fitch brought up Hannah, 'the somber orphan' (HW 39) to Salem. They nurtured her with love and affection. As Hannah was skilled in needle work, she becomes famous and her artistry reaches the masses.

Temptation dogged the sensuous Hannah everywhere: in rich clients' halls as she delivered her handiwork of velvet gowns and quilted underskirts, coats flirty with ladders of bowknots and lingerie under sleeves, and caps of sheerest white muslin. (HW 42)

Hannah marries Gabriel Legge, the man who had been courting her intimate friend Hester Manning:

He claimed to be the son of the owner of the *Swallow*, three hundred and twenty tons. He had come from London, but hailed from Ireland, to scout the colonies for investment, for new forms of imports and exports to the New World to mark its growing stature, its great wealth and taste for finer things. (HW 62)

Hannah's acceptance of Gabriel Legge, a man of doubtful character, is an unconscious imitation of her mother:

Why would a self-possessed, intelligent, desirable woman like Hannah Easton suddenly marry a man she recognized as inappropriate and untrustworthy? Why would she accept Hester Manning's castoff, or betrayer? Guilt, perhaps, a need to punish herself for the secret she was forced to carry? Unconscious imitation of her mother, a way of joining her by running off with a treacherous alien? Gabriel Legge with his tales of exotic adventure was as close to the Nipmuc lover as any man in Salem. She sought to neutralize her shame by emulating her mother's behavior. (HW 69)

Bharati Mukherjee rationalizes her act as follows: "We do things when it is our time to do them. They do not occur to us until it is time; they cannot be resisted, once their time has come. It's a question of time, not motive" (HW 70).

Hannah was greatly shocked when she fears that Gabriel's father is not a ship-owner but an indebted drunk from Morpeth. Gabriel's life was shrouded in secrecy.

He could describe the interior of a Mongal tent, the smell of camels, the pink flesh inside the trunk of a raja's elephant, but he could not, or would not, answer the simplest question about the ships he sailed or the captains he served.(HW 71)

Hannah understands the fraudulent life of Gabriel. Gabriel and Hannah visited India, where he worked as a junior factor in East India Company. While in India Hannah notices the attitude of British colonists towards the English Crown.

The colonists were not grateful or respectful enough to the Crown and the Mother Country; the colonists were ignorance personified and insufficiently ashamed of their backwardness; the colonists were proud and self-reliant, New world giants to Europe's dwarfs. England's Noblest Party, England's Folly. The new world was hard and savage; it was soft and bountiful. It was evil, it was innocent. England was refined and cultured; it was soiled and sinful. Probably every colonist and every Englishman ascribed to one or many of those views, serially or simultaneously, whatever the nature of their mutual contradiction. (HW 72)

Hannah's arrival in India in 1965 is set against a period of tumultuous political and economic activity. Here she notices the inner motive of the British industrialists in India. "They had not come to India in order to breed and colonize, or even to convert. They were here to plunder, to enrich themselves (under the guise of a Royal Charter) and pay their fees to the ruling nawabs" (HW 99-100).

As soon as Hannah stepped on the shores of the Coromandel Coast, she felt a sense of belonging and decides that she did not aspire to return to England upon the completion of Gabriel's tour.

She knew she'd been transported to the outer side of the world, but the transportation was more than mere "conveyancing", as it was for Gabriel and the others. Many years later she called the trip, and her long residence in India, her "translation". (HW 104)

Hannah is not afraid of the exotic atmosphere instead she is thrilled. It is this curiosity and enthusiasm towards life which makes her a contemporary of the narrator who cannot withhold her sense of admiration," Of all the qualities I admire in Hannah Easton that make her entirely our contemporary in mood and sensibility, none is more touching to me than the sheer pleasure she took in the world's variety" (HW 104).

As Hannah travels to many places of the world, she says that life in the Indian sub-continent is entirely different. Her reactions are thus explained below as a tourist:

She was, in some original sense of the word (as a linguist is to language), a tourist. She was alert to novelty, but her voyage was mental interior. Getting there was important, but savoring the comparison with London or Salem, and watching her life being transformed, that was the pleasure. She did not hold India up to inspection by the lamp of England, or of Christianity. (HW 104)

During their voyage, Gabriel told many things about the life and society in India. He told her, that everyone in the Coromandel belonged to a specific caste. In spite of the religious difference either Hindu or a Muslim the caste distinctions were strictly adhered. They spoke different languages, they worked under different masters, and they worshipped different Gods, and their ancestors had come from different countries. On hearing the words of Gabriel, Hannah thought it was nightmarish, because as a puritan girl she was not exposed to such diverse culture. She wondered Indians are "not just pagans and Muhammadans, but different gods and different ways of worshipping the same God" (HW 100).

The moment Hannah stepped on the Indian soil, she realises that she belongs to the land and people of this country are her brothers and sisters, and that she has got nothing to do with Britishers who have come here to lead a comfortable life and to conquer it. Though the women in England lead an ordinary life in their country, they claimed command and respect here. Martha Ruxton and Sarah Higginbotham are both examples of English snobbery and disdain which is characteristic of the British women in the colonies:

Any servant with a new sari, any cheekiness detected, anything missing, meant a good serving girl had passed over to bibihood. Bibis were simultaneously beneath notice, no more than cute little pets like monkeys or birds, and devious temptresses, priestesses of some ancient, irresistible and overpowering sensuality. (HW 131)



Bharati Mukherjee contrasts the house in Fort St. Sebastian with her former house she lived in, by comparing the two houses; she portrays the life of luxury and comfort led by the East India Company men during the Mughal period:

In Brookfield, in Stepney and Salem, a house was a barricade to stop encroachment. Outdoors was the prowling ground for Satan and his companions; indoors was furnished, tamed and therefore safe. But the house that she was to live in, like all houses in Fort St. Sebastian, was built to entice crystal-bright tropical starlight, spume-slanted breeze, bugs, birds and butterflies through its huge barred windows. There were terraces shiny as marble, balconies made of hardy woods, a flat roof for evening walks-ground level at night being considered unsafe- and turreted parapets. Behind the main house were the gardens, kitchen sheds, servants' shed and stables. (HW 118-119)

By fusing history with fiction, Mukherjee describes the life style, cruelty, lechery, of the Britishers and their inhuman treatment of the natives. Hannah had a different experience with Bhagmati who was her maid-servant. Hannah developed a close friendship with Bhagmati "She was not ready to entomb herself in Morpeth or London. She didn't felt bereft-of roots, of traditions – as Martha and Sarah professed to feel. Instead she feel unfinished, unformed" (HW 163). Hannah felt herself no more at home in England than she felt that she belonged to the Coromandel.

Mukherjee's main aim is to write an alternative history of America. By rewriting the lives of Puritan she offers an alternative version of an Indian myth, the story of Rama

and Sita. In the novel Mukherjee brings in Sita's story, through Hannah, who discusses the scene to Bhagmati, where Ravana takes Sita captive. "Ravana has desired you and gazed upon your beauty. Honor has required me, your husband and king, to avenge this evil. Now the same honor requires me to renounce you" (HW 175). Although her husband Rama rescues her, he questions her honor during her imprisonment." Sita proves her purity to her husband and to her society in a trial by fire. The god of fire, Agni, embraces her and expels her unscorched" (HW 176), thus Sita proves herself the exemplar of wifely devotion by throwing herself into the fire. Sita's story illuminates the collaborative interplay of cultures as different characters interpret the age old myth to reflect themselves and their global relationships.

I MAKE ONLY one demand of Venn and his mother, and of Jay and his grandmother. Where is Sita's version of her captivity in Lanka? I want to hear Sita tell me of her resistance to or accommodation with the multiheaded, multilimbed carnivorous captor. Did Sita survive because of blind or easy faith in divine Providence? Or did she genuinely believe that deprived of Rama's protection, she'd transformed herself into a swan whom a crow wouldn't dare touch? I may not have Sita's words, but I have the Salem Bibi's; I know from her own captivity narrative what Sita would have written. (HW 177)

Bhagmati regards Sita as a model of ideal womanhood and the storytelling as continuation of tradition: "it's all that Bhagmati knew, or had ever been taught (HW 176). Hannah, however, questions the story and Bhagmati's oral discourse by asking, "did all this happen, exactly as you're telling it?" (HW 172). Hannah's story is a parody to Sita's

story because Jadav Singh does not imprison her but rescues Hannah, and she seduces him in spite of Jadav Singh abducting her. Hannah thus appropriate and adapts Sita's story to reconcile and understand her individual experience as a woman. But Hannah Easton's life take diversion when she dwells into the exotic world of Mughal India, for it is the world that she was in search of. Hannah meets Raja Jadav Singh of Devgad and they become lovers. She likes her new identity as the Bibi of Raja Jadav Singh. But Hannah was not able to hide her skepticism towards the Eastern faith:

The idea of Hinduism was vaguely frightening and even more vaguely alluring to Hannah. English attitudes saw Islam as a shallow kind of sophistication; Hinduism a profound form of primitivism... Muslims had restrictions, which were noble and manly; Hindus had taboos, which were superstitions and cowardly. Hindus were unreasonable, and unreachable, so tradition-bound that their minds were considered undeveloped, except for a wily ruthlessness among the trading castes. (HW 219)

Hannah takes a new identity and she steps into the new world of Hinduism. She and Jadav Singh love each other ignoring the imminent danger that surrounds him. Thus the Nawab Haider Beg, Governor of Aurangzeb's state, dispatches his most ruthless commander, Morad Farah, to arrest Raja Jadav Singh. Raja Jadav Singh puts Hannah and her caretakers and, Bhagmati into a palanquin. The Raja attacks the Mughal army and he is severely wounded. Hannah kills Morad Farah, saves Jadav Singh's life and brings him back to Panpur. She tries to transact with the emperor Aurangzeb and stop the war but she is taken hostage by him. She disdains the emperor Aurangzeb for the bloody war and suffering of numerous innocent lives.

Wherever Aurangzeb comes to see her, she is reminded of Ravana, the demon king, in Muslim disguise. Though she fails to armistice between the Raja and the Emperor, somehow, she purloins the diamond – the Emperor's Tear from Aurangzeb's war tent and escapes towards the Fort of Panpur. There she hands it over to Bhagmati. The diamond is ultimately found by Beigh Masters in cyber spatial finale. Venn takes Beigh through the miracles; Bhagmati thrusts world's most famous diamond into her dying womb. Thus the holder of the world's diamond of the seventeenth century lies in her grave.

On entering the new world of Hindus, Hannah decides to sacrifice herself for the true love. She was pregnant with Jadav Singh's child.

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

Hannah's love for Raja Jadav Singh changes her sensibility, and the Eastern love makes her more emotional. After she fell in love with him, she herself realizes the transformation of her mentality, and her whole personality:

With Gabriel she had clung to Salem's do's and don'ts. She had pulled and pummeled the familiar rules, hoping they'd help make sense of her

own evolution. With Jadav Singh, she'd finally accepted how inappropriate it was in India- how fatal- to cling, as White Towns tenaciously did, to Europe's rules. She was no longer the woman she'd been in Salem or London. The 'qasbas' and villages of Roorconda bore no resemblance to the fading, phantom landscapes where she'd lived in old and New England was in flux on the Coromandel Coastline. (HW 234)

Finally Hannah came to know that "the survivor is the one who improvises, not follows, the rules" (HW 234). Bharati Mukherjee stresses the message that only those people who can adjust themselves according to the alien land can survive. In the final confrontation between the two armies, Raja Jadav Singh was killed in the battle. Hannah returns to Salem with her daughter Pearl, not as a reformed American but a rebel living in the fringes of the society.

Though the novel seems to be a historical novel, it is a novel of expatriation too. Hannah's whole personality undergoes a tumultuous change as her life shifts from Salem to Stepney, Coromandel to Devgad and then back to Salem:

In one rainy season, Hannah Legge had gone from woolen clad English married woman on the coromandel Coast to pregnant sari-wearing bibi of a raja; a murderer (she murders Morad Farah, one of the Great Generals of Aurangzeb), a widow, a peacemaker turned prisoner of the most powerful man in India ... She wasn't Hannah anymore; she was Mukta, Bhagmati's word for 'pearl'. (HW 271)

Hannah's perceptions of the world become different. She gets to know more about "the world's variety" (HW 104) and about her servant, Bhagmati, who "was invisible to the women of White Town" (HW 133). While Gabriel decides to work for a notorious pirate, Hannah leaves him and the strict, codified world of White Town. In the unexpected episode, Bhagmati and Hannah are kept at the court of the Raja. Until then, Hannah begins to feel that "now she was in a totally Hindu world and Bhagmati seemed no longer a servant. Perhaps she, Hannah, was about to become one" (HW 220). Hannah is impressed by the truth about Indians that "Bhagmati had a vital life ... They're humans; they have a richer life than I do" (HW 222) and she also observes that "the survivor is the one who improvises, not follows, the rules" (HW 234). Eventually, Hannah becomes the mistress of a Hindu prince—"she was Mukta. Bhagmati's word for 'pearl'" (HW 271).

The novel ends with Hannah's return to Salem where she locates her mother from a mental asylum and brings up her "black" daughter Pearl Singh and fearlessly stays in Salem all her life along with her mother's five half Nipmuc children. Thus Beigh Master's tracking the most perfect diamond in the world 'the Emperor's Tear' brings into focus the life of Hannah through which the author shows that immigration was a continuous process.

Bharati Mukherjee regards *The Holder of the World* as a restorative act of American cultural history, and she not only restores a global perspective to Hawthorne's novel but experiences it by her act of rewriting. Mukherjee's adoption of *The Scarlet Letter* actually reaffirms its place in the American canon because of its ability to be constantly reinvented and reworked by those in different times and from different cultures. Hannah comes back to Salem with her daughter Pearl; she renders the novel

adaptable and constantly transformative. These qualities, the same as those Mukherjee expects from immigrants and all citizens, makes the novel truly American.

By demythologizing the myth of Sita, Bharati Mukherjee foregrounds the precarious position of women in various societies. Bharati Mukherjee has given an universalized concept of diaspora by the globalised context in which the plot proceeds. With literature she reflects the optimistic argument of Frederick Buell, who in 1998 defined globalization as a national recovery narrative that identified U.S. culture as something different: "the attempt to recreate official national culture out of the very heterogeneity and heteroglossia that were supposedly undoing it" (Buell 552).

Jennifer Drake "Mukherjee's writing creates fullness in short takes, crams a world of detail into fragments of story, compresses constant motion, travel, discontinuous overload. This is how immigration feels; this is how America feels" (Drake 70). Mukherjee exposes the polygenetic cultural origins of American literature by restoring globalization through diaspora.

Thus, *The Holder of the World* portrays an entirely different picture of jostling of cultures- the Eastern and the Western. Hannah Easton buries her Puritan past and emerges as a real fighter to relish life to the maximum. Her love for Raja Jadav Singh makes her reckless and daring. She faces the holder of the world, the 'Alamgir', the Great Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, with courage and confidence. Beigh Masters, the narrator, passes the final judgement about Hannah's character and personality when she acknowledges: "Wherever she stayed ... She would have changed history for she was one of those extraordinary lives through which history runs a four-lane highway" (HW 189).

The story that she weaves traverses throughout the world from America to England to India and vice-versa. The narrative moves from present to past and vice-versa. Bharati Mukherjee always suggests a future for immigrants that will enable and acknowledge them as global citizens. Throughout her works, Bharati Mukherjee anticipates such a future through an act of return, searching for the polygenetic origins of both individuals and nations. She reminds Americans that they are all immigrants, if not literally then by inheritance, and she reveals how a host of cultures contributed to the making and continuous refashioning of America. Broadening the scope from individual to nation, a focus she increasingly expands throughout her successive novels, actually allows her to move back to a more personal quest in her later novels.

Hannah's subsequent move from England to India, then, suggests that her origins lie not in the Western nation of England but in India. Though neither Mukherjee nor Beigh provides a blood lineage to support this supposition, each offers the possibility and acknowledges the global flow of commerce that connects India, England, and America, among other countries. Hannah's journey also eventually leads her back to America, making her journey circular, interconnected, and hostile to monogenetic readings of her cultural ancestry. By placing Hannah in India, a country supposedly foreign to the American, Mukherjee forms new connections between characters of different cultural origins, and she assembles a comparative framework that supersedes these differences.

*Desirable Daughters* (2002) and *The Tree Bride* (2004) are sequel novels in which Mukherjee mythologizes a progressive Indian ancestor and the lives of the protagonist and her two sisters living different lives across the globe. Mukherjee's focus is particularly literary, she explicitly evokes other literary genres and works in order to



rewrite them and the immigrant characters are placed in these cultural discourses, moulding them together to create new subjects.

By recovering the polygenetic origins of the American nation, its culture, and its individuals, Mukherjee acknowledges the dissolution of the nation as a result of globalization, where the transnationality of individuals supersedes and breaks the boundaries they cross. Mukherjee's work is a response to globalization through discourses of multiculturalism and transnationalism. By revising the American canon Bharati Mukherjee shows its cultural multiplicity a sense of defensiveness or delusion about the solidarity of the nation, celebrating its adaptability.

The sisters Tara, Padma and Parvati, in the novel *Desirable Daughters*, are highly educated young Brahmins who have the opportunity to live legally in the USA. In spite of their differences, these women characters share the condition of being involved in the new diaspora as well as facing the necessity of redefining themselves in relation to the spaces they inhabit.

*Desirable Daughter* narrates the lives of three sisters, belong to Hindu Brahmin background, the two among the three sisters undergo diasporic displacement. *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride* are sequel novels which visualize history as a document of time's destruction, represented by the goddess Kali, the destroyer of time:

All these apparently unrelated triangular relations in *Desirable Daughter* and *The Tree Bride* work to construct, a text about the tree bride in colonial Bengal, a compiled text of Tara's life in a world turned diasporas with the British colonial encounters in Bengal, a text re-inscribed through

the lives of three sisters, and finally, a text that is deconstructed in the lives of Tara Victoria, and the newborn girl as the shattering aftermath of "a homing desire". (Brah 179)

Bharati Mukherjee in *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride* is an attempt of tracing the origin of a female consciousness, and the making of an identity that transgresses boundaries and analyses history in order to give it a new recourse. The diaspora has created rich possibilities for the understanding of various histories. These histories have revealed that identities, selves and traditions do change through travel and that such changes can be achieved intentionally or unconsciously.

Tara Chatterjee is the youngest of three sisters from a cultured, Bengali Brahmin family. Tara Chatterjee is the narrator of the novel. She is a divorced school teacher living with her teenage son and a Hungarian boy friend, Andy. Tara is married to a millionaire, Bishwapriya Chatterjee, called Bish. Padma, the eldest is married to Harish Mehta a non-Bengali business man. Parvati is a television celebrity in the USA. Parvati lives with her husband, Aurobindo and with her two sons Bhupesh and Dinesh in Mumbai.

The novel opens with a vivid description of a marriage that took place in India during the nineteenth century. Bharati Mukherjee very consciously dwells with every detail of traditional occurrence. The father of the bride is a lawyer educated in English but a traditional bound Hindu. A child marriage was in progress. The five year old groom dies of snake bite. Everyone in the village thinks that the groom dies only because the bride was unlucky. The father of the bride groom demands the return of dowry, but her

father takes the child to a forest and marries her to a tree. Later in life, the Tree bride becomes a noted woman for her courage and generosity and patriotism. Her American great grand- daughter Tara Chatterjee visits her native country, tracing the history of her great maternal aunt: "I cannot imagine the loneliness of his Child. A Bengali girl's happiest night is about to become her lifetime imprisonment. It seems all the sorrow of history all that is unjust in society and in religion has settled on her" (DD 4).

To a modern reader, the arranged marriage of a five- year- old girl is likely to evoke unease. The procession is preceded by servants holding naphtha lamps. "No one has seen such brilliant European light, too strong to stare into" (DD 4). But in a plot device which suspends lines of descent Tara Lata is not about to be transferred to a human bride groom to continue an ancestral line. She is headed deep into the forest to marry a tree. Her family tree is just that- large hardwood white tree. Lack of light is apparently the cause: the groom has died of snake bite in the dark, and Tara Lata has been transformed into an unmarriageable girl, who brings ill fortune.

She was now not quite a widow, which for a Bengali Hindu woman, would be the most cursed state, but a woman who brings her family misfortune and death. She was a person to be avoided. In a community intolerant of unmarried women, his Tara Lata had become an unmarriageable woman. (DD 12)

For a solution her father turns to Hindu custom. Her father marries her to a proxy- husband, a tree: "Tree Bride- she'd been proxy- married to a tree at the age of five"(TB 28).He permits her to occupy the respected position of married woman within the family

home. Tara Lata becomes famous for acts of rebellion and she becomes a freedom fighter and dies as a martyr.

Tara Lata the virgin, the untouched, who opened the house to beggars, then to the sick, then to the young soldiers fighting the Raj. It's as though the crowd Jai Krishna invited inside the night of the wedding had never left. Tara Lata the saint, the freedom fighter. (DD 17)

Keeping in mind the Indian tradition and escaping his daughter from a life without the commitment of husband, children and mother-in – law, the father transforms her into a rebel. Faced with rapid change, the Tara Lata has opted for an apparently independent identity, potentially validating a nationalist past against the diminished claims of the modern present.

Tara the grand niece of the tree bride was brought up by her parents in Hindu tradition. While she was in India; she fulfills the obedient and passive role of daughter and sister. It is in America, however, "after crossing the dark waters to California"(DD 24), that she is able to change the traditionally assigned roles of daughter, sister, wife, lover and mother. The most significant alteration that Tara acts out is related to her role as a Brahmin Indian wife. She slowly transforms, she tries to acquire an American identity by calling her husband by his first name or nicknames, and she becomes completely transformed when she asks for a divorce. As Miller observes, although she claims that she is not a modern woman, "Tara inhabits a world that her more traditional sisters criticize and reject" (68). Tara never affiliates herself to the discourses about modern and liberated women she finds in magazines, but she does challenge gender

relations as a consequence of her diasporic experience of living in the USA. As she is exposed to different forms of gender relations and experiences she expects a certain freedom in the psychological and social space. She feels that she has the option of asking for a divorce when her emotional needs are not fulfilled by her husband.

Tara's divorce and her subsequent relationships with Andy imply her rejection of gender roles that are traditionally expected by Indians who belong to her social milieu. She explains that when she married Bish and moved with him to the USA, she thought she was going to live a more liberating life and that she was going to travel around and expand her horizons as well.

Bharati Mukherjee uses Tara's narration of the reconstructed history of Tara- Lata Gangooly, the great- grand aunt she was named after, as the framing narrative for Tara's more contemporary renegotiation of her identity: "the story of Tara Lata the Tree-Bride- and that I had been named for her – I have felt, for no discernible reason, a profound connection"(DD 16).

Tara's connection to the Tree Bride is not therefore a connection back to a secure identity, but to reconstruct her own identity. Tara's own story is that of an entirely untraditional Bengali- American who has rebelled against the life of an Indian wife, and has set up home with a lover in a multi- ethnic neighbourhood almost synonymous with revolt: the Height. Hers is emphatically a broadband world. As a student her husband Bish discovered a process for allowing computers to create their own time, instantaneously routing information to the least congested lines. Bish is part of the process of globalization, the process by which people become increasingly

interconnected across natural borders and continents. His mobile phone routing devices connects the whole world.

Bish's discovery was prompted by a football game in which the player exploited the "West coast offense", a tactic in which short passing's plays replace the running game, to control the ball. The lateral throws have the effect of stopping the clock and buying time. The bandwidth systems, called CHATTY is "about width, using the whole field, connecting in the flat, no interference, a billion short passes linked together .(DD 24)

Tara is shocked by the arrival of Chris Dey who claimed to be her nephew. When Christopher Dey reaches adulthood, his father reveals the truth of his parentage, and Dey decides to travel to the United States to meet his mother Padma. Dey traces Tara's address in San Francisco, and comes to the Bay Area. While there, he ran into a conman Abbas Sattar Hai, who murdered him and assumed his identity. Abbas satar Hai in guise of Dey approached Tara and gained entry into her house, and presented her with a letter from Ron Dey, explaining the circumstances of his birth. The letter contains the information as follows:

The bearer of this letter is my son and your nephew, Mr. Christopher Dey. His mother is your sister, Padma. She and I had a love affair, for which I am totally responsible and have borne entire guilt and financial burden. This ocured when we were all very young in Calcutta in the summer of 1973 ... I believe he wants to know more of himself than I have been able to provide ... I beg you to facilitate a meeting with his mother. (DD 41)

This incident precipitates a crisis in Tara's life, leading to questioning of their family traditions and cultural codes. When confronted by Tara, Padma refuses to confess her teenaged liaison and its consequences; she rather prefers to immerse herself in the insular Bengali subculture of New Jersey, where she has evolved into a cultural icon.

Padma has adopted traditional roles, such as staging Indian mythological evenings to focus her Bengali culture. She appears to have found an individual place on the stage which successfully unites family and nation. Padma invites Tara to a party, she provides her with a new hair style, museum quality designer sari and traditional gold jewellery.

As the star of a TV shopping channel Padma is cultural icon to the Indian community and her parties are "a kind of home shopping service for upscale Indians" (DD 231). Tara's hair was cut, the better to display the earrings to buyers; the sari is designed to expose sufficient cleavage to show off the necklace. It dawns on Tara that she is performing in an advertising stunt. Padma pretends to be most traditional in order to exploit tradition to consumerist ends.

Padma Mehta is a television personality. She is an icon among the Bengali's of the tri state area. What she wears and what she recommends are taken as fashion statements in the community. They are high rollers, but their wives don't get out that much, and the men don't like to waste time coming into the city on Sundays. So Padma thought of these parties as a kind of home shopping service for upscale Indians. There's an economic benefit for participating merchants, but the social values far outweigh it. And so, from time to time, we throw these parties so that the

community can sample these styles in saris and jewellery that they might be missing by being out of Bengal. (DD 231)

Padma's diasporic self-fashioning has impelled her to retrieve her Indianess with a vengeance, adopting the discourse of authenticity to protect her space. Her career as an Indian American performer also dictates that she foregrounds her ethnicity, so as to appear more authentic to her audience. Despite the outwardly stable identity Padma projects, the ambivalences and subterfuges that govern her life become visible:

Didi was sitting just inches away, a firm identity resisting all change ...

But under scrutiny, fractured, like cracks under old glaze. Up close, I didn't recognize her. I didn't know who she was. I was following the cracks, fascinated by their complexity, not the simple, shining face.

"Puffles and Piffles", Andy once called them, but I never thought that previously unidentified fault lines could refer to my sister, or to me. (DD 196)

Padma was brought up in the same atmosphere as her youngest sister. After short stay in Switzerland and London, Padma has made her home in the same geographical place as Tara. Both were born in India and raised in Calcutta, and after their diasporic experience, they settled in the United States. Although there are similarities between the locations the sisters inhabited, the way Padma seems to deal with and define the concept of home is quite different from her sister's.

In India, Padma lived in the same home as her sisters. She also lived in the fortress-like house at Calcutta and enjoyed the privileges of being part of the elite Bengali



Brahmins. She learns in that home that she is the eldest desirable daughter of Motilal Bhattacharjee and that she is supposed to play the gender roles prescribed for her family's caste, class and religion. Tara, and her sisters receive formal education in convent schools so that they can become educated bride-to-be in the marriage market. Padma inhabits a patriarchal household where she had to conform to the traditional gender roles of her culture. She is raised and protected in her father's home so that she can properly be married to a worthy gentleman.

In spite of the comfort and security that the home in Calcutta guarantees, Padma does not seem to be completely happy about it. Padma wanted to pursue an acting career, but was prohibited by her father because he worried about her reputation and feared that her marriage prospects could be ruined. Padma turns the so-called security and comfort of the home her father provides into a prison. Her choices are restricted by the norms of that patriarchal household and her answer is rebellion.

Padma commits some transgressions in terms of gender roles. Based on her sister Parvati's memories, one of Padma's disruptions was expressed in her interest in marrying a boy whose religion and origin did not match her family. As a means of dissuading Padma, her parents sent her to a school in Switzerland. From there, she moved to London and then to New York and never returned to India. The so-called comfort and security of Padma's private sphere, home and home-country do not guarantee her the freedom of choice she wants for maintaining a private sphere in her life and so she moves away from her home.

Padma, however, seems to distance herself from home in a peculiar way. At the same time she physically and psychologically displaces herself from home, and tries to reproduce home in the location she currently inhabits. Padma is stuck to a version of India she builds for Americans to consume. Her house in New York is not described as comfortable or cozy. On the contrary, in the eyes of Tara, Padma's house is cold and does not seem to be truly inhabited. Her sister's house then does not seem to be a home. It does not seem to be inhabited, as Tara explains, and its tidiness, points to some form of artificiality of that home.

The appearance of Padma's house seems to match the relationship she has with her husband. When Tara enters her sister's house, Mehta does not care about entertaining Tara while she waits for her sister's arrival. Instead, he only reappears the moment his wife arrives and pays her compliments, which sound insincere in Tara's view. Tara wonders why Padma, a girl who seemed to be so passionate towards life, could have married an unenthusiastic man such as Harish. Their relationship, as observed by Tara during her stay, does not seem to be based on love and companionship. Both husband and wife seem to be rather independent from each other.

Artificiality is a key word to describe Padma's home, marriage and also her overall attitudes in the novel. Tara is unable to understand Padma's isolation from American influences and to maintain a traditional and artificial presentation of Indianness in spite of her displacement from her homeland. Although Padma lives away from India for several years, she somehow manages to reproduce the stereotypical exoticism of her ethnicity in New York. Tara, on the other hand, feels she is quite different from her sister. Tara observes an apparent contradiction in her sister's attitude. As her father does not

allow his eldest daughter to have a career, Padma seems to be quite bitter about that fact and still couldn't forgive her parents. At the same time she affirms that she is upset about the confinement and restriction involved in her parental home. She tries to reproduce in New York the very life that she often criticizes. While Tara has no interest in preserving the culture and family life she once experienced in India, because she is aware of the displacements she suffers, Padma apparently does the opposite.

Tara breaks away from the gated community and does not try to live only among Indians. Not only her attitudes but Padma's physical appearance also point to her preoccupation in emulating India in the United States. Padma does not wear Western clothes. She preserves the tradition of women of her class by having the preoccupation of taking proper care of her beauty as well as always wearing sari and jewelry. Padma apparently reproduces the gender and ethnic roles she learned in India.

Padma's occupation also points to her willingness to present oneself as the exotic other to Americans. She plays the role of the traditional Bengali woman by performing roles in television shows, at local schools, on community shows, at parties and political events. Although her activities are never well defined, she can be said to be a multicultural performance artist. When Tara visits her in New York, Padma's precise career as a performer reminds the reader of the notion of performativity.

The contradictions in Padma's attitudes as well as her evasive answers to Tara's questions make Tara quite upset and critical about her sister. As Tara rehearses for the confrontation with her sister by asking questions about Chris Dey, she plans to tell Padma about the significance of their tradition and strict parenting.

... that world is gone, we're here, we have to stop pretending, we have to stop living in a place that's changed on us while we've been away. I don't want to be a perfectly preserved bug in amber, Didi. I can't deal with modern India, it's changed too much and too fast, and I don't want to live in a half-India kept on life-support. You think I'm ridiculous, or somehow a disgrace to Indian womankind, a divorcee walking around in my American clothes? It's okay for the Indy Vermas and the girls who were born here and don't know any better, but not for us, the last flowering of Calcutta's golden past? (DD 193)

Tara wants to make her sister accept that the old traditional way of life is gone and now that they are away from home, they should stop being exaggeratedly attached to the past. That conversation, however, never takes place and although Tara actually inquires about Chris Dey, Padma never admits of having an affair with Ronald Dey. Furthermore, Padma seems to stick to her alienating choices in life, her never-ending performance and her firm belief in a supposedly stable Indian identity.

Padma's effort to embody the traditional Bengali Brahmin woman living in the USA is, not the result of pre-given ethnic traits: she actually creates an effect of pure ethnicity, which is nothing more than make believe. Tara claims that her sister gives the impression that she possesses a firm identity resisting all change. But Padma's identity is fractured like cracks under old glaze.

Padma's attitude of reproducing Indian ethnicity and traditional gender roles is indeed just pretence. She enacts several disruptions in gender relations. She subverts the

gender roles she claims to be protecting in many different ways. She is not the traditional wife, sister, daughter and perhaps mother as defined by her culture. Padma uses her displacement from home as a means of rebelling against the confining and restrictive configurations of home and of acquiring the freedom of choice and the career opportunities that she longs for. Her attachment to an artificial and exotic version of India away from home, on the other hand, is actually a means of providing her with both the respect of her family and financial advantage. The novel's narrator, does not endorse such exoticizing attitude and examines Padma's behavior with rather critical and inquisitive eyes.

Padma needs at the same time to move away from her home country but had to preserve her native tradition and culture. The apparent construction of home in terms of safety and comfort actually turns into confinement and limitation to her. Home becomes a place to escape from and Padma moves to the United States. In contrast, Padma sees advantages in maintaining an exaggerated attachment to her old home values in New York. Exoticizing herself by performing the Indian ethnicity benefits her in two ways. On the one hand, she keeps the respect of people who share her culture, including her parents and sisters, while she selects her life partner that goes against that very cultural configuration. On the other, she is able to earn her living out of her performance, selling an exoticized image of the Hindu woman in the USA and financially profiting from it.

In India, Parvati lives with her husband Auro and their teenage sons Bhupesh and Dinesh. Living on "the fifteenth floor of a spectacular high-rise, building the bedrooms over-looks the Arabian Sea" (DD 52), she inhabits the conservative and comfortable household and lives according to her caste and class. Tara explains Parvati's life thus:

In her Bombay flat each object has its rightful place. She doesn't waste time hunting in closets and drawers, as I seem to have to do, for basics such as needle and thread, spot remover, matches, scratch pads and postage stamps. No piled-up dirty dishes in her kitchen sink, even though she doesn't own a dishwasher, not wet towels on her bathroom floors, no beds left unmade, though she has three to four nuclear family members as houseguests almost every day of the year. (DD 55-56)

The orderly characterization of Parvati's home contrasts precisely with the lack of organization of Tara's home in San Francisco and Padma's in New York. Parvati's home in India can be said to be representative of a so-called authentic Indian household.

It is not only because her house is tidy and clean that Parvati's home is said to be traditional. In her house, she also plays the traditional gender roles of daughter, wife, mother and relative and acts according to the expectation of her culture. Parvati constantly receives and accommodating guests in her house, as custom demands. Although taking care of so many relatives may at times be exhausting for her, she does not complain about it: "We have this great place that Auro's company pays for, so why not share with my in-laws?" (DD 56). Whereas Parvati's house is always filled with guests and relatives, Padma's house as if nobody inhabits it.

Diaspora is, according to Brah, "about settling down and putting roots elsewhere" (182). With Brah's argument in mind, Parvati is one of the main women characters in *Desirable Daughters* is not diasporic. Parvati moves to the United States in order to study, but soon feels homesick and returns to India. Her immigration experience, thus,

involves only temporary permanence. She is actually the least transgressive of the characters and most of the time she conforms to the traditional roles prescribed for Indian women of her social class and cultural background. Her only transgression is that she chooses her own husband and marries him. So Parvati cannot be said to be diasporic.

In India Parvati plays the role of the traditional Indian wife and mother. The only transgression she performs her attitude of choosing her own husband when she was studying in America. Except from this disruptive behaviour, that takes place when she is away from home, Parvati conforms to the gender roles she is taught to play. As a mother, she manages to raise and educate her sons as good Bengali boys, and as good students at an elite school. Tara observes that Parvati's marriage had proved to be more solid, her lifestyle more conspicuously luxurious than Padma's and Tara's. Tara flees to India when her house at San Francisco is bombed, she describes Parvati's routine as one limited to waiting for her husband's "nightly return, his bathing rituals and change from business suit to kurta and pajama" (DD 299). Parvati lives mostly for her husband, sons, parents and relatives. As Tara claims, her life is one "that preserves most of the old ways as sanity permits" (DD 299). Unlike her sisters, Parvati is not diasporic and chooses to dwell in a home that can be described as a private sphere of patriarchal hierarchy.

When Tara first arrives in America, she is steeped in Indian culture and exhibits the behavior of the typical Indian wife, having had an arranged marriage. She is subservient to her husband and well-versed in domestic duties, such as "serving pakoras and freshening drinks when Bish and Chester watching a Sunday football game" (DD24). Bish takes great pride in showing his parents "how well-trained this upper-class ... girl had become, what a good cook, what an attentive wife and daughter-in-law. What a

bright and obedient boy she was raising"(DD 82).Tara wanted to study at the community college, but instead stays at home to take care of her son, just like all of the other young Indian wives in Atherton, California. Believing in the liberating promise of marriage, Tara devotes her entire life to supporting Bish and raising their family, for the importance of fulfilling the domestic responsibilities has been ingrained in her since birth.

Yet as Tara assimilates herself to life in California, she begins to dispense with certain age-old traditions and finds adapting to a Western environment an increasingly easier process.

The "boy" (they are always "boys" when fathers choose them for their daughters) who was selected to jumpstart my life, to be worshipped as a god according to scripture was (and is) Bishwapriya Chatterjee....His American friends call him Bish ... I, of course, as a good Hindu wife-to-be, could not utter any of his names to his face. But we're progressive people; after crossing the dark waters to California I called him Bishu, then Bish". (DD23)

Bish's crossing of the dark waters represents the beginning of Tara's transition into her new identity, a more "progressive" and liberated self. Tara comes to California expecting to fulfill the role of the traditional Indian wife, but instead realizes that she does not desire to play the typical role of a wife in the Indian family drama.

When I left Bish (let us be clear on this) after a decade of marriage, it was because the promise of life as an American wife was not being fulfilled. I wanted to drive, but where would I go? I wanted to work, but would



people think that Bish Chatterjee couldn't support his wife? In his Atherton years, as he became better known on the American scene - a player, an adviser, a pundit-he also became, at home, more of a traditional Indian. (DD 82)

Tara's frustration at her unfulfilled wish for assimilation and Bish's lack concern leads her to make the most drastic of personal moves in Indian culture, divorce. As Khandelwal writes of Indian culture, "Marriages are considered permanent and should not be altered by either partner's free choice...Divorce was taboo, and considered a sure sign of Americanization"(119-137). Tara's decision to divorce Bish represents a definitive step toward a new consciousness in which the traditions of Indian culture no longer dominates Tara's actions and where the opinions and judgments of others do not pose a constant threat. As Tara becomes more familiar with American culture, she moves from seeing herself as a good Hindu wife-to-be to an independent, progressive Californian, and one of the most clear manifestations of this transformation of identity is the manner in which Tara's perception of her sexuality changes over the years. During her first few years of marriage with Bish, Tara and her friends , the other Indian wives and mothers living in Atherton often perused American magazines, intrigued by how different the media's expectations of sexuality were from their own.

When Tara leaves Bish, however, she soon learns that her sexuality is an aspect of her identity that she can possess and embrace, but without succumbing to the Indian stereotype of sexually liberal women as shameful. As she is propositioned by many of Bish's old friends, Tara begins to see that Indian males living in America do not have to hide their sexuality; in fact they appear to flaunt it.

In the months after I left Bish, one by one, nearly all of his oldest friends, those boys who had sat in the Stanford student pub with us while I sipped my Coca-Cola, found my new address in Palo Alto. I gratefully opened the door of my new apartment to them, thinking that divorce did not necessarily spell the end of my old social life, and I'd ask about their wives and children-and where, by the way, were they, still in the car? - and within minutes they were breathing hard and fumbling with my clothes. Your life is already shattered, they said, what more damage can this do ... I left the peninsula because of them and moved to the city.... (DD 188-189)

Tara's view of both Indian culture and American culture is slowly changes, thereby influences her perception of her sexuality and her coming to view herself as a more sexually liberated woman. Tara goes to the extreme level of a Westernized woman when she dates with a Hungarian boy friend. She explains about him as:

There's Andy, my balding, red-bearded, former biker, former bad-boy, Hungarian Buddhist contractor/yoga instructor, the man Bish calls "Tara's mistri," my carpenter. That hasn't stopped Bish from hiring him for work on his Atherton house. He considers the fact that Andy sleeps with his ex-wife the best possible guarantee of quality work. (DD 25)

As Tara continues to assimilate to American culture, her perceptions of her race and ethnicity begin to change as well. Raised in an upper class Bengali Brahmin family, Tara's conception of race was limited to the hierarchical class system of Indian familial lineage, in which she was at the top.

Any community whose roots were not in Bengal, preferably in the eastern half of Bengal; anything like the Marwari, Parsi or Sindhi community, was seen as alien and money-grubbing, worthy of our disrespect, if not outright contempt. No reason needed; that was the joy of being born rich and Brahmin and Bengali in the great city at the center of our culture. (DD 214)

Tara perceives race as she was brought up to see it - in a manner that makes racial distinctions based on a cultural class system. Tara's native conception of race distinguishes between subcultures of India; it recognizes race as differentiations in class and caste. Thus when Tara comes to America with a specific notion of race, she is shocked to see such distinctions disappear and Indian culture categorized as a singular entity rather than a multiplicity of groups.

We're a billion people, but divided into so many thousands or millions of classifications that we have trouble behaving as a monolith. Yet each Indian is so densely packed with family that he or she seems to contain hundreds of competing personalities. (DD 199)

Financial security has however enabled Tara to strike out on her own, in her search for self-fulfillment. Padma, has to hustle for her day to day existence, and this has pushed her in the opposite direction, preserving her ethnicity presenting the outward appearance of a typically Indian married woman. At first, Tara is unable to reconcile her quintessentially Indian sister with her rebellious younger self. She intuitively comprehends the fault line within the family thus, separating herself from her Didi:

I understood better why Didi had condemned me for going through with my divorce. According to her, I had become "American" meaning self-engrossed. She had chosen to echo our mother and our aunts- things are never perfect in marriage, a woman must be prepared to accept less than perfection in this lifetime and to model herself on Sita, Savitri and Behula, the Virtuous wives of Hindu myths. (DD 134)

The circumscribed, protected life imposed on the sisters in their youth may have driven Padma to rebel, but in adulthood in America, she chooses, rather ironically, to revert to an essential version of the Indian wife.

The turning point of the novel comes when Tara's son Rabi introduces a boy named Christopher Dey as Padma's son. But Tara finds it hard to believe that he is an illegitimate child of her sister Padma. The information given by Chris seems to be true. The discovery of Padma's child brings into open all her inner disquiet and the need to find valid connections with her culture. Tara in a confused state had a conversation with her sister Parvati, who confirms that Padma has an illegitimate child. Tara writes to her sister Parvati " Dear Mrs. Parvati Banerji: You do not know me, but it has recently come to my attention that we may have a nephew in common" (DD 45). Parvati who lives in a protected apartment complex warns Tara to be careful for she might possibly be dealing with a dangerous criminal.

Rabi continues to meet Chris Dey and repudiates his mother's warning. Tara, the narrator is not leading her life according to Indian culture as she is at present by living in San Francisco. Parvati in a long series of letters which seems to be a discontinuous

document written over the course of several days is delivered to Tara by courier. Parvati is not sure that Padma might have had an involvement with Ronald Dey, the man who is said to be Christopher's father. She recalls an emotional scene between Padma and her parents regarding the possibility of Padma's marriage with Ronald Dey.

I seem to remember Mummy telling Didi something like, if you want to marry this man, you better know what you're getting into, because you don't just marry a boy, you marry his family, his religion, his biases, his politics, and if all those things are totally different from yours as they are bound to be, then you can prepare yourself for a lifetime of being lonely.

(DD 101)

Tara informs police about Chris Dey. When she returns home, she finds that Andy has learnt about her visit to the police. He becomes angry and parts with Tara. Tara calls Jack Sikh the detective assigned to deal with her case. He shows some pictures to Tara so that she can identify the man posing as Chris Dey.

Tara identifies the man posing as Chris Dey. His real name is Abbas Sattar Hai, who poses as Chris Dey in order to enter Tara's life and to dismantle it. Abbas Sattar Hai poses as Chris Dey, Tara's nephew is a member of Indian criminal group and a murderer. His fraudulent diasporic identity is based on conciliation. Abbas Sattar Hai, with all his aliases, encompasses the identity of a diasporic chameleon and stays in between and creates the effects of rupture between the binary of home and abroad.

Marriage is man's manifest dharma, his test, his duty, the outer sign of his inner strength and harmony."My parents are fifty years together. Even our

house servants, forty, fifty years. One time, you mentioned the loneliness inside of marriage and did not understand what you were saying. Two people are together; they have come from the same place; they share the same values, the same language. Practically speaking, they are two halves of one consciousness, They eat the same food; they have a child they sleep in the same bed, how can they be lonely? (DD 266)

Tara expresses that the man's manifest dharma is to do his duty for the family members and that husband and wife are equal half with the same consciousness where as Bish and Tara were physically together but emotionally apart.

Bharati Mukherjee is seen at her insightful best in the delineation of Bish Chatterjee. She captures the successful diasporic Indian immigrant in the throes of a crisis despite all his accomplishments. His sense of failure derives largely from the failure of his marriage, which he sees as the result of his inability to adhere to his dharma. As psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar states: “Desirable is the means through which man approaches the desired goal of human life. As the Vaisesikasutra has it, dharma is “that from which results happiness and final beatitude” (Kakar 37). Bish Chatterjee had unquestioningly followed his father's advice since childhood and this Bengali prudence had resulted in his great success, as Tara observes:

Our training, not only in the old classrooms with second-rate equipment and uninspiring teachers, but also our training at home, duty and honor, obedience and respect, the whole dharma of studentship, spared us doubt and second thoughts. Bish became an electrical engineering student in

India because his father told him he would be an engineer, and he excelled at it because that is what Chatterjee did. He received a scholarship to Stanford because that was the best place to go and everything Bish Chatterjee did was best. (DD 44)

The traditional Hindu world-view saw a man's life as defined by four distinct phases and the roles he was required to play in each. The first stage is that of apprenticeship or studentship and involves the cultivation of knowledge competency and fidelity. The second state is that of the ghashasrama in which man plays the role of the householder. The third stage is vanaprastha, where the individual retreats to the forest and begins to renounce his worldly connections. The final stage is of sannysa where one has attained realisation of one's dharma and wisdom. Though he is a successful international business man and personifies the American dream, Bish remains firmly rooted in Indian tradition. Unlike Tara he does not seem to be torn between his Indian Hindu heritage and his American professional demands. As Tara observes:

Although his life was cited everywhere as perfection itself, he had failed in his fundamental duty. I braced myself for a complicated economic or technological explanation, but Bish's failure was vastly simpler and more fundamental. He had been failed in his dharma, the basic duty of a man in the householder phase of his life, to support and sustain his marriage. He had been brooding over the breakup far longer and more profoundly than I ... He was intent on delivering a self-lacerating scrutiny of his failure. He was a man in pain. (DD 265)

Tara felt that marriage is a mode of freedom life. Moreover she dreams that she could go around all over the world with her husband and fulfill her dreams. But, after the marriage she comes across many events that she dislikes. She felt that Bish, her husband failed in his dharma, the duty of a man in his life.

Bish's deep understanding of Tara's deep shock and grief over the Chris Dey episode, leads her to realise that the essential difference in social and cultural outlook can never be bridged. In contrast, Andras Karolyi had a completely different reaction, ultimately breaking up with Tara, unable to deal with the complications. Tara realises early on through the reactions of American women to her arranged marriage. "I'll never be a modern woman" (DD 27). Her realisation of their cultural bond rekindles Tara's love for Bish. At this stage, Tara's post-divorce home is destroyed by a terrorist bomb. The three of them, Bish Tara and Rabi miraculously survive, but Bish is badly burned and will require months of surgery and physiotherapy. By the time Tara's phase of rebellion is finally over she returned to the fold.

At the close of the novel Bish is seriously injured by a bomb, triggered by a reconfigured cell phone. After the bombing, stock value of Bish's company came down drastically upsetting the world economy. Chris Dey had been murdered and his identity was assumed by a known criminal gang member Abbas Sattar Hai. Bish Chatterjee's sympathy over the appearance of this man in Tara's life, led her to realize that one cannot totally cut oneself off from one's traditions. In her confusion and distress, Tara turns to Bish for comfort. The novel concludes with a hint that the target was Bish and that the bomber was part of an international globalised criminal network, and their aim was financial. The false Chris is the product of a world in which it is easy to make global



connections. Finally the couple gets together; Bish carried Tara through the flames, sustaining serious burn injuries on his legs and feet.

Tara is deeply traumatized by the terrorist attack and returns to India so as to reevaluate the Hindu customs that had shaped her and her family. After the firebombing of her San Francisco house, Tara Chatterjee is compelled to search for her identity. By tracing the story of her great-great-aunt Tara Lata, she understands that history keeps repeating and diaspora is a universal concept happening throughout history.

Tara and Rabi make a pilgrimage to the home of the Tree- bride, a scene hinted at the opening pages.

The first time I went back to India on my own, it wasn't just to see relatives. I took Rabi with me know my own American-style roots search, into the East Bengal-now Bangladesh- of my grandparents and a hundred generations of Gangoolys and Bhattacharjees ... I felt for the first time how recent my family's Calcutta identity was, just two generations, how shallow those urban roots were, not much deeper than Rabi's in California. I saw my life on a broad spectrum, with Calcutta not at the center, but just another station on the dial. (TB 20)

Bharati Mukherjee uses Tara's narration of the reconstructed history of Tara Lata Gangooly, the great-great aunt she was named after, whose story frames the modern narrative. Tara- Lata was the ' Tree-Bride', an unfortunate young girl whose prospective groom had died of snakebite on their wedding day. She was married to a tree at the dead of night to prevent a deadening life as a widow. In order to protect her from lifetime

imprisonment and to save her from public neglect as a woman who brings her family misfortune and death, Jai Krishna Gangooly, her father, had married her to a tree. Hence Tara- Lata the Tree- Bride, had become a family legend:

After the night of her marriage, Tara- Lata returned to Mishtigunj and, at least by legend, never left her father's house. Unburdened by a time-consuming, emotion-draining marriage and children, never having to please a soul, she grew up and grew old in a single house in an impoverished village in the poorest place of earth, and in that house, the world came to her. She lived there seventy years and gradually changed her world. (DD 17)

Tara- Lata accepted her marriage to a tree: unburdened by the demands of husband and family, she had fashioned a redemptive role for herself. Though she remained single, she sacrificed her life for a noble cause. She helped the poor and the needy and fought for India's Independence.

Her house was open to all. Through it came visitors from abroad, men and women descending from polished motor cars. Gradually, the people of Mishtigunj believed the evidence of their own eyes, which told them that Tara- Ma, as she was familiarly called, dwelled on a higher spiritual plane ... Years later, in the eyes of many, she had become a goddess, prayed to by unmarried women needing husbands and by wives seeking sons. (TB 255)

She helped the beggars, the sick and then the young soldiers who indulged themselves in the freedom movement. She transformed herself from the unfortunate Tree-Bride to “Tara Ma”, a saint and a freedom fighter.

Tara’s Chatterjee’s search for roots is related to her interest in finding out more about the historical figure Tara Lata Gangooly, since she is named after her and she feels a insightful connection to her. Tara Lata is the youngest daughter of Jai Krishna Gangooly, a middle-class Hindu doctor. The legendary Tara Lata is married to a tree in the jungle and is taken back home by her father. This home that, even after so many years, is described by people of Mishtigunj as a palace-house and is a place in which The Tree Bride lived but never left. Tara Lata is as rooted as the tree she marries and her home becomes a symbol of Indian nationalism.

During the struggle for the India’s independence, Tara Lata opens her house to accommodate the injured freedom fighters as well as injured civilians. She keeps records of the atrocities committed against the native population and pays special attention to the women who were tortured by British soldiers. The only time she leaves her home in Mishtigunj is when she is forced by colonial authorities. She never comes back and is declared dead. The history of Tara Lata as recorded by her grand niece, Tara Chatterjee becomes the history of a saint. She is considered to be a symbol of Indian nationalism, a figure that contributed to India’s independence. Tara Lata’s life is a source of admiration and reflection for the modern Tara. Traumatized by her brush with terrorism, Tara Chatterjee learns through Tara-Lata’s life, she reads a message for her own, the courage to persevere against repressive traditions and to triumph with virtue.

Of all her stories, the one that moved me most was about my namesake, Tara Lata, the Tree Bride of Mishtigunj, the five – year-old almost- widow who was forced to marry a tree as surrogate husband and then expected by villagers to lead a life of resigned self-abasement. Caste tradition forbade remarriage. But destiny works in mysterious ways, my mother said. Who better than an abandoned child, free of wifely duties and fear of consequences, to lead a village into dignity and freedom? (TB 37)

Bharati Mukherjee's fiction reflects her preoccupation with cultural conflicts, with the results of change, and with the influence of the past and the present. Typically her characters are Indian women raised in a society where life is governed by tradition, as interpreted and enforced by the older members of large extended families. When such women find themselves in the very different environment of the alien land, the result can be terrible for cultural assimilation doesn't come naturally.

Every time I see Indian women with their children, they seem so serene. They never shout, they never rattled. I'm just struck by their incredible devotion. She was trying to compliment me. And their children don't cry and throw tantrums; they just sit there like angels. I used to sit like a little angel. And I never threw tantrums. Tantrums would have shamed my mother in the company of her in-laws. She would have been blamed for being a bad mother, another crime her mother-in-law could hold against her. In fact, many members of the family would have loved me to scream and misbehave. I learned to protect her when I was about two years old. So much for our family values. (TB 156)

After Tara Chaterjee's home was firebombed just as she was reconciling with her ex-husband, she begins to long for home and tradition. A trip back to India creates a desire to find her family's ancestral roots and their place in the history of pre-independent India.

The novel begins in 1879, and Tara Lata's wedding party is travelling through a dark jungle because the bride groom was dead of snake bite and grooms father in order to save her from a life of degradation, widowhood, and shame, marries her to a tree, but the people around started to curse the groom as: " Better a barren womb than a womb that produces such a luckless female" (TB 11). After she marries the tree she becomes the legendary Tree Bride. As a lifelong virgin she spends her life for the poor and the needy and participates in the freedom struggle. She is dragged from home in 1944 by colonial authorities, who announce her death six days later.

When I was a very small child back in Kolkata, my paternal great-grandmother told me a very strange, very moving story about life-before-birth. Call it the Hindu version of the stork leg-end. Between incarnations, she said, the individual soul wanders in a dreamless state, like a seed between plantings, in the windy realm of *vayumandala*, waiting for its allotted time to reinhabit a living body. When the time arrives, it slips through a seam in the fetal skull and begins its phase of deep dreaming. The bodies it has previously inhabited have perished, but the soul persists. Fire cannot burn it, nor water drown it. It dreams of its past tenancies. It remembers the terrors and triumphs of its many lives on earth and links them together with the logic of dreams. (TB 4)

The title character in Bharati Mukherjee's new book, *The Tree Bride*, is an Indian woman from the last century who was married to a tree following the sudden death of her bride groom. More than a century later, San Francisco resident Tara Bhattacharjee researches the history of this distant relative, discovering the hidden links between her history with the Tree Bride, and the people she knows in the present day.

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

Tara is the narrator of the two novels, *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*. The two books are part of a proposed trilogy. *Desirable Daughters* ends with the attempted murder of Tara and her husband Bish Chaterjee by a firebomb in their home. The main purpose of this attack was Bish, a co-founder of a hugely successful communications technology company. He was the target, and he was terribly injured during the attack and confined to a wheel chair. Tara is pregnant and doing research about her relative, Tara Lata, her great grant aunt in India.

I'm enough of a mystic, like Bish, to believe there are coincidences, only convergences. Yash Khanna had met and married an Anglo- Canadian,

Victoria Treadwell-Percy, in India for Stanford and he'd taught my Indian husbands. No Yash Khanna, no Bish and Chet Yee, no CHATTY. Victoria Khanna knew my blood, had typed me and could trace me, if she wished, to dawn of time. Victoria Treadwell's grandfather must have known the Tree Bride. All stories of Mishtigunj touch, eventually, on Tara Lata Gangooly. She is like the Ganges, draining all tributaries. Hearing the world "Mishtigunj" from unexpected lips closed the circle. (TB 27)

Tara Chaterjee tries to find out her place in the lineage of her ancestors. The story traces the British colonial rule in India, its contributions and its ultimate downfall. When she tries to turn back to her ex-husband for comfort and carrying his child in her womb, Tara realises her heritage and the actions of her ancestors which may and may not have contributed to the total personality she has evolved into. The core message of the novel is that, everything is connected in this Universe and every action has its own opposite reaction.

*The Tree Bride* narrates parallel text and histories of people across culture, religion, nation, and gender. The first to be discussed here is that of John Mist then Vertie Treadwell, Victoria, Sameena Hai, and finally, Tara Lata, the tree bride and Tara Chaterjee. John Mist, the founder of Mishtigunj and an Indian native at heart, and of Vertie Treadwell, the District Commissioner of Mishtigunj, had different notions of home.

John Mist, made Bengal his home and Bengali his native language. Being a self-inspired visionary, he sought to resolve the bipolar opposition of Hindu and Muslim in

his city by recruiting two for each administrative job. As a result Mishtigunj had a Hindu and a Muslim doctor, a Hindu and a Muslim Lawyer, a Hindu and a Muslim teacher, and basically a two of everything. Jai Krishna Gangooly, Tara Lata's father and Rafeek Hai were the two Lawyers in that two of everything project. Ironically, Mist's death also involved such pairing as his friend Rafeek Mohammed Hai was also executed with him in 1880. "Mist and Hai were hanged by the British, who had been invited to enter because of Razak's debts; Razak's son, rich from British bribes, became history's darling, the man with his name on the map" (TB 151).

John Mist embodied the hybridity by becoming almost Indian, but not quite to the extent that he gave up his language and declared.

With his newly acquired hybrid identity in the home that he built in Mishtigunj, John Mist constructed a new life free from his past crimes and guilt. Mishtigunj thus became his Utopian vision of a home of hybrid perfection. He died like a hybrid saint, even in death mimicking the person he was but not quite (an Indian), accompanied by his friend Rafeek Hai, a Bengali Muslim lawyer with British education. (Hasanat 279)

*The Tree Bride* narrates British history in India. A great deal of detail has gone into recreating the British men who left their homeland to fulfill what they believed was a higher purpose of instilling order and discipline in foreign lands. Vertie Treadwell's homing in India was about to end in 1947, with the end of the British Raj. And he was fortunate to have a home to return to. Vertie Treadwell was Anglo- Indian by birth and English by nature, but India was his country. His parents and grandparents were born, or



had died, in India. Yet, Vertie was unhoused by free India and had no right to own a plot of Indian soil. In his delirium he panicked that he would be murdered. Vertie Treadwell gave a speech justifying his Indian home and identity:

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

Yet he also felt proud to be the one who tried to save the British Empire. The notion of home thus had a twisted contradiction for him. Britain was the home where he never was and would never be, and India was a home he owned with a feeling of love and hate. He fell in love with Tara Lata, and yet ordered her arrest and eventually her death in prison on account of treason. Tara Lata's connection with the nationalist activists and her unadulterated devotion to India's independence stood in opposition to Vertie Treadwell's double-consciousness. Vertie's dilemma of belonging nowhere comprised one of a British India, a hybrid home for a hybrid resident.

My grandfather's name was Virgil Treadwell. They called him Vertie- an acronym, really, Virgil Ernest Reginald Tread-Well. He was in the Indian Civil Service. Eventually they posted him to Bengal. He was a district commissioner in Bengal from 1930 up through Independence. (TB 25)

Like her Grandfather, Victoria Treadwell-Khana also lacks a sense of belongingness. Born out of illegitimate blood line, shifting through continents, and

earning an Indian last name through a second marriage, Victoria is finally able to redefine her diasporic Anglo-Indian hybrid identity as Indian. Just like her grandfather, she rambles on her death-bed, but her realization is one of pride and peace: "I am Indian, my dear, what do you think of that" (TB 242). This homing truth brings her peace as she dies, dreaming of five little Indians. In her own recollection of that moment, Tara explains the five Indians for her readers: "Bish and I, Yash and she, and baby make five. She felt, finally, she belonged with Indians"(TB 244). Victoria's newly negotiated identity is reconfirmed when Yash Khanna organizes a ritualistic cremation ceremony and chooses Fremont, the heart of the Indian community in California as the perfect disposal place for her remains.

Yash Khanna, was Bish's professor at Stanford. Yash admired Bish for he followed his career with great interest. Yash and Bish had a good relationship. Bish was so admired by Yash because he practically invented wireless communication. Yash and Bish became business partners. Tara Chatterjee gets more information about her great aunt Tara Lata from the papers given by Victoria and she connects the history.

Victoria at this movement received a letter from her aged New Zealand cousin-uncle. In the letter he had mentioned about a lady named Agnes Harpenny, who tried numerous devices to get to England from India but had failed.

"Aunt Agnes" had tried numerous devices to get to England, she said, but failed in every endeavour. As I grew older, she told me of her heart being broken more times than she could count, then of a fiance's death in the Great War. She was quite the gifted tragedienne. (TB 233)

Tara Chatterjee exclaims that the target of Abbas Sattar Hai's bomb wasn't Bish or Indian money. He tried to kill her. "Digital communication made Bish and Chet Yee famous, but from a block away it also triggered the bomb hidden inside a boom box that nearly destroyed our lives" (TB 240). Once again the bomb blasts in Sausalito and Victoria got terribly injured and blood seeps around the wound. Victoria died on the way to Marin General.

Tara Lata and Sameena were five years old, both recent brides." Tara Lata called Abdulhaq "the cook" not "a cook". For an orthodox brahmin like Jai Krishna Gangooly to take food from a Muslim's hand would bar his path to salvation. (TB 69)

Sameena and Tara Lata were of the same age and Tara Lata didn't consider Sameena a servant's daughter. They both would play in the dark glade of Uvaria trees. Now after reading the history of all these important persons Tara Chatterjee gets an idea about the coincidence of history.

In 1880, when she was six years old, Tara Lata's childhood friend and chief house servant, Sameena, was married to Shafiq Mohammed Hai, a student in the local school who was destined, according to his father, Rafeek Hai, for a career in medicine in Dhaka or Calcutta. When Rafeek Hai was hanged and denied a proper burial. Sameena and the crowd led by Jai Krishna had fought with the authorities to handover the body, but Shafiq was struck across the face by a British truncheon. Somehow, Shafiq got admission in medicinal college in Dhaka, while Sameena stayed back in Mist Mahal, serving Tara Lata.

Shafiq returned back as a doctor after seven years, and became Tara Lata's personal physician. Sameena gave birth to a son and they named him Gul Mohammed. Shafiq went to Mecca, and became Hajji, and in 1932, he was honored with the title "Chowdhury" by the newly installed district commissioner, Virgil Treadwell.

Sameena, a cook's daughter, married the son of the towns leading Muslim. In the Muslim community they should offer dowry for the daughter. Abdulaq would not have been able to afford the dowry expected by an educated doctor from a leading family. Sameena's dowry was the house that she never owned. Therefore Sameena and her husband, Tara Lata's personal physician plotted to take possession of Mist Mahal.

In 1943, after the death of Tara Lata Gangooly, her house was passed to Begam Sameena Chowdhury, widow of the late Dr. Hajji Shafiq Mohammed Chowdhury. She was the mother of Gul Mohammed Chowdhury, the old hajji I'd met in Mishtingunj on my second visit. I'd met Hajji's son, on leave from the New York restaurant while he pillaged his father's holdings, on my third visit. And of course, I've had dealings with Sameena's great-grandson, Abbas Sattar Hai, in San Francisco. (TB 277)

The presence of Abbas Sattar Hai in Tara's San Francisco life is inevitably a sort of deconstruction of the multiracial notion of home. Tara Bhattacharjee's home in Calcutta was burnt leaving Tara standing outside. In her attempt to rewrite history of the tree bride, Tara encounters multiple layers of narratives that either threaten to destroy or reformulate history relocating the teleological history as fiction.

Abbas Sattar Hai attached himself to our son as a way of burrowing into our family and destroying an Indian foothold in America- and both he and Agnes succeeded. I can imagine that Agnes Harpenny decided to destroy every sign of Vertie Treadwell except her own son, who was already safe in his English orphanage. (TB 235)

Abbas Sattar Hai had targeted many people as, " Victoria died because the pasts of Vertie Tredwell, Rafeek Hai, and Tara Lata Gangooly conspired to reconnect us, their ignorant descendants" (TB 283).

Tara's attempt to set tree bride's soul free in a religiously significant location as she arranges a ceremonial cremation in Kashi, India despite the fact that Tara Lata lived and died in a place that is geographically located in Bangladesh a country where majority of population is Muslim, Tara's final decision to arrange for a ceremonial cremation for the tree bride is the required effort to locate a final home within one's own religious culture.

She named the town: Kashi ... Kashi, she explained, is both the City of Light and the City of Liberating Cremation. When the cosmos chars into total blackness, Kashi glows because Shiva created it as a sacred where to die is to be saved. (TB 5)

Tara experiences displacement within home but does not even realize it. Blinded by the privileges offered her by her family's class and caste, she is unable to comprehend the patriarchal configuration of her family. Her displacement from home is not a decision taken by her, for moving to the United States is part of the wife's role she plays after

marriage. It is there, however, that she becomes dissatisfied with the confinement and limitation of her life outside home which reproduces the gender relations of her old home. In that new location, Tara has the opportunity to act and transgress those very gender roles. As she gets divorce, she feels freer and believes that in that space, she can let go of her over determined sense of self and benefit from her so-called invisibility. Things, however, are more complicated for her as she still feels a profound connection to her old home at the same time that she is unable to let go of her newly acquired subjectivity and to simply return to home. Tara seems to look for a sense of belonging, a homing desire than a desire for her homeland.

Bharati Mukherjee explores in this novel that history can have the ripple effect on an individual's life, and to show the patterns of love and betrayal and redemption that are repeated generation after generation. She explains that the freedom to begin a new life, offered by America, will always be circumscribed by familial imperatives, by religious and cultural tropes and by more primeval, subterranean forces that she likes to think of as fate.

Tara learns more about her lineage, as she deals with her pregnancy and recuperates from the aftermath of the bomb blast, the perpetrator of which is yet to be caught. Mukherjee's focus on the past suggests that our histories are all intertwined and may one day intersect. Her focus on the present wisely tells us that technology is only going to create the future but also helpful to reconstruct past. India, past and present, its inhabitants and expatriates, has always formed the framework of Mukherjee's literary world.

By separating herself from her family and community, Tara challenges some of the social and ideological markers that determine her identity; however, as Mukherjee demonstrates in this novel, identity determinants cannot be shed as easily as a snake's skin. (Miller 64)

Miller has a point when she argues that Tara cannot escape some constituents of identity, even if she is away from India. When she looks for the detective's help in order to try to solve the mystery around Chris Dey, Jack Singh Sidhu informs her that in the eyes of Indians, she will also be linked to her ex-husband. Thus, although Tara is a divorced woman, as the ex-wife of a wealthy member of the Indian community, she is a target for the Indian underworld. It is not easy for the protagonist then, although she transgresses gender relations, to let go of what has for so long defined her, especially in the eyes of others.

Although these two Indian women share a name, there are enormous differences between them. On the one hand, Tara Lata, is rooted as a tree, even though she is enclosed in the private sphere of her home, manages to have an active voice in the public life of her country and fights against the British imperialistic oppression. On the other hand, the rootless Tara is a diasporic woman whose small conquests are confined solely to the private sphere. The Tree Bride's home is very well defined and she is faithful to it throughout her life. She never disappoints her father and plays the gender roles she is assigned to even though she is only symbolically married to a tree. She lives according to tradition and the gender roles prescribed for her, never disappointing her family. The modern Tara, however, leaves her home and transgresses the gender roles as prescribed by her class and caste. In this sense, she is not faithful to the symbolic notion of home.

On the contrary, she suffers a displacement from home and chooses not to follow some of the roles that this social space expects from her.

The protagonist knows how different she is from her namesake, and she supposes: "I will grow old, but I know I will never change the world" (DD18). At the same time rootlessness makes Tara leave her home, she is never sure which place she should call home. Although the protagonist's mother defines home as where you belong, such definition of home does not match Tara's experience. She does not know exactly where she belongs and feels she is always in-between. She has transgressed too much to simply go back to India and she is too critical to simply assimilate into American culture. Tara tries to balance between her home - India and America trying to acquire some sense of belonging but to no avail. The cultural clash suffered by Hindu women trained on the traditional moral codes that denies them even a separate existence but who are given a western education in India is highlighted by Tara's dilemma. They are caught between cultures and this feeling of being in between or being juxtaposed poses for them the problem of trying to maintain a balance between their dual affiliations. In the case of the immigrant women it is more pronounced and prominent. She carries the burden of cultural values of her native land with her to her new country, thus making it more difficult and problematic for her to adjust.

In this context it may be reviewed that, Tara Chatterjee, the protagonist in Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*. She is convent educated, yet she recalls that as a good Hindu wife she could not utter her husband's name to his face. She has lived an exemplary life in India but how much ever she tries to blend in with the cosmopolitan



population of San Francisco she is constantly aware of being different. She finds it impossible to convey her Indian sensibility to her American friends,

Through her critical reconstruction of the Tree- Bride's history, Tara is able to arrive at an awareness of her identity that is largely shaped by her Indian affiliations albeit mediated through her acquired American consciousness. Tara at the end of the novel seems to believe that there are no facile solutions to her quest. Finally when she leaves Tara- Lata's house and spies at the local vendors of fruits and vegetables outside, she comments to Rabi: "Remember this, it's a miracle" (DD 310). Tara realizes that if Tara-Lata, aged virgin and a Tree- Bride, could attain the status of a saint and freedom fighter in a society where it was unthinkable for a woman to be without a man, it was essential that she, Tara- Lata's descendant must forge her own path towards self-assertion.

Tara is of the view that death is not the end of life but it is a starting of new life according to our ancestors. She also remembers the story of her great-grandmothers story: "story of god Shiva showing Kashi to his bride, Parvati. Kashi, the luminous city, where death holds no terror and no finality" (TB 285). "In Kashi, death would not have signaled the end of life, but the soul's return to the Abode of Ancestors, in realm invisible to mortals, to be judged, and returned in time to a new existence" (TB 284).

Mukherjee enmeshes the socio-cultural history of Bengal blending it with a family history. Central to her story is the impact of western culture on ethnic Bengali society. She traces the earliest influences of colonialism, bringing it up to the present

when immigrants have a different circumstance but essentially the same confluence of the orient.

Through these narratives of silence and speech Mukherjee tries to interpret women's responses to patriarchal hegemony. Silence is a symbol of oppression, a characteristic of the subaltern condition while speech signifies self-expression and liberation. Mukherjee depicts both women as a different entity and the difference between each individual, rather than limiting the lives of women to one ideal. Her focus on the past life of the protagonist suggests that our histories are all intertwined and may one day intersect.

The diasporic situation has created rich possibilities for the understanding of various histories. These histories have revealed that identities, culture and traditions do change through dislocation and the diasporic individual attains these intentionally by comprehending the distinction between change as expediency and the resistance in retaining their native culture. The change in the psyche of the displaced individual is a consciously directed self-fashioning. The ethnic minority community is often forced to assert its authenticity in an alien land just to protect and maintain its history and its space. These are the factors that confront the diasporic Indian- American individual.

Authenticity, relationality and the politics of representation are situated alongside each other and place similar demands on the diasporic subject. The very notion of authenticity demands a univocal response, yet diasporic identities are necessarily multifaceted. (Balakrishnan 256)

In *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*, Mukherjee mythologizes a progressive Indian ancestor and the lives of the protagonist and her two sisters living different lives across the globe. Throughout her fiction, Mukherjee's focus is particularly literary, which leads her to the written evidence of cultural propagation and mythology, and she explicitly evokes other literary genres and rewrites them and weaves immigrant characters into these cultural discourses, moulding them together to create new subjects. *The Tree Bride* portrays texts and histories of people across culture, religion, nation and gender.

All the three novels, *The Holder of The World*, *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*, take the same track of thinking back through history in an attempt of tracing the origin of a female consciousness, and in order to give it a new recourse. This chapter explores the cultural confrontations of the two worlds America and India. It also deals with history in its multiple layers of transcultural spaces, and migration is inscribed as a key feature that ignites transnational connections. Thus Mukherjee elaborates historical narrative of diaspora and broadens the scope for historical rewriting. This chapter reveals that history can have the ripple effect on an individual's life; patterns of love, betrayal and redemption that keeps repeating generation after generation. The freedom to begin a new life offered by America is circumscribed by familial imperatives, by religious and cultural tropes and by more primeval, subterranean forces that a protagonist tries to link her individual conscience with that of the collective consciousness.