

# **Diasporic Divulgence in the Select Novels of Bharati Mukherjee**

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## **Chapter IV**

### **Summation**

Postcolonial literature with reference to diaspora is related to locale, dislocation and relocation. The history of immigration is a history of alienation and its consequences. The effect of the cultural uprootedness is harsh and the assimilation into the host society is traumatic to the immigrants. Diaspora discusses about people displaced from traditional environment and transplanted into a strange ground where strange customs and climate prevail. The customary modes of behaviour become inadequate to confront the problems of the new atmosphere. They are compelled to readjust and redefine themselves in the alien soil. Transplantation forces the severance of the old roots and the establishment of new moorings. The immigrants are exposed to extreme situation such that the impact of the cultural shock sometimes reaches down to generations.

By uprooting and transplantation of people to a new locale, place the person amidst shifting images of the self between a past which is always alive within them and a present in another country and culture which is now termed as the host society. Each immigrant, regardless of sex and nationality, passes through a traumatic transitional stage. Though millions move, the experience of migration especially assimilation is essentially individual.

Loneliness, despair, estrangement from familial grounds and their own insignificance in the new realm haunt the migrants. Exile, refugee, diasporic, expatriate and immigrant are related yet slightly different terms concerning the domicile of a person. They indicate the ideologies, choices, reasons and compulsions which govern the cause of migration. The word home has more connotations than just a dwelling place: it is

where one belongs to; it is his national, cultural and spiritual identity, the soil that nurtures him, his language that forms part of his consciousness. Home refers to the ambience in which one's childhood has flowered and matured into youth. Exile is loss of home. Exile from blissful home and its effect is deeply embedded in every human psyche right from the banishment of Adam and Eve from Eden. In postcolonial context diaspora literature discusses colonialism and colonial education which have resulted in alienating people from their culture and traditions and have made them exiles in their own lands.

The word exile evokes multiple meanings which cover a variety of relationships with the motherland such as alienation, forced exit, self-imposed exile, political exile etc. The experience of an exile or expatriate grants a special insight which is not available to an insider. Majority of expatriate writers nostalgically present their native land. Like their protagonists, the expatriate writers are cut off from home and accustom themselves to an alien culture.

Migration in early times was only the transportation of third world laborers to a developed country as slaves. But today people are leaving their countries voluntarily in order to satisfy their personal ambitions. The nostalgia of migrants includes longing for their motherland, culture, religion and language. Highly educated people who migrate to foreign countries willingly for personal gains adjust to the different social, religious economic and political milieu in the alien land.

Homi. K.Bhabha explained about people who live border lives on the margins of different nations, in between contrary homelands. Borders are important thresholds, full of contradiction and ambivalence. They are intermediate locations where one

contemplates moving beyond a barrier. For Bhabha, the border is the place where conventional patterns of thought are disturbed by the possibility of crossing.

At the border, past and present, inside and outside no longer remain separated as binary opposites but instead commingle and conflict. So, it is argued that the imaginative border crossing as much consequence of migration as the physical crossing of borders. (Bhabha 25)

In olden days a group of people or a community as labourers moved together to other country. Therefore it was the total culture that moved together, it was a forced migration. The migration of different races and communities creates racial, cultural and linguistic confusion and this becomes a great difficulty in the formation of a national culture. The migrants from different country create a new culture in the alien land which is ultimately different from the parent culture. The old values diminish and just remain as a memory in the mind of the people as they proceed towards assimilation.

People from different countries of our time migrate to America in order to satisfy their personal ambitions. Especially, the youngsters are making an unabated flow to America. This flow of different races, classes and cultures has totally changed the face of America. Those immigrants blindly imitate American habits and culture. They feel more American and adjust to its culture, race, and religion in order to fulfill their dreams. Earlier it was religion which was more vital. But nowadays it is economy which is governing supreme power in the formation and alteration of cultural norms of a society. Fredric Jameson rightly comments:

The post modern is ... the forcefield in which very different kinds of cultural impulses- what Raymond Williams has usefully termed 'residual' and "emergent" forms of cultural production must make their way. If we do not achieve some general sense of a cultural dominant, then we fall back into a view of present history as sheer heterogeneity, random difference, a coexistence of a host of distinct forces whose affectivity is undecidable. (6)

This dissertation attempts to reveal the different aspects of diasporic experiences and how these experiences further diverge into preservation and appropriation under the sway of globalisation which is a challenge to cultures, to marginalised communities and their identities.

The recognition that identity is not merely constructed, but depends upon some other, opens up the theoretical space for marginal or oppressed groups to challenge and re-negotiate the identities that have been forced upon them in the process of domination. (Edgar and Sedgwick 184)

Literature, particularly fiction, reflects the contemporary social conditions. It forms the background and the deterministic conditions of the lives of their characters. Hence a wide range of alienated characters populate the fictional landscape of Indian novelists as well. Women writers all over the world have been recording their experiences and invariably each experience is based on a particular cultural, political, religious and social milieu. The segment of the Indian society is mostly affected by the migration is women. When the whole world is rushing forward, Indian women are most

often compelled to conform to traditional ways. With feminine sensibility, sensitivity and understanding women writers portray a life-size picture of the contemporary Indian women with all their longings, aspirations and frustrations.

The status of Indian women has been intertwined with the history of the country which is primarily one of repeated impositions of many an alien ethos on its culture necessitating a frequent restructuring of the social system and consequently individual identity. As centuries rolled by, the situation went on changing adversely for women who once enjoyed considerable freedom and privileges in the spheres of family, religion and public life. Idealistically a woman is worshipped in India, but factually she is defiled. Indian woman's freedom from the shackles of illiteracy and ignorance has generated a new sensitivity about covert and overt oppressive conditions of womankind. They have begun to stir out of their placid stoicism. Yet, even the pursuit of career has not diminished the taboos and pressures. Modern woman values individuality and an insistence to preserve it from the gathering demands on it alienate her. The search for an independent identity has negatively influenced the quality of our familial ties. The psychologically tense, socially dynamic milieu often becomes un conducive to the establishment and development of healthy interpersonal relationships. Deprived of a sense of identity most women feel emotionally incapacitated to face life. Too fragile to withstand the onslaughts of the external world, they drift towards loneliness, isolation, neurosis or death.

The women writers concentrate on the problems of female marginality, psychic and spiritual despair, broken marital relationships, suppressed sexuality or the thwarted attempts of establishing individuality in their works. In their attempts at charting the

feminine sensibility Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Bharati Mukherjee portray the sensitive, intelligent woman who refuses to accept any more the myths created by patriarchy. These novelists have generally concentrated on the plights and problems of educated women mostly with an urban base.

The culture-shock experienced by Bharati Mukherjee was bound to change her as a woman and as a writer. In her opinion, Canada is a country that is hostile to its immigrants and also opposes the concept of cultural assimilation. The initial problems of an expatriate Indian wife and writer in Canada are assuaged by the recognition of her literary talent in the U.S.A.

Mukherjee discuss the alienation and despair confronted by the female section of the middleclass society. Expatriate Sensibility in Bharati Mukherjee's novels, as a literary form, has the scope to depict human condition in all its varied aspects. Bharati Mukherjee's fiction very effectively depicts the current social and cultural scenario of the American society as experienced by the immigrants. Her novels are praised for their representation of the plight of Indian expatriates in North America. Her fourteen years stay in Canada comprises some of the difficult moments of her life, as she encountered racial prejudice – a different kind of caste system. In an interview, she says:

In Canada, I experienced an awful lot of racial discrimination – there were a lot of violent incidents ... Canada was a very hard place to be a dark-skinned Asian in. After five years we moved to New York and I have never regretted that decision. (qtd in Pandit 35)

In *The Tiger's Daughter* the protagonist Tara's sense of alienation in Calcutta is symbolized by her regular visits to Catelli Continental Hotel, from where she views the turmoil, from the safe heights of a tourist, cut-off from the India which seethes below. Tara's experience in America, her sense of discrimination if her room-mate did not share her mango chutney; her loneliness resulting in her vehemently taking out all her silk scarves and hanging them around to give the apartment a more Indian look. All these incidents portray the cultural resistance put forward by an innocent immigrant who refused to be completely sucked into the alien land. Thus she felt completely insecure in an alien atmosphere.

Tara's alienation in Calcutta is visible through her regular visits to Catelli-Continental Hotel, where she feels cut-off from the real India, burning with violent riots. She still "longed for the Bengal of Satyajit Ray, children running through cool green spaces, aristocrats despairing in music rooms of empty palaces" (TTD 105). But unable to find the innocence she left behind, she decides to go back to David, an evidence of accepting her American identity, and thrusting her nostalgia aside. Thus, globalisation leading to multi-cultural confrontations brings about the mutations in Tara's identity. These changes are irreversible and despite her earnest efforts she cannot locate the lost identity and fails in her roots.

Though Tara is in India there is a discontinuity between herself and India. Through a visit to India, Tara realizes that the real India is different from her recollected imagination. Her determination to go back to America implies her cutting off her ties with India, and her desire to become a true part of the American life. Tara's quest for self



identity proves that frustration slowly leads her to disillusion, depression and alienation. Once tradition is denaturalized it loses its meaning, and makes it impossible to recover.

Tara returning to India after seven years in the U.S.A. experiences the alienation of an expatriate who finds a gulf lurking between herself and her native people and traditions. Despite Western education, upper-class living and a Western husband, Tara fails to assimilate the culture she is exposed to, because her sheltered background has not provided her the required maturity. Hence, she remains rootless both at home and abroad. In fact, there is no home for her.

Dimple, the protagonist of *Wife*, also experiences an intense loneliness in the host country. There is a progressive and total estrangement from the environment, from herself and from existence itself. Dimple Basu with all her dreams of a liberated wife in America fails as a cultural transplant due to various reasons. Loneliness and inactivity destroys the spirit of Dimple and drags her to the pits of neurosis where her only company becomes the T.V screen. The denial of the unexpected chance to flourish as a working woman thrusts a wedge to her marital bond as well.

Jasmine's restless move from one place to another betrays her gripping alienation and bewilderment. On more than one occasion she realizes that she is an outsider and other in America- an illegal immigrant without passport living among aliens whose ways she knows nothing about. Thus Jasmine becomes a survivor in the alien soil by seeing a possibility even behind a problem.

The vast difference between expectation and reality both in the limited domestic space and in the larger cultural space, lack of emotional support and loneliness coupled

with a neurotic sensibility obstruct her attempts at assimilation. Trapped by the worlds they have left behind, Tara becomes a nowhere woman and Dimple transgresses into the extremity of alienation ending up as a murderess. Without the strength to fight their own battles, Dimple and Tara fail. Incapable of interrogation and integration they become unrealistic and misfits at home and on the exciting new land.

In *Leave It to Me*, Devi feels alienated when she came to know that, she was an adopted child. In order to gain identity in the society she indulges in search of her biological parents. Though her adopted parents are very lovable she was not happy, and when Jack informs that her parents belong to the Hippie culture movement she felt much alienated and depressed. She also started to lead a meaningless life.

Expatriate sensibility in Bharati Mukherjee's novels, is a major theme, but it becomes a metaphor for deeper levels of alienation like existential alienation and self-estrangement. This is revealed in some significant images used in all her novels. Mukherjee depicts the plight of women who have experienced cross-cultural crisis. An analysis of Mukherjee's novels reveals fascinating similarities and differences among a wide repertoire of contemporary woman ranging from emotionally starved children to psychically famished old women, from conventionally brought up young cultural transplants.

The theme of alienation in Indian womanhood is projected mainly through marital relationships. The highly hierarchical nature of the Indian society is manifested within the family and the concept of equality is unknown to them. In India where even intimate personal experiences and habits tend to be dominated by conventional codes and

traditional experiences constitutes guarantee for equality which is superseded by social institutions like marriage and religion.

In the Indian cultural context marriage forms an important institution to which the lives of the protagonists, except a few, are linked with. Matrimony is not a mere sociological institution, but an intense personal experience based on love and understanding. Tara's experiences in *The Tigers Daughter* seem to be a replica of Mukherjee's real life. *The Tiger's Daughter* is one of the first works of Mukherjee when she herself was undergoing the phase of expatriation. Hence, Tara's journey from an expatriate to an immigrant is a fine manifestation of Mukherjee's own experiences. Mukherjee sees this transition as "a movement away from the aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration" (Kumar 62).

Modern investigations have made available strong and effective medicines for most of the diseases. But for the wounded mind the strongest medicine comes from true love. Love is the union with somebody or something outside oneself, under the condition of retaining separateness and integrity of one's self. It is an experience of sharing and interdependency which is central to human nature. One cannot have meaningful identity without acknowledging an emotional relatedness to others. Identity is an influential psychic and social mechanism that guides human behavior. Awareness of ones value and identity assists woman to become autonomous. Since the private world of the woman merges with that of her outer world, she will find it difficult to live as a meaningful individual unless she learns to assert herself. Self-negation, eulogized as the quintessence of feminine virtue, only makes her submissive. Women can be themselves only when

they have a purpose, and a direction. Education brings about a freer definition of self and identity which empowers them.

The protagonists of Mukherjee have different views about marriage. In *The Tiger's Daughter* Tara does not consider marriage as the absolute goal as in the novel *Wife* Dimple does. Yet marriage to a foreigner does not liberate Tara's psyche from the age old myths of submission and surrender. While Amit demands it, David sees no reason in it. Despite a liberated marriage Tara fails to attain oneness of soul because of cultural disparity. Though there is no apparent marital discord, lack of understanding and communication gap hovers over them. Marriage becomes more of an escape from the cultural norms. But instead of aiding her to assimilate, it only makes her an alien at home too.

For Jasmine, each marriage carves a different destiny for her, none of which is dissatisfying for the ever-accommodating protagonist. Each marriage, which demands a separate identity, helps her to fulfill her march towards establishing her own identity. Though marriage alienates her from her family and her mother country, she transfers the fragrance of jasmine with her to each of her relationships; she is able to transcend the confines of her sex, race and nation. It is not in flight that she tries to establish her individuality but by overcoming personal conflicts. Marriage provides her a sense of fulfillment than it does to any other protagonist of the novelists.

In *The Holder of the World*, Beigh Masters indulge in trying to locate the most perfect diamond in the world, 'The Emperor's Tear'. As Beigh tried to trace the diamond she gets inspired and interested in Hannah's life more than the diamond itself. Hannah

Easton, though she was adopted by a couple Robert and Susannah Fitch and was brought up as a puritan woman, after her break up with her husband Gabriel, she fell in love with, Raja Jadav Singh, who rescues her. Like Jasmine, Hannah also involves in illegal relationships to survive in the alien land. Hannah's mother Rebecca Easton deserted her daughter in a Brookfield forest to run away with her American-Indian lover. Bharati Mukherjee beautifully portrays seventeenth and eighteenth century Puritan American society in the novel. As Beigh who belongs to the present liberated American society, hunts every minute details of Hannah Easton she exclaims that: "Like Rebecca, I have a lover"(HW 31).

In the novel *Leave It to Me*, the protagonist Debby Dee, sets out to seek her biological parents. Her parents belonged to the hippie counter culture movement and they were addicted to psychedelic drugs and were prone to free sex. Their policy in the life was, to enjoy life to the extreme, so marriage was not treated as a holy institution. Debby's parents separated after her birth, leaving her alone in the wicked world. Her mother Jess DuPree after breaking the relationship with her partner Romeo Hawk travelled to many places and changed her name according to the situations.

In *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*, Tara Chatterjee the protagonist gets divorced from her husband Bish. Tara felt that her husband fails in understanding her emotional needs. After her divorce, Tara lives with a Hungarian Andy and lives with her son Rabi in California. Later Tara realized Bish's love for her and reconciles. As they joined together their house was ruined by a bomb blast. The target behind the bomb blast was believed to be Bish the millionaire.

*The Tree Bride* is the continuation of the novel *Desirable Daughters*; it revolves around the traditional marriage of a girl who was only five years old. As the bride groom died of snake bite, the groom's father decides to marry his five year old daughter to a tree. A woman after her marriage takes up refuge under the shadow of her husband. But Tara Lata who was married to a tree as a proxy husband takes up refuge in her house. She never came out of her house for any reason until her death. But she gave helping hands to the poor and the needy; she helped the freedom fighters and opened her doors for the sick people throughout her life.

Thus Indian womanhood gets estranged from self and others, though most often it goes undetected by others, due to reasons varying from personality traits to societal expectations. Uncongenial domestic environments characterized by emotional deprivation, parental neglect or partiality, gender discrimination and lack of peer group or sibling support incapacitate girl children to establish meaningful interpersonal relationships. Broken marital relations, sexual abuse, loneliness, despair, identity crisis, thwarting of individuality, sterility as well as loss of children, dislocation and culture shock contribute to darken the lives of these women. Absence of emotional rapport with kith and kin drives them to the pit of despair. Unless they lit the corridors of their minds, break their silence and learn to assimilate without surrendering their individuality they will end up as strangers in the strange world. Bharati Mukherjee often contends that the immigrants have fascinating stories to recount. Particularly those who have migrated from the newly independent countries have to encounter and absorb the two hundred year old past of American history.

In *The Tiger's Daughter* Tara's changed personality made her a misfit everywhere. Her split self raised doubts regarding her husband for not understanding her country through her and in turn concluding that he may not have understood her either. She is convinced of her alienation when she forgets the next step of the ritual after the sandalwood paste had been grounded.

While Tara's friends and relatives consider with suspicion Tara emancipated lifestyle as marriage presupposes bondage in the Indian culture. David who is painfully Western, does not give Tara any credit for being submissive or dependent. She could not communicate to David the finer nuances of her family background and life in Calcutta while he asked negative questions about Indian customs and traditions.

Dimple, the protagonist of *Wife* saw both marriage and emigration to the USA in terms of an escape into a life of opportunity. Dimple's physical separation from India and its culture was seen as a passage to freedom. She was dismayed to find the old ways of life being pursued by the Indian immigrants even in America. She feels acutely desperate when she stays temporarily at the house of Meena Sen who still remains the same old house wife with the same old mind set.

In the novel *Wife*, Dimple's girlish fantasy about marriage is portrayed. She is eager to get married and had many visions of her prince. In Dimple's fantasy world marriage means supreme bliss and love. But Dimple finds the tedium of leading a solitary life as a house wife in U.S.A as a burden. She cannot see any joy in her married life in Calcutta and longs to go to the U.S. In the foreign land also, as her husband cannot devote long hours to her, Dimple watches T.V programmes for hours together and gets

worked up to see murder and aberrations in the films and the T. V serials. It is the hiatus between dream and reality that darkens the life of Mukherjee's Dimple. Mukherjee's *Wife* explores the inner space of neurotic individuals. Dimple's maiden dream of freedom, love and luxury clashes with what she attains. She fails to reconcile Amit with her fantasy. The shift to the land of freedom shocks her to realize that America with all its glamour allows Indian women little escape from the traditional routes chalked out for them. If it is memory of the prophecy and Amit's inability to soothe the troubled psyche that decline the tragic predicament of Dimple, it is cultural transplantation and her addiction to the world of fantasy that cripple the mind of Dimple. While Amit does not help to liberate Dimple of her terrifying nightmares, Amit thwarts Dimple's attempts at acculturation. Disenchanted with life for different reasons she becomes neurotic and the gradual descent to the role of murderer is carefully patterned.

Dimple fails to see realities of life, a small apartment, presence of in-laws in the husband's family, a tired husband after his work hour, house hold works and other every day realities. Inner demands and outer realities create a conflicting situation. Disintegrating forces are let loose and conflict increases. This is her stage of self-alienation when she loses contact with reality. In a mixed state she finally kills her husband.

Man's undetermined curiosity to know the unknown and distant has made him break the shackles of time and space. The protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee have more or less effect on the past and suffer in the present. Thus their future becomes a question mark.



In *The Tiger's daughter*- Tara's psyche is always troubled as a result of the tension created in the mind between the two socio-cultural environments, between the feeling of rootlessness and nostalgia. She feels both trapped and abandoned at the same time. Neither has she taken refuge in her old Indian self nor in her newly discovered American self. In the difficulty to choose one world, she totally condemns the other. It might have been easier for Tara to leave her past untouched if she could find her old home disgraceful, but she does not. She does not fit in any world finally. Thus Tara suffered from split personality because of cultural confrontation.

Marriage teaches Dimple “the virtues of sacrifice, responsibility and patience” (WF 27). At first, she was renamed without her approval. Although Dimple wants to resist, but as she is trained to be docile she surrenders. Being a good wife is her responsibility, which is to obey Amit. In the Basu family, Dimple is a vassal who is supposed to serve her husband and her in-laws. When Amit and Dimple emigrate to America, Dimple wants to be free from the so called “Indianness”. Ina who is an Americanized woman becomes Dimple’s model.

For Dimple, learning to enjoy the American freedom is a challenge to both herself and Amit who represents Indian patriarchy. During her stay in the Indian ghetto, Dimple takes a step out to try for herself the freedom of the American life. Milt, a White American, teaches her to assimilate, but she is a wonder to him. Milt tells her, “Everything about you is shocking and exciting and a little sad” (WF 201). Her “borrowed disguises” represent that she is like “a shadow without feeling” (WF 200). There is a home-like Indian ghetto, but Dimple wants to embrace America where she feels at home. Her dilemma is shifting between what is American and Indian tradition.

Dimple's struggle reveals her conflict in seeking a new identity in a new location along with the memories of the past.

As her life in America unfolds, Dimple begins to realize the impossibility of separating past and present, India and America, Realizing the futility of her situation, of accepting a cultural role that overshadows her identity, she feels: "the unfairness of what life had done to her overwhelmed Dimple. There would be no thrilling demolitions, merely substitutions" (WF 151). Dimple had used violence in India to express her aversion to her circumstances. In the process of acquiring a new American identity, she is misguided by violence and destructiuon that she is exposed to in the T.V shows that she watches and magazines she reads. Destruction tendencies were inherent in Dimple which is evident in her self induced abortion while she was in India. Dimple allows violent fantasies to resurface such as Amit's death and her suicide, "her own intensity shocked her she had not considered herself susceptible to violence so she tried to explain it away as unnatural sexual desire" (WF117).

At every step Jasmine revolts against her fate. The narrative shuttles between past and present, between India of the narrator's early life and America of her present one. The past is Jyoti's childhood in the small village of Hasnapur, Punjab, her marriage to Prakash Vijn and the incidents leading to her departure to America. The present is her life as Jane in Baden, Iowa where she is a live-in-companion to Bud Ripplemeyer, a small town banker.

Bharati Mukherjee in *The Holder of The World*, brings a modern American women who does assets research who traces the eventful life of Hannah Easton. She is in

search of the precious stone 'Emperor's Tear'. The journey of Hannah Easton is not by chance or a forced one. It is more an escape from the rule bound, Puritan world. Hannah's early life points most emphatically a fascination for passion and feeling, which she expresses by weaving her colourful, bright tapestries, a desire to escape from the dull, grey like of the Puritan outpost.

Mukherjee has used two narrators who belong to two diverse time periods separated by a time span of three hundred years. But this distance in time is bridged when Beigh Masters in the process of her research finds her familial link with Hannah Easton at the distant past and all her energies in present are directed to track down the history relating to Hannah Easton. The whole novel acts as the bridge between the past and the present.

In *Leave It to Me*, the protagonist Debby Dee seeks to find out her past. The novel is about Debby who tries hard to know about her biological parents and thus she suffers a lot in the present.

In the *Desirable Daughters*, Tara is forced to face her family, her past and a culture that she has distanced herself from, resulting in a conflict between old modes of thinking and new forms of consciousness that has been created. Tara soon realizes the fallacy of a real singular identity, for she learns that she is comprised of multiple selves, each with its own consciousness and instincts.

Tara Chatterjee views herself through the ever-shifting lens of culture, her identity and consciousness contingent upon whether she chooses to accept or reject certain aspects of both Indian and American culture. As she continues to develop new selves

throughout her life, Tara accept that she will never be simply American or Indian, but rather dispersed between these categories of identity. Tara is the most celebrated character for her multiplicity of identity. While the women characters who had an arranged marriage battled with the division between the private and public spheres and the subsequent divisions within themselves, Tara does not fight her multiplicity but rather embraces it as a part of her progressing identity.

Mukherjee opens the novel *The Tree Bride* with a Sanskrit epigraph adapted by Octavio Paz, its symbolism indicates of the ambiguity of the diasporic experience.

No one behind, no one ahead.  
 The path the ancients cleared has closed.  
 And the other path, everyone's path,  
 Easy and wide, goes nowhere.  
 I am alone and find my way.

Mukherjee is setting the novel in the familiar terrain of immigration, where time and space lose their linear and geographic meanings. The epigraph suggests a space of liminality, with "no one behind" and "no one ahead," and it also portrays identity as a continuous journey rather than a fixed construction. The notion of going nowhere yet somewhere and having to choose among multiple paths contribute to the sense of contradiction that epitomizes the diasporic consciousness.

Tara Chatterjee is the narrator of the story, she is writing the history of her family and herself as it unfolds and in that process, she gains insight into the creation of her own consciousness as it is influenced by the culturally defined consciousnesses of others. She

had the passion to undertake the recreation in the process of history. Documenting her family's history, Tara while recording the creation of her identity, feels the influence of the past events and cultures have on the present construction of consciousness. Rather than leaving her past behind, Tara delves into it and understand its intricacies in order to understand herself. Tara begins her narration with the story of her ancestral namesake, Tara Lata, also known as the Tree Bride. Tara Lata's life history helps Tara Chatterjee to locate her roots which are entrenched in her family history.

Mukherjee, juxtaposes the present in California and past in colonial India, a jarring temporal and spatial jump that suggests the immanence of time and space that permeates the text. The plot of *The Tree Bride* moves from past to present with such fluidity that it is difficult to distinguish between what has happened and what is happening, while the boundaries between India and America and California and New York disappear. It is within this chaotic world that Tara writes her history and discovers herself, uncovering her multiple consciousnesses as she unearths the secrets of her past.

Realizing the American Dream is the ambition of all the protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee. They think that leading a life in America will possibly change their life style and they can enjoy a happy and luxurious life if they settle in America. But, their fantasy turns to failure and they suffer in the alien land and cannot fit ever with the new culture and tradition.

In *The Tigers Daughter*, it is Tara's father who packed up her to foreign land for her higher studies. In America, Tara longs for her mother country and plans a trip to India. But the moment when she steps in India everything looked alien to her, because the

seven years of stay in America had changed her and she is caught between the two cultures.

Dimple, in *Wife*, dreams about America as the land which fulfills all her dreams. She dreamt of cocktail parties, costly dresses, rich food, in addition a luxurious life. But when the couple shifted to America. Amit is jobless and there arises misunderstanding between them and loneliness crushed Dimple and leads her to neurosis. She tries to her best to fit to the new culture but her dream fails.

Mukherjee writes against the accepted norms of American culture in her narratives like *Jasmine*, which defines American identity as necessarily diverse. Each individual has to restructure a framework for empowerment and enfranchisement. Jasmine's first glimpse of America also contradicts the suggestion that Mukherjee uncritically represents the new homeland. She observes,

The first thing I saw were the two cones of a nuclear plant, and smoke spreading from them in complicated but seemingly purposeful patterns, edges lit by the rising sun, like a gray, intricate map of an unexplored island continent, against the pale unscratched blue of the sky. I waded through Eden's waste: plastic bottles, oranges, boards, sodden boxes, white and green plastic sacks tied shut but picked open by birds and pulled apart by crabs. (JAS 107)

Jasmine observes the destructive nature of American over-consumption in the energy plant pollution, garbage, and uneaten food floating in the bay where she first arrives. By confronting American readers with their wastefulness, Mukherjee refutes

American consumer culture. The invocation of Eden is clearly ironic, which shows the discontinuity between what immigrants expect America to look like and the reality they face. The novel also reveals ambiguity regarding the American Dream itself, casting doubt on whether the possibility of transformation is always positive. After being in the U.S. for a few years, Jasmine reflects:

it is by now only a passing wave of nausea, this response to the speed of transformation, the fluidity of American character and the American landscape. I feel at times like a stone hurtling through diaphanous mist, unable to grab hold, unable to slow myself, yet unwilling to abandon the ride I'm on. Down and down I go, where I'll stop, God only knows. (JAS 138-139)

The fluidity and potential for self-making, is ostensibly celebrated throughout the text, and is presented here as an uncomfortable experience. Although she chooses to remain in the America and become an American, Jasmine does not deny that the new culture identity in which she creates is acquired after overcoming various perils which insists that transformation is the law of life.

Violence in Mukherjee's fiction functions as a technique to entwine the past and present and become an integral part of the plot. It acts as a tool in asserting identity, being both creative and destructive at the same time. Violence changes the dynamics of personality and creates liberated identities. The women protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee adopt violence to fight against the evil they face and move further courageously. Tara deduced that she was not incapable of affection as she had feared and

that she loved David desperately after being raped by the politician. Tara is involved in a violent demonstration, in which Joyonto Ray Chowdhury, a symbol of the old world order is brutally beaten to death. Pronob the young man tries to save him, but he is injured in the process.

In *Wife*, Amit tries to adopt American practices outwardly. He fails to understand Dimple's mind. Uncomfortable in the domestic space and lacking confidence in social interactions in America, she develops psychosis which worsens as a result of patriarchal control which her unsympathetic husband exercises even in America. From her insulated life in the apartment she views America indirectly through television programmes where violence predominates. She thus essentialises America as a land of violence, and naturally misconstrues violence as an American norm which she appropriated herself in the end.

Jasmine's killing of Half- Face is a kind of self- assertion. She first decides to kill herself, but later, she kills Half- Face. This shows her survival instinct and will to continue her life. By killing the demon, Jasmine experiences an epistemic violence which is a turning point that transforms her life.

In *The Holder of The World*, like heroines of romances who dare all to save their knights, Hannah braves to rescue the wounded Raja Jadav Singh in the battlefield by killing the general Morad Farah. In *Leave It to Me*, Devi burns the house given by Francis A. Fong and kills the friends of Jess Du Pree to instill fear. All these characters do not preserve their own life or try to protect the lives of others; through destruction they recreate themselves.



Violence plays the most significant role in the novels *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*, in fact it acts as a technique or tool that progresses the plot for the novel *Desirable Daughters*. Tara Chatterjee divorced her husband Bish for some meek reasons. A group of terrorist aimed to kill Bish and, their old house was attacked by the terrorists and damaged by the bomb blast. This incident makes the departed couple more lovable and more understandable than earlier. Tara then forgets her past and starts a new life and indulges in finding out the history of her great grand aunt.

The same plot continues in the novel *The Tree Bride*, and the reason for violence is explained. Tara Chatterjee understands that the target of Abbas Sattar Hai's bomb was herself and not her husband. Once again the bomb blasts in Sausalito and Victoria is fatally injured. Victoria died on the way to Marin General. The person behind this bomb blast was Abbas Sattar Hai.

Sameena a servant's daughter was a childhood friend of Tara Lata and Sameena, a cook-turned chowkidar'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 which was owned by Tara Lata. Thus, the presence of Abbas Sattar Hai in Tara's San Francisco life is inevitably; the impact of past in the present.

In fact, the America that Jasmine encounters in the 1980s is undergoing drastic political and socio-economic changes. Post-Vietnam disillusionment, an increase in

illegal immigration, and an economic recession provide the backdrop for Jasmine's counter-narrative, the development of a more corporate and diverse United States. Early in the novel it is noted that Jasmine's newest hometown, Baden, Iowa, is profoundly affected by these changes, and her husband, a banker who provides loans to farmers, finds himself in the crossfire of a changing agricultural economy. The decline in the American agricultural economy and the difficult economic times literally make their way on to Bud Ripplemeyer's doorstep, by the time the novel begins he is paralyzed from the waist down as a result of a gunshot wound. Bud was shot by disgruntled farmer whose loan Bud could not approve.

In Jasmine's recognition of these unstable times, she likes her new home to the one she left behind, a move that contradicts the critics who argue that Mukherjee unproblematically celebrates the West over her homeland:

I see a way of life coming to an end. Baseball loyalties, farming, small town innocence...In the brave new world of Elsa County, [Bud's ex-wife] Karin Ripplemeyer runs a suicide hot line. Bud Ripplemeyer has adopted a Vietnamese and is shackled up with a Punjabi girl. There's a Vietnamese network. There are Hmong, with a church of their own, turning out quilts for Lutheran relief. (JAS 229)

Just as in the country she left behind, in the United States Jasmine witnesses' economic, political, and economic changes. Although these changes in the U.S. perhaps allow Jasmine to more easily participate in American culture, to be a part of the wave of transformation rather than just an observer, it is important to note that America is not

depicted as being immune from instability through any sort of first-world privilege. On the contrary, anger and tension beget violence even in the all American farming community.

The novel also explicitly links the changing and troubled times to the growing underground world of illegal immigrants in the U.S., and Mukherjee makes use of what Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut call the “compassion fatigue” (xv) of the 1980s in her portrait of Jasmine’s America. By making her protagonist an illegal immigrant, Mukherjee is able to comment on the treatment of such immigrants, their invisibility and dehumanization in the rhetoric of the debate over their status. Jasmine is able to observe a world that her native-born American husband does not see:

I wonder if Bud even sees the America I do. We pass half-built, half deserted cinder-block structures at the edge of town, with mud-spattered deserted cars parked in an uncleared lot, and I wonder, Who’s inside? What are they doing? Who’s hiding? Empty swimming pools and plywood panels in the window frames grip my guts. And Bud frowns because unproductive projects give him pain. He says, “Wonder who handled their financing?”. (JAS 109)

Bud’s perception is that of natural-born citizenship. Unlike Jasmine, he cannot imagine living in the shadows of mainstream American society, whereas she sees this invisible population everywhere. In addition to calling attention to the underground world of illegal immigrants, this scene also reflects the unstable economic times, for which the

influx of immigrants is blamed. As in the world she left behind, in the U.S. the most defenseless groups are:

Public outcry about the growth of the foreign population and the pressure of influential newspapers and public policy centers led the U.S. Congress in the mid-1980s to consider a series of alternatives to bring unauthorized immigration under control. Following recommendations of the congressionally appointed Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy and after lengthy debate, a series of sweeping measures were passed by both houses. The resulting Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) became law in 1986 and led immediately to a number of important changes in the character and legal treatment of labor immigrants. (Portes 361-362)

The Vietnamese have had a long history of migration within immediate region but a very limited history of migration outside of Vietnam. By 1975, only about one lakh Vietnamese were living outside Vietnam. The Vietnamese in the Western world original culture and the demands of adapting to their new host cultures was a tedious process.

Mukherjee has realised that one of themes throughout her fiction is the changes in the way America thinks of itself and is seen by the rest of the world as a result of Vietnam. Many of them never acknowledged the fallout from that kind of narcissism or about how it affected the people around them. A large number of people went to India but misunderstood and misapplied Indian traditions, and looked at India through their vision and did not understand Indian culture.

Early in the novel, Jasmine and Du watch:

twenty INS raid a lawn furniture factory in Texas. The man in charge of the raid called it a factory, but all it was a windowless shed the size of a two-car garage. We got to hear agents whisper into walkie-talkies, break down a door, kick walls for hollowed-out hiding places. (JAS 26)

The agents use walkie-talkies and kick down doors as if hunting dangerous criminals, but find only two illegal Mexican immigrants in the shed. Jasmine describes the scene:

One minute they were squatting on the floor webbing lawn furniture at some insane wage – I know, I’ve been there – and the next they were spread-eagle on the floor. The camera caught one Mexican throwing up. The INS fellow wouldn’t uncuff him long enough to wipe the muck off his face. (JAS 27)

Her narration emphasizes the excessive use of violence against illegal immigrants who are clearly non-violent perpetrators and the lack of dignity afforded to them because of their lack of legal status. The tone of her narration reveals her stated empathy: “I know I’ve been there” (JAS 27) and expresses disgust with such exaggerated and inhumane treatment. In the same report, two American women are interviewed, further revealing the compassion fatigue and scape goating of immigrants plaguing America. One woman says, “I don’t think they’re bad people, you know. It’s just that there are too many of them. Yesterday I opened the front door to get the morning papers and there were three of them using my yard as their personal toilet”(JAS 27). While the other is heard saying,

“The border’s like Swiss cheese and all the mice are squirming through the holes” (JAS 29).

Identity plays a vital role in every immigrant’s life and it leads to the recognition of one’s self. The Indian scholars allude to these writing as diaspora’s fiction, American and Canadian scholars term it as immigrant fiction. People in the alien land find difficulties to cope up with an unknown socio-culture pressure.

More specifically diasporas are defined as a group of ethnic expatriates who share the following characteristics. They or their ancestors have been dispersed from a specific original ‘centre’ to two or more peripheral regions. They retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their homeland. They believe that they are not fully accepted by their host country and therefore feel alienated and insulated from it.... (Sengupta 68-69)

Mukherjee’s protagonists change their names and identity in order to survive in the alien land and it is an impact of the past which is related to their present life. In *The Tigers Daughter*, the protagonist Tara after a gap of seven years plans a trip to India. Her entire perception has changed and she fails to bring back her old sense of perception and views India with the keenness of a foreigner. When she landed in the Bombay airport her relatives address her as 'Tultul' a nick name which she had cherished, but it sounds strange to her Americanized ears. She looked India with American eyes, and in America she visualized their culture with Indian eyes. Thus she was caught between the two cultures' and thus loses her original identity.

In the novel *Wife*, Dimple, after her marriage was named as 'Nandini' by her mother-in-law but she hates a new identity imposed on her. She longs to settle in U.S and finally fell a prey to the foreign culture. In the atmosphere of loneliness she goes to the extent of killing her lovable husband.

Throughout the text, *Jasmine* refers to the various identities she has possessed and admits, "I do believe that extraordinary events can jar the needle arm, jump tracks, rip across incarnations, and deposit life into a groove that was not prepared to receive it" (JAS 127). Although reincarnation belongs to her Indian culture, she integrates each new life into her American identity, effectively transforming both. Like the references to sati Mukherjee uses reincarnation to show that Jasmine does not abandon her culture, but translates particular aspects of it into her new American context.

With the initial placement of Jyoti Vijn in her Punjab village, she surrenders all individuality to her husband, Prakash. He is her care giver and the determining force for her future. Prakash recreates the village girl in his preferred image of a city woman. Jyoti becomes Jasmine because he sees these attributes in her: "You are small and sweet and heady ... You will quicken the whole world with your perfume" (JAS 77).

But Jasmine shows indefatigable courage and spirit and overcomes obstacles and assimilates to the changing conditions. She is a survivor conditioned to alien. But the transformation is not without pains. She admits, there is no harmless, compassionate ways to remake one.

In Hannah, Mukherjee presents a definitive American character, which is a result of immigration and transformation. In *The Holder of the World*, Hannah forms her most

striking relationships with other individuals while in India, and these bonds created with non-Western people transform Hannah in what she retrospectively calls her translation, a term connoting foreign rather than domestic. Her voyage to and residence in India forces encounters with other characters that produce change: "She was alert to novelty, but her voyage was mental, interior. Getting there was important, but savoring the comparison with London or Salem, and watching her life being transformed, that was the pleasure" (HW 104). Hannah also employs a comparative framework to make sense of the transformations spawned by her global experiences and relationships.

While residing in White Town at Fort St. Sebastian, an East India Company hub of the English settlement in India, Hannah meets and eventually befriends Bhagmati. Because "Bhagmati had been born with the name of Bindu Bashini" (HW 222). Mukherjee links Bhagmati and Hannah as characters with names and identities in constant evolution. Hannah makes the connection with naming practices herself, "the alliterative name like a ball on the tip of her tongue (HW 222), and realizing that "Hannah Easton Fitch Legge was dying" (HW 222), and about to transform yet again. Henry Hedges, an English merchant and colonist, employed Bindu, renamed her Bhagmati, and adopted her as his mistress, his bibi. Hannah later renames her Hester, after her murdered friend in the New World, thereby equating Bhagmati and Hester for their individual qualities of loyalty and compassion, not their nationality. Bhagmati likewise renames Hannah, establishing a reciprocal relationship:

She wasn't Hannah anymore; she was Mukta, Bhagmati's word for "pearl." And she gave Bhagmati a new name: Hester, after the friend she



had lost. The friend who had indirectly brought her to the Coromandel Coast. (HW 271)

The reciprocity of the renaming removes the violence and suppression of immigrants associated with imperial naming processes, for it takes the nature of sharing rather than imposition. Both women also adopt the name *bibi*, as a reflection of their status as mistresses to a man of different cultural origins. Because Indian Bhagmati has an Anglo- Indian partner and white Hannah adopts an Indian lover in Jadav Singh, Mukherjee shows the two mirroring instead of replicating each other, reiterating the reciprocity of their relationship. Both Bhagmati and Hannah absorb a different culture's name and transform one another through their association. Hannah's affair with Raja Jadav Singh, a Hindu King in Muslim India, transforms her into the Salem Bibi, an amalgamated title that mixes her American and Indian selves.

As his *bibi*, Hannah upsets the colonial power structure of white domination and imposition. She still manages to exoticize the relationship with the Raja, for

The vast inequalities, as well as the injustice and superstitions of India, seemed to her unnatural and unbearable. And yet it was here in India that she felt her own passionate nature for the first time, the first hint that a world beyond duty and patience and wifely service was possible, then desirable, then irresistible. (HW 237)

In *Leave It to Me*, Debby was born in India and raised as an adopted child by Italian American family. Originally she was named as Faustine by the nuns and later her adopted parents gave her the name Debby Di Martino. When she seeks to find out her

biological parents she changes names according to the situations. Thus Debby is the product of changing identities. Therefore, In *Leave It to Me*, Bharati Mukherjee paints the American as well as the Indian culture, whereas the protagonist changes their identity to various circumstances.

America is a country of immigrants, immigration being central to America. Every American who ever lives, with the exception of the native Indian, was either an immigrant himself or a descendant of immigrants. The immigrants contribution is palpable in every sphere of life, be it religion, politics, education or arts, they have enriched the fabric of the America. Bharati Mukherjee's characters do what the earlier immigrants did; only the demand of the time is different. In the portrayal of the immigrant experience of her characters she has touched the chord in the hearts of the Americans, they recognize their own struggles and relive their past experience. This is the reason why she has found place in the luminous world of American writers in such a short span of time.

Bharati Mukherjee's first novel, *The Tigers Daughter* explores the condition of being an Indian expatriate. The writer did not attempt a family situation, but set about exposing the feeling of a young girl who leaves a sheltered home, hedged by class privilege and wealth, returns home, as a fully grown young woman who after breaking all social taboos had married a foreigner, after long years she longs for her mother country and her culture. When she look back to find a place at home again. She realises that she could not communicate with that society because the society Tara rejoins is without a vision of the west. She understands that she has been totally moulded by the western culture.

*Wife* brings a unique Indian perspective to the standard themes of immigrant fiction failed quests, thwarted dreams, dislocation and isolation leading to marital stress, demand of a new and hostile cultural environment, loss of supportive community and loss of a relatively coherent earlier identity. Dimple is isolated in an alien country with no supportive base, no traditional values to hold on to and no handy rules of dominant culture to help the new comers like Dimple.

Jasmine proves by her grit and determination that change and adaptability are key to survival, and that successful immigrant requires compromise. In the end she decides to leave Bud and move to California with Taylor grasping at yet another chance at happiness. By doing so, she is not merely choosing between Bud and Taylor, she is symbolically asserting her right to try and move her stars, instead of passively accepting her fate. Self-assertion is a power that she believes in, and is beginning to enjoy.

Though *Holder of the World* seems to be a historical novel, the theme of the novel is expatriation. Mukherjee gives the message that the people who can adjust and set their mind according to the new culture or the migrated country can only survive in the alien land. It is made clear in the novel when the final confrontation between the two armies Raja Jadav Singh was killed in the battle and Hannah returns to Salem with her daughter Pearl as a rebel who lives in the fringes of the society.

In *Leave it to Me* it is the protagonist Debby who assumes different identities to find her bio-logical parents as well as herself. Debby is the example to the hyphenated immigrant who learns to create an alternate reality which is neither purely ethnic, nor totally American.

Bharati Mukherjee's construction of a diasporic female subjectively in *Desirable Daughters* appears to be in consonance with the diasporic individual, seeking to redefine his or her identity. Tara's steps towards seeking her true identity makes her learn the essential difference between prescriptive Hindu traditions and American notions of individuality and freedom. Through her critical reconstruction of the Tree-Bride's history, Tara is able to understand that her cultural construct is largely shaped by her Indian affiliations in spite of her acquired American consciousness. The sense of belongingness that Tara so desperately seeks in American remains elusive, despite all her attempts at assimilation. Tara at the end of the novel seems to believe that there are no facile solutions to her quest.

Mukherjee presents woman as a contender for achieving a self-forged, fulfilling identity. Immigration enables the protagonists to undertake two journeys transcontinental and psychological. The protagonists fail neither to merge nor to form a new identity in the alien land. The survey from Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* to Tara Chatterjee in *Desirable Daughters* highlights the perceptible changes in the phase of Indian womanhood. None of the protagonists belong to the all-suffering, self-negating women of the past. Even when incapable of changing the existing pattern they show remarkable calibre to question them in their own ways. Bharati Mukherjee accords the need of self-examination, self-reliance, and self-determination to maintain individuality for women, without which she will be alienated.

Mukherjee advances from omniscient narrator in *The Tiger's Daughter* to the first person narrative in *Jasmine* to highlight the various identities of the central character. The structure of the novels too corresponds to the various stages in the lives of the

protagonists who experience different locales. Starting with the alien experience of Tara, in *The Tiger's Daughter*, Mukherjee prepares the ground for her atrophied status through the different traumatic experiences that culminate with the violence at Catelli Continental. The novel *Wife* is compartmentalized to shifts of locale: first in India, then at the Sens in America and the last at the Mookerjees. The unique experiences of Jasmine in India and America are bridged together by Jane Ripplemeyer who embarks on her challenging journey from Hasnapur as Jyoti and after wandering routes gets ready to ride with Taylor to reposition her stars. Since place and displacement are of great import for an immigrant, the outside world also gains significance in her novels.

Published in 1989, *Jasmine* reflects the immigration debates of its day, which were most likely reaching a fever pitch in the mid-1980s, when Mukherjee was working on the novel. Her previous book, *Wife*, published in 1975, deals primarily with the internal struggles of a newly arrived Indian immigrant and does not reflect a particular political attitude regarding immigration policy in the U.S. In fact, Mukherjee has said in interviews that *Wife* more directly addresses the isolation and discrimination she experienced as a minority in Canada under its multiculturalist policies. The eruption of anti-immigrant sentiment during the recession of the 1980s played an important role in Mukherjee's construction of the America Jasmine encounters in the novel.

In *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*, Mukherjee mythologizes a progressive Indian ancestor and the lives of herself and her two sisters living different lives across the globe. Throughout her fiction, Mukherjee's explicitly presents her immigrant characters into these cultural discourses, moulding them together to create new subjects. Yet in recovering the polygenetic origins of the American nation, its culture,

and its individuals, it seems that Mukherjee acknowledges the dissolution of the nation as a result of globalization, where the transnationality of individuals supersedes and breaks the boundaries they cross.

Bharati Mukherjee's novels discussed in the preceding chapters from the diasporic perspective demonstrate that she has recorded expatriate experience through her characters. By choosing her protagonists from all parts of the world having divergent ethnic, religious and cultural preoccupations, she has attempted to explore the multiplicity of her themes which is centered in their struggles to outgrow their inherited values. Mukherjee's creative vision enlarges the complexity of cultural assimilation which has acquired a new dimension. Mukherjee focuses upon the immigrants in America, that energetic, volatile community to which this gifted writer lends her voice and consequently appropriates 'another' America.

The cultural imperatives, interacting with the unknown forces of the new world, create a drama of co-operation which Bharathi Mukherjee records in her novels. The women protagonists have crossed the domestic barrier to reach beyond the limits prescribed by her native culture. The protagonists break out of the traditional roles and try to converge upon a new cultural code. Mukherjee has skillfully women's struggle for independence and empowerment into rich metaphor for analyzing the immigrant psyche.

Mukherjee's valid distinction between expatriate and immigrant stresses person's attitude towards the parent country and the past. The expatriate is forever nostalgic; the immigrant is aggressively future-minded. Those who settle down in a foreign country move out of their cultural contours they become assimilated and give birth to hybrid – culture.

Post-colonial culture is inevitably a hybrid phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the grafted European cultural system and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity. Such construction or reconstruction occurs as a dynamic interaction between European hegemonic and 'peripheral' subversions of them. (Ashcroft 195)

Mukherjee is mainly concerned with the representation of the expatriate condition of her characters especially middle-class Bengali women hailing from Calcutta. Mukherjee has portrayed migrant's dual relationship with both the ancestral nation and with the host nation. Migration is a central tenet of Bharati Mukherjee's discourse of national identity and belonging. She remains a first-generation immigrant as much as a well-established South Asian American novelist, and she has found a rich textual resource in her own experiences of emigration. The movement from expatriation to immigration is reflected in Bharati Mukherjee's creative sensibility.

Mukherjee's immigrants are doctors, university professors, businessmen and women married to successful professionals. She addresses the diasporic experience of cultural dislocation. Bharati Mukherjee's protagonists are neither nostalgic for the lost past nor afraid of the unfamiliar present. Their main strategy is adaptation without surrender. Thus Mukherjee's approach to life and its problems is deeply moored in her Indian upbringing. Mukherjee's fiction moves from the constantly shifting margin to the unstable and shifting centre which has no fixed place. The characters deploy various means of transcending difficulties in the face of chaos, displacement and alienation.

Immigrants are expected to embrace the culture and language of the host land. The expatriates who try to foster their native culture in a new land suffer from a sense of alienation. Immigrant writing and intercultural interaction is an offshoot of the globalisation of world economy. In ancient times culture was confined to geographical boundaries but with advancement of technology people have started to settle down in far off countries. In a multicultural milieu the expatriates have started to understand and recognise the importance and relevance of Indian culture as an answer to the entire predicament faced by the post modern society.

Bharati Mukherjee in her novels makes a concerted effort to conceptualise the image of the immigrants, who assert their claim to hyphenated identity as Indian - Americans by struggling heroically to reinstate themselves in a new cultural landscape. Bharati Mukherjee redefines herself as an artist in an immigrant tradition, and not as an signified release from constrictive social and cultural restraints back home.

Mukherjee's presentation of women as contender for achieving a fulfilling identity. Immigration enables the protagonists to undertake two journeys simultaneously transcontinental and psychological, Inorder to merge or to form a new identity in the alien land. The survey from Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* to Tara Chatterjee in *Desirable Daughters* highlights the perceptible changes in the phase of Indian womanhood. None of the protagonists belong to the all-suffering, self-negating women of the past. Even when incapable of changing the existing pattern they show remarkable calibre to question the existing cultural codes. Bharati Mukherjee accords the need of self-examination, self-reliance, and self-determination to maintain individuality without which women will be alienated. Throughout her fiction, Mukherjee explicitly presents the experiences of her



immigrant characters who undergo various trauma in the process of merging the various cultural discourses, in the process of melding them together to create new subjects. By recovering the polygenetic origins of the American nation, its culture, and its individuals, Mukherjee acknowledges the dissolution of the national culture as a result of globalization, where the transnationality of individuals supersedes and breaks the geographical boundaries they cross and creates a conglomeration of various cultures thus formulating a hybrid identity among the immigrants.

In this globalised scenario world has become a small apartment with the advancement of technology. Let this new type of society create brave new world where people irrespective of their ethnic origin walk hand in hand to breathe the fresh air with true love and freedom and smell the scent of peace and beauty. Only when people realize the true meaning of the significance of this worldly stay, they can undoubtedly challenge the hurdles that come across in this earthly journey. Every individual has a right to think and act according and to do his wish. From Socrates to Osho the importance of self realization is advocated, but very few realized this principle and tailored their life and left an indelible stamp of their existence in this world. Though we are rational beings, but still we are compelled to strictly follow the traditions and strictures of the society to which we belong. But for the dedicated and the beautiful writer like Bharati Mukherjee the dilemma, hardships faced by the immigrants struggling between two cultural constructs may not have to brought to the lime light.

In the post colonial scenario the educated elite migrated to the Western countries with the zeal of realizing their dream of leading a sophisticated life. Bharati Mukherjee in

her works expresses the enigma that surrounds the immigrants as he suffers from a lack of belongingness. For a seed to sprout, to grow and then to be of benefit the five elements are absolutely necessary, likewise a human being to establish himself as a free thinker, the cultural values imbibed through his native tradition is essential. Unless a tree's root is strong the plant cannot be healthy and one cannot witness smiling flowers. If the values are properly rooted in an individual, he can face any existential situations with ease.

Bharati Mukherjee's artistic beauty in translating the authentic situation of the immigrants and attributing large encomium upon the native culture and tradition should be applauded.