

**THESIS
ON
AN ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN CHARACTERS AND THEIR
ROLES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NUANCED THEMATIC
PATTERNS IN THE NOVELS OF BHARATI MUKHERJEE**

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The assistance and help received during the course of investigation have been duly acknowledged.

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DECLARATION

I, Nabasree Datta, (I.D.No.10PHENG102), hereby declare that the thesis entitled '**An assessment of women characters and their roles in the development of nuanced thematic patterns in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee**' submitted for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English** in the Department of English & Foreign Languages, Chitamber School of Humanities & Social Sciences of Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology & Sciences (Formerly Allahabad Agricultural Institute-Deemed University), Allahabad, India, is my original work and it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or other similar titles.

Date: 28th April 2016
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ABSTRACT

Liberty and censure became an integral part of the lives of Indian women who refused to buckle themselves under the pressure and succeeded in changing their own lives and lives of those who were dependent on them. In literature, it was being portrayed by majority of writers, among them, Bharati Mukherjee, became the live example of a free woman who through her novels, portrayed the struggles of immigrant women for achieving their identity. Bharati Mukherjee provides readers to take the challenge boldly against the traditional frame work of the society and to turn her way towards a new consciousness of her own worth and place in the society.

Bharati Mukherjee is an Indian-born American novelist who started her writing career only at the age of three. Mukherjee achieved her fame with the novels like, *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife*, *Jasmine*, *The Holder of the World*, *Leave It to Me*, *Desirable Daughters*, *The Tree Bride* and *Miss New India*. This famous novelist achieved many prestigious awards during her splendid creative and professional career.

At the age of globalization, immigration becomes a burning issue for most of the immigrant writers where the world is shrinking in to a global village, the differences melt into similarities. Culture and groups outside the dominant ideology try to find out ways to put forward their

diversity. In the earlier times, the main purpose of immigration of the third world people was only depending on their vocational problem. But in the present time vocational problem mingles with the desire of avocation for the purpose of crossing the boundaries of native land. But in the cases where cultural dissimilarities are much sharper in terms of racial, linguistic and religion, the predicaments get hopelessly complex for immigrant to cope with the new circumstances. The adjustment problems of the immigrant women in an alien society and their phobic mental condition due to political, gender and racial biasness become vital issues in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee. The women characters of her novels are very familiar and the novelist has very successfully portrayed them in the pre-existing context which really inspired the researcher to do her research with the purpose that the study would be a modern work in the field of literature and would render into helping hands for the researcher to do their research in this area.

Therefore, this study is significant in the context of age of globalization and immigration. The major objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To find the thematic patterns in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee.
2. To study the influence of oriental and occidental culture on the women characters in her novels.

3. To explore the role of female characters in the development of the story.

In order to obtain the objectives, researcher considered first seven novels of Bharati Mukherjee, and methodically explored thematic patterns, considering both the major and minor themes. Moreover, the influence of cross cultural conflicts in the immigrants' life and their sense of identity crisis were critically analyzed, and finally, role of women characters in the development of nuanced thematic patterns were explored in the research work.

The thesis is arranged in five chapters where the first chapter introduces the novelist, Bharati Mukherjee, emphasizing her family background, academic and professional carrier and literary canon, background of the research topic, the major objectives and very brief outline of the context and plot of each of the novels. The second chapter is oriented to find the brief story line, the themes and thematic patterns in the novels. The third chapter is based on the influence of native culture in the lives women protagonists who settled in foreign land and illustrates the conflicts of Oriental and Occidental cultures that provide the altered shapes of the women characters in her novels. The fourth chapter is dedicated to explore the role of female characters in the development of each of the story. The fifth chapter is about conclusion that displays the

major findings of the study. Mukherjee in her first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, expressed her own expatriate consciousness through the experiences of her heroine Tara Banerjee. In *Jasmine*, the female protagonist travelled several divergent geographical locations like neonomads and passed through many transformations showing the protagonist's sense of rootlessness and continuous search of identity. *The Holder of the World*, immigrant fiction, is based on the issue of immigration and identity crisis which was based on personal observations, autobiographical details and oral histories. In *Leave It to Me*, the protagonist being haunted by the crisis of her own genetic identity in the society she left her foster parents to find out her biological parents. *Desirable Daughters* discusses the burning issues of immigrant life, quest for identity and the difficulties of cultural assimilation. *The Tree Bride* attempted to find out the source of a woman consciousness and the making of an identity that transgresses boundaries in order to give it a new route.

Mukherjee depicted different aspects of the cultural, political, psychological, gender and racial discriminations, problems and sufferings of Asian immigrant women. The novelist magically expressed her own experiences through short stories and fictional works and delicately

depicted problems of immigrants and racism as an important feature of her writings.

Most of Mukherjee's characters are Indian women who are the victims of racism and sexism, often driven to desperate acts of violence after realizing that they can neither be fit into the culture of the West nor in the Indian society they left behind. She specially sympathized on women giving illustrations of the predicament in the contemporary society and the distorted psyche of those immigrants who have been surviving in the conflict of traditional values. The women characters of her novels are very familiar and the novelist successfully portrayed them in the pre-existing context and they played the major role in development of the nuanced thematic patterns in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee.

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CHAPTER- I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Search for identity has been an integral part of the Indian consciousness. It has specially made its place in the Indian English writings since the development of its literature. Each person who is in search of this identity has to face the problems that galore at every stage of life that changes continuously. In Indian context of the reformation in their identity, the concern with an individual search for identity was previously submerged under a broader concern with the national identity. This national identity had been established through independence and then there was a scope that fore grounded the search for identity at the individual level.

The Indian women as a part of the same phenomena also felt the need of reformation in their identity. They, at a relatively advanced stage of life, labouring under the various compulsions, enjoy less social and psychological freedom than men and were forced to live their lives in the place where they get small piece of light of hope. First, under the parental dominance and then under the patriarchal oppression, the position of woman in community was socially to change with the times. Women refused to buckle themselves under the pressure and succeeded in changing their own lives and lives of those who were dependent on them.

Freedom and censure became an integral part of their life. In literature, it was portrayed by majority of writers who helped this whole tender gender to identify their selves. Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Sir V.S. Naipal, Vikaram Seth, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Amitabha Ghosh, Rohitan Mistry, Upamanyu Chaterjee, Gita Hariharan, Sashi Tharoor are the stalwarts who are continuously contributing in this field.

Among them there is Bharati Mukherjee who not only became the live example of a free woman but also through her novels, portrayed the struggles through which any woman might undergo to get them identity. The emotions and feelings that she has discussed about in all her novels actually made a bridge to the enlightenment and empowerment. Bharati Mukherjee equips readers to take the challenge confidently against the traditional frame work of the society and to steer her way towards a new consciousness of her own worth and place in the society.

Bharati Mukherjee is an award-winning Indian-born American novelist who was born on July 27, 1940 in Calcutta (now called Kolkata), West Bengal, India. Her father, Mr. Sudhir Lal Mukherjee was a pharmaceutical chemist and her mother, Bina Banerjee Mukherjee, was a housewife. Mukherjee spent her first eight years as a member of large extended Bengali Brahmin family with her loving and cultured parents

and two sisters. She is the second of three sisters born into an extraordinary close-knit and intelligent family. She lived in fairly comfortable circumstances, in a house that was beautifully furnished with expensive furniture and artefacts quite typical of the post independence era. There was a splendid mixture of English and Indian style in the interior decoration of the house. Though the family was superficially modern, they always followed the Hindu practices and beliefs.

Bharati Mukherjee and her sisters had the opportunities to receive excellent schooling and thus had all pursued academic activities in their careers. Shortly after India's independence, her father got a job in England and he moved there with his family. In England, Mukherjee got plenty of scopes to develop her skill in English language and became fluent in English. She lived there with her family for about three years. The family returned to Calcutta in 1951 when she was eleven years old. The English education was much valued in literature and philosophy. Bharati Mukherjee and her sisters joined the Loreto Convent School. Bharati Mukherjee started her writing career only at the age of three. The earliest manuscript of her writing that was discovered by her mother was several chapters of an English novel that she started in London only at the age of nine. At that time she began to write short stories and published her first short story in School Magazine at the age of twelve. The story

was written from the point of view of Julius Ceasar. Her second published story was written from the view point of Nepoleon at the age of thirteen.

In 1959, she earned a B. A. degree in English Honours from the University of Calcutta. In the meantime her father lost his partnership with the factory and moved from Calcutta to Baroda, Gujarat, with his family. There he joined in the Research and Development wing of a large Bombay Complex. In 1961, Mukherjee achieved her Master's Degree in English and Ancient Indian Culture from the University of Baroda. Observing her interest in writings, Mr. Mukherjee encouraged her to join Creative Writing Program in the United States. In 1961, Mukherjee went to the University of Iowa to attend the prestigious writer's workshop. She planned to study there to earn her Master's of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) in Creative Writing. In 1969, she achieved her Ph.D. in English and Comparative literature and received a Prize from the University of Iowa for her Ph.D. on 'The use of Indian Mythology in EM. Foster's *A Passage to India* and Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*'.

Meantime, she enrolled in the Iowa Writers Workshop which had three specialization- fiction, poetry and translation. Bharati Mukherjee joined the fiction group and along with the other creative writers and

poets, she received a scholarship to pursue the course. At the same time of her enrolment Clark Blaise, the Canadian novelist, Professor and Journalist came from Canada for the same course. Mukherjee fell in love with Clark and after only two weeks of courtship, in September 1963, she married him in North American style in a Lawyer's office above a coffee shop. She married him against the wishes of her family who had arranged for her to be married to an Indian nuclear Physicist. In an interview Bharati Mukherjee said about her courtship and marriage: "In 1962 at the Iowa writer's workshop. The next year we got married" (Bhattacharya 289). She also added: "We met, got acquainted, fell in love, and then married. Now we are happy with our two sons" (Bhattacharya 288). Mukherjee expressed her feelings about her marriage with a foreigner:

Actually the relationship between a husband and a wife is based on mutual understanding. Both have to sacrifice something at some point. What we call 'adjustment' remains true of all relationships, no matter whether your husband is a foreigner or a local person (Bhattacharya 289).

Mukherjee's first son, Bart Anand Blaise, was born in the next year of her marriage. In 1966, the Blaise family moved to Montreal, Canada, where their second child, Bernard Sudhir, was born; his name is a clear

reference to a Jewish-American writer, Bernard Malamud, whom his parents really appreciate. Bharati Mukherjee and her husband have jointly named their sons by mixing English and Bengali names.

Mukherjee gained bitter experiences during her fourteen years stay in Canada. She had to face racial and cultural discrimination there and it narrowed her strength of mind. She was treated there as a member of the visible minority. She expressed her experiences in her essay, “An Invisible Woman”. In this essay she writes: “Many including myself left (Canada) unable to keep our twin halves together” (Mukherjee, “An Invisible woman” 37). She has spoken in many interviews that Canada is a country that she sees as hostile to its immigrants and one that opposes the concept of cultural assimilations. Canada’s hostility to Indians and non-recognition of her writing in Canada are the twin recurring themes which appeared almost in each of her early works. She felt herself as an expatriate in Canada and clung to her racial identity- “I remember how bracing it was to cloak myself in my own Brahminical elegance (Mukherjee, “Immigrant writing” 28). In an interview Bharati Mukherjee expressed her feeling about the new environment in Canada:

I am from Calcutta. I have married in Canada. These countries are polar opposites in social and economic terms. However progressive

Indian husbands might be, they still want to retain their patriarchal control over their wives. In matters of controlling the kitchen and home expenses, the wife is important. But beyond that there is nothing. In all other matters the husband has the last word. And the wife has to abide by it. Here the husband's behaviour is dictatorial. But the situation is not similar in Canada or America. Though not always, but in most cases the role of the wife there is that of an equal partner. In literal terms, one is not subservient to the other (Bhattacharya 289).

The social condition of the Canadian women was not equal as men. During her stay in Canada, Mukherjee minutely observed discrimination in job opportunities, promotions and pay structure between men and women. This issue became sensitive and women gradually started raising their voice against such discriminations. Mukherjee said in a conversation:

Wives in that country usually work part time as there is a difference in the opportunity men and women receive in getting good job offers. Compared to many other places, women in Canada have fewer opportunities for promotions and their 'grades', meaning their positions, are lower. But women are gradually becoming vocal against this discrimination. The difference in pay has also created

different reactions in family relationships as well (Bhattacharya 290).

Mukherjee along with her husband, Clark Blaise, came to visit Kolkata in the year 1973. Her love for the native city has not decreased even after her stay in the different cities of Canada and America for a long time. Her love for Kolkata is expressed through her own words:

I love Calcutta. I love it more than Bombay and Delhi. I feel the pleasure of reunion here. People are very friendly. When I lived here, I did not realize it. Coming back after leaving a long time in the West, I can realize it better now (Bhattacharya 291).

After this trip Mrs. Mukherjee and Clark Blaise jointly published *Days and Nights in Calcutta* in the year 1977. The book is interesting in the sense that it records Mukherjee's sense of loss over seeing a Calcutta that had changed so much during her lifetime. At the same time, it also shows the more positive reactions of Blaise to the Indian culture. About the change of Calcutta Mukherjee expressed:

No, not really new. Except for some new houses and high-rise buildings, the city is still the same. Of course, it has become more crowded, and many people are forced to live in the streets. There is

garbage lying all over the place. But I cannot call Calcutta a dirty city (Bhattacharya 291).

After returning Montreal, Mukherjee wrote both fiction and nonfiction in protest of the white Canadians discrimination against Indian immigrants. In Canada, she expressed herself as a Civil Rights activist and through her writings she described the racial biasness of the white Canadian bureaucrats' and their lack of power to make a positive change in race relations. Being irritated Bharati Mukherjee and her Husband, Clark Blaise, decided to move from Montreal to Toronto. They stayed there for two years and later they moved to USA as Mukherjee felt uncomfortable due to racist actions against her. There she became a permanent citizen of USA and she again moved to the West coast to settle in San Francisco with her husband and two sons.

In Canada Mukherjee and her husband taught literature at two different Canadian Universities. Clark was the Professor of English Creative Writing at Sir George Williams University, Montreal. Bharati Mukherjee joined as the Director of the graduate studies program at McGill University. Bharati Mukherjee before joining at the University of California, Berkeley, as a Professor of English had accomplished several teaching assignments in various institutes. First, she joined at Marquette

University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin as an Instructor in English during 1964-65 session followed by the appointment at Madison in 1965. She was as a Lecturer in McGill University, Montreal, Quebec from 1966 to 1969. Later, she got promotions as an Assistant Professor and then an Associate Professor in 1969 and 1973 respectively in the same institution. In 1979, she started to work at the Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York. After that she also taught in several other institutes like Queen's College, Columbia University and City University at New York. At last she joined as a Professor of English in the University of California at Berkeley in 1989.

Mukherjee gained her fame with the novels like, *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972), *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the World* (1993), *Leave It to Me* (1997), *Desirable Daughters* (2002), *The Tree Bride* (2004) and *Miss New India* (2011). She wrote numerous works of fiction, non-fiction and short story. Her literary essays are Response: American Fiction. *Salmagundi*, 50-51, "An Invisible Woman", published in 1981 issue of *Saturday Night*, "Immigrant writing: Give Us Your Maximalists!" Mukherjee's popularity as a writer increased dramatically with the publication of her first volume of excellent short stories. Mukherjee wrote two collections of short stories. She published first short story collection *Darkness* in 1985 and *The Middleman and Other Stories*

in 1988. Another splendid short story is *A Father*. She also wrote non-fictional writings like *Kautilya's Concept of Diplomacy: A New Interpretation* (1976), *Political Culture and Leadership in India* (1991) and *Regionalism in Indian Perspective* (1992). Mukherjee has co-authored two non-fictional works with her husband Blaise—*Days and Nights in Calcutta* in 1977 and *The Sorrow and Terror: The Haunting Legacy of Air Indian Tragedy* (1987). This book is an account of the horror and underlying racism exposed by the 1985 airline crash that killed hundreds of Canadian citizens, most of whom were of Indian descent.

This famous novelist achieved many prestigious awards during her splendid creative and professional career. In 1968 and 1970 she gained Grants from McGill University. She won Canada Arts Council Grant twice in the years 1973-74 and 1977. In 1976, she had won the Shastri Indo-Canadian Award. After that she joined as the Director of the Indo-Canadian Shastri Institute in New Delhi for a year. In the year 1978-79, she received the prestigious Guggenheim Foundation Award. In 1980 the Periodical Distribution Association gave her the first prize for her short story *Isolated Incidents*. Her story *Isolated Incidents* won first prize from the Periodical Distribution Association in 1980. In 1981, she won the National Magazine Award's second prize for the essay “An Invisible Woman”. In 1982, another feather added to the crown of her fame with

Canadian Government Award. In 1989, Mukherjee's second collection of short stories, *The Middleman and Other Stories*, won the National Book Critics Circle award for the best fiction. In 1999 she also won Pushcart Prize.

Mukherjee's sole interest in her writings is to depict the present social reality of the Asian immigrants' life in contemporary America. The adjustment problems of the immigrant women in an alien society and their phobic mental conditions due to political, gender and racial biasness come again and again in her novels as her liking themes. Her novels are very realistic and deliberate. The feeling of alienation, as depicted in her novels refer to the concept of trans-nationalism, multiculturalism and the theory of Diaspora. The women characters of her novels are very familiar and the novelist successfully portraits them in the pre-existing context which really inspired us to do the research on the above mentioned topic. In the novels of Bharati Mukherjee, one can see joys, sorrows, pains, anxieties, violence and also find solutions. The characters of Mukherjee's novel artistically portrayed along with the course of nuance development of the story and also in her subsequent writings. In this context, the researcher studied Mukherjee's transformation to American novelist and the nuance development in the themes of her novels along with the assessment of the role of women characters. Hence the present study

namely ‘An assessment of women characters and their roles in the development of nuanced thematic patterns in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee’ is highly relevant in the present scenario.

The present research is an attempt to throw a light into some questions regarding thematic patterns in the Novels of Bharati Mukherjee, influence of cultural and identity of women characters. Therefore, the study is significant in the context of globalization.

The major objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To find the thematic patterns in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee.
2. To study the influence of oriental and occidental culture on the women characters in her novels.
3. To explore the role of female characters in the development of the story.

The thesis is arranged in five chapters where the first and fifth chapters are set apart for introducing and concluding the research respectively. The second chapter is oriented to find the thematic patterns in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee. The third chapter is based on the

influence and conflict of oriental and occidental cultures on the women characters in her novels and the fourth chapter is prepared to explore the role of female characters in the development of each of the story.

The second chapter deals with the thematic patterns of the novels. Mukherjee's first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* appeared in 1972. It is quite autobiographical. The novel concerns with the cultural shock and horror experienced by a young Indian woman on her return to Calcutta from USA. Mukherjee expressed her own expatriate consciousness through the experiences of her heroine Tara Banerjee. Through the novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, the novelist Bharati Mukherjee beautifully shows an expatriate's painful cross-cultural experiences and her sense of nowhere-ness.

Bharati Mukherjee in her novel *Wife* (1975) portrays the story of a newly married Bengali house wife who migrated to New York to settle with her husband for a better life and there she faced the difficulties of adjustment with Westernized cultural and social environment. She became bored, lonely and depressed. At the climax of the novel, the protagonist stabbed her husband repeatedly with a kitchen knife. She could not handle the situation and at the end she committed suicide.

Considering the novel as an expatriate experience we find a number of crystal clear themes such as adjustment to a new social order, challenges to get a job, frustrations and crushing of dream. The novel is a fine description of the conflict of Western and Eastern experience and of modern and conventional traditions. Finally, about *Wife*, it may say that the novel is mainly based on the three themes— an expatriate fiction; a feminist text; and a study of a woman's madness due to dissimilarities of Eastern and Western worlds.

In 1989, Mukherjee expanded one of *The Middleman* stories into the novel *Jasmine*. It is about the story of a rural Punjabee girl who went to America to fulfill the wishes of her late husband. There she had to face so many difficulties as an immigrant though finally she could withstand by the trials of assimilation of foreign culture. Here, Jasmine, the main female character travelled several divergent geographical locations and passed through many transformations showing the protagonist's sense of rootlessness and continuous search of identity. The novel, *Jasmine* is based on the themes of feelings of rootlessness, search for identity in an alien land, the problems of conflict between Eastern and Western traditions and the final absorption of an immigrant to her host country. In a sentence it may say that Jasmine is, in fact, saga of an immigrant woman's suffering in a foreign country.

Her fourth novel, *The Holder of the World*, was published in the year 1993. The novel is based on the issue of immigration and identity crisis. *The Holder of the World* also exhibits the novelist's entire skill to blend Past and Present, exotic and known, East and West, the Old world and the New world that makes this novel so extra ordinary that never seen before in her writing.

The Holder of the World is fore grounded in the last decade of the Seventeenth Century India, when the country was undergoing a transition of power from the Mughals to the English. Mukherjee has used interestingly the source materials of history and culture as context for her immigrant fiction for which she relied upon personal observations, memory, autobiographical details and oral histories.

In the novel *Leave It to Me*, the themes such as displacement, fluidity of identity and search for the genetic root become important. Revenge through violence also plays an important role here. The novelist includes vengeance to the theme of the novel as a way to find out the solution of the problem of loss of identity of the protagonist. In *Leave It to Me* (1997), the protagonist- Debby Di Martino, an orphan who was adopted by an Italian- American couple and was raised up by them. Being haunted by the crisis of her own identity, she left her comfortable home

and her loving Italian-American foster parents at the age of twenty three and decided, to find out her biological parents in order to get her real genetic identity in the society.

Bharati Mukherjee's novel, *Desirable Daughters* (2002) belongs to the genre of American literature that discusses the burning issues of immigrant life, quest for identity and the difficulties of cultural assimilation. The novelist highlighted the fact that for an immigrant identity is not fixed. It is an incomplete process that changes time to time. Beside the main theme of diasporic identity there are also some minor themes such as homing desire, mundane attitude and conflict between native and foreign traditions. The novel is also a protest from the part of the novelist against the restrictions inflicted on the lives of women in traditional societies.

Bharati Mukherjee in *The Tree Bride* (2004) attempted to find out the source of a woman consciousness and the making of an identity that transgresses boundaries in order to give it a new route. She also expressed how the female protagonist wrote, changed and then reconsidered her texts in order to write history of her diasporic identity. In addition to her fiction, Mukherjee has published several academic works on Indian politics and society.

The third chapter incorporated with the influence and conflict of oriental and occidental culture on the women characters in her novels which is based on her personal experiences also. In the earlier part of Bharati Mukherjee's writing career, she was considered as an Indian writer of English but in later phase of her career she felt more comfortable to be identified as North American writer than Indian writer. She has claimed herself as an American writer. Just like other eastern immigrants residing in America, she also suffered the identity crisis and faced racial discrimination. Her personal experiences in abroad helped her to transform her as an American writer from an immigrant writer. In her writings she depicted different aspects of the socio cultural, socio political, psychological, gender and racial discriminations, problems and sufferings of immigrants, especially of Asian immigrant women. The author magically expresses her own experiences through short stories and fictional works and delicately depicted problems of immigration and racism due to confrontation of the Occidental and Oriental cultures.

Bharati Mukherjee's first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter* is a fine expression of the cross-cultural conflict, experienced by the heroine Tara Banerjee when she returns to her mother land, India, from the United States after seven years. It also highlights Tara's mental agonies being

caught in the web of two contrasting cultural worlds that break her illusion about her native land.

The novel, *Wife* shows how powerful may be the impact of cross cultural dilemma to drag one's life to the edge of tragedy. Through the life story of Dimple the novelist, Bharati Mukherjee, narrates the predicaments of cross cultural conflict that leaves a deep negative impression on her pathetic mentality at the end of the novel. Through the novel *Jasmine*, she attempts to convey the impact of the Oriental and Occidental cultural conflict on the life of the protagonist, Jyoti.

In the novel *The Holder of the World*, the novelist, Bharati Mukherjee, shows how two different cultures, the Oriental and Occidental, come closer with each other and, finally, transforms Hannah Easton from a traditional Puritan woman into a reform American. It also explores the cultural attitudes of the British people towards the native people of India.

In *Leave It to Me*, Bharati Mukherjee establishes a multicultural atmosphere by using the Indian myth of Devi Durga and the Greek myth of Electra in a cross-cultural way.

In the novel, *Desirable Daughters*, the sole aim of the novelist is to show the cultural confrontation of the three sisters - Padma, Parvati and Tara. The cross-cultural conflicts arise when the Oriental cultural values of these three sisters come in contact with the Occidental culture.

The Tree Bride throws light on the influence of Karma and Dharma on the life of the protagonist Tara Lata and also emphasizes the influence of the Oriental culture on life of John Mist.

Mukherjee's fictions that show the struggles of immigrants, living in the United States and Canada, had been compared to those of V. S. Naipaul and Bernard Malamud for their ironic and piercing literary style. About the stylistic devices of her writings and her use of irony Mukherjee said in the Introduction to *Darkness*:

Like Naipaul, I used a mordant and self-protective irony in describing my character's pain. Irony promised both detachment from, and superiority over, those well-bred post-colonials much like myself, adrift in the new world, wondering if they would ever belong (Mukherjee, *Darkness* 2).

The fourth chapter becomes relevant because almost all of Mukherjee's characters are Indian women who are the victims of racism

and sexism, often driven to desperate acts of violence after realizing that they can neither be fit into the culture of the West nor in the Indian society they left behind. The female character of the novel, *The Tiger's Daughter* explores the truth that it is very difficult for an expatriate to find out her root and identity in her native tradition again if she has lack of mental strength. The novel, *Wife*, narrates the story of the woman character Dimple who throughout the novel grows, matures, rebels for her feminine freedom, murders her husband and finally commits suicide. Lack of adjustment power and high expectation to become free from the bondage of male dominated society dragged this woman protagonist to this catastrophe of her life. In the novel, *Jasmine* Bharati Mukherjee portrayed her female character Jasmine as a fighter, survivor who through her strong willpower and adaptive quality created her identity in an alien land. In the novel, *The Holder of the World* through the character of Hannah Eston, Bharati Mukherjee proved that if a woman has sufficient courage to go against the limitations of the society and also has strong will-power to adjust to the changing situations, she can change her history where ever she stays. In *Leave It to Me*, Debby DiMartino suffered from identity crisis and in order to take revenge against her bio-parents through violence becomes a self destructive heroine. *Desirable Daughters* narrates happiness and crisis, expectations and achievements and final realizations of life of the three sisters – Padma, Parvati and Tara. In the

novel, *The Tree Bride*, Bharati Mukherjee gives emphasis to female consciousness considering their effort to make identity. Women and their struggles become the most favorite topic of the novelist here.

The fifth chapter is about conclusion in which the researcher has presented her findings keeping in view the objectives of her research. As Mukherjee's career has developed, her stories have expanded to include the narratives of refugees and immigrants from other Asian countries as well as the voices of long-settled European Americans and Canadians. Her later stories show increasing optimism at the possibility of successful integration as her characters learn rebuilding their lives and identities. This allows them greater personal opportunities and a chance to participate in fostering a more inclusive society and culture.

At the age of globalization immigration has become a common trend. In earlier times the main reasons for immigration by the third world people were only dependent on their vocational problems. But in the present time people's vocational problem mingles with the desire of avocation for the purpose of crossing the boundaries of native land. Now a day, to live in abroad is a prestigious issue for common people. They don't think much about the predicaments to adjust in a different social, religious, economic and political milieu. Despite the progress and

development at the external level some where people forget to take need of their inner self. In cases where cultural dissimilarities are much sharper in terms of racial, linguistic and religious determinates, the issue gets hopelessly complex for the immigrant to cope with. Mukherjee in her novels depicted the struggles and problems of the immigrant women in the foreign land. As an immigrant she herself experienced identity crisis and racial discrimination and difficulties to adjust to the traditions, society and culture, which she depicted in her writings through her female protagonist's cross-cultural conflict. She specially sympathized on women giving illustrations of the predicament in the contemporary society and the distorted psyche of those immigrants who have been surviving in the conflict of traditional values.

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THEMATIC PATTERNS IN THE NOVELS

Bharati Mukherjee, the daughter of Calcutta, through her brilliant creative writings, has gained fame as a writer of Indian Diaspora. Like other contemporary women diasporic writers, such as Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee also discovers the meaning of life and conveys the feelings of double isolation, alienation and nostalgic memory for the land of origin through short stories and fictional works. Within a relatively short creative span she has attained a remarkable position as a voice of immigrant America. In the earlier part of her writing career, she was regarded as an Indian Writer of English literature but later she has claimed herself not as an immigrant writer but simply as an American writer. Mukherjee in her novels depicts the struggles and troubles of the immigrant women who are especially Indian. Like other Eastern immigrants in America, Mukherjee personally experienced the problems of identity crisis and racial partiality which she depicted in her writings. The life and temper of the contemporary American society that are experienced by the Indian immigrants become the most important theme of her novels. In an interview, Bharati Mukherjee has expressed very clearly about her aim in her novels:

We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate. Many of us have lived in newly independent or emerging countries which are plagued by civil and religious conflicts.....When we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb 200 years of American history and learn to adapt to American society. I attempt to illustrate this in my novels and short stories. My aim is to explore Americans to the energetic voices of new settlers in this country (Carb 648).

It is a very common fact that when a person migrates to an unknown land, becomes an outsider in that country and there he or she has to struggle a lot for survival. The nostalgic memory of native land haunts them. But gradually they adjust themselves to the new land and form an emotional tie with the new place and culture. Their new selves slowly make them detached from their native traditions. As a result, when they return to their native land they find themselves as a foreigner here and this sense of foreignness makes them split persons. Bharati Mukherjee through her novels shows this problem of expatriate persons.

The emotional and psychic problems due to cross-cultural clash between the East and West and the problems of search for self-identity in the society are the liking themes of her novels. In the year 1990, in an interview with Jessie Glearson and Tom Grimes, Bharati Mukherjee said

about the themes of her novels and stories are “about psychological transformation, especially among women immigrants from Asia”(Gliarson and Grimes 15).

The Tiger's Daughter

Bharati Mukherjee's first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, is based on the theme of an expatriate's association with her native country and the complexities of the expatriate experiences. In this novel the novelist shows the confrontation between fancy and reality and also expresses the difficulties that she has faced as an immigrant through her protagonist Tara Banerjee. The novel depicts the problems of nationality, location, identity and also explores the socio-political condition of post-colonial India. In an interview to a Canadian Fiction Magazine Bharati Mukherjee mentions that she has written *The Tiger's Daughter* on a summer break reply to a request of an editor from Houghton Mifflin who had been impressed by a story she had published in Massachusetts Review.

The protagonist, Tara Banerjee, the only daughter of a Bengali Brahmin tobacco Industrialist (known as the Bengal Tiger), is an upper class Brahmin girl who travels to America at the age of fifteen for advance studies and there she has studied English Literature. Tara stayed in the United States for seven years. There she falls in love with a white American fellow student, David Cartwright and marries him. After marriage she becomes Tara Banerjee Cartwright. Her Indo-American surname reflects an expatriate's love for her native tradition. In this novel Mukherjee very precisely expresses the experiences of the postcolonial predicament of an English educated elite migrant when she revisits her native land. Mukherjee writes about her first novel:

My first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, embodies the loneliness I felt but could not acknowledge even to myself, as negotiated the no man's land between the country of my past and the continent of my present. Shaped by memory, textured with nostalgia for a class and culture which I had abandoned, this novel quite naturally became my expression of the expatriate consciousness (Mukherjee, "Beyond Multiculturalism" 456).

The character of Tara is the embodiment of the loneliness which the novelist talks about through her writing. The key protagonist of the novel feels loneliness and homesick like the novelist during her early

academic days in Vassar, USA. At the early years in a foreign country she confronted with crisis like obscure fears and hesitations and gradually she adjusted herself in the new situations. But the nostalgic memory of her family and native country always were in her mind. She feels highly discriminate when her roommate refuses to share her mango chutney. She prays to goddess kali to give her much mental strength so that she would not collapse before the Americans. The novelist gives some autobiographical information through the experiences of Tara. Like the novelist the protagonist, Tara also ties her knot with a white American as a way to assimilate into the West. She also exposes the themes of rootlessness and the crisis of identity which derived from the personal experiences of the novelist herself. In USA Tara always thinks that all her fears and hesitations as an immigrant may be erased if she once comes back to India. So to get mental solace and to rescue her root Tara Banerjee Cartwright nostalgically returns to Calcutta after a long gap of seven years. But she feels frustration at the moment when she first put her step at the busy Bombay railway station. To her the station looks like a hospital. According to her: “the station was more like a hospital; there were so many sick and deformed men sitting listlessly on bundles and trunks (*The Tiger’s Daughter* 19).

She becomes helpless to reinstate her old feelings and emotions about her motherland. These seven years has changed her outlook completely. Now she starts to observe India from an outsider's view point. This is clearly expressed through the lines below: "She had admired the house on Marine Drive, had thought them fashionable, but now their shabbiness appalled her" (*The Tiger's Daughter* 18).

Tara becomes irritate while she is travelling in a train for Calcutta sharing her air-conditioned compartment with a Marwari and the flat-nosed and hairy Nepali. She hopes that Calcutta will revive her tormented spirit from the feelings of rootlessness. But in Calcutta, she does not find the peaceful city of her childhood. She surprised to find that her nonviolent city is now in the grab of riots, industrial agitations, filthy political demonstrations, poverty, starvation and decay. Even in the company of her family members and friends she does not feel ease as they treat her as an outsider. Everywhere she senses the same feeling of foreignness like America in her place of origin.

She realizes that her changed personality due to her stay for a long time in abroad makes her unadjustable in the company of the friends and relatives. It also makes her unable to involve herself in the ritualistic

functions at home. Tara also feels that her mother regards her as a foreigner and is unhappy of her marriage to a foreigner:

Perhaps her mother sitting severely before God on a tiny rug, no longer loved her either. After all Tara had wilfully abandoned her caste by marrying a foreigner. Perhaps her mother was offended that she, no longer a real Brahmin, was constantly in and out of this sacred, room, dipping like a crow (*The Tiger's Daughter* 50).

Tara is suffering at every moment from the tension created in her mind due to two contradictory social environments and a sense of rootlessness and loss of identity always haunts her. She feels abandoned in her home country. It becomes difficult for her on one hand to refuse her Indian self and the other to accept her newly discovered American self. She finds herself sandwiched between two selves. Bharati Mukherjee said about this novel:

It is the wisest of my novels in the sense I was between both worlds. I was detached enough from India so that I could look back with affection and irony, but I didn't know America enough to feel any conflict. I was like a bridge, poised between two worlds (Kumar 40).

When she realizes that everything in India irritates her and it is impossible to adjust with her family and relatives, she decides to go back to her foreigner husband. She goes to the office of Air India and reserves a seat on a flight to New York. She calls her friends at the Catelli Continental to let them know about her decision to come back to David. By this time a troop of marchers who were proceeding towards Catelli surrounds them and Tara becomes a witness of violence. Joyonto Roy Chowdhury, her friend and an industrialist is trapped by the rioting mob in his attempt to run away. Another friend Pronob is unluckily murdered by the rioting people. Tara becomes frightened and helpless by seeing this brutal incident. At the midst of this chaotic situation she only thinks about her foreigner husband David who now becomes more safe shelter to her. The novel ends with this line:

Tara still locked in a car across the street from the Catelli-Continental, wondered whether she would ever get out of Calcutta, and if she did not, whether David would even know that she loved him fiercely (*The Tiger's Daughter* 210).

Through the novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, the novelist Bharati Mukherjee beautifully shows an expatriate's painful cross-cultural experiences and her sense of no-where-ness.

Wife

Bharati Mukherjee's second novel *Wife* was published in the year 1975. The novel was written during the novelist's hostile years in Canada. In this novel the novelist gives emphasis on the consequences of immigration problem. Mukherjee very skillfully and delicately shows how the feminine psyche is affected by the immigrant experiences. In *Wife*, she describes the story of an Indian couple who has immigrated to New York to lead better life with honest earning and that unfortunately ended with tragic incidents where the wife murders her husband brutally and eventually commits suicide. The protagonist, twenty years old Dimple Das Gupta, migrates from Calcutta (now Kolkata) to New York after her arranged marriage with a mechanical Engineer, Amit Basu, a middle class Bengali of Calcutta. Dimple always lives in an imaginary world. She has romantic ideas about marriage. According to her, marriage is a way of freedom and perfect pleasure. She thinks: "Marriage would bring her freedom, Cocktail parties, on carpeted lawns, fund-raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love" (*Wife* 3). When the hard realities of life come to her, all her dreams break into pieces and she becomes disappoint about life. Dimple's fantasy about marriage breaks when she enters in Amit's residence at Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road after marriage. As Basu's house is a small apartment, so

she does not feel comfortable there. Her mother-in-law does not like her modern name “Dimple” and wishes to call her with a typical Bengali name “Nandini”. Dimple feels that her childhood identity is now robbed by her mother-in-law. A sense of identity crisis knocks her consciousness very badly. She does not like Amit’s mother and sister so she feels the problem of adjustment there. To get rid of this pathetic situation she longs to migrate to USA with her husband.

In USA, Amit tries his level best to keep her happy in spite of his own struggle to find a job. The reality of life here is that he cannot devote all his time to his lonely wife as he has to spend long hours out of home in search of job. Through Amit’s frustration for a job the novelist Bharati Mukherjee gives a very important hint that getting a job in America is very tough if you particularly be an immigrant Indian. Indians see America as a dream land of happiness but when they suffer a lot of hardship and difficulties as immigrants in new surroundings, all kinds of fantasy break into pieces and they meet the realities of life. To get a job there one has to withstand all sorts of humiliations and exploitations. This reality finely expresses in the words of Jyoti Sen, an immigrant friend of Amit in New York: “Work day-night as hard, keep your mouth shut and you’ll be millionaire in fifteen years” (*Wife* 56).

Instead of understanding Amit's situation Dimple always blames that Amit does not like her and also complains that he never pays attention to her physical and mental demands. This leads a mental gap between them. All her blames are in fact an outburst of dissatisfaction and unhappiness of a painful immigrant woman who feels herself lonely, disturbed, bored and neglected in a foreign county where she is unable to adjust herself with the new situation. She losses all emotions about her husband and compares him to a machine, "husband, blender, color TV, cassette, tape recorder, stereo, in their order of convenience" (*Wife* 113), without any human feeling.

The trouble of her is that the geographical dislocation does not bring any change in her husband's perception about her. Dimple feels insecure and depress in abroad. She realizes that Amit is not the man of her dream and her marriage to Amit strangles all her dreams:

She was bitter that marriage had betrayed her, had not provided all the glittery things she had imagined, had not brought her cocktails under canopied skies and three A.M. drives to Dinzy restaurants where they sold divine Kababs rolled in roti (*Wife* 102).

To get out from the life of frustration and boredom Dimple likes to accept Mr. Vinod Khanna's proposal to work as a sales girl in his boutique shop. But Amit promptly denies it by saying that Dimple is unable to add two and two. Amit also comments: "One breadwinner in the family was enough" (*Wife* 107).

Amit purposely rejects Dimple's job to protect her Indian wife from a so called Punjabi about whom he has a deep rooted belief that Punjabis are lecherous, dirty and uncultured. Dimple does not understand the real motif of Amit's remark in the public and it leaves a negative effect on her mind. Dimple feels shattered and undergoes a sense of inferior complexity.

Ina is an Indian immigrant, living in America. She smokes, drinks and also possesses extra marital affairs. Dimple is highly influenced by Ina's American life style. In a party Ina offers her drinks and she wants to accept the offer. But she fears that her conservative husband will never give her permission for this and will share this with his family in Calcutta. Dimple's fear reveals an expatriate's inner conflict about conservative and modern traditions. Dimple meets Milt Glasser, an American friend of Ina, in the party and falls in love with him. She keeps it secret from her husband. Dimple frequently goes out with her new

friends Ina and Milt to enjoy all the prohibited freedom of a Bengali wife. To look like an American, she wears Marsha's (her American friend) pants, sunglasses etc. while going out. According to Janet M. Powers, she uses Marsha's coloured sunglasses because:

The purple-tinted sunglasses are perhaps the most typical index of American culture. For Dimple, they are a disguise, borrowed from the West, just like Marsha's clothes and the apartment in which she is living (Powers 98).

Dimple's activities show that as an immigrant she is trying to assimilate herself to her new country to get an identity. In her attempt to assimilate in new land she is going far from her own tradition. She feels a mental distance to her Indian friend, Pixie, and becomes unable to share her day to day experiences of America to her. She says: "friendship was impossible through letters" (*Wife* 120). As a result in her attempt to make fit herself into the new land she is losing very quickly her native identity and a sense of rootlessness haunts her every time.

Her relationship with Milt does not give her mental peace for a long time. She stops going out and breaks her relationship to Milt. She spends her time in watching TV. Media becomes her more dependent

friend than anybody. She loses all her interests on life and does not take care of her body: “Her own body seemed curiously alien to her, filled with hate, malice, an insane desire to hurt, yet weightless, almost airborne” (*Wife* 117).

Dimple’s mental condition is decreasing day by day. Her emotional life is totally doomed and she becomes a neurotic woman. She experiences the dilemma of her identity as an expatriate. For her fierceness and psychic problems she is evaluated to Maya’s neurosis in Anita Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock*. Every moment she thinks of murder, suicide and violent acts. Many times she tries to commit suicide. Linda Sandler comments on Dimple’s mental condition thus:

She is uprooted from her family and her familiar world, and projected into a social vacuum where the media becomes her surrogate community, her global village. New York intensifies her frustration and unhooks her further from reality (Sandler 75).

To get a free life she not only neglects her duties towards Amit and her household tasks but also towards herself. She feels: “Her life was slow, full of miscalculations” (*Wife* 118).

Dimple needs much endeavor to adjust her in the new environment of the USA, but she entirely fails to extent herself both as an immigrant and as a faithful wife. She does not find any ray of hope from anywhere and out of depression she starts to complaint against life without facing it boldly. She complaints: “ Life should have treated her better, should have added and subtracted in different proportions so that she was not left with a chimera”(Wife 156). The source of all misery of her life is that she stops her contact with reality. For her poor mental ability she cannot make difference between right and wrong situations. She over looks her own faults and condemns Amit for all troubles in her life. She starts to think to murder Amit and finally she stabs him with a kitchen knife. Thus Dimple’s journey as an immigrant in an alien land where she comes with her husband for a free and better life ends up by becoming a murderer and committing suicide.

The novel *Wife* is a trajectory tale of the experiences of an expatriate Indian woman in America. Though boredom and exile are not the predominant themes here, but they play significant roles to drag a tragic end to Dimple’s life. Dimple seeks freedom but she does not know for what. The themes of immigration, assimilation and feminism make the novel very realistic of the burning issue of migration of the 21st Century. Considering the novel as an expatriate experience we find a

number of crystal clear themes such as adjustment to a new social order, challenges to get a job, frustrations and crushing of dream. The novel is a fine description of the conflict of Western and Eastern experience and of modern and conventional traditions. Finally, about *Wife*, it may say that the novel is mainly based on the three themes— an expatriate fiction; a feminist text; and a study of a woman's madness due to dissimilarities of Eastern and Western worlds.

Jasmine

Mukherjee's third novel, *Jasmine*, is a beautiful story of absorption of the East in the West. In *Jasmine* Mukherjee gives importance on an Indian country woman's uninterrupted struggles in America as an immigrant to assimilate in to its main stream. Her struggle indicates the restless pursuit of a rootless person for an identity in a new land piqued by a depressing sense of isolation all around. It is a story of a Panjabi rural girl Jyoti, an Indian refugee who is empowered by the experiments of integration. The story opens with the prophecy of a village astrologer of Jyoti's future widowhood and banishment. Through this foretelling Mukherjee very smartly wants to tell about Jyoti's lifelong struggle. Jyoti

marries Prakash Vihh, an energetic and enthusiastic young man in a court of law by refusing her grandmother's choice to marry a widower. After marriage, Jyoti is christened by her husband as Jasmine, a city woman. Like a traditional Indian wife Jasmine happily shares the aim of her husband to secure admission in some American Institute of Technology and she agrees to go to America, a land of opportunities and prospects for most of Indians. But this dream is shattered while her husband, Prakash is murdered in a bomb blast on the eve of their migration. She dares to go to America with illegal documents without thinking future consequences to fulfill her husband's mission and perform "Sati". She ponders over her fate:

We are the outcasts and deportees, strange pilgrims visiting outlandish shrines, landing at the end of tarmacs, ferried in old army trucks where we are roughly handled and take to roped-off corners of waiting rooms where surly, barely wakened customs guards await their bribe. We are dressed in shreds of national costumes, out of season, the wited plumage of intercontinental vagabondage. We ask only one thing: to be allowed to land; to pass through; to continue (*Jasmine* 101).

For her daring nature Jasmine has to sacrifice her chastity on the way of her journey to America. She is raped by the captain of the ship on

which she is travelling. She puts her first step on the new land as an illegal immigrant by murdering the captain. In the words of Malashri Lal Jasmine's violent encounter with America is "regeneration through violence" (Lal 59). After this incident fate meets her to an old American lady, Lillian Gordon who gives shelter to her and transforms her from a Trinidad Indian girl to an American girl by grooming her American manners and calls her in a Western name –"Jazzy". Jasmine says about her transformation: "I checked myself in the mirror, shocked at the transformation. Jazzy in a T-shirt, tight cords, and running shoes" (*Jasmine* 133).

Through Lillian Gordon's help she initiates her first amalgamation towards West. From the house of Gordon, Jasmine goes to the house of her husband's former teacher, Mr. Vadhera in Flushing. The conservative Vadheras were not willing to assimilate themselves to their host country and kept them aloof from its traditions. They want to see Jasmine as an Indian widow in her manners. But they do not know that Jasmine is transforming herself step by step towards Americanization. Jasmine wants to leave the life of an Indian girl that may make a barrier towards her goal. She says: "I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti-like" (*Jasmine* 145). Vadheras' conservative outlook

towards widow Jasmine terrifies her. She expresses her experiences in Flushing thus:

Flushing was a neighborhood in Jullundhar. I was spiraling into depression behind the fortress of Punjabiness.... In Flushing I felt immured. An imaginary brick wall topped with barbed wire cut me off from the past and kept me from breaking into future. I was a prisoner doing unreal time (*Jasmine* 148).

She also says, “Flushing, with all its immigrant services at hand, frightened me” (*Jasmine* 145). So, the freedom loving Jasmine deserts the Vahdera family and sets for her another adventure for a self- identity in American society. In an apartment on Claremont Avenue, Manhattan, Jasmine in the name of ‘Jase’ restarts her life as a day mummy of the adopted child of Taylor and Wylie. Here she gets much opportunity to blend into the crowd of her new land. She becomes more confident of her ability in English. Jase falls in love with Taylor and is going to earn the dignity of his new wife when Wylie departs him for another man. She feels happy that her sense of rootlessness at last comes to an end and she is going to get an American identity from the status of an immigrant Indian. She says, “I had landed and was getting rooted” (*Jasmine* 179).

Her happy life with Taylor is disrupted by the appearance of Sukhwinder, the Khalsa Lions, who killed Jasmine's husband. After seeing him she moves to Iowa and there she re-starts her life with a banker, Bud Ripplemayer, who gives her a name - Jane, and carries his child in her womb without marrying him. But when she gets a chance to re-unite with her former lover Taylor she leaves Bud. By the heroine's restless journey through different geographical locations like Punjab, Florida, New York, Iowa and finally California and her continuous process of changing her names—Joyti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane, Bharati Mukherjee gives emphasis on the theme of an immigrant woman's sense of rootlessness and her continuous struggle for a non-immigrant identity in her adopted country.

Jasmine puts her every step very carefully and uses every opportunity exactly to reach her goal. For this she breaks out the shackles of caste, gender and family traditions. She comes in contact with Taylor and Bud to affirm her position in the main stream American society. Jasmine's escape from Taylor to Bud and her renaming from Jase to Jane shows her slow but firm immersion into the main stream of American society and her final decision to go with Taylor shows her ultimate Americanization.

The novel *Jasmine* is based on the themes of feelings of rootlessness, search for identity in an alien land, the problems of conflict between Eastern and Western traditions and the final absorption of an immigrant to her host country. In a sentence it may say that Jasmine is, in fact, saga of an immigrant woman's suffering in a foreign country. Though it is a journey towards the achievement of longings what she has cherished in her mind. Sumita Roy aptly comments on this novel:

Consequently, to read Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* as an ambitious endeavor to outline the life of a woman engaged in a serious quest for values is rewarding (Roy 187).

The Holder of the World

The Holder of the World is a story of a Puritan woman's experiences as an immigrant in India and her gradual absorption into the traditional society of the new land. Here Mukherjee is quite different from her previous novels, where she is concerned mainly on Indian women's problems as immigrant in abroad but here she shows a

foreigner's problems of immigration and her attraction to the traditions of India. Arshia Sattar comments about *The Holder of the World*:

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

The story of this novel is a search for identity, and transformation of the protagonist Hannah Easton's personality under the sprain of situations. Mukherjee here very cunningly mixes history and fact with each other.

The Holder of the World, tells the story of two white women, one, the narrator of the story, Beigh Masters and the other, Hannah Easton, the protagonist of the novel. The novel is divided into two plots—the main plot and the secondary plot. In the secondary plot the novelist says the story of Beigh Masters, from whose view point the story of Hannah's life is reviewed. Beigh is a thirty two years old modern woman. She is an asset hunter by her profession. She says about her job: "Uniting people and possessions; it's like matching orphaned socks, through time" (*The Holder of the World* 5). Beigh's lover, Venn Iyer, is a brilliant Indian

computer scientist. As an asset-hunter Beigh is appointed by a client to track down a diamond called the Emperor's Tear. In course of her search for the diamond, she came to know the story of Hannah Easton's life. Through Beigh's search the novelist Bharati Mukherjee exposes the layers of Hannah's life.

Hannah Easton, the Seventeenth Century Puritan woman, was born in Brookfield, Massachusetts, to Edward and Rebecca Easton in the year 1670. After the death of her father, her mother Rebecca Easton elopes with her Nipmuc lover leaving Hannah to a neighbour. She grows up in a conservative Puritan family as an adopted daughter of Robert and Susannah Fitch. Hannah is very creative in her embroidering works from childhood and attains a great fame all around the city. Though Hannah bought up in an orthodox Puritan family, she always dreams for individual freedom. She marries Gabriel Legge, a man of tentative nature, only to find freedom like her mother beyond the restrictions of the Puritan society. For Hannah this marriage is, "a way of joining her by running off with a treacherous alien" (*The Holder of the World* 69). With Gabriel, Hannah comes to India as a wife of the East Indian Company employee. Gabriel is not a domesticated person and turns into a pirate and leaves frequently Hannah in the Company's enclave. Initially, Hannah feels monotony but gradually she starts to spend her time freely with her Indian

maid, Bhagmati and comes to know from her about the native people and the traditions of the subcontinent. The narrator thinks “To let Gabriel go was also to let herself expand” (*The Holder of the World* 163).

After the death of Gabriel in the sea, Hannah involves in a love affair with Raja Jadav Singh. The Raja gives her a life of limitless sensuous pleasure that is unthinkable in Puritan society. She loves the Raja so much: “She wanted the Raja and nothing else; she would sacrifice anything for his touch and the love they made” (*The Holder of the World* 229).

Hannah’s happy life with the Raja comes to an end when the Raja is arrested in a fight with the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb. She pleads to the emperor to spare the Raja but the Raja is killed by the Emperor and Hannah returns back to Salem. But this Hannah is totally different from old Hannah who comes from Salem to India in the 17th Century. Her experiences as an immigrant in India and her capacity of adoption of the traditions of her country of immigration transform her personality totally. Mukherjee through Hannah shows that lives can be intermingled across time and geography if we are eager to erase the external differences that detach us and if we are really want to make an emotional tie with each other. In her effort to connect the lives Mukherjee is going ahead of her

current issue of immigration from Asia to America to exult in the movement across seas and boundaries over the centuries.

In an interview with N.P. Krishna Kumar, Bharati Mukherjee describes her novel *The Holder of the World*, is a “post-modern historical novel” (Kumar, “An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee” 6). In this novel the narrator describes the rude realities of British industrialists in India. The Britishers have come to India to loot, to lead a life of ease, lechery and convenience. The fort in which the Britishers lived in India was for them a little England. The novel depicts the picture of luxurious life style of the Company men during the Mughal India. They always show their supremacy over the native people. According to Shakuntala Bharvani: “It is very much a colonial novel at one level, with several details of colonial life woven in” (Bharvani 192).

Sexual awakening through lovers plays an important role in the novel. Hannah is deeply influenced by her sexual life in India. Hannah and her mother get personal freedom not through their husbands but through ‘other’ lovers. Hannah’s awakening from a conservative Puritan woman to an Indian individual comes through her Indian lover Raja Jadav Singh. Besides this the novel is a saga of expatriation and the writer’s hunger to connect her Indianess in her journey towards

Americanization. *The Holder of the World* also exhibits the novelist's entire skill to blend Past and Present, exotic and known, East and West, the Old world and the New world that makes this novel so extraordinary that never seen before in her writing.

Leave It to Me

In the novel *Leave It to Me*, the themes such as displacement, fluidity of identity and search for the genetic root become important. Revenge through violence also plays an important role here. The novelist includes vengeance to the theme of the novel as a way to find out the solution of the problem of loss of identity of the protagonist. The novel becomes a tale of mysterious and alarming contemplation on the consequences of America's current history - the way of life of the Hippie of the ninety sixties, Vietnam-rather than a novel of displacement in the diasporic sense of her previous novel. Through this novel Mukherjee completes her journey from an immigrant writer to a multicultural writer.

In *Leave It to Me*, Bharati Mukherjee tells the story of a twenty three years old young woman named Debby Di Martino, short name

Debby, born in India and raised up as an adopted child by American parents. Mukherjee introduces her protagonist as: “a tall girl in a small school, a beautiful girl in a plain family, an exotic girl in a very American town (*Leave It to Me* 16).

Though she is very beautiful but her story is full of pangs and sufferings. Being an adopted child she is always preoccupied with the feeling of rootlessness. In our society identity of a child becomes fixed from the moment of birth. Communal identity is more important than individual identity. Bharati Mukherjee came out of a society in which identity is prefixed. Debby in *Leave It to Me* comes to the same realization that her individual identity is incomplete without a genetic identity. The sufferings of the protagonist on account of her rootlessness become clear through the lines below:

Who but a foundling has the moral right to seize not just a city, but a neighbourhood, and fashion a block or two of it into home? When you inherit nothing, you are entitled everything (*Leave It to Me* 60).

So, as an orphan Debby has to find out her biological parents to affirm her social identity. Debby has no idea about which race she originally belongs. Unlike her Italian- American sisters, she cannot claim her

nationality as an American, Pakistani, or a Vietnamese. She has a lot of bitterness towards her bio-parents:

lousy people who'd considered me lousier still and who'd left me to be sniffed at by wild dogs, like a carcass in the mangy shade (*Leave It to Me* 10).

In the Di Martino family Debby gets shelter, love, affection and a social identity of an adopted child. But she thinks that her life is not stable there and feels herself as an outsider among the Di Martinos. She says: "You're just on loan to the Di Martinos. Treat them nice, pay your rent, but keep your bags packed" (*Leave It to Me* 17). She always thinks herself as an unwanted child in this world. She says: "I was just a garbage sack thrown out on the hippie trail" (*Leave It to Me* 13) In search of her real identity, Debby desperately leaves her comfortable home and her loving Italian-American foster parents. Debby travels throughout America and comes in San Francisco where she comes in contact with a group of old ex-hippies and a mentally misbalanced Vietnam Veteran from whom she gets some information about her Hippie parents. From San Francisco she finally arrives to Laxmipur, Devigaon, India and the orphanage where she was raised by the Gray Sisters after being deserted by her real parents.

For investigation she hired Fred Pointer, a detective, who provides her the information that her mother was the hippie follower of a sex-age guru, and her father Romeo Hawk Haque was a serial killer. The child of this Hippie couple, Debby, is saved by the nuns and is adopted by Di-Martino family. After revealing the truth by her detective, she instead of thinking any happy family re-union, wants to take revenge on her parents. She expresses her feelings about her real parents thus: “The man and woman who’d given me life were as strange to me as honeymooners from Mars” (*Leave It to Me* 224).

It is very unfortunate for Debby that Jess Du Pree never confesses her relationship as mother with Debby even at the end of the novel. But Romeo claims Debby as his daughter. Just like the goddess of the Hindu mythological story, Mahishasurmardini, killed the buffalo demon to free the world from the grasp of sin, Debby also takes the path of violence against her parents for justice. She kills Stark Swann, Beth and Larry - the friends of her bio-mom to take revenge on her. Jess Du Pree is killed in the hands of Romeo and Romeo is murdered by Debby. At last, Debby realizes that violence cannot be the only way in the war of justice and through it one cannot gains anything but losses more.

Desirable Daughters

Bharati Mukherjee's novel, *Desirable Daughters* expresses the novelist's concerns about the problems of immigrant life and the traditional assimilation of the East and the West. The novel categorically belongs to the genre of American literature and is a story of immigrant women's quest for identity. Through this novel Bharati Mukherjee highlights the fact that diasporic identity never completes and is a continuous process that changes every moment. Beside the main theme of diasporic identity there are also some minor themes such as homing desire, mundane attitude and conflict between native and foreign traditions. Through this novel Bharati Mukherjee protests against the restrictions that are forcefully thrust upon women's lives in traditional societies. The renowned novelist explained her reasons for the title of the novel, *Desirable Daughters* in her interview with Bill Moyers thus:

In Hindu societies, especially in over protected patriarchal families like mine, daughters are not at all desirable. They are trouble. She also adds: I wanted to play in also the sexy looks of the three sisters in the book. That sex itself in the form of revolution that enables these three sisters in the novel to breakout and makes their own lives. Some of them decide not to break out and they come back into the fold (Moyers).

The novel is a beautiful story of three upper class, educated traditional Brahmin sisters - Padma, Parvati and Tara - the daughters of Motilal Bhattacharya. Their mother gives them the symbolic names of Hindu Goddess in the hope that her daughters will achieve a prosperous life out of the traditional society where women are shackled by the orthodoxy of the society.

These three sisters are a beautiful combination of conventional and modern outlook. They are “as like as blossoms on a tree” (*Desirable Daughters* 21). The female protagonist Tara carries the name of her ancestor Tara Lata. She went to San Francisco at the age of nineteen after her marriage with a young Indian man, Bishwapriya Chatterjee. The middle sister Parvati is very traditional in nature and is living in a flat in Nariman Point, Bombay, India with her businessman husband, Aurobindo Banerjee and her two sons –Bhupesh and Dinesh. Parvati is the most conventional of the three sisters. The elder sister ‘Padma’ whom Parvati and Tara call ‘didi’ is rebellious in nature from early days. She is a perfect blend of beauty and talent. She won Miss Brains and Beauty for a news paper called Eve’s Weekly. At the age of sixteen she had a love affair with her friend, Poppey’s brother Ron Dey. She gave birth of a male child, Christopher Dey. As a result of this affair she deserted the child and went to London to materialize her dream.

In London, she grew a live-in relationship with a Parsi man who economically helped her for her trip to New York. After his death she married middle – aged Punjabi, Harish Mehta, a business person and both are settled in Montclair. Padma Mehta started her career as a performance artist interpreting Indian culture and mythology to suburban American audiences and she also worked as an anchor for a Bengali language news show. Though Padma was living in New Jersey for a long time she never tried to adjust herself with Western life style but was very aware to preserve her Indian identity. The interior decoration of her house shows her love for native land: “Two framed Hindu devotional paintings decorated the walls” (*Desirable Daughters* 203).

She always wears saris, a hanging jhumka, earring and a champakali necklace, mehndi in hands to express herself as a typical Indian woman. It is very surprising that Padma who previously had no devotion on Indian traditional norms, now tries to lead a traditional Bengali life in New Jersey. Tara comments on Didi:

In the nearly twenty - five years that she has been in the United States, she has become more Indian than when she left Calcutta. She is a “multicultural performance artist” for local schools and community centers, staging Indian mythological evenings, with

readings, slide shows, recitations and musical accompaniment
(*Desirable Daughters* 94).

Actually she is shuttling between her two identities. Through her Indian life style in the United States Padma is searching her native root in abroad. Through her life style, Padma also points out the fact that quest for identity of an immigrant changes every time.

Tara, the youngest of the three sisters arrives in America with her husband as a traditional Bengali wife. In America, she very promptly adjusts herself and does not want to confine herself in the role of a good wife. She is influenced by the American notion of freedom and self fulfillment. She divorces Bish as she feels that she is not happy with her husband, Bish and they have different attitudes towards life:

Bish is generous and protective; he has more than enough to provide. Indian men, whatever their faults, are programmed to provide for their wives and children. If I had only to be provided for, stupendously provided for inside the gated community, endlessly on display at dinners and openings, I would have stayed in Atherton (*Desirable Daughters* 27).

After her divorce she re-establishes her identity in immigrant sensibility. She starts to live with her son, Rabi and her lover Andy, a Hungarian refugee. During her stay with Andy she enjoys a free sexual life that is unthinkable in a conservative family like her.

The story reaches to its climax by the arrival of a young Indian man, the named Christopher Dey in Tara's apartment in San Francisco. The man claimed that he is the illegitimate son of Padma's love affair with a Bengali Christian doctor named Ronald Dey. Tara does not believe that 'Didi' can do such a sin before her marriage as she has strong confidence on her family values. This incident compels her to investigate the situation to reveal the truth. Tara goes to the police to find out the real identity of Christopher Dey. Tara's boy friend Andy does not want to investigate the incident as he fears that it may disturb Tara's life and hits on her traditional family values. Tara says about Andy's anxiety about her: "He worried I would only hurt myself, trying to lift every rock and throw open every door. It's good to rediscover my roots, but not if they rise up and strangle me" (*Desirable Daughters* 138).

Through the story of Christopher Dey, Tara gradually returns to her own root. When the mystery about the identity of Christopher Dey is solved the fact comes out that the real Chris Dey has been murdered and

his identity presumed by a criminal gang member Abbas Satter Hai. Andy's exit from her life leads Tara to turn back to Bish's life. The bomb blast that destroys her house indicates the end of her Californian free-spirited life and her return to her traditional Indian life. After bomb blast Tara comes back to India in search of her root.

In the novel, *Desirable Daughters*, Bharati Mukherjee depicts Tara's "homing desire". Tara constantly runs from home to home for a real home. She comes to Atherton in San Francisco where she makes her Indian home with her husband. She leaves it to make an American home with her lover Andy. But her journey for home does not stop here. Before bomb blast she creates her Indian home again with Bish and after bomb blast she returns to the home of her ancestor Tara Lata in Mishtigunj from where her journey for home starts as a descendent of Tara Lata. Tara's homing desire points out that a diasporic immigrant's search for home and identity never comes to an end. She also realizes that she can only achieve an identity by assimilating her Indian traditions with American concept of freedom and individuality.

The Tree Bride

The novel *The Tree Bride*, published in the year 2004, is a continuation of Mukherjee's former novel *Desirable Daughters*. Tara Chatterjee is the narrator and protagonist of the novel *The Tree Bride*. The story of Tara begins in the novel *Desirable Daughters* and ends in *The Tree Bride*. In the novel the novelist uses Tara's family history to analyze the source of a female consciousness and to make an identity of a woman in a diasporic world where identity always changes. Tara narrates the story to expose the history of her diasporic identity. Fayeza Hasanat appropriately explores how Tara encounters and overcomes physical, cultural, political and historical violence and further constructs a new narrative of fragmented identity of a woman who, through the modes of disruption, dismantling, and assimilation, yearns for the truth about the unattainable identity of a diasporic woman (Hasanat 270).

The story of *The Tree Bride* begins after the destruction of Tara's house in San Francisco by a bomb blast by a man who wanted to kill her. After this incident she comes back to the house of her legendary great-great-aunt, Tara Lata. Tara Lata, the unfortunate girl was married to a tree at the age of five as her fiancé died in snake bite at the night of her marriage and became the Tree Bride. Later, in her life Tara Lata was

involved in the independence movement of Bengal to achieve independence from England. For this reason she was arrested, tortured in the police custody and died in prison. In San Francisco Tara comes to know much information about Tara Lata, her great grandmother from the family papers which was given to her by her gynecologist, Victoria Khanna, the grand-daughter of Vertie Treadwell, the District Magistrate of Mishtigunj. Victoria Khanna's information inspires her to know more about Tara Lata and she decides to come back to Mishtiganj. At Mishtigunj, she meets Haji Gul Mohammed Chowdhury who gives her more information about Tara Lata's life and accompanies her as her guide. From her visit to Mishtigunj, Tara comes to know more information about John Mist, the founder of Mishtigunj and Vertie Treadwell. Tara now finds a new way of her research.

In the novel there are two chapters. In the first section Tara, the narrator, describes her personal rage against the evils of British colonialism in India. At first these two chapters appear as an unnecessary deviation of the theme but later they pave the way for the second and third parts of the story. In part I, the narrator promised her readers to tell what she has learned in her research of the story. To keep her promise Tara narrates the life story of Jhon Mist in part II and the story of old Treadwell in part III. John Mist and Victoria's grandfather Virtie

Treadwell, the Colonial Officer, traumatized by an unconventional upbringing, lured by the beauty and mystery of the Indian subcontinent.

The Tree Bride writes parallel texts and histories of people across culture, religion, nation and gender. Here Mukherjee uses ‘homing desire’ as a theme of her novel. Tara Chatterjee, the protagonist; Tara Lata, the tree bride; Sameena and her husband, Abbas Sattar Hai, John Mist, Vertie Treadwell and Victoria Khanna—all are influenced by homing desire. Jack Snow who later emerges as John Mist and the founder of Mishtigunj is a foundling. On his way to India, his ship is overtaken by Danish pirates. This incident coincidentally brings him in an area of East Bengal where he founded the settlement of Mishtigunj. Being a foreigner Mist was a native Indian at heart. He loved this village and its Bengali language deeply. For this language he gave up his own language too. He confessed in the novel: “I no longer speak English” (*The Tree Bride* 137). The influence of Bengali language on him is expressed here: “He felt reborn, all his sins washed away, the boy he’d been lay buried under a mound of language he no longer spoke. The sound of English, in fact, sickened and enraged him” (*The Tree Bride* 137). Bengal became his home and Bengali his native language. According to the narrator, “Mist found himself a clearer thinker and better negotiator in his adopted language” (*The Tree Bride* 138).

John Mist through his life establishes an example of Homi Bhabha's hybridity and mimicry by becoming "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 266). He is a well-wisher of Mishtigunj and likes to see the progressive peaceful social and cultural harmony amongst the residents of Mishtigunj. He thinks, for proper development of any locality, the educated professionals like teachers, doctors, lawyers etc. play a great role. He has given more importance to make a balanced community during recruitment drive in his city by recruiting two for each administrative job to resolve the bipolar opposition of Hindu and Muslim. As a result, Mishtigunj had a Hindu and a Muslim doctor. Two Lawyers of Mishtigunj were Jai Krishna Gangooli, the father of legendary Tara Lata, the tree bride, and Rafeek Hai. In Mist's project - two of everything - there is "a Muslim doctor, and a Hindu, a Hindu lawyer and a Muslim, two kinds of teachers, two kinds of journalist, and built two kinds of schools" (*The Tree Bride* 63). In the year 1880, Mist and his Muslim friend Rafeek Hai were executed together by the British. In his death also Mist puts the sign of his project - 'two of everything'. Thus Mist has become a part of Indian tradition and Mishtigunj has become his final home.

Vertie Treadwell's homing desire in India is quite contrasting to Mist. When Mist fully adopted Indian traditions, Vertie Treadwell

despised the people as he had come here to govern. He was an Anglo-Indian by birth. But he was an Indian in the sense:

His parents and grandparents were born, or had died, in India. His mother lies in the Anglican Cemetery of Mysore. She was a Canning, does that not count for something? When his father had fallen in the Sudan with Gordon Pasha, they'd found his last instructions stitched in to his tunic: Do not condemn me to a second English death. Bury me beside my wife in Mysore" (*The Tree Bride* 195).

Vertie Treadwell had an experience of fifty years of living intimately with the Indians. He was appointed as District Commissioner in Mishtigunj in the year 1930. He had a contradictory notion of home. On the one hand he demanded himself as an Indian, on the other hand, he also felt proud to save the British Empire by his complete supremacy on the enemies in Mishtigunj. Verti Treadwell gave a speech on behalf of his Indian identity:

I am one of the Indian-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 (*The Tree Bride* 201).

He was not against Tara Lata but his sense of duty never gave him permission to spare her. So he arrested her. Vertie returned to his home in England when India achieved independence from the British Raj in the year 1947. Victoria Treadwell Khanna, grand- daughter of Vertie Treadwell, is an illegitimate child. She marries Yash Khanna to achieve a hybrid identity. She expresses pride about her Indian identity as: “I’m Indian, my dear, what do you think of that?” (*The Tree Bride* 242).

Victoria had died in a bomb blast. After her death her husband Yash Khanna arranged a ritualistic cremation ceremony for her in Fremont as most people of Fremont belonged to Indian community. Victoria’s soul feels peace for ever through her funeral ceremony in the Indian traditional norms. Her soul also attained a new identity that was purely Indian in an alien land far distanced from real India.

Sameena’s life is an example of homing desire. Sameena is the daughter of a head cook at Jai Krishna’s house and a friend and servant of Tara Lata. This Sameena enters as a source of all sufferings in the life of Tara and her great grandmother Tara Lata. Sameena appears in Tara’s life

through her great grandson Abbas Sattar Hai who demolishes Tara's house in San Francisco by a bomb blast. Though Abbas Sattar Hai has no personal clash with Tara, his purpose is to take revenge on a descendant of Tara Lata. His violent act is rooted in a kind of his homing desire. Though Tara suffers from this bomb blast but this incident returns her an Indian home and a family with her ex-husband, Bish, their son and their unborn child. On the contrary, Sameena and her husband Shafiq Hai, betrayed Tara Lata long ago to occupy Tara Lata's house. To remove Tara Lata from their path they informed the British authority about her political involvement. As a result Tara Lata was arrested and died in police station.

The novel ends with a ceremonial cremation of Tara Lata in Varanasi's Manikarnika's Ghat by her descendant Tara. Tara has arranged this funeral to pay her honour and to set free Tara Lata's soul in purely Hindu traditional manner. Tara does not want to arrange this ceremony in Fremont as Tara Lata never live here. It is an alien land for her. Tara Lata lived in Mishtigunj and also died here before independence. Now this Mishtigunj is geographically located in Bangladesh. So to give her a real 'home' that is in India, Tara chooses Varanasi, the holly place for Hindu. So through the funeral of Tara Lata, the diasporic definition of home is re-established. By reforming Tara

Lata's text, the narrator Tara actually construct her identity as an Indian in a world of diaspora where identity changes continuously.

Bharati Mukherjee occupies a very prominent place in the Era of Immigrant writings in English literature. In her novels she gives much attention to the condition of Indian women in North America and their struggles as immigrant. Immigrant experiences become the major theme of her novels. She not only expresses the problems of Asian women in America as immigrant but also expresses the difficulty of those women who are struggling hard to assimilate back to their native country. She also gives importance on the psychic problems in the life of an immigrant. Her some novels expose the autobiographical information about the novelist. Though the dilemma of immigrant life becomes the main theme in her novels there are also some minor themes such as rootlessness, quest for identity, issues of racisms, existential sensibility, violence, high social expectations and pressures, sexism, joblessness, cultural adjustment, lack of family support and psychic disorders which are related to the immigration and cross cultural influences.

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INFLUENCE OF ORIENTAL AND OCCIDENTAL CULTURES ON THE WOMEN CHARACTERS

The culture is a complex blend of historical traditions including different aspects like languages, religions, dance, music, architecture, food and customs that vary from place to place. It refers to the way of life of the people. Periodically several men of letters, anthropologist, sociologist and historians have tried to define precisely the term culture. Amongst the men of literature T.S. Eliot's contribution towards definition of culture is noteworthy. In his treatise, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, T.S. Eliot discussed on culture as - "Culture may even be described simply as that which makes life worth living" (Eliot, *Notes* 27). According to Eliot culture is an integral part of our life and it has power to affect our life. There are three gradients of culture - the culture of the individual, the culture of a group or class, or the culture of a whole society: "The term culture has different associations according to whether we have in mind the development of an Individual, of a group or class, or of a whole society" (Eliot 21). Considering interdependence among these three levels of culture, Eliot explains that the culture of the society is fundamental one:

The culture of the individual is dependent upon the culture of a group or class, and that the culture of the Group or class is dependent upon the culture of the whole society to which that group or class belongs. Therefore, it is the culture of the society that is fundamental (Eliot 21).

Eliot points out that the men of letters and moralists have discussed culture in the first two senses usually at individual and group level, especially the individual culture and without relating it to the third, the culture of the society.

N. A. Nikam's perception about cultural concepts is combinations of quest for good and free choice of both ancient, traditional, and contemporary, modern. He says culture "is a quest for good but it is not good if the quest is not free choice. The quest and the choice are, therefore, the two ingredients of culture, and the tradition is formed by the culmination of centuries of history, or a tradition may be defined as a 'Passage' in which there is both persistence and renewal. So, cultural concepts are ancient and contemporary, traditional as well as modern"(Nikam 1-2).

For complete picture of culture, the importance of the social background can be ascertained by a consideration of the several kinds of

attainment to be had in different context. Culture may mean refinement of manners or urbanity and civility, learning and a closed acquaintance with the accumulated wisdom of the past, philosophy in the widest sense - an interest in and some ability to manipulate abstract ideas and the art.

Culture has an important influence on our social life. No one can wholly avoid his or her native cultural influences. The cultural growth, development and standard depend upon the use of language. Environment and religion have also much importance in the determination of a culture. Due to globalization cultural mixing becomes a very common issue and it leads to hybrid culture. According to Ashcroft and his colleagues:

Post-colonial culture is inevitably a hybrid phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the grafted European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity (qtd. in Kumar 12).

The Oriental culture is a combination of several cultures across the Indian subcontinent. Many elements of India's diverse cultures, such as Indian religions, yoga, and Indian cuisine, have had a profound impact across the world. The culture of modern India is influenced by the effects of colonialism over centuries and current Occidental culture. Due to

diversity of cultural assumptions between Occidental and Oriental cultures, it is very difficult to attain a uniform tangible pattern of culture that provides little scope for total assimilation.

People started to move to America from the mid–nineteenth century and now at the age of globalization it has reached to its climax. Now people immigrate willingly for better opportunities along with “a part of the total culture in which so long as they remained at home, they participated” (*Notes* 64). Because of their education and determination they are able to adjust in the different new socio-religious, economic and political conditions but they have to face difficulties and suffer the problems of immigration. Among them who, finally, settled down experiences cross-cultural conflicts and qualitative transformation in the process of assimilation. Bharati Mukherjee found her difficult to adjust with the culture, customs and traditions which she depicts through her novels.

The Tiger's Daughter

Bharati Mukherjee's first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* is a fine expression of the cross-cultural conflict, experienced by the heroine Tara Banerjee when she returns to her mother land, India, from the United States after seven years. It also highlights Tara's mental agonies being caught in the web of two contrasting cultural worlds that break her illusion about her native land. Her stay in Vassar, America, she feels loneliness, home sick and racial bigotry that reminds her: "Vassar had been an almost unsalvageable mistake" (*The Tiger's Daughter* 10).

Her experiences of racial biasness render her incapable to share her thoughts with White skinned girls. New York has driven her to depression. In her loneliness she hangs all her silk scarves around her room to create an Indian atmosphere and talks passionately with them. To get out from this situation she bends on her Oriental religious faith and prays to goddess Kali, the symbol of power of Hindu mythology, for strength to face boldly the Americans. Initially, in abroad she could not absorb herself in its culture due to nostalgic memory for her native country. Her dependence on her native religious faith even in an alien country indicates an innocent immigrant's unwillingness to adjust her to Occidental cultural tradition. Shobha Shinde refers to this expatriate

weakness, “an immigrant away from home idealizes his home country and cherishes nostalgic memories of it” (Shinde 58).

To get mental solace Tara returns to her native soil after seven years. But she fails to revive her earlier emotional feelings about it. At the Bombay air port she does not feel any excitement by seeing her relatives. When her relatives call her by her nick name “Tul-tul”, instead of feeling joy, she feels uneasiness. She realizes that her Americanism dominates her Indianess and it has changed her entire outlook about her home land. She starts to observe India not as an Indian but through the eyes of an outsider. This cultural clash her alter makes her unadjustable in everywhere and she discovers herself as a total stranger in her innate culture. Tara is confused “her old milieu, her family, her ideas of yore seem to confront the ‘American’ Tara as it were” (Choudhury 82). Everything in India starts to annoy her. The untidiness of the Bombay station and its crowd irritates her and it seems to her a hospital. While travelling to Calcutta from Bombay in the train compartment, she finds it difficult to travel with a Marwari and a Nepali. Moreover, the moment Tara reaches at Howrah Railway station she feels uncomfortable about the usual rushes of passengers and the crowd of vendors and untidy beggars and she wants to come out of the station premises. Now, her newly born American self generates her rage to everyone and everything

in India where she was born and-brought up and taught Hindu cultural values of life.

Tara expects that her friends will offer peace to her confused mentality and will understand her feelings and faults: “Her friends had seemed to her a peaceful island in the midst of Calcutta’s commotion” (*The Tiger’s Daughter* 55). But Tara sees that the attitudes of her friends have changed during these seven years. They behave in a different way and treat her as a foreigner. “Her friends let slip their disapproval of her, they suggested her marriage had been imprudent, that the seven years abroad her eroded all that was fine and sensitive in her Bengali nature” (*The Tiger’s Daughter* 55). She realizes that her friends can accept foreign manners and fashions but they don’t support marriage with a foreigner: “in India she felt she was not married to a person but to a foreigner, and this foreignness was a burden” (*The Tiger’s Daughter* 62). They never forgive her for this sin and think that she has polluted herself by this marriage and has brought disgrace for her family. It is the greatest irony of the life of Tara that she has become a ‘mleccha’ (outcaste) in her own culture. As an outsider she is unable to share her thoughts and feelings to her friends. Her foreignness in her native land is finely express below.

Seven years ago she had played with these friends, done her home work with Nilima, briefly fancied herself in love with Pronob, debated with Reena at the British Council. But now she feared their tone, their omissions and their aristocratic oneness” (*The Tiger’s Daughter* 43).

Religion, as a part of culture has a very important role in the life of human being. Religion, myth and culture are the very basis of Indian cultural identity and no child can avoid these while growing up in Indian culture. Tara was also unable to avoid the role of a traditional Indian woman because of her perception that had been built up since childhood. Parikh and Garg say:

Perhaps the role models of the cultural lore are internalised as deeply as the universe of identities is interjected. The three significant and persistent models running through mythology and history are the virtuous woman who suffers, the virtuous and assertive woman who fights, and the one who escapes into religion. (Parikh and Garg 153-54)

Tara admires the sacredness and serenity enjoyed by her mother but she cannot feel any peace by the religious activities of her mother for her Americanized attitude. She cannot remember the next step of the

ceremony while preparing for worship with her mother. She feels no attraction to Saraswathi pooja and listening Sanskrit slogans. After her return from America the song ‘Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram’ becomes a bore song and she does not enjoy it like previously. She realizes that her gentle Brahmin life styles are usurped by Occidental cultural mentality. She feels: “It was not a simple loss. Tara feared, this forgetting of prescribed actions; it was a little death, a hardening of the heart, cracking of axis and center” (*The Tiger’s Daughter* 15).

Tara realizes that America has transformed her personality completely. Now she sees everything with her Americanized eye and comments on every-thing from the point of view of an Americanized Indian. As a result she is suffering from the conflict between her old sense of perception and her newly generated outlook. Jasbir Jain observes in this connection:

Tara’s consciousness of the present is rooted in her life in the States and when she looks at India anew it is not through her childhood associations of her past memories but through the eyes of her foreign husband David. Her reactions are those of a tourist, of a foreigner (Jain 13).

She is caught between Oriental and Occidental cultural outlook and suffers from a split personality. Tara feels that it is very difficult to her to stay along with the sense of a foreigner in her own country and she decides to go back to America. “Tara’s Westernization has opened her eyes to the gulf between two worlds that still makes India the despair of those who govern it” (“Oh Calcutta” 736). To escape from mental pangs of an outsider in the midst of her own people and culture, she finally decides to go back to the West .Through the decision of Tara, Bharati Mukherjee hints that East is East and West is West and it is very difficult to bring together these two distinct and separate spheres.

Wife

The novel, *Wife* is an ideal description of tangential perplexities considering American culture. The novel shows how powerful may be the impact of cross cultural dilemma to drag one’s life to the edge of tragedy. Dimple is a teenage girl and is exciting enough of her dream marriage rather than her study. After marriage she wishes to migrate to USA to escape from the traditional life of in-laws house. For her, migration and marriage are one and the same with each other. The author points out that migration for some are flight from reality.

When the opportunity of migration comes to Dimple, she becomes very excited as she has a deep fascination to Occidental life. In a party, Dimple shares her excitement about West with her friend, Pixie. Dimple said, “real happiness was just in the movies or in the West” (*Wife* 47). But Pixie gives her reaction negatively. For Pixie, Orient with all its traditions and values is better than Occident. Pixie says: “I wouldn’t want to feel foreigner all my life” (*Wife* 46).

Finally, Dimple migrates to America with her husband. In USA initially they had to stay with Jyoti (Amit’s former friend) and Meena Sen for some financial problems. Though Sens were living at Queens, New York as Indian immigrant, they never tried to assimilate themselves to the occidental culture. They did not like the Americans as according to them the Americans are ‘dirty people’ and had a deep dislike to English language. They preferred to talk in their own mother tongue with the other immigrants. The interior decoration of the Sens apartment was purely traditional. They hanged a framed batik wall hanging that showed the characters of Ramayana - King Ram and his court in splendid array. Sens are very eager to preserve their Oriental culture in the West and always maintain a distance from Americans. According to Janet M. Powers:

Because there are no chairs, we realise that the Sens never entertain Westerners in their home, a point confirmed in conversation nothing their disgust with beef eaters and American insincerity, insecurity with the English language, and projected losses on inexpensive furniture for those retuning home (Powers 93).

Jyoti and Meena Sen through their lives point out that in an alien land assimilation and alienation of the foreign culture are purely individualistic. According to Sens, people rose in an entirely different social milieu and cultural atmosphere can hardly shed off their cherished values for one they are forced to adopt out of necessity. They have come to abroad for vocational purpose. The country of adoption is a temporary address for them. So they have no interest to compromise with their own identity, culture and religious values for a foreign culture. Their attitude towards America expressed through the confession of Jyoti Sen: “If it weren’t for the money, I’d go back tomorrow. This is too much the rat race for a man like me” (*Wife* 55). Sens’ earnest attempt to keep alive their Oriental cultures in abroad irritates Dimple who wants to assimilate to the Occidental culture. She feels suffocated in their apartment and dislikes everything related to them and wants to lead a free American life.

Dimple is experiencing every moment a cross-cultural dilemma. At the party of Ina, an immigrant Indian, she is shocked by seeing that

Hindus are eating beef without any hesitation and is revolted the idea of consuming beef. In the Oriental culture, beef is strictly prohibited for the Hindus. Cow is worshipped in India as a God. So to consume beef is a great sin for the Hindus. Beef is also the cause of conflict between communities. In America the immigrants always suffer from feelings of an outsider. To assimilate themselves into the Occidental culture the immigrants often take beef as normal food. By testing 'beef' Dimple tries to adjust herself into the main stream of Occidental culture.

Meena, another immigrant in America, has deep rooted faith on Hindu religion. She does not like the beef eating Hindus. She never invites the 'Sahibs' to her home as she belief that beef eating American people will render her home impure. Thus beef becomes the matter of difference among communities and an impassable gulf between Oriental and Occidental cultures.

Dimple's ecstasy for Occidental foods makes her disappoint and gives her traditional religious faith a strong shock when the Jewish meat shopkeeper shouts at her for asking some cheese cake by breaking the law. Cheese cake becomes the issue of cultural differences present in America and India. Dimple was unable to understand the law of America and relates this event as a racist attack. She thinks:

In Calcutta she'd buy from Muslims, Biharis, Christians, Nepalis. She was used to marry races; she'd never been a communalist (*Wife* 60).

Dimple becomes fully influenced by the American life style of Ina Mullick. When Ina offers her drinks in the party at her house she refuses to take it though in her mind there is a hidden wish to drink. In India taking drink by a woman in public places is a social taboo. Oriental society never gives permission to a woman to violate the social code. The conflict arises in Dimple's mind for a drink due to her born and brought up in a cultured Hindu Bengali Brahmin family. It indicates that in spite of all her attempts to achieve Occidental cultural life style, she cannot go further from her native culture which has a deep rooted influence in her life. Dimple is suffering from the problems of psychic disorder being caught between two contrasting cultures. Asnani comments:

Dimple is entrapped in a dilemma of tensions between American culture and society and the traditional constraints surrounding an Indian wife, between a feminist desire to be assertive and independent and the Indian need to be submissive and self-effacing (Asnani 42).

In America, cross-cultural predicament makes Dimple unhappy. She feels difficult to communicate with the other native people due to lack of her fluency in English. She is confused to think that how she will live in a country: “Where every other woman was a stranger, where she felt different, ignorant, exposed to ridicule in the elevator?” (*Wife* 112).

Thus she is caught in the web of Oriental and Occidental cultures. Her final act of stabbing her husband with a kitchen knife is the result of the sudden changes in her milieu. If Dimple keeps her belief on her own traditional culture, she never dares to murder Amit as to an Indian wife her husband is her God, her protector and the symbol of her colourful life and, above, all the source of her lifelong happiness. So, for a traditional Indian wife, murder of her husband (God) is a great sin. Through the life story of Dimple the novelist, Bharati Mukherjee, narrates the predicaments of cross cultural conflict that leaves a deep negative impression on her pathetic mentality at the end of the novel.

Jasmine

Cross-cultural reality becomes a major issue in the most famous novel of Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine*. Through this novel she attempts to convey the impact of the Oriental and Occidental cultural conflict on the life of the protagonist, Jyoti. The story of the fiction, *Jasmine*, revolves round the experiences of the protagonist Jyoti, her feudalistic village, Hasnapur to America. After her husband's death in a terrorist attack Jyoti decides to go to America with illegal papers to complete her husband's mission and perform 'Sati' a ritual of Hindu culture to burn the widow after the death of her husband. To fulfill the goal of her life she has to face so many difficulties that arise due to her confrontation of Oriental and Occidental cultures.

From the beginning of the novel the novelist gives a hint of Jasmine's attempt to break out of the paradigms of traditional Indian culture. From her childhood, Jyoti is bold, intelligent and against fate and superstitious belief of traditional culture. The novel begins with the lines:

Lifetimes ago, under a banyan tree in the village of Hasnapur, an astrologer cupped his ears - his satellite dish to the stars - and foretold my widowhood and exile (*Jasmine* 3).

Jyoti protests the astrologer's prophecy about her "widowhood and exile" by saying: "You're a crazy old man. You don't know what my future holds!" (*Jasmine* 3) Jyoti's sharp reply indicates that she is unwilling to imprison herself into the superstitious cultural norm. Jasmine's arrogant behaviour irritates the astrologer and he knocks her down. As a result she falls on a stick and gets a star-shaped wound in her forehead. Her sisters become anxious about her fate by seeing the injury in her forehead. They fear that for this injury she may be valued lesser as bride in future. They say to Jyoti: "Now your face is scarred for life! How will the family ever find you a husband?" (*Jasmine* 5). Their question reveals the fact that in the Oriental social tradition a girl's beauty is more important than her qualities for marriage. Steinberg also agrees with the opinion of Jyoti's sisters and says: "for a Bengali girl to have a physical imperfection is to be unmarriageable" (Steinberg 34).

From her childhood Jyoti has a keen interest for education. She is a brilliant student who wants to carry on her education. But her Dida, the mother of her 'Pitaji', was always against her education. Actually Jyoti is born in a male dominated orthodox village where women have less opportunity for education. Through the character of 'Dida' the novelist shows the suppressive aspect of conventional village culture for woman. In the Oriental social system dowry is an important factor in the marriage

of girls. Parents hardly think to marry their girls without dowry. As a result, girls are treated as curse for the family and are trained mainly in domestic activities rather than proper education. They have to accept the persons whom their parents or elder family members select for them as their husband. In the society there had the deep rooted notion about village women: “Village girls are like cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go” (*Jasmine* 46). Jyoti is a free minded girl and has not any faith on this tradition. She breaks all the established cultural norms and marries a modern man, Prakash who wants to leave the backwardness of Indian tradition for a more satisfying life in America. Their marriage is held in a non-traditional manner - “no-dowry, no-guests Registry Office wedding” (*Jasmine* 75).

After marriage, like an obedient wife Jasmine always tries to give importance to the wishes of her husband. She decides to give all-round support to Prakash to get admission in the Institute of Tampah and starts dreaming about their immigration in America. But it is her bad luck that Prakash is killed in a terrorist attack by the Khalsa Lions. This incident renders her a widow and Jasmine is compelled to live the life of a widow rest of her life in the company of other widows. Jasmine’s widowhood robs all her right of material fulfillments and it brings to her a life of loneliness. She expresses her condition thus:

Mataji and I were alone in the widow's dark hut, little better than Mazbis and Untouchables. My young friends, like Vimla, never visited. Inexplicable, seemingly undeserved misfortune is contagious (*Jasmine* 96).

Jasmine is a born fighter and has a little faith on traditional Hindu norms. She realizes that to live the life of a widow is to live a life worse than death. She expresses her position in a feudalistic society by saying this: "Feudalism ! I am a widow in the war of feudalisms" (*Jasmine* 97).

To get rid of the rigid norms of the patriarchal society, she decides to go to America to fulfill her husband's last wish and to become 'Sati'. Now Jasmine starts her journey from her culturally absurd native place towards West. During her adventurous journey Jasmine is brutally raped by Half- Face, the captain of the trawler on which she is travelling. This incident gives a deep mental shock to Jasmine. According to Oriental culture 'chastity' is the most precious thing for a woman. If once it lost willingly or unwillingly, there is no option except death. Jasmine plans to suicide to escape from the life of disgrace. But when she remembers that her mission is not completed she changes her decision of suicide. She murders the rapist who dares to violate a Hindu widow's chastity and she realizes that as she has lost her chastity so there is nothing to lose again.

So she decides to utilize every opportunity to assimilate with the Occidental culture.

In Queens, New York Jasmine takes her shelter in the house of her husband's former teacher Professor Vadhera. Vadheras confine themselves in Oriental culture even in America. Jasmine is unable to understand why they are trying artificially to maintain their Indianness in an alien country. Here she has to live the life of a typical widow. She is forced to wear white saris with patterns that expose her status as a widow. This typical widow life irritates her and she wants to go away from this life. She says: "I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti-like" (*Jasmine* 145).

Mr. Vadhera's mother is highly opposed to the Occidental culture. She complains that it is the impact of the Western culture, busy life style and extra health consciousness of the women, renders her son and her daughter-in-law childless. She expresses her concern about the infertility of her daughter- in- law by saying: "This country has drained my son of his dum. This country has turned my daughter-in-law into a barren field" (*Jasmine* 147). Through this remark of the mother of Professor Vadhera, the novelist Bharati Mukherjee highlights the Oriental 'grandmotherly desire' of a woman for a grandson or a granddaughter.

Jasmine feels that it is impossible to assimilate the Occidental culture staying with the conservative family of Vadheras. She takes firm decision to run away from here in search of a free life. In Manhattan, she restarts her life with Taylor and Wylie by adopting a new name Jase. She leaves her Indian dress of a widow and adopts the dress of a young American woman to blend herself into the Occidental society and culture. She learns from Taylor and Wylie the ways of American family life. She finds that in America a husband can work in kitchen without any ego while his wife is working outside. This mutual responsibility of a husband – wife relationship is very contrasting to the Oriental culture. In Oriental culture we can hardly imagine this scene. Though Jasmine is trying to assimilate in the Occidental culture, there is a soft corner in her mind for traditional Oriental values. So when she comes to know that Duff is not a normal child but an adopted child she reacts like a typical Indian.

I could not imagine a non-genetic child. A child that was not my own, or my husband's, struck me as a monstrous idea. Adoption was as foreign to me as the idea of widow remarriage (*Jasmine* 170).

Actually her reactions come out from her sense of Indian cultural values. In our traditional belief, it is very difficult to accept a non- genetic child in society and also in family.

Wylie's decision to leave Tailor for her lover Stuart gives a strong shock to Jasmine's Indian values. She never imagines that without the interference of fate, a woman deliberately can leave her husband and child for her personal happiness with another man. She realizes that in American culture nothing lasts for a long time, not even human relationship. She painfully remarks, "In America, nothing lasts" (*Jasmine* 181). She becomes confused to think that what tradition she will choose between Oriental and Occidental cultures. In this context Pushpa N. Parekh remarks:

Instead of fate or destiny or an unknown power being responsible for a family's break-up, Jasmine witnesses an American woman, Wylie, deliberately choosing to leave. Jasmine's inner monologues and silent reflections capture her deliberations on cultural differences and an immigrant woman's emotional adherence to her traditional beliefs (Parekh 113).

In spite of the draw backs of Occidental culture Jasmine puts her step forward the optimistic side of American culture. As Jane she

welcomes the democratic thought of the Western people and their work – culture where everybody is working freely his duty without any complex. Jasmine gets cordial responses from Taylor and Wylie while she starts her new profession as a day-mummy in Taylor’s house. She is surprised to see their sense of respect and affection for a maid servant that has a sharp contrast with her Oriental experience. She points out this contrasting work-culture of the East and the West by comparing her job of a caregiver with the work of a Mazbi woman at Hasnapur:

In Hasnapur the Mazbi woman who’d stoked our hearth or spread our flaking, dried-out adobe walls with watered cow dung had been a maid servant. Wylie made me feel her younger sister. I was family, and I was professional (*Jasmine* 175).

Jasmine’s happy life with Taylor and Duff does not live long. She becomes restless when she sees Sukhwinder, the Khalsa lion, in Manhattan, for the security of Taylor and Duff, she plans to go to Iowa. Her decision indicates that there is an ongoing conflict in her mind between her Oriental and Occidental family values. Her departure from Manhattan to Iowa shows the triumph of her sense of Indian family values where personal happiness has no space before the safety of the family.

In Iowa, she meets Bud Ripplemayer and starts a live-in relationship without marrying him with a new name Jane. According to Occidental culture marriage is not essential for a conjugal relationship but in Oriental culture it is not admissible for a woman to live with a man without marrying him as it is considered as great sin which may bring curse upon society. Her relationship with Bud is based on purely Western view of mutual need. Bud needs Jane's affectionate care like his wife Karin for his physical inability and Jasmine needs an identity in the Occidental society.

But Jasmine is haunted by her inherited Oriental value which generates in her a sense of guilty that for her entry in the life of Bud, the breakup of Bud and Karin relationship comes to an end. But at once she consoles herself by remembering that in Occidental cultural value nothing is permanent. So there is no cause for her repent on the divorce of Bud and his wife. Every moment there is going a conflict between Indian cultural values and American cultural values in the mind of Jane and every time Indian values are defeated by the cultural values of America. This is finely expressed in the following remark of Jane: "Bud would have left Karin, or twisted in mid-life until he dropped. I was a catalyst, not a cause" (*Jasmine* 200). Though Jane is living with Bud, she never forgets her relationship with Taylor. She became puzzled and was unable

to decide what to do when Taylor offered her again to go with him to California. She is trapped between her duty for helpless Bud and the attraction of the life of progressive America. This conflict divides her mind into two selves. Finally she gives her positive response towards 'progressive America' and returns to Taylor. Her final decision gives the indication that Jasmine willingly gives more importance to her 'self' which is very eager to adopt the values of Occidental culture.

The Holder of the World

The Holder of the World by the novelist Bharati Mukherjee is a story of a Puritan woman, Hannah Easton who comes to India in the seventeenth century from America and adjusted herself in the culture of the East. Here the novelist shows through the character of Hannah how two different cultures, the Oriental and the Occidental, come closer with each other and finally transform her from a traditional Puritan woman into a reform American. About this novel Arshia Sattar remarks that Mukherjee "is at her most eloquent and intelligent when she explores the complexities of cultural confrontation and the politics of otherness"(Sattar 6). Referring the cultural aspect of this novel, K. Anthony Appiah

comments in *New York Times Book Review* that the novel , *The Holder of the World* “ reminds us of the interconnections among cultures that have made our modern world” (Appiah).

Hannah comes from the Puritan society of Massachusetts to India at the age of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. The orthodox Puritan society never tolerates any type of sexual adulterous and impertinence is strictly punished. In her childhood Hannah is abandoned by her mother Rebecca Easton for her native Indian – American lover. She never forgets this act of elopement of a puritan woman. This untraditional act leaves a deep imprint on her memory of little Hannah. Rebecca Easton’s this sinful and anti-cultural crime is aptly expressed through the lines bellow:

She has witnessed the Fall, not Adam’s Fall, Rebecca’s Fall. Her mother’s Fall, in finitely more sinful than the Fall of a man .She is the witness not merely of the occasion of sin, but of the birth of sin itself (*The Holder of the World* 30).

She was brought up in an orthodox Fitch family. Her foster mother taught her all the traditional wisdom and the household duties since her childhood. She has great love for needle works and her reputation in needle works spreads around in a rapid way. She is unable to share her

emotional commotion with the members of the family as the traditional cultural values of the Fitches never give her permission to share her mother's unconventional act of elopement. Her embroidery becomes the only way to express her sexuality and her feelings about her mother: "Her embroidery gave away the conflict she tried so hard to deny or suppress" (*The Holder of the World* 42).

Like her mother, Hannah wants individual freedom out of this conservative Puritan society where independence is shackled by duty and moral values. She gets the opportunity to run away from her culturally rigid society when Gabriel Legge comes in her life. Hannah is impressed by the tempting adventurous tales of Gabriel:

Tortured? Punished? Heroic? No one knew for sure. He had a thousand stories of imprisonment by Turks; banishment to forests; brigands, highwaymen, pirates (*The Holder of the World* 63).

After marriage Hannah comes to India at the time when India is dominating by the Mughals. She comes here with her husband as a wife of a junior factor in East India Company. She comes here with the hope that India will bring to her the freedom which she has cherished long being confined in the traditions and moral values of Puritan tradition. At

the moment when Hannah arrives in Coromandel Coast she decides to assimilate herself in its people and culture. But here she gets less opportunity to assimilate with Oriental culture. Like the wives of the other Chief Factors she has to keep herself aloof from the native Indians and their culture. The aim of the Chief Factors of East India Company in India is:

...to plunder, to enrich themselves (under the guise of a Royal Charter) and pay their fees to the ruling nawabs (*The Holder of the World* 99-100).

They think themselves superior to the native people. They have a contrasting belief about West and East: “England was refined and cultured; it was soiled and sinful” (*The Holder of the World* 72). Hannah had deep interest towards India and its cultural life. So she never tries to:

... hold India up to inspection by the lamp of England, or of Christianity, nor did she aspire to return to England upon the completion of Gabriel’s tour (*The Holder of the World* 104).

She always tries to collect inspiration from Oriental philosophy of life. The impact of the Oriental culture upon Hannah’s mind is expressed finely through the lines “The Coromandel had started something as

immense as a Cyclone deep inside her body and mind” (*The Holder of the World* 163). Hannah takes every chance to mingle herself with the people of “Black Town” and its culture (native culture). Cephus Prynne, the Chief Factor of the East India Company, for his strong faith on the hierarchical ethics of the Company officers and the notion that the natives are sinful people, never welcomes Hannah’s attempt to bring close together the cultures of the two towns. He rebukes Hannah to keep away herself from her effort by saying –“It is not consistent with our interest... to let the people of the land see our countrywomen yield to self-indulgence” (*The Holder of the World* 100). Prynne’s bold words clearly depicts that the supremacy of the White Town never gives permission to its inhabitant to mix with the local population and their Oriental culture.

Hannah got a lot of information about the social life of India and also its culture from her husband during their way from Massachusetts to India. Her husband told her that every people on Coromandel belonged to a specific caste. They may be a right hand or left hand caste if they are Hindu. In case of Muslims they may be either Shia or Sunni. To a woman like Hanna, who belongs to a Puritan society which is not so varied and not so diverse like Indian society, becomes surprise to know that in India people speak different languages, they owe fidelity to different masters, and they worship different gods even also their ancestors have come from

different countries. Everything about Coromandel arise her wonder and she expresses her wonder in the following lines: “Not just pagans and Muhammadans, but different gods and different ways of worshiping the same gods” (*The Holder of the World* 100).

In India, Gabriel often leaves Hannah alone in the home and goes out for his expeditions. She uses this opportunity to come in close contact with native people. From her Indian maid, Bhagmati, she hears the story of some parts of the great Hindu epic, the Ramayana. The experiences of Sita’s life fascinates her more than the other fragments as Sita proves her chastity through a trial of fire to her husband, Rama, and the society. This trial significantly indicates that chastity of a woman is very important in both societies (Puritan and Indian society).

While Hannah is escaping along with Bhagmati from the Company’s enclave after the death of Gabriel, she meets a Hindu Raja, Jadav Singh who saves them from an accident. Post that incident she becomes the concubine of Jadav Singh and later carries his illegitimate child. It is an untraditional act for a conservative Puritan woman whose traditional cultural belief never permits extramarital relationship with other man. But Hannah crosses the boundaries of the typical Puritan society by surrendering herself to the Raja. This relationship helps her to

assimilate in the Indian society and culture and also helps her to free her enchained Puritan soul from the orthodoxy of the Puritan culture. About their relationship Shandhya Rao Mehta gives her opinion thus:

Her courtship with the Raja indicates a relationship based entirely on Indian, 'Eastern' values and morality with little reference to the life left behind (Mehta 197).

The Raja changed her whole life. Her assimilation to Oriental culture becomes crystal clear through Hannah's words to Jadav Singh: "I was once a respectable married English lady and look at me now-a bibi in a sari" (*The Holder of the World* 197).

When Jadav Singh is defeated in a war by the vast army of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, she kills the general of the emperor to rescue the unconscious Raja. She decides to run away with Raja but the Raja rejects her proposal. The Raja thinks that the culture of his society never allows him to transgress his dignity and heroism for a woman. So, finding no option to save the Raja from the impending battle, she appeals to the Emperor to forgive Jadav Singh. Her appeal to the Emperor is an exciting verse full of Oriental religious belief. She says to the emperor:

Mercy before Allah, not mercy before men. Allah judges men, and the Emperor is but a man who must also be judged. The duty of the Emperor is to bring the infidel before the throne of judgment. There is no escaping the judgment of Allah (*The Holder of the World* 269).

Aurangzeb is impressed by Hannah's Oriental religious knowledge but does not move from his point to usurp the kingdom of the Raja as he thinks it as his duty to the throne. After the death of Raja, Hanna comes back to her Puritan Salem. Now in Salem she becomes a foreigner who violates the moral code of the orthodox Puritan society by making an extramarital relationship with the Raja and dares to give birth an illegitimate child. But her ability to adopt the Oriental cultural values provides her much strength to face undauntedly the taunts of the people of the Puritan colony. She finally finds her long cherished independence from the strict Puritan cultural norms in the midst of the Oriental society and its people that changed her personality from a traditional Puritan woman to an undaunted rebel.

Leave It to Me

The novel, *Leave It to Me*, is the most American work of the novelist Bharati Mukherjee. Through this novel the novelist establishes herself as a multicultural writer. The key character of the novel, Debby DiMartino crosses the frontier of her adopted land and travels throughout the Europe to find out her genetic parents. It also exhibits the cultural plurality of the adopted country of the protagonist. Through Debby's odyssey Bharati Mukherjee arrests a multicultural spirit in the novel, *Leave It to Me*. In this novel, "Mukherjee combines the journalist's grasp of contemporary culture with the magic realist's appetite for myth. Her book is a hybrid of history and gossip, of high and low culture" (*Leave It to Me*, "Excerpts from reviews").

The novel opens with a short prologue where the location of the story is a small village of Rajasthan, Devigaon in India. In the prologue an old man, Hari is telling to the children the story of the goddess of Hindu mythology, Durga, who is known as Devi or Maha Devi. The Devi slays the Buffalo Demon who had usurped the throne in the kingdom of heavenly beings. The Devi's purpose is to establish divine justice in the world. Through the story of the Devi, the novelist Bharati Mukherjee

attaches an Oriental cultural touch to the occidental cultural aspects of the novel.

The novel is based on the lifelong experiences of Debby Di Martino, the multicultural protagonist. She is born and deserted in India, and is rescued by Sister Madeleine who christened her in her affidavit certificate as Baby Clear Water Iris-Daughter. She was adopted by Manfred and Serena DiMartino, an Italian American couple and went to New York only at the age of two. As second daughter in the DiMartino family, she got her new name Debby DiMartino. Debby grows up in her adopted family with love and affection. Her adopted parents provide her shelter; give the lessons of moral values of life and also a cultural identity in the society. In the novel the novelist shows her as “a fun-loving twenty three year old American girl” (*Leave It to Me* 10) but she always haunts by her aspiration to know, her original cultural identity. In the midst of the DiMartino family she feels herself alone and an unwanted child in the world. She has no exact idea about her childhood. She has only nightmares and fantasies about her past:

... in place of memory, impressions of white – hot sky and burnt - black leaves? Nothing to keep you on the straight and narrow except star bursts of longing (*Leave It to Me* 16).

She has a fervent yearning to establish her in the society as a member of a particular race like her Italian-American sister, Angie. Her foster mother gives brief information to Debby about her past:

...hippie backpacker from Fresno and Eurasian loverboy, both into smoking, dealing and stealing. She left my bio-data minimal: some sort of police trouble my hippie birth mother had got herself into meant that the Gray Nuns in Devigaon village had had to take me in; one of the nuns had renamed me Faustine after a typhoon, but Mama'd changed it officially to Debby after Debbie Reynolds, her all-time favotite (*Leave It to Me* 41).

She also comes to know from Serena DiMartino that she was abandoned by her biological mother who later went San Francisco, California. She also hears that her father is now in a prison in Indian. She abandons her loving and caring parents and comes to California in search of her bio-mom.

In California she falls in love with a Chinese immigrant, Francis A. Fong. Frankie has a business of fitness equipment. But he was not always in this business. Before that he may be a star or a director or a producer of dozens of Hong Kong Kick-boxing extravaganzas. Though China is his real home-town, but New York becomes his present home. For the

purpose of his multinational business “he’d scouted London, Vancouver and Toronto, Wellington and Auckland, Sydney and Perth; and chosen cheap and serene New York City” (*Leave It to Me* 29). With Frankie she travels from city to city and in different countries. Debby says:

He wanted me to model for Chinese countries in Paris and London; to travel with him as his personal assistant to Honolulu for an FHP Board of Directors meeting (*Leave It to Me* 34).

Frankie decides to make a flash movie co-starring Debby as an orphan. Initially Debby opposes it but later she agrees with him. Debby says:

Frankie confided in me his dreams of the Fong Empire he would build by catering to American wants with Asian needs (*Leave It to Me* 34).

Through Frankie, she realizes the conflicting cultural truth of the Asian and the American society: “Americans convert needs into wants; Asians wants into needs” (*Leave It to Me* 35). When Debby realizes the reality of their relationship that Frankie does not love her genuinely, only considers her as his upstate concubine, she leaves him and sets her journey for San Francisco.

In San Francisco, Debby tries to adjust to the culture of the new land. She has to face difficulties for her unknown cultural identity. In San Francisco people were eager to know about her native land:

They also assumed I'd come to California from somewhere more fascinating. All of a sudden Brazilians led off speaking to me in Portuguese, Zydecos in Creole, Mexicans in Spanish (*Leave It to Me* 129).

To get rid of the curiosity of the people, Debby changes her identity to Devi without knowing the real meaning and importance of this particular name of the Hindu mythology. By involving this myth the novelist adds an Oriental mythological touch in her novel. In San Francisco Devi has to face odd circumstances such as poor behavior of the hippie community. In this city she again involves in a love affair with Hamilton Cohan. Ham helps Devi to reach to the goal of her life. In this vast town through different pleasing and unpleasing events, Devi comes to meet Jens Du Pree, her biological mother. Meantime, Romeo Hawk comes to San Francisco after escaping from prison in India to take revenge upon Jess who is the cause of his imprisonment. From the private detective Fred, Devi gets the information that Romeo Hawk is her bio-dad. But it is Devi's bad luck that Jess never accepts her as her daughter. The novel

ends through some violent incidents where Devi murders some friends of Jess to take revenge upon her bio-mom and on the contrary Romeo murders Jess to fulfill his revenge. At last Devi kills her father, Romeo Hawk.

Devi's act reminds of the Hindu deity of the prologue of the novel. The Devi, Mahishasuramardini killed the buffalo demon to establish divine justice in the world. Like wisely, Debby slaughters her monster-like father to give justice to her mother. Through the story of Debby, the novelist very craft fully mixes the Greek myth of Electra with the Indian myth of Devi. The Electra myth is based on mother-father-daughter triangle relationship. About the use of the Indian and Greek myths in cross-cultural way in the novel, *Leave It to Me*, Bharati Mukherjee says:

In these days of mega scale diaspora, when whole peoples are crossing borders because of better job opportunities or wars, cross-cultural applications of myths seem the most appropriate way to go. Myths embody archetypes, which is why they speak to all of us no matter what our ethnicity. I don't have to be a pagan Greek in order to empathize with Oedipus. You don't have to be a Hindu Indian to recognize the part that Devi the goddess is asked to play in the struggle between good and evil. The conflict that I had to resolve in synthesizing a Hindu myth and a Greek myth in *Leave It to Me* was

this; Greek mythology, according to scholars like Edith Hamilton, places humans at the centre of the story whereas Hindu mythology places destiny at the center (Powells 2).

The novel, *Leave It to Me*, centers on the protagonist Debby DiMatino's search for her genetic root. Debby is best described in the novel as a transnational protagonist without raising any debate. It may appear that Debby is refusing a false American identity and accepting a true Asian or Asian American identity. From the brief account of Debby's story it is clear that she is interested in digging out the root for a larger sense of national and cultural firmness.

Desirable Daughters

Desirable Daughters is a story of the cultural confrontation of the three sisters - Padma, Parvati and Tara. The cross-cultural conflicts arise when the Oriental cultural values of these three sisters come in contact with the Occidental culture.

Padma, Parvati and Tara, these three sisters are born and raised in a privileged, cultured Bengali family of Calcutta. From their childhood they achieve the lessons of traditional cultural values of the Orient

besides their Western education. The elder sister, Padma, marries a non-Bengali business man, Harish Mehta and settles in New Jersey. Her marriage to an out caste person shows that she is against the tradition of inter caste marriage. Parvati, the middle sister marries against the wish of her father but chooses a typical Indian life with her husband and two sons in Bombay. Tara, the protagonist of the novel, is very traditional among three sisters from childhood and marries a computer engineer, Bishwapriya Chatterjee, chosen by her father and settles in San Francisco. In Oriental society marriages are executed in parent's selection and girls have no scope to express their wish. This tradition of arrange marriage is expressed through the speech of Tara:

I married a man I had never met, whose picture and biography and bloodlines I approved of, because my father told me it was time to get married and this was the best husband on the market (*Desirable Daughters* 26).

In America, Tara starts her life as a traditional Indian wife. Her regular contact with the modern American society ignites in her a strong desire to adjust to the Occidental life style. But her inherited native culture always comes as obstacle in her way of adoption. Tara is continuously haunted by the quest of her freedom in the web of cultural

dualism. But at last she breaks all taboos of Oriental culture and divorces Bish. After divorce she grows a sexual relationship with Andras Karolyi, her Hungarian Buddhist lover and starts to live with her son, Rabi and Andy. Tara's sexual life indicates that she comes far from her native culture and sinks entirely into the Occidental culture. She never discloses the news of her divorce to her parents and other relatives as in India divorce is a big issue for a woman that brings shame for the family and also arises different questions about the character of the divorcee woman. Tara becomes surprise by the reaction of Didi on hearing the news of her divorce. Tara says: "Her reaction to my divorce (that I had brought shame to the Bhattacharjee family had been her refrain) had hurt" (*Desirable Daughters* 94). In this context the comment of Madhulika Khandelwal about Indian culture is very appropriate. According to Khandelwal: "Marriages are considered permanent and should not be altered by either partners' free choice...Divorce was taboo, and considered a sure sign of Americanization" (Khandelwal 137).

Bish is a traditional Indian. He always remains deeply rooted in his Oriental cultural belief and never has much interest in Occidental culture. He thinks himself as a failure person who is unable to protect his marriage from separation and also unable to hold on his dharma: "He had

failed in his dharma, the basic duty of a man in the householder phase of his life, to support and sustain his marriage” (*Desirable Daughters* 265). According to psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar: “*Dharma* 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).

Tara’s American life is disturbed by the sudden arrival of an unknown person, Christopher Dey, who claims that he is the illegitimate child of Padma’s love affair with a doctor Ron Dey before marriage. Christopher Dey’s claim gave a sensitive shake to Tara’s pride about their family traditions and cultural norms. Tara always feels proud to be a Brahmin, the height caste of Bengalis. She says:

We are Bengali Brahmins from Calcutta, and nothing can touch us. Now, in one afternoon, that hoard of inherited confidence, the last treasure I’d smuggled out of India and kept untarnished for sixteen years in America, was about to be exposed and auctioned off (*Desirable Daughters* 44-45).

Though through Andras, Tara liberates her female consciousness from her native tradition, but she does not get support from him at the

moment when Christopher Dey creates crisis in her life. About Andy's cold attitude about the matter Tara says:

He's never taken a deep interest in my Indian life, even though he's seen far more of Indian than I have, tramped through it bare foot from the Himalayas to the south, hit the holy places, stayed in hostels and flophouses, knows the religious practices, likes the food. He can handle the villages; it's upper-class Calcutta Brahmin life that he finds a little too exotic (*Desirable Daughters* 46).

To discover the real identity of Christopher, Tara communicates her sisters after a long gap. Christopher enters in Tara's life as a catalyst of her gradual return to the Oriental culture. Parvati is very happy in her typical Indian life. She has no interest in Western culture. She likes to hear from her sons the traditional sound 'Ma' rather than 'Mummy'. She also fears that the news of Tara's divorce may generate rumour in the society.

On the contrary Padma, the 'Didi', who had deep attraction to the West, ironically becomes more Indian in America. In America, she earns her living as a traditional Indian performance artist. She always wears sari, Indian traditional ornaments and also speaks in Bengali, eats only Indian food. When Tara meets Padma and discusses on the matter of

Christopher's real identity, she understands that their Oriental cultural values did not keep off Padma from having a teenaged love affair and falling pregnant. Through her native traditional life in New Jersey, Didi exposes the fact that, it is impossible for one to avoid native culture completely. She says:

Our family's 'Westernization' was superficial, confined to convent school, Metro Cinema and movie magazines, which overlaid a profound and orthodox Hinduism (*Desirable Daughters* 178).

Rabi, only son of Bish and Tara having spent his early childhood in Atherton with his parents shifted to San Francisco after the separation of his parents. Rabi's relationship with Oriental culture is different his from his parents. The codes and conduct of the Indian culture irritates him. He beliefs in living a free life. He builds for himself a unique bond by mixing the rigidities of the Oriental tradition with the true ideas of equality and individuality of Occidental culture.

Tara comes closer to her ex-husband, Bish during her investigation of the case of Christopher Dey. Initially, Tara enjoys her American self but, later she realizes that her Indian self never completely wipes out:

Yet I'm still too timid to feed my Ballygunge Park Road identity in to the kitchen Garburetor. That dust identity is as fixed as any specimen in a lepidopterist's glass case, confidently labeled by father's religion (Hindu) caste (Brahmin), subcaste (Kulin), mother-tongue (Bengali), place of birth (Calcutta), formative region of ancestral origin (Mishtigunj, East Bengal), education (Post Graduate and professional), and social attitudes (conservative) (*Desirable Daughters* 78).

Tara returns to Bish and admits that Bish's success in life is mainly based on his strong belief in Indian traditions and respect for his father's advice all over his life. Tara says:

Our training, not only on the old class rooms with second-rate equipment and uninspiring teachers, but also our training at home, duty and honor, obedience and respect, the whole dharma of student ship, 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 Chatterjees did (*Desirable Daughters* 44).

Tara and Bish both are very eager to restart their relationship on the basis of their oriental belief. Bish argues that as they have the same place of origin, same language, and same cultural values, there is no

hindrance to reunite as a family. Tara's reunion with Bish, points out that one can not totally cut oneself off from one's traditions. Finally Tara returns to India to re-evaluate her Oriental culture on which her family is based on.

The Tree Bride

The story of the novel, *The Tree Bride* is told from the view point of the narrator Tara Chatterjee. Tara takes her interest to write a book on the life of her great-great-aunt and namesake, Tara Lata, when her house in San Francisco is firebombed by a man who wants to kill her. She had made a couple of trips to Mishtiganj for the purpose of her work. Six years before the bomb blast, she had come to Mishtiganj alone to find out the house of the Tree Bride. There she met an elderly Muslim, Hajji Gul Mohammed Chowdhury, with whom she went to the house of the Tree Bride and visited the town, Mishtiganj. He told Tara the story of the marriage of Tara Lata with a tree and her contribution of her dowry for independence and gave her a Bengali translation of the life story of John Mist - Mist-nama.

Tara Lata was born in the year 1874 in Mishtigunj. She was an unfortunate girl who only at the age of five became a widow as her intended bride-groom had died on his way to the wedding. To protect his daughter from a deadening life of widowhood her father Jai Krishna Gangooly married her to a tree and she became the legendary Tree Bride. Her father's action may be judged from the Hindu cultural norm of marrying an unmarriageable girl to a tree. According to Hindu culture, an unmarriageable girl is a curse of family and she brings misfortune and death to the family. Tara Lata had to accept her marriage to a tree as in the Oriental culture girls has no right to speak against the elder male members of the family. Tara Lata, later, in her life became educate and sacrificed her life for the freedom of the country against the British. She is a very open-minded woman and to her, all men are equal, and there is no difference between upper caste and lower caste people and even in a Hindu and a Muslim. She says: "No boy is too young, no sudra too poor, no woman too weak...." (*The Tree Bride* 61). Her attitude is quite contrasting to the upper caste Hindus who think themselves superior to the lower caste people. They also think that Muslims are untouchable to them. She had opened her house to beggars, the sick and to the young soldiers fighting against the British Raj. In her youth Tara Lata trained all her servants to read and write. Through her social services she became Tara-Ma to the villagers of Mishtigunj.

John Mist was the founder of Mishtigunj. Though Mist was foreigner, he very easily imbibed to the culture of the Orient:

He trekked to Ambarnath, the sacred ice-cave in the Himalayas where the Ganges comes to life; he visited Benares and slept in alleyways with the beggars; he prayed in mosques and honored the burial sites of every pir; he tramped the length and breadth of India, surviving on the generosity of strangers. He was taken for Indian wherever he went (*The Tree Bride* 148).

He had become so much a part of Indian culture that he lost his capacity to speak English. In the century of transformation when everything was changing rapidly, John Mist with his adoption of Indian culture “stands out as the perfect, and may be the last, “British Hindoo” (*The Tree Bride* 149). In Mishtigunj, Mist established a communal harmony among the people. He gave equal importance during the recruitment of teachers, doctors, lawyers and other professionals in Mishtigunj. Vertie Treadwell, the Dc of the Mishtigunj said about Mist:

He had gone totally native, didn't speak a word of English, forged an alliance between Mussalmans and Hindus and insinuated some money into schools and whatnot (*The Tree Bride* 205).

Mist through his life reveals the fact that cultures may be different but they can coexist in harmony if the people show flexible temperament towards it.

Unlike Mist, Vertie Treadwell had no interest to make a friendly bond with the native and was reluctant to adopt the Oriental culture. His main aim in this land was to protect the British Empire from any type of agitation and to govern the native people. Through Vertie Treadwell Mukherjee advocates the typical approach of the British civil servants towards native people in India. In these two accounts, the author has contrasted a man who acted unjustly with one who, though not a Hindu had a commitment to dharma, to doing the right thing.

The novel, *The Tree Bride* begins with the lines of the great Hindu epic Mahabharata:

All kings must see hell at least once. Hence you have for a little while been subjected to this great sorrow. (*The Tree Bride* “epigraph”)

These lines give the indication of the unavailability of suffering that governs the book. These lines also advocate that the noblest people are

also helpless before suffering. The novel revolves round the two Hindu concepts of karma or fate over which human beings have no control and dharma, or right conduct, the only area in which they have a real choice.

Tara is so infatuated by the life history of her ancestor, Tara Lata, that she feels her presence at every moment. The incorporeal presence of Tara Lata always begs Tara to perform a ritualistic cremation to set free her. The preta of Tara Lata requests Tara: “I am trapped in your world of mortals, she pleads. Perform the rites” (*The Tree Bride* 279):

Tara Lata was died in jail. The police vanished her body, so that the nationalist-minded villagers would not make any agitation through her funeral procession. The spirit of Tara Lata is restless, as she met a bad death and her spirit is now demanding a ritualistic cremation from Tara to set free. The preta of Tara Lata says:

They tossed my body over the prison wall into the sewage ditch. I hovered above my corpse. It lay submerged in filth. Vultures ripped chunks off with their beaks. Starving dogs chewed my bones. I had no body but I felt the pain, and the shame. (*The Tree Bride* 281):

According to Hindu culture, a ritualistic cremation is necessary to a dead person for the liberation of his soul. Till the rite is not completed he cannot go on his final journey to the Abode of Ancestors and he remains a preta.

As a descendant of Tara Lata, Tara thinks that it is her duty to arrange a ceremonial cremation for the tree bride. Tara Lata's ceremony in Fremont is impossible as it is an alien soil to her and the tree bride would not allow her burial outside of India. As a foreign land, Fremont signifies alienation of social and linguistic cultures where as India represents cultural assimilation. So, Tara and Bish along with their son Rabi and their infant daughter, Victoria, come to India to arrange an honorable ceremonial funeral for the tree bride. At the Manikarnika Ghat of Varanasi Rabi as the only living blood relative of Tara Lata performs his duty and liberates Tara Lata's soul from this world for its final journey to the abode of her ancestors. Instead of Tara, Rabi performs the ritual because the Hindu culture permits only the male members to light the bodies of their family members. The novel ends with an expression of Dharma and also with the realization of Tara that there is no resistance against Karma or fate.

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ROLE OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF STORY

Bharati Mukherjee's interest is to depict the present social reality of the Asian immigrant's life in contemporary America. Mukherjee always pay attention to the feminine problems in her writings, especially on those women who are suffering from misbalanced psyche owing to cultural shocks and conflicts of traditional values in the foreign land. As an immigrant Mukherjee faced cultural clash, racial prejudice and identity crisis which are the main source of her portrayal of the women protagonists of her writings. Like Mukherjee, her female protagonists also suffer the problems of immigration and are very restless to create their individual identity through their daring journeys. Her female characters occupy more space than male characters and Bharati Mukherjee could successfully portrait them in her writings. To attain individual identity, they come out from the male dominated society and become the role models for many immigrant women. In the words of Fakrul Alam:

Once literature begins to serve as a forum illuminating female experience, it can assist in humanizing and equilibrating the culture, value system, which has served predominantly male interests. A

literary work is capable of providing role models, instill a positive sense of feminine identity by portraying women who are self actualizing, whose identities are not dependant on men (Alam 45).

The Tiger's Daughter

In the novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, Bharati Mukherjee introduces Tara Banerjee to the readers as her female protagonist. Tara was born in an upper class Bengali Brahmin family. Her father is an industrialist who has gained his fame in Calcutta in the name of Bengal Tiger and her grandfather Hari Lal Mukherjee was a renowned Zaminder in East Bengal. Her father sent her to America for higher studies when she was only fifteen years old. There Tara has to suffer the problems of adjustment due to her excessive attachment for her home country, India. She has also experienced racial discrimination in USA. She tries hard to assimilate but fails due to her 'otherness'. She feels alone and insecure in the alien atmosphere. Meantime, she falls in love with an American, David Cartwright, and marries him, though, her parents wanted an upper class Bengali boy as of her husband. She weds David to erase the stamp

of 'other' on her and to attain an identity as a woman out of male dominating society in the America.

After marriage she feels that there is a big mental gap between them as they born and bought up in the two contrasting social values. For this reason she becomes helpless to explain her Indian social tradition and customs and also her nostalgic feelings for her home in Calcutta to her husband. So, she tries all possible ways to transform her from an Indian girl to an American wife but fails due to her nostalgic memory for her native traditions. She was helpless to refuse her Indian self and was unable to remain fixed in her newly discovered American self. Actually the causes of all sufferings are her unstable self and her poor mental strength that never totally chooses any one world. As a result she becomes sandwiched between her two selves. Brinda Bose aptly highlights Tara's condition thus:

Duality and conflict are not merely features of immigrant life in America; Mukherjee's women are brought up in a culture that presents them with such ambiguities from childhood. The breaking of identities and the discarding of language actually begin early, their lives being shaped by the confluence of the rich cultural and religious traditions, on the one hand, and the 'new learning' imposed by British colonialism in India on the other. These

different influences involve them in tortured processes of self-recognition and self-assimilation right from the start; the confusion is doubled upon coming to America (Bose 50).

Tara wants to come out from this situation but never gets much support from her husband. David likes to see her as a caring Indian wife who will accomplish her domestic services without any question. Tara do her domestic works and also do the works such as “cleaning bathroom” that she never deed in her father’s home but never gets any appreciation from the part of her husband. She becomes puzzle to think that whether she was happier in her father’s home than in the house of David. Now she realizes that her decision to marry an out caste person was wrong and emotional. It becomes very clear to her that she has lost her identity of an individual woman in her utmost attempt to become an American wife. She is unhappy with her life as she has no independence in the house of her husband. She feels sad by thinking that before marriage her life is governed by her father and now after marriage she is dominated by her husband in the name of bondage of marriage. Now her woman self seeks freedom from the male governing society and gives blame to the tradition of her society to make a double standard system for man and woman. To get out from this situation Tara decides to come back to India to find out

her identity .Tara's condition is finely expressed in the following words of Roshni Rustomji-Kerns:

Tara's petulance and constant nervousness regarding her role as the Bengali wife of an American, visiting her family in Calcutta; overshadows her well-intentioned efforts to understand her world of diverse cultures (Rustomji-Kerns 657).

At last, Tara returns to India after seven years with the hope of that her search for individual identity will be come to an end here. But she does not feel any excitement here. She does not find the peaceful Calcutta of her childhood where the children run through cool green spaces. She sees that her peaceful and loving city is now in a very unrest condition due to Naxalite movement. Now everywhere in the city she finds poverty, industrial agitation, riot and different political manifestations. Everything in the city makes her very sensitive. She hopes that the company of her family, relatives and friends will help her to get rid of her unstable mind. But she feels in their company the same feelings of otherness like in America. Nowhere has she got the tranquility of her mind.

She feels that her childhood friends are not interested to know the sufferings she has faced in America. Her friends "were curious only about

the adjustment she had made” (*The Tiger’s Daughter* 62). They never accept her marriage with a foreigner and regard it as an unconventional act of a Hindu Brahmin Bengali girl. Her mother also thinks that by marrying an outcaste person her daughter brings shame for the family. Tara realizes that now she has become a foreigner to all. She also feels her foreignness when she becomes unable to remember the family rituals of worshipping god.

When the sandal wood paste had been ground Tara scraped it off the slimy tablet with her fingers and poured it into a small silver bowl. But she could not remember the next step of the ritual (*The Tiger’s Daughter* 51).

She went to the house of her aunt, Jharna, to see the polio infected child. Tara expects that her aunt will be happy to see her after a long gap and will welcome her very cordially. But there too she experiences the same feelings of a foreigner. Due to her westernized outlook she cannot accept her aunt’s superstitious attempt to heal her child by religious aids instead of medicinal aids. She feels sympathy for the child. But her aunt does not understand her sympathy and abuses her by saying: “You think you are too educated for this, don’t you?” (*The Tiger’s Daughter* 36). Tara consoles her aunt by saying: “I don’t hate you. I love you, and the miserable child, the

crooked feet, the smoking incense holder, I love you all” (*The Tiger’s Daughter* 38). Tara becomes very hurt by the behaviour of her aunt and comes to the realization that to her family and relatives she now becomes completely an American. The greatest irony of Tara’s life is that in her native land she is haunted by the same feelings of otherness and rootlessness as she felt in America and becomes more outsider than a real foreigner. She realizes that her personality has changed due to her stay for a long time in abroad and it becomes a hindrance in the path of her reintegration to her family, old friends and relatives. She tries to find out the satisfactory answers of her foreignness:

How does the foreignness of the spirit begin? Tara wondered. Does it being right in the centre of Calcutta, with forty ruddy Belgian women, fat foreheads swelling under starched white headdresses, long black habits intensifying the hostility of the Indian Sun? The nuns had taught her to inject the right degree of venom into words like “common” and “vulgar.” They had taught her *The Pirates of Penzance* in singing class, and “If I should die, think only this of me -” for elocution (*The Tiger’s Daughter* 37).

She always meets her friends, Reena and Pronob in the Catelli-Continental Hotel to express her feelings being caught between two conflicting situations. But she never gets any sympathy from them. Tara

returns to Calcutta from America at the time when Calcutta is suffering from industrial unrest and Naxalite movement. But Tara was not interested about the altered social situation of Calcutta because of her personal crisis. By seeing Tara's indifference attitude towards the city, her friend Reena ridicules that she has "become too self-centered and European" (*The Tiger's Daughter* 38).

To take a break from these confusing situations of Calcutta she went to Nayapur for a trip. There she is raped by the ugly Marwari politician Tuntunwala. She does not dare to share this incident to any one for fear of personal dishonor. She feels:

She could not share her knowledge of Tuntunwala with any of her friends. In a land where a friendly smile, an accidental brush of the fingers, can ignite rumors – even lawsuits – how is one to speak of Mr. Tuntunwala's violence? (*The Tiger's Daughter* 199).

Tara feels herself completely alone in her own people and loses all her patience being tormented between her two selves - one of an expatriate and other of a newly Americanized self. She realizes that she cannot reconcile to her native land again and becomes depress. Her illusion to rediscover her identity in her own tradition finally breaks and she decides

to go back to the Western country and to her foreigner husband for solace. Through the portrayal of the character of Tara the novelist gives the hint that if once one crosses the boundary of native land; it becomes very difficult for the person to find out his root and identity there again if he or she has lack of mental strength. The gradual changes of the character of Tara also explore the novelist's interest to become an immigrant writer from an expatriate one.

Wife

Wife is the story of a twenty years old Dimple, a middle-class Hindu Brahmin modern girl, who is very romantic about her marriage. The title of the novel is interesting and one can easily guesses that it will be the tale of a traditional wife who will maintain all the codes and conducts of a wife. But through the character of Dimple the novelist gives a shape twist to the story which leaves a shocking impact on readers mind. The novel revolves around the woman character Dimple who throughout the novel grows, matures, rebels for her feminine freedom, murders her husband and finally suicides.

As a teenage girl Dimple has romantic outlooks about life. She has always lived in imaginary world, which is created by her fantasy. She always reads novels and film magazines which keeps her away from the ruthless and dreadful realities of life. She thinks marriage as a gate pass to enter into the world of happiness and liberation. Dimple is a member of middle-class conservative family which never gives permission to a woman to take decision of her marriage and it is also the duty of a daughter to respect father's decision and choice. So Dimple's wish to marry a neurosurgeon was not fulfilled and she had to marry Amit Kumar Basu, consultant Engineer, a perfect boy chosen by her father. After marriage she goes to Amit's house with romantic notions: "an apartment in Chowringhee, her hair done by Chinese girl trips to New market for nylon saris" (*Wife 3*).

But her dreams shatters into pieces when she enters in the house of her husband. In Amit's little house, she feels like a prisoner under the supervision of her mother-in-law. The old fashioned interior decoration of the house irritates her. She feels suffocated there:

She hated the gray cotton with red roses in side yellow circles that her mother in-law had hung on sagging tapes against the metal bars of the window (*Wife 20*).

Besides irritation, Dimple is very excited with the news that she is going to migrate with her husband in America and all her unfulfilled desires will be fulfilled there. But her all excitement vanishes at a moment when the truth comes to her that she is pregnant. Pregnancy is seemed as a blessing of God for women. In our society, it is a matter of pride for a woman who can carry baby. If a woman fails to beget a child she is condemned and becomes an object of hatred not only in society but in her family also. Without considering her pregnancy as gift of her marriage life she regards it as an obstacle of her journey to abroad. She is unwilling to carry any relics from her old life as in her new world she hopes everything will be nice and far away from old frustrations and irritations. So to get rid of this obstacle, she wants to terminate her pregnancy. She starts to eat “hot green chilies in the hope that her body would return to its normal cycle” (*Wife* 30).

The scene, in which Dimple kills a pregnant mouse in the bathroom, indicates her uneasiness with her pregnancy. Her joy on catching the tiny creature expresses that she is mentally abnormal. She says:

“I’ll get you” she screamed. “There is no way out of this, my friend...” And in an outburst of hatred, her body shuddering, her

wrist taut with fury, she smashed the top of a small gray head (*Wife* 35).

She becomes so desperate that she deliberately skips in order to kill the unwanted foetus in her belly. The description of abortion is very heart breaking and touching for any woman who welcomes it as a best gift and blessing from the Almighty:

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

By this act, Dimple deliberately murders her woman self and also liberates her from the conventional role of a Hindu wife by rejecting her motherhood.

This cruel step of the heroine arises much criticism from the parts of the critics. According to Maya Manju Sharma, Dimple's self abortion is: "a sacrament of liberation from the traditional roles and constraints of womanhood" (Sharma 15). Standing apart, from this criticism, the novelist very intentionally portrays the character of Dimple to show that

her woman character is seeking freedom from the role of mere child bearing and rearing of the patriarchal society. In this respect Sushila Singh comments Mukherjee's woman character offer: "a frontal challenge to patriarchal thought, social organization and control mechanism"(Singh 65). After that leaving all hindrances she immigrated to America with her husband. But she does not get any consolation in her new surrounding in America. She feels disturbed and lonely again in New York as Amit is busy in search of a new job.

Just after their immigration to New York their economic condition was very poor so they had to stay at Jyoti and Meena Sen's house. Their house is decorated entirely with Indian taste that is very contradictory to Dimple's imagination. Meena Sen's behaviour and all her activities remind Dimple every time of her native land. So, she wants to runaway from their apartment and wants to mingle to the new surroundings. She tries to maintain balance between her old world (India) and her new world (America) and wants to become a perfect wife like Sita, icon of purity, patience and sacrifice of Indian mythology. She expects necessary helps and mental support from Amit but he is so busy in his new job that he is unable to give her much time and incapable to understand of her mental conditions. Being depressed Dimple's condition is gradually going to worse.

Her loneliness brings her close to Ina Mallick, an immigrant Indian in USA to become her friend. Ina adopts all bad habits of her new land. She becomes an important agent to intensify Dimple's tragedy. She wears pants and mascara, smokes, drinks and goes to night school and also possesses extra-marital relationships with Americans that makes her more American than a native American. Dimple is highly influenced by Ina and considers her as icon of her new land. Dimple meets Milt Glasser as a friend of Ina and falls in love with him.

In Ina's party Ina offers Dimple a drink but Amit promptly restrains her to take drink and says: "She does not like alcoholic beverages. He also adds: She does not even like Coke" (*Wife* 77). Dimple thinks that even in the new land also she is not free from the male domination. She also feels that Amit never gives her permission to adopt the openness and modernity of America. The insecurity of her dream arises in her a psychic disorder. To keep her busy she used to go out with Ina and Milt. Her relation with Milt gradually becomes deeper and she makes a physical relationship with him. This act shows Dimple's change of personality that is highly influenced by the American notion of freedom and is free from conservative womanhood of her native land. This relationship does not provide her permanent comfort and mental solace. She feels guilty by thinking that she is betraying Amit and is

violating the duty of a wife. She is oscillating between the moral values of her native land and the values of the new land. She becomes neurotic and passing her times watching TV. Amit is fully unaware of her mental condition. He never tries to understand her female psychology. Without spending time with Dimple, Amit advises her: “You must go out, make friends, do something constructive, not stay at home and think about Calcutta” (*Wife* 111). She becomes emotionally so disturb that she losses her sleep. She blames Amit for all her problems arise in her life. She considers him as a hindrance of her freedom and decides to kill him. At last in a fit of madness, haunted by depression and with the hope of liberation she takes her kitchen knife and stabs him madly seven times in his neck. Her frantic action is deeply expressed through the following lines:

She sneaked upon on him and chose a spot, her favourite spot. Just under the hairline, where the mole was getting larger and browner, and she drew an imaginary line of kisses because she did not want him to think she was the impulsive, foolish sort who acted like a maniac just because the husband was suffering from insomnia. She touched the mole very lightly and let her fingers draw a circle around detectable spot, then she brought her right hand up and with the knife stabbed the magical circle once, twice, seven times (*Wife* 212-213).

These seven stabs indicate Dimple's liberation from the prison of marriage. It also points out her liberation from the seven vows that have taken by her at the moment of her marriage. Her act of murder is quite contrasting to the act of an ideal Indian wife. She wants to become an ideal Indian wife like Sita, but it is her fate that turns her into a murderer of her god, husband. It is the greatest irony of Dimple's life that she marries Amit to free herself from the gallows of rules and regulations of her father but ultimately murders Amit for freedom. At the end, it may say that though there are influences of the surrounding circumstances, but the lack of adjustment power and high expectation to become free from the bondage of male dominated society pushed this woman protagonist of Bharati Mukherjee to the catastrophe of her life.

Jasmine

Bharati Mukherjee in her third novel *Jasmine* introduces her women protagonist as a fighter, a survivor and an adapter. It is the story of a rural Panjabi girl Jyoti who owing to her immense mental strength and daring nature creates her identity on the American soil. Jyoti is a brave fighter from her childhood. She is born as a fifth daughter of her

parents in a feudalistic society where female child is considered as undesirable and ‘curse’ for family. In her childhood her mother tries to strangle Jyoti to death as she believes that fifth daughter may bring curse in the family but she survives. This hard reality is proved through the following lines: “the bruise around her throat was to spare her the agony of a dowry-less marriage” (*Jasmine* 35). The miserable condition of women at Hasnapur is expressed bellow:

All over our district, bad luck dogged dowryless wives, rebellious wives, barren wives. They fell into wells, they got run over by trains, they burned to death heating milk on kerosene stoves (*Jasmine* 41).

From her childhood, Jyoti is very courageous and has no faith on superstition. She always stands against the oppressions on women in the male dominated society. Jyoti is intelligent and very desirous since her childhood to become educate. Her mother helps her to acquire minimum education. The Masterjee of her school loves her for her interest in education and thinks that she is his first student fit for English education. Her courage of a future fighter comes out through her off bit action of killing a mad dog when her other women friends are very afraid. She, boldly protests against the prophecies of the village astrologer about her

widowhood and exile. She does not believe that a human being can foretell the future of other persons. She says: “You’re a crazy old man. You don’t know what my future holds!” (*Jasmine* 3).

She again shows her rebellious spirit to refuse to marry a widower selected by her grandmother and marries a modern young man, Prakash Vijn. By doing so she breaks the established conviction about women, “whichever way you led them, that is the way they will go” (*Jasmine* 46). By marrying Prakash, Jyoti comes out from her male dominated village. Prakash is a very free minded man who inspires Jyoti to establish an individual identity and gives her a new name Jasmine. He conveys his wishes thus: “You are small and sweet and heady, my jasmine. You’ll quicken the whole world with your perfume” (*Jasmine* 77). On the eve of their departure for America, Prakash is killed in a terrorist bomb blast. After the death of Prakash, Jasmine has to live the life of a widow in the house of her father at Hasnapur. But the poor life of a widow never robs her zeal for life. She decides to go to America to materialize her husband’s, unfinished dream. She dauntlessly leaves Hasnapur for America with forged documents. Jasmine’s journey to America brings to her a lot of difficulties. She is raped by Half-Face, the captain of the ship in which she has travelled. The captain raped her in a motel after landing on Florida. She murders Half-Face to take revenge for

his heinous act. For a moment Jasmine decides to put an end to her life but as a real fighter she inspires herself by saying that it is not the time to die, she has to complete her mission:

I didn't feel the passionate embrace of Lord Yama that could turn a kerosene flame into a lover's caress. I could not let my personal dishonor disrupt my mission. There would be plenty of time to die; I had not yet burned my husband's suit. I had not stood under the palm trees of the college campus (*Jasmine* 117-118).

This incident changes her whole life and also generates a new kind of philosophy of life that teaches her to fight for a decent existence at any cost. Samir Dayal comments about the influence of this violent act on Jasmine thus: "She experiences an epistemic violence that is also a life-affirming transformation" (Dayal 71).

In New York, Jasmine stays with Prof. Devinder Vadhera and his family. But the excessive possessiveness of the Vadhera family for their native tradition irritates her. Jasmine is in a hurry to get an American identity as her status is an illegal immigrant. So, she tries her best to adopt all the American traditions suppressing her own Indianess. She leaves the house of Vadhera and re-starts her life as a day-mummy of

Duff, the child of Taylor and Wylie Hayes on Claremont Avenue with a new name 'Jase'. Jasmine's continuous journey from place to place indicates her strong determination to establish herself in the American main stream. The generous behaviour of Taylor and Wylie towards Jasmine gives her feeling of home first time in abroad. She expresses her feelings thus: "Duff was my child; Taylor and Wylie were my parents, my teachers, my family" (*Jasmine* 165). Taylor and Wylie help Jasmine to adjust her in the new society. She falls in love to Taylor for his loving and caring nature. About Taylor Jasmine says:

I fell in love with what he represented to me, a professor who served biscuits to a servant, smiled at her, and admitted her to the broad democracy of his jocking, even when she didn't understand it (*Jasmine* 167).

Jasmine stayed with Tailor and Wylie Hayes for nearly two years. These two years are the best period of her life in America. In this context Pushpa N. Parekh comments:

This period in Jasmine's life is the most restful and comforting, emotionally and psychologically, intellectually, however, it is a phase of minute observations of complex inner deliberations on, and keen involvement in her new enviorment (Parekh 113).

It is Jasmine's fate that her happiness never lasts long. She has to leave the house of Taylor as she sees in the park the terrorist, Sukhwinder, who murders her husband. After seeing Sukhwinder in the park she moves to Iowa. For the decision to run away from Taylor's house, the readers may think that Jasmine is a coward. But she is not a coward, she is a fighter and she has enough courage to face the terrorist but she escapes to save Taylor and Duff from Sukhwinder. Jaiwanti Dimri explains this act of Jasmine thus: "She (Jasmine) is running away for life not escaping from life which is a positive step" (Dimri 173). In Iowa Jasmine starts her life as a teller girl of a bank and later becomes a live-in companion of her colleague Bud Ripplemayer and becomes pregnant. Bud gives her new identity as 'Jane Ripplemayer'. Bud and Jasmine's mutual relationship is based on mainly give and take policy. Bud needed caring helps of Jane as he was handicapped and on the other side Jasmine's need was to secure a permanent shelter in the new society and for this Jasmine grabbed every opportunity that came to her way. Though by taking an American name Jasmine wants to assimilate in to the American society, she never denies the Indian part of her own self.

In Bud's house she takes care of him and always tries to fulfill his needs like an Indian wife. She has sacrificed all her individuality and happiness for Bud's happiness. But Bud never tried to understand her

feelings and always tries to domesticate the Indian self of Jane's character. For this attitude of Bud, Jasmine was unable to share the memories of her past life with Bud and Bud also never gives much attention to it. She feels herself as a prisoner in the house of Bud. At this moment of her mental crisis she gets a call from her former lover Taylor who wants to take her to California. Jasmine accepts his proposal and begins her final adventure for California. It may be seemed that Jasmine is very selfish for her decision to leave Bud who is totally dependent on her for his physical incapability, but to Jasmine the freedom of her woman self is most important than her duty. Jasmine justifies her act thus: "I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the promise of America and old world deautifulness" (*Jasmine* 240).

In America, Jasmine's every decision was very calculative to become an American and her personality has changed gradually. Her repeated renaming Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and finally Jane shows that her free woman self is slowly entering in to the American mainstream. But for this assimilation she has faced so many difficulties that increased her self-confidence and paved her way for future course of action. Jasmine's frequent shifting like a nomad from place to place gradually helped her to assimilate in to the American mainstream. Samir Dayal comments about Bharati Mukherjee's woman character Jasmine as "a perpetual nomad"

who “shuttles between differing identities” (Dayal 77). Thus Bharati Mukherjee efficiently portrays Jasmine, as a strong woman character than the protagonist of her former novel.

The Holder of the World

In the novel, *The Holder of the World*, Bharati Mukherjee gives emphasis on the problems of shifting identity of a diasporic woman. Like her previous novels, this novel also deals with women and their sufferings, aspirations and crisis in life to make an individual position out of the rigid norms of society. Hannah Easton is the main woman protagonist and her story is narrated by another woman, Beigh Masters, an assets researcher. Beigh is working for a client to hunt down a diamond, the Emperor’s Tear, presumably the most perfect diamond in the world. During her search for the gem Beigh comes to know the story of Hannah Easton’s life. As a woman Hannah shows her immense courage to become a bibi of a Hindu king by breaking the established norms of her orthodox Puritan society. Hannah’s indomitable spirit as a rebel arises Beigh’s interest than the diamond. She says:

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 (*The Holder of the World* 5).

Hannah Easton is a member of the Puritan society, where women are chained by the traditional restrictions, have no right to express their sexual demands and also have no power to go against their society. She is the only survival child of Edward and Rebecca Easton. After the death of her father, her mother abandoned her and elopes with her Nipmuc lover. After that she was brought to Salem by Robert and Susannah Fitch, her foster parents. The memory of her mother's elopement lacerates her mind and soul. She does not share her feelings about the unconventional act of her mother with the pious Robert and Susannah Fitch. Though she grows up in the conservative Fitch family, she always wants to go to faraway places from the conservative Puritan society for the independence of her woman self. Hannah is very creative and becomes popular for her needle work only at the age of twelve:

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; at the

baker's as she passed by shelves of German fried and sugared breads (*The Holder of the World* 42).

For her extraordinary handiwork people offer her cakes and tiny tokens of additional payment. But she has no attraction for extra money. She wants, "only additional threads, sheer spools of color that the wealthy hoarded and were happy to share" (*The Holder of the World* 42). Hannah marries Gabriel Legge, a dashing Irish adventurer only to escape from the puritan society. It is very surprising that Hannah who has a conflict in the mind about the elopement of her mother with her lover, at last tracks the same way of her mother for independence and freedom by choosing Gabriel, the lover of her closest friend Hester Manning. The narrator Beigh Masters justifies Hannah's decision to marry Gabriel thus:

Guilt, perhaps, a need to punish herself for the secret he 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 (*The Holder of the World* 69).

After her marriage Hannah realizes that Gabriel is a very irresponsible person who pampers all sorts of things that can provide him money. He

frequently goes out leaving Hannah alone at home for his mysterious missions. In the absence of her husband Hannah engages herself in the duty of a nurse. One day Gabriel proposes her to go with him to India, where he is going to appoint as a junior factor of East India Company. Hannah immediately accepts the offer as: “She was tired of waiting at home, of not bestirring herself in the rich new world opening out at every hand” (*The Holder of the World* 86).

Like Salem in India too Hannah becomes frustrate as the life of romance that she has desired for a long time seems impossible because of Gabriel’s negligence towards her sensuous fulfillment. So whenever her husband goes out to inspect factories or villages, Hannah feels alone and “spent her days in a dream of sensuality” (*The Holder of the World* 132). In India Hannah tries to come in contact and mix freely with the native people. But as a wife of an employee of the Company, she has no permission to do so, as it is against their rule of supremacy. She does not want to confine herself to the hierarchical life of the Company officers and their wives. She is warned by Cephus Prynee, the Chief Factor of the Company for her generous treatment towards her black- native gardeners and servants. Prynee warns her: “The Company is not in want of

tenderheartedness. An iron will and a heart of flint, that's what, survives on the Coromandel" (*The Holder of the World* 118).

Freedom loving Hannah realizes that in the male dominated society, the fate of a woman whether she is a White or a native is equal. In the society of the educated White, a woman's role is reserved. A woman is compelled to confine herself in the four walls of their house. Referring to the mistresses of other Chief Factors - Sarah Higginbotham and Martha Ruxton, Prynne reminds Hannah about her duty as a woman. He says:

Mistresses Higginbotham and Ruxton devote themselves to the well-being of their husbands, the keeping of their tables and the education of their children in the Protestant religion (*The Holder of the World* 112).

The white women are aware of the extra marital relationships of their husbands with other women, but are helpless to protest it. Martha says: "Whatever you do, you will of course never confront your husband's bibi. You will never acknowledge her" (*The Holder of the World* 131). A white woman has no right to stain her honour. According to the norms of the puritan society, a woman must be chaste and she will never compromise to die in

case to protect her honour. In this respect Mark Breitenberg comments: “Male honour to a large extent depends on female chastity” (Breitenberg 11). Hannah is a self-respected lady. She can tolerate her roguish husband, but never accepts his infidelities. So when she comes to know that Gabriel has another *bibi* except her, she decides to leave him. Meantime Gabriel is died in the sea and she leaves the enclave of the Company with her native maid servant, Bhagmati.

After that she meets the Raja of Devgad, Jadav Singh who rescues her from a collapse bridge. This incident changes Hannah’s life. She falls in love with the Raja. The Raja enters in her life as an agent of providence. He first saves her life from the accident and then frees her from the unfulfilled life of a wife. With Jadav Singh she lives a life full of sensuous pleasure that she has craved for a long time. She loves him so deeply that she offers her chastity to the Raja and leaves the morality of a Puritan woman. The narrator says: “She wanted the raja and nothing else; she would sacrifice anything for his touch and the love they made” (*The Holder of the World* 299). As a result of her passionate love she becomes pregnant. Through this relationship she can understand for the first time in her life, the cause of Rebecca’s elopement with a Nipmuc lover rejecting her duty of a mother. The Raja brings her to the contact of native people and their traditions. On entering the world of Hindus she

transforms her identity into white bibi of an Indian king. She feels that this love transforms her mentality as well as her 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 Holder of the World* 234).

In an encounter Jadav Singh is arrested by the army of Emperor Aurangzeb. Hannah travels to the tent of the Moghual Emperor to plea for the life of her Indian lover but vain in her attempt. After the death of Jadav Singh, Hannah comes back her home in Salem not as a reform white woman but as a rebel along with the morality of her adapted land. Her firm decision to give birth her illegitimate child knowing that it may cause of her banishment from her own society in Salem, shows her strong protest against the authority of men over women. The conservative people of Salem did not freely accept her in the society. About the attitude of the people of Salem, the narrator relates:

Salem children were warned about the small house jammed with brass and copper items, called by many the House of Enchantment, meaning the place of ultimate debauchery (*The Holder of the World* 285).

But Hannah restarts her life as a nurse with her mother and her new born daughter, named Pearl Singh without caring the gossips and taunts of the people of the Puritan society.

Through the ongoing journey of her life Hannah proves that if a woman has sufficient courage to go against the limitations of the society and also has strong will-power to adjust to the changing situations, she can change her history where ever she stays.

Leave It to Me

Debby DiMartino is the woman protagonist of the novel *Leave It to Me* by Bharati Mukherjee. Debby is a young girl who came to Schenectady, from India, as an adopted infant in a religious family of upstate New York. In her childhood she is deserted in India by her hippie genetic mom who is the mistress of an Asian serial killer, Romeo Hawk

Haque. Later she was saved by the Gray Nuns who brought her in an orphanage of Devigaon, a village at the west of Delhi. She was christened by the one of the nuns as Faustine a typhoon. Typhoon is a type of storm that brings calamities in the world as well as in the lives of people. So by the word typhoon the novelist very cleverly indicates that the life of her protagonist is full of difficulties.

In the DiMartino family, Debby grows up with love, affection and in high care of her foster parents. She is “a fun-loving twenty-three-year-old American girl” (*Leave It to Me* 10). She is a very intelligent and mature girl than any girl of her age. She gets her new identity as the second daughter of Manfred and Serena DiMartino in the society, but she is not happy with her new identity. She always feels insecure as an adopted child and feels that she has no real identity from the part of her original parents. She wants to set up her own biological identity in the society like others. She always feels sad by thinking that in this crowded world she is completely alone. Her feelings of a foster child haunt her at every moment like nightmare. The novel shows the predicament of the protagonist that arises due to her quest for true biological identity. As a foster child she always feels insecure and thinks her an unwanted member in the DiMartino family. As an orphan she expresses her feelings thus:

An orphan doesn't know how to ask, afraid of answers, and hopes instead for revelation. Ignorance isn't bliss, but it keeps risky knowledge at bay. I never badgered Mama to tell me all she knew about my toddler days. Mama must have liked it that way too. She kept my origins simple: hippie backpacker from Fresno and Eurasian loverboy, both into smoking, dealing and stealing. She left my biodata minimal: some sort of police trouble my hippie birth mother had got herself into meant that the Gray Nuns in Devigaon village had had to take me in; one of the nuns had renamed me Faustine after a typhoon, but Mama'd changed it officially to Debby after Debbie Reynolds, her all-time favorite (*Leave It to Me* 41).

Her sense of no-where-ness is kindled in her by Wyatt, a twenty-two-year-old boy. Wyatt is studying his master's at Syracuse in social work and he takes Debby as his project. Debby's feeling about herself as an unwanted child in this world hurts her always. Debby realizes that to wipe out the label of an orphan on her or to attain her identity as an American, or a Pakistani or a Vietnamese, or a Parsi or any race, she has to find out her real genetic parents. Her daring nature also instigates her to pursuit her mission. To get rid of mental pangs, she leaves her adopted home where she is leading a physically happy life and her foster parents and sets out her journey for California to find out her real parents. She travels through America in search of her bio-mom.

In California, she does not get any information about her bio-parents and become helpless. At that time, Francis A. Fong, a Chinese immigrant enters into her life as her lover. Before she meets Francis, she was living a restless life and had a pessimistic view about life. She was not interested about the country in which she was living. She did not read the papers or watch the news. But Frankie brings hope in her life .With Frankie she has travelled many cities and countries. She tells how Frankie has changed her life thus:

Before Frankie epoch, I didn't read the papers or watch the news, but I knew, because all DiMartinis were Republicans that the country had gone to the dogs and the cities had been taken of her by crack - cocaine addicts, rapists, muggers and welfare queens. Frankie changed all that. For Frankie the new World was as green and crisp as a freshly counterfeited hundred-dollar bill. In the After Frankie, months I became a news junkie, a fact hound. I started thinking like Frankie a cornered rat with options. And suddenly life became interesting. Suddenly I was sniffing out possibilities where the world saw only problems (*Leave It to Me* 31-32).

From Frankie, she comes to know some information about the country where her bio-mom gave birth to her and abandoned. This information rouses her desire again to find out her bio-parents. Though she was happy

with Frankie and wanted to marry her, but Frankie never wanted to marry her. To take revenge on her lover, Frankie, Debby burns the house that Frankie has offered her. Debby's foster parents are not happy for her violent behaviour and her search for bio-parents. For Debby, love of her foster mom is not enough for her quest; it is her need to search her bio-parents to establish her identity in the society. She says:

I loved this woman, but love wasn't enough in the face of need; it would never be. Need teased out the part of me that the orphanage had whited –out in my best interest. “It's about me and them”
(*Leave It to Me* 50).

She also says: “It's not because I miss them, Mama. It's about medical history. And psychic legacies (*Leave It to Me* 52). In search of her real parents, she comes to San Francisco. She envied the people who have their genetic identity. She consoled herself by saying that she had a life and also the chance of a prosperous life that had lost temporarily. In this unknown city when people were interested about her real identity she changed her name from Debby DiMartino to Devi Dee. She says:

For now why not be Devi, the Tenderloin prowler, all allure and strength and zero innocence, running away from shame, running to revenge? (*Leave It to Me* 66-67).

She has to go through so many odd circumstances for living. She accustoms herself to the different ways of living in the city that leads her to astray like many other people. She starts to tapping business men for fives and tens, starting small by picking up pennies and dimes, paying attention to the bases of parking meters, then lifting wallets from too-tight jeans, snatching purses of coffee house tables etc.

She appoints Fred Pointer, the expensive investigator, to find out her bio-parents. Fred informs her, a sex guru serial killer was supposed to have illegal relations with the white hippies. He also informs that fifty years before in Devigaon, a small village of India, a sahib and some memsahibs had lived, by enjoying their lives with dancing, drinking and sacrificing. Once, a mem and a baby were sacrificed by those people. But the baby was rescued by the nuns and is assumed to be Debby. Fred's information gives her new hope to discover the past of her life. At any cost, may be in fair way or to use violence, Debby wants to reach her goal because as an orphan she thinks: "What choice does an orphan have? Ignorance is no choice" (*Leave It to Me* 107).

Devi meets Jess Du Pree, through Hamilton, the lover of Devi in San Francisco. Jess worked in a media escort agency, called 'Leave It to Me'. After getting the news from her hired detective that Jess is supposed

to be her original mom, Devi joins the media agency to understand and watch Jess very closely. Devi realizes that Jess is a very self confident lady who has travelled many countries such as England, France, Greece, Turkey and Afganistan and stopped her journey for sometimes at the village of Laxmipur in Indian. In Laxmipur she came to meet the man who makes her wanton. Though Jess realizes that Devi is her deserted daughter but never accepts it. Devi questions Jess –“Why didn’t you keep me? Why didn’t you want to see me again?” (*Leave It to Me* 223). In response of Devi’s question, Jess claims that she never had been pregnant. So to take revenge, Devi starts to kill Stark Swann, Beth and Larry, the friends of Jess for justice.

Meantime the coming of Romeo Hawk, the genetic father of Devi, to take revenge on Jess brings a twist in the story. Romeo tells her about Jess that many people were cheated by the lady and he also cheated by her and she was responsible for his imprisonment in India. Devi believes on Romeo’s words and makes her judgment that Jess has no sympathy in her nature and also blames Jess for all sufferings in the lives of her and also her father, Romeo. But, later, when she understands that Romeo is the killer of her hired detective, Fred and also sees Romeo to murder Jess and Hamilton, her fascinations to her father brakes into pieces. She ultimately realizes the truth of life:

The world you see isn't the world you get. Ninety percent of it lurks out of your sight. Invisible matter is the cosmic glue holding reckless galaxies in place (*Leave It to Me* 239).

She kills her father and dials the number 911. Debby, the adopted child leaves her loving foster parents in order to search her real identity, develops a different life outside the home, faces all cruelties and odd circumstances in life, uses violence as the means of her fight against her bio-parents but ultimately achieves nothing and becomes a self destructive heroine of the novel.

Desirable Daughters

Desirable Daughters by Bharati Mukherjee is the story of Padma, Parvati and Tara- the three desirable daughters of an upper class Brahmin family of Calcutta. Through this novel, Mukherjee shows their happiness and crisis, expectations and achievements, and final realizations of life. These three sisters are beautiful, well - educated and are very desirous to live the lives of their like, come out from the conventional role assigned to women in the orthodox Indian society.

Padma and Parvati, the two elder sisters show their courage to marry against the wishes of their father. But the youngest of the three sisters, Tara could not show enough courage like her elder sisters to go against the wishes of her father. So when her father says – “There is a boy and we have found him suitable. Here is his picture. The marriage will be in three weeks” (*Desirable Daughters* 23) - she does not dares to refuse it and marries the boy, Bishwapriya Chatterjee, at the age of nineteen. Bishwapriya Chatterjee is from an outstanding family and is a student of computer science at Stanford University.

After marriage, she migrates from Calcutta to San Francisco with her husband. In San Francisco, she primarily exhibits the behaviour of a typical Indian wife. From her childhood, on one hand, she gets the lessons of traditional values at home, on the other; she also gets the modern teachings from the Catholic nuns. So, in the early years in America, Tara easily makes a balance between tradition and freedom. Tara dedicates her life like a typical house wife to fulfill the expectations of her husband and for welfare of her family. Tara spent her time in domestic services:

I was in the room serving pakoras and freshening drinks when Bish and Chester, watching a Sunday football game on a new 52-inch screen (*Desirable Daughters* 24).

Tara was very interested to get admission in the community college, but she had to stay at home like other young Indian wives in Atherton, California to take care of her son, Rabi. Bish enjoyed Tara's role of a whole hearted housewife and felt pride on her:

how well —trained this upper- class Ballygunge girl had become, what a good cook, what an attentive wife and daughter-in-law. What a bright and obedient boy she was raising (*Desirable Daughters* 82).

In Atherton, Tara was highly influenced by the American magazines as:

Those magazines encouraged women to talk over their problems, to share their disappointments, to experiment with hair color, sexual positions, and pointedly meaningless one-night stands (*Desirable Daughters* 83).

Tara had gone through the advice given in those columns of magazines and wanted to apply them in her life but had no courage to break the image of a good Indian wife. She gradually became tired to perform her

domestic duties and seek freedom for her woman self. When she realized that her husband had no interest to her individual needs and aspirations, she no longer tried to confine herself into the primitive traditions.

She adjusted herself to the life in California, as she found more scope in the liberal America to get her individual freedom and expression than her own tradition. Bharati Mukherjee shows that her woman character is so desperate to get her identity in the new society that she is ready to leave her own native values also. Like an American woman, Tara now starts to call her husband by the name 'Bish' - the short form of Bishwapriya, breaking all the norm of an ideal Hindu wife who has no permission to utter her husband's name. The gradual change of Tara's personality from a traditional woman to a modern woman is finely expressed below:

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 (*Desirable Daughters* 23).

Through the reference of crossing the “dark waters” that means ‘Kalapani’, the novelist shows that her woman character also crosses the limitations of patriarchal society to make her new identity and to make her woman self more progressive and liberate. Tara wants to assimilate to the new land but Bish never has any interest towards American life style and he never admires the endeavors of Tara towards it. When Tara feels that it is not possible for her to stay with Bish, she divorces him. She justifies her act of divorce through the lines below:

When I left Bish (late 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 this Artherton 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 (*Desirable Daughters* 82).

After divorce, Tara leaves her husband’s house and moves to San Francisco with her son Rabi and there works as a volunteer in a pre-school to get a life apart from her husband’s identity. For self identity, Tara denies the safety and social identity of her husband’s house. For an Indian woman after marriage husband’s home is her place of protection and a symbol of identity in the society. In this context Rosemary

George's comment about 'home' is worth quoting, "Private sphere of patriarchal hierarchy, gendered self-identity, shelter, comfort, nurture, and protection" (Marangoly 1). She grows a sexual relationship with Andy Karolyi, a Hungarian Buddhist. Tara becomes so American that she does not feel guilty to her relationship with Andy. For Andy's romantic love she refuses Bish's love that represents duty, family and community. Through her sexual relationship with Andy, Tara here-establishes her identity as a modern woman who breaks the taboos of traditional society and adjusts herself in the modernity and mobility of the new society around her. For Tara, Andras becomes a symbol of freedom. Tara's emergence as a new woman is very similar to K. Srilata's discussion about New Woman. According to her the New Woman:

Conveys her agency in terms of her public visibility, the clothes she wears, and her participation in the discourse of 'free choice' and its corollary, romantic love (Sritala 308).

Though Tara continuously adjusts herself in the new society but never denies her Indian self totally. When she realizes that in American social context a woman's sexuality is mainly based on selfishness and self-involvement, she feels guilty to start with Andy an intimate

relationship that now appears to her a selfish act .About her sense of guilty she:

I have not fulfilled my duties, and I have not passed them on. As far as I've drifted from the path of piety, or even of the family, their names suddenly swell by dozens, the hundreds, filling my heart, brain, memory, soul, and if I were to speak at the moment, my words would have come out chocked (*Desirable Daughters* 246).

She is floating between her two selves and two identities. The sudden appearance of Christopher Dey in the life of Tara in the disguise of her elder sister Padma's illegitimate son and friend of Rabi helps her to spread her Indian self after a long gap.

Padma (Didi), the eldest and the most beautiful of three sisters had a love affair at the age of sixteen with a friend's brother, Ron Dey in Calcutta. She gave birth a child as a result of this affair. But she abandons the child and has shifted herself to London for better life. It is very ironical that Padma in abroad sustains her Indian-self for her identity. She rejects all American habits and practices only Indian descent, works for an Indian channel and lives in an area highly populated by South Asians. This transition in the life of Padma is a tricky attempt to avoid the

difficulties to assimilate in the new society and to create a new identity for her. Tara remarks:

Her clinging to a version of India and to Indian ways and Indian friends, Indian clothes and food and a “charming” accent had seemed to me a cowardly way of coping with a new country (*Desirable Daughters* 134).

When Tara decides to solve the mystery of Christopher Dey, she is warned by her boy friend Andy that the past has the power to govern one’s entire present. Nevertheless, Tara proceeds with her quest and as the mystery unfolds, Tara is forced to face her past that she has distance herself and realizes that the past is an integral part of her present identity, she returns to her ex-husband’s life.

When her house is fire bombed, Tara returns to India to find her family’s ancestral roots. She gains her inspiration from the story of her great grand mother Tara Lata. Through the story of Tara Lata, Tara the protagonist of the novel, *Desirable Daughters* comes to the realization that if Tara Lata, the lifelong virgin can achieve the position of a saint and freedom fighter in a male dominated society, then it is her duty of being an modern woman to create her own path towards self-assertion.

The Sanskrit lines of the epigraph of the novel highlight the goal of Tara's life:

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 (*Desirable Daughters*, "epigraph").

Tara finally realizes that, as she possesses American and Indian selves, it is difficult for her to gain a single complete identity. So she has to merge her two selves to reconstruct her new identity.

The Tree Bride

In the novel, *The Tree Bride*, Bharati Mukherjee like her other novels gives importance to female consciousness regarding their attempt to construct identity. Women and their struggles are always the most favourite topic of the novelist and in this novel also there is no alteration about it. After the destruction of her house in San Francisco in a bomb blast Tara gets her inspiration to reconstruct her life from the life long

struggle of her great- great-aunt Tara Lata Gangooly, whose story is the center point of this novel. There are some information about Tara Lata's early life in the novel *Desirable Daughters*.

Tara Lata was born in Mishtigunj before the independence of India. Her father, Jai Krishna Gangooly arranges her marriage only at the age of five to a thirteen-years-old Brahmin boy, Surendranath Lahiri. But, unfortunately, on their wedding day Tara Lata's prospective bridegroom has died of snake bite and she becomes a prey of the superstitious society of India. Her father gives her marriage to a tree at the dead of night to save her "from the fate of a despised ghar-jalani, a woman - who-brings-misfortune-and-death-to-her-family" (*Desirable Daughters* 15). Unlike other normal girls, Tara Lata positively takes this unfortunate incident and being free from the duties of family and husband, she sacrifices her life for the freedom of India. Tara, the narrator of the story remarks:

Teach her to read and to write the oppressor's tongue as well as her own. Convince her of the intractable evil of the British Raj. Very few little girls in India had ever been so well prepared to face the future (*The Tree Bride* 255).

She learned to read and write English that was very uncommon in that time for women. She trained to all her servants to read and write and sends them out into the villages to teach others. She has opened the door of her house in Mishtigunj to beggars, to the sick and personally provides them medical care. She also opens her house for those young soldiers who fight for their country against the British Raj. Thus she becomes:

Teacher of literacy distributors of grains, and occasional oracle on subjects of Indian freedom and communal harmony (*The Tree Bride* 255).

Tara Lata takes part in the independence movement indirectly. As a freedom fighter, she never takes part in any violent incident. Tara Lata is highly influenced by the nonviolence ideology of Gandhiji. To support Gandhiji financially for Salt March, she contributes her gold dowry. But later she breaks off with Gandhi to support Subhas Bose. By her nationalist activities Tara Lata shows her protest against British Raj. She hands over her files about British atrocities in Mishtigunj to a reporter, Nigel Coughlin to publish them in the British news papers. About her involvement in the independence movement Vertie Treadwell, the District Commissioner of Mishtigunj comments:

We knew her house was a veritable printing press and munitions factory for seditious elements. Somehow or other every arrest we made throughout the district got reported to her first and if any detainee happened to meet with an unfortunate out-come in colonial custody she'd be the first to announce it. She probably maintained a network of informants in every village and there were over two hundred stations in the district, most of which I had never visited myself (*The Tree Bride* 207).

Through her services to the community, she transfers her position from an unfortunate girl to 'Tara Ma', a saint to whom unmarried women pray for husbands. Vertie Treadwell remarks:

Every day there'd be a knot of women sitting outside her door praying to Tara-Ma. Praying for children, if you can believe it, praying for sons, praying for healthy sons, praying for a husband, for a sober husband - she who knew nothing of husbands and children (*The Tree Bride* 212).

This heroine of Mishtigunj has met her tragic end by the conspiracy of Sameena and her husband. Samenna is her playmate and servant. Sameena's father, Abdulhaq works as the head cook of Jai Krishna's house. But later for his orthodox mentality, Jai Krishna banishes Abdulhaq from the Brahmin's kitchen and appoints him as gatekeeper or

chowkidar. To possess the house of Tara Lata, Sameena informs the British authorities about her anti-Raj activities. As a result Tara Lata is arrested by the police and is died in the police custody. Thus Tara Lata by her unlimited patience and immense courage transforms her identity from a miserable tree bride to a freedom fighter and martyr of Mishtigunj and becomes an inspiration for all villagers, as well as for her descendants.

Tara, the narrator of the story collects inspiration from the revolutionary spirit of her predecessor, Tara Lata to re-construct her life and to find out an identity for herself. In San Francisco her home is destroyed in a bomb blast by an Indian cum Bangladeshi terrorist. Though there is no personal clash between the terrorist and Tara, but the terrorist targets her for her distant connection to Tara Lata. Actually the source of this attack is based on Tara Lata—Sameena relationship. In this connection Tara says:

May be not this “I” named Tara and living in San Francisco, and not even the distant “I” of Calcutta that seems like a different life from centuries ago (*The Tree Bride* 246).

Another woman character Victoria Treadwell Khanna, the gynecologist of Tara and the granddaughter of Vertie Treadwell also become a prey of the same terrorist, perhaps for her connection with Tara. By marrying an Indian, Victoria's search for identity comes to an end and finally she achieves an Anglo-Indian hybrid identity for herself. She dies in a bomb blast by the terrorist Abbas Sattar Hai, the grandson of Sameena. Tara considers herself as the cause of Victoria's death .Tara remarks:

I know that somewhere in the wire-web of history, our lines have crossed. A Gangooly and a Hai have clashed, and as a result, I am responsible for killing Victoria and I nearly killed Bish and Rabi
(*The Tree Bride* 246).

These two bomb blasts bring Tara close to her Indian husband and to her Indian home. When Bish is injured by the first bomb blast Tara starts to stay with him and takes care of him like a traditional Indian wife. After the second bomb blast, Tara remarries Bish in a civil court and re-establishes her Indian home with her husband, son and new born daughter. At last Tara returns to her native country with her family to accomplish her duty as a descendant of the tree bride by arranging a ceremonial cremation in Varanasi for the strolling spirit of the tree bride.

Tara's reunion with Bish and her decision to return to her home country indicates that Tara cannot avoid the importance of home, human relationship and native tradition in the formation of identity. In this regard Martin and Mohanty comments: "The complicated working out of the relationship between home, identity and community" (Martin and Mohanty 195).

Bharati Mukherjee, who is well known as a voice of immigrant women, started her writing career at the moment when the western countries were stirring by the Feminist movement. As a woman, she gives emphasis on the problems of Indian immigrant women in North America than the problems of immigrant men in her writings. Most of her women characters are Indian and they cross the geographical boundaries of their native land with different motives. But in abroad as immigrant they have to face the same problems of identity crisis, social, racial, gender and political prejudices and cross cultural dilemma. Her women characters are mixture of strong and weak personalities. Some of them get triumph of their fate while some others throw their weapons before their destiny. But in every field, whether strong or weak, her women protagonists raise their voice against the restrictions of the patriarchal society to establish their individual identity.

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CONCLUSION

Bharati Mukherjee is one of the most fabulous writers of the Asian immigrants' experience in America. Her writings are predominantly influenced by the numerous displacements of her personal biography. In her fictional writings, she has given much emphasis on the lives of women who migrate from India to North America. She has become the champion in depicting the predicament of those women who migrated to new locations and confronted with the problems of immigration.

In her first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, Mukherjee has given emphasis on the theme of an expatriate's relationship with her country of origin. Here, through the protagonist, Tara Banerjee, she has described the common difficulties that she faced as an immigrant and also reflected the confrontation between illusion and reality. Bharati Mukherjee, in her second novel, *Wife*, has finely mixed the feminine problems with immigrant experience through the portrayal of Dimple Das Gupta. Bharati Mukherjee's third novel, *Jasmine*, deals with the protagonist Jasmine's continuous struggles to assimilate into American main stream space as an adapter. Her next novel, *The Holder of the World*, shows her affirmation of Indianness while asserting her Americanization. Actually the novel shows a hunger for connectedness. In *Leave It to Me*, Debby Di

Martino seeks revenge on her bio-parents who abandoned her. In this novel Mukherjee has adopted violence to fight against evil for justice. In *Desirable Daughters*, through the protagonist Tara Chatterjee, Bharati Mukherjee has highlighted the fact that for an immigrant 'identity' is not fixed, it is a continuous process and which is changing every time and never truly complete. In the novel *The Tree Bride*, Tara encounters and overcomes physical, cultural, political and historical violence and further constructs a new narrative of fragmented identity of a woman who through the modes of disruption and assimilation, yearns for the truth about the unattainable identity of a diasporic woman. Besides these major themes, there are also some minor themes such as existential sensibility, issues of racism, sexism, political movements, high social expectations, mental pressure, joblessness, cultural adjustment, lack of family supports, and presence of historical events. When these minor themes mingle with the major themes of immigration sufferings, her writings become powerful and realistic in the present context.

The portrayal of different problems faced by her women characters in the story and their ways of showing them give us the idea that how a woman can become so strong for the survival. The only thing is the point of realization of her self-struggle. By comparing the themes of the novels

it was found that there is a trend of delicate change in the thematic patterns.

The word 'culture', 'makes life worth living' as described by T. S. Eliot and to N. A. Nikam culture is a quest for good but it is not good if the quest is not a free choice. Culture, whether, it is Oriental or Occidental, plays an important role in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee. An inherent desire to tackle cultural tensions finely defines her creative impulse remarkably manifested in all her novels. The conflict of the Occidental and Oriental cultures and their impact in the lives of the protagonists are expressed beautifully in her novels. Her women characters confront a multicultural society in their immigration and evolution.

In her first novel *The Tiger's Daughter*, Mukherjee has drawn the Indian society as hostile to accept a foreigner even an Indian expatriate through the character of Tara. In the novel *Wife* the novelist has portrayed the problems arises due to cross-cultural confrontation of her protagonist, Dimple, to settle down in abroad with her husband with high expectation of happiness. Being brought up in a passive and dependent Indian cultural society she had not enough courage and inner strength to adjust with the fear and challenges of immigration that ultimately lead to the way of her

tragedy. Like the Western women, she did seek her freedom but the way she chose for her freedom was not the right way. She killed her unborn child and her husband to free her-self from all bondages but it was a moral and cultural suicide. Culture, whether, it is Oriental or Occidental, never gives permission to anyone to break its positive norms and systems to do anything in the name of freedom.

In her third novel, *Jasmine*, Mukherjee has given a message through the protagonist Jasmine that if one possesses firm determination and will power to adjust him or herself to any circumstance in anywhere then the feeling of cultural dilemma becomes less important to merge him or herself in an alien cultural society. Next novel, *The Holder of the World* shows Mukherjee's reaffirming her Indianness while asserting her Americanization. It has showed the novelist's earnest effort to reconcile the two cultures. In the novel, *Leave It to Me*, she has shifted her journey from an immigrant diasporic writer to a multicultural writer. In the novel, *Desirable Daughters* Tara, who became more American among her three sisters, came back again to her native Indian culture to find out her real root. In *The Tree Bride* also the same protagonist of the previous novel realized that culture is an integral part of one's life and without culture one's identity is not completed. So Tara, in *The Tree Bride*, returned to India with her husband, son and infant daughter to search out her original

root in her own culture. With these characters, Bharati Mukherjee tried to comprehend that a woman can well understand the difference between a taboo and a culture if she agrees to them for a definite purpose, and when she reacts against them it can become fatal for the so called cultural society.

In the concerned study Bharati Mukherjee has given emphasis on her women characters mainly on their struggle for identity and mental trauma due to cross-cultural dilemma resulted in final emergence as self assertive individuals free from the bondages imposed by relationships of the past in her novels. She chose women as her protagonist rather than male members in her novels. When the researcher went through the novels of Bharati Mukherjee, the researcher found that most of her women characters desired to migrate to USA with the expectation that a foreign land would provide them the liberty to create their new identity which they could not achieve in their native land for the invisible chains of typical conservative society. In *The Tiger's Daughter*, the heroine Tara Banerjee went to USA with the hope of higher study and to make a new identity for her. But there she had to face racial discrimination, diversities of traditions. Being unable to spread her new root in a foreign land, she dreamt to come back her birth city, Calcutta. This illusion broke into pieces when she confronted the same problems as an outsider in her

own country and finally she realized the transformation of her personality and decided to go back to USA to find mental equilibrium. In *Wife*, Mukherjee showed that due to the urge for excessive freedom from the family restrictions and the desire to adopt the life of an American, Dimple had to face fatal consequences in her life. It may be said that Dimple's high expectation from marriage, desire for freedom from all sorts of bondage of marriage, lack of adjustability to the continuous changing situations, low self confidence and moreover, her weak mentality compelled her to drag the tragic end of her life by murdering her husband. Jasmine, the strongest protagonist of Bharati Mukherjee's third novel *Jasmine* unlike Dimple established herself as a new woman by gradual nuances of her personality. For her fervent willing-power and strong mentality she became able to adjust herself and finally survived in an alien land. Jasmine's success in her continuous struggle and adjustability in the changing situations in abroad proves Charles Darwin's theory of Struggle for existence and struggle for fitness. Her other women characters like Hannah Easton, Debby Di Martino, Tata Chatterjee, the common female character in both of her novels - *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*, also met the common sufferings of immigration. Her women protagonists transcended the boundaries of native lands and experienced the cross-cultural conflicts inside and outside of their society. In order to make their individual identity they came out from the norms

and restrictions of the male dominating society. Actually, Mukherjee could successfully portray the women characters here to indicate the journey to the foreign land and in course of adjustment and assimilation of alien cultures. Customs had some definite influence on the characters and we have found nuanced development in the story of the novels through the changing personalities of her women characters.

Bharati Mukherjee showed much interest to express the present social reality of the Asian immigrants' livelihood in the contemporary America in her novels. Interestingly, Mukherjee has used the source materials of history and culture as the context for her immigrant fiction for which she relied upon personal observations, memory, autobiographical details and oral histories of a matrilineal tradition. Her Hindu philosophy and religion enabled her to find a new morality that allowed her to leave behind those things that limit her personal freedom.

During the study it was found that Mukherjee became a multicultural writer in combining in her novels' elements, both from ethnicity and the host country culture. The study of her fiction is a matter of considerable significance for an Indian reader. It provided entry into the immigrant experience of the Asians to the sensibility they bring with them and the new sensibilities they forge. Mukherjee's novels are an

evidence of her remarkable achievement for articulating their ethnicity and rendering the same through suitable literary strategies. Her novels offer a rare combination of traditional ethnicity and modernity of Americanness. As women have experienced displacement and dislocations in personal lives, they are better suited for adaptability in an alien culture. Mukherjee's earlier books are complex tales but they lack the art of storytelling. But her later works are more successful at capturing the readers. Thus, Bharati Mukherjee is a typical feminist writer. Her novels truly adhere to the temperament and mood of the society in which she lived.

Immigration and exposure to the West made the protagonists of Mukherjee slightly different from the other Indian women. Immigration enabled the protagonists to undertake two journeys: transcontinental and inner. Through their daring and restless journeys they tried to create their individual identity and to attain that they had come out from the male dominated society and become the role models for many immigrant women. Bharati Mukherjee created her women characters as contender for achieving a self-forged, fulfilling identity and they show remarkable talents to question themselves in their own ways.

Due to the effect of globalization the world has now become a global village where migration is a common phenomena and that leads to cross- cultural conflicts and multicultural identity. In the earlier times, the third World people used to cross the boundaries of their native lands for vocational problems but in the present time people's vocational problem mingles with the desire of avocation. But they never think much about the predicaments to adjust in a new social, religious, economic and political milieu. Despite the progress and development at the external level somewhere people forget to take need of their inner self. In the cases where cultural dissimilarities are much sharper in terms of racial, linguistic and religion, the issue gets hopelessly complex for the immigrant to adapt.

As an immigrant, Bharati Mukherjee also experienced difficulties to adjust to the traditions, society and culture in abroad which she has depicted through the lives of her women protagonists. This study was concerned with the problems that arise in the lives of immigrant women due to their attempt to cross the boundary of their native lands. It also exposes their attempts and the degree of adaptability, assimilation and the outcomes considering their innate personality as portrayed by the novelist, Bharati Mukherjee.

The growth of her personal various experiences reflected in her novels in the shape of nuanced thematic patterns. Her later stories showed increased optimism of the possibility of successful integration as her characters learnt that rebuilding their lives and identities allowed them greater personal opportunities and a chance to participate in fostering a more inclusive society and culture. The women characters of her novels are very familiar and the novelist successfully portrayed them in the pre-existing context and they played the major role in development of the nuanced thematic patterns in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee.

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