CHAPTER – I
MULTICULTURAL MOSAIC

Maxine S. Seller in his *To Seek America* says:

We all go forth to seek America
And in the seeking we create her
And in the quality of Search
Shall be the nature of America we create,(23).

Culture is an integral part of a nation. Culture is generally understood as constituting the way of life of an entire society and includes codes of manners, dress, language, rituals, social customs and folklore of a nation. Every nation has a distinct culture of its own. But when an independent country becomes a colony, the native culture undergoes a radical change. Nations are defined by their boundaries and boundaries are geographical, but there is more in it. The people born under a particular national boundary acquire genetic features, colours, food habits, and become the sons and daughters of the soil. They are born with the features and mindset of the nation.

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

Every culture has its own peculiarities and predilections, which evoke a mixed response in one from a different cultural milieu. People quite often try their best to forge a workable synthesis between their native culture and that of a new set-up. This process is not an easy one, and more often than not, it results in some psychological eccentricities alien to both the cultures. T.S. Eliot in his Notes Towards the Definition of Culture observes:

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

Today people migrate to foreign countries in search of education and economic prosperity. Migration has become a global phenomenon today. It has induced a consciousness of borders and nationalities in the psyche of the immigrant. This cultural reality is reflected in all works of the immigrant
writers. The large-scale immigration of the people to America is leading to racial conflicts. Even as free nations the societies have not been able to solve their basic problems like poverty, unemployment, over population, hunger, illiteracy, healthcare etc., On the contrary the West with its economic prosperity got projected as a model of all round achievement. Unable to find adjustment with the sheltered economy in their own country and pressed by joblessness and poverty, many of the natives decided to migrate to America, the ideal country, in an attempt to get steady, and remunerative jobs.

America is a multicultural country. People are drawn towards America for better living. Working in migrant countries, the migrants initially achieve a standard of living they could never have hoped for at home, but soon the situation begins to change. The discrimination against the immigrants is exercised on racial basis in many ways. Hostility and rejection in the host country produce in immigrants a deeper sense of consciousness about their oppressed condition. In this way they become disintegrated and make a frantic search for their roots and identity. The situation results in various psycho-sociological problems such as nostalgia, rootlessness, alienation and other indefinable feelings in them. Despite living in two cultures, their dilemma, whether to stay in the host country or return to homeland persists.
Cross-cultural confrontation has received a pronounced impetus since the emergence of the modernist movement in the opening of the twentieth century; the globalization of world economy can be looked as a natural offshoot of multiculturalism and intercultural interaction. In ancient times, the Western culture was practically confined to a certain territory and likewise, the Eastern culture had also a limited area to flourish with hardly any possibility of mutual exchange between them. With the passage of time, many adventurous explorers from the West started discovering new wonders and the Indian culture and civilization was one of their findings.

With further advancement in search of economic status, men started putting on wings and flying to far-off regions. This coming together meant enhanced interaction and mutual co-operation between nations in the field of industry, technology, information and education in one from a different cultural milieu. People quite often try their best to forge a workable synthesis between their native culture and that of the new set-up. T.S.Eliot says in his Notes On Culture, “culture may even be described simply as that which makes life worth living” (ibid. 27)

There is a difference between culture and civilization. Civilization has a reference to an advanced state of society judged on the basis of its culture, science, industry, laws, government, wars, transport and communication,
architecture and planning of cities. There is a close relationship between culture and religion. An individual, class or group of a society's way of living is moulded and shaped by its religion, which in turn becomes the religion of that particular society. Religion and culture are complementary to each other.

Language is also of utmost importance in the growth and development of culture. The cultural standard of an individual, of a group or a class, or of a society depends upon the use of their language. Language of an individual is moulded by the educational status. Environment is also of great importance in the determination of a culture. In the case of an individual, family stands for environment and locality signifies environment.

Diversity of cultural assumptions and complications provides little scope for cultural assumptions. In cases where cultural dissimilarities are much greater, the issue gets irredeemably complex for the immigrant to cope with. Nowadays the problem of migration is different from that of the pre-historic and early times. Today people are leaving their countries willingly under certain motives for the satisfaction of some personal ambitions. When people migrate they have to adjust with a different social, religious, economic and political differences. The migrant's inner world is occupied by the mother country. This outer migration of different races, and communities creates racial, cultural and linguistic confusion and this
becomes great hurdle in the formation of a national culture. The new culture, which develops in a new land, is bafflingly alike and also different from the parent culture. As the time passes, the old values gradually diminish leaving their remnants in their memories.

The contemporary times have witnessed a total transformation of cultural logic. Earlier it was religion, which was more vital but now it is economy, which is governing supreme in the formation and alteration of cultural norms of a society. The immigrants in an alien land often recognize, in great dismay, the loneliness of their condition. The uncertain hazards of new lands expose them to perilous risks. In such a helpless condition, they need to befriend, lest they be doomed. These compulsions make the aliens live in crowded tenements, thus generating associations. The disintegrating condition of the present time makes them live within the ghettos, thereby showing sympathy and co-operation.

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

The prism of nostalgia distorts the images of the immigrants. The immigrants contribute their labour to the industrialization of America. It is impossible to keep young children deferential to parental authority. The schoolroom is the first separating force. The disintegration is observed in the parents following the old century traditions. It is distressing to see the children adopt the patronizing attitude towards the father and mother after a few months in the public school. Customs and language bring about domestic conflict. Thus they have to lead disintegrated lives in the process of assimilation.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines disintegration as "breaking up with small parts". The disintegration is seen in the life of an Indian entering into the middle class, which is not made conditional upon acculturation. Indian society is bound up together with the fundamental unity in culture. Cultural unity in India is reflected in the life of the people belonging to different races, religious sects but still holds Indian culture as the stem of the diverse attachments. Indian society is the hallmark of various epical traits and values. Feelings of kinship and kin’s obligation are very strong in the Indian family. The familial integration is observed in all walks of life.
Once an Indian starts his life in America, he discovers that he cannot blend easily with the American society because of their distinctive physical and cultural characteristics. Indians abroad notice that they cannot share the life style of the Americans. The Indian immigrants start feeling structurally isolated; although they are professionally settled in America. Thus, the feeling of self-alienation, combined with the realization that they can never cast off their Indian physical traits and cultural habits, reaffirm their sense of Indian identity. To combat the feeling of self-alienation, they are drawn towards their ethnic communities. They experience intense personal feelings and realization of the Indian identities. In order to retain their religious identity they have to maintain Gurudwaras, ashrams and temples in every big city and town in America. Thus they try to evolve a new integration in their survival.

The experience of adapting to a new society is a process unique for each person. The degree of adaptation of “making it” is affected by individual needs and the possibility of participation in the new society. Time is seen as a great healer. Once the impact of shock and transfer are over, the process of establishing new roots and starting life begins anew. For children, it has been an easier process to accomplish than others. The process of migration to America that started in mid nineteenth century has reached a
new height in terms of immigrant population with its span of one hundred and fifty years.

No doubt, America is the crowning glory of our time and so it has become a sole dream of people around the world. The young ambitious personnel from the third world countries are making an unabated flow to America. This flow of divergent races, classes and cultures has changed the face of America. These aspirants to the new world are dead even in their own country to blindly imitate American habits and American culture. They have to adjust to their American counterparts in all respects and they have to adjust to the environment comfortably. The migrants become victims of circumstances and are forced to lead worse lives than the ones they left behind. Those who experience acculturation sing all praise on their country of their adoption. Others can never forget that plunge into a new, alien culture, which has been a "big mistake" for them. This big mistake has led them to lead disintegrated lives and experience a kind of fragmentary living.

In recent times, the Mass exodus of Asians and Africans to the west has invited the attention of literary writers towards problems posed by the basic differences in the culture of the West and that of the non-West. As a natural consequence, the Indian Expatriates in their writings have reflected upon what one may consider today as an expatriate sensibility, which has been generated due to the cultural disparity and emotional disintegration. A
note of alienation does exist in the expatriation, since they refuse to forget India. One of the multicultural aspects is the expatriate sensibility. This expatriate sentiment leads to a kind of complete disintegration in the lives of the immigrants. The expatriation basically differs from immigration in its concept of assimilation. He will always carry the memories of his country with him, betraying notes of nostalgia or aversion as the case may be.

Immigrants, though opposite of expatriates, are exiles in their country; but where as an expatriate, in trying to maintain his identity voluntarily or due to racism, follows the multicultural mosaic pattern as in America. The immigrant embraces assimilation and subscribes to the melting-pot theory of America.

The ‘melting pot’ was the compelling image of metaphor of the American dream. The image of the age of industrialism was first used by the French-born essayist, St. Jean de Crevecoeur, in 1765: "Here in America individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men." The metaphor was given its most elaborate expression in British playwright Israel Zanwill’s play of 1908, The ‘Melting pot’:

There she lies, the great ‘melting pot’. Listen! Can’t you hear the roaring and the bubbling? There gapes her mouth – the harbour where one thousand mammoth feeders come from the
ends of the World to pour in their human freight, Ah what a string and a seething? It is America, where all races and nations come to labour and look forward”. Peace, peace, to all ye unborn millions, fated to fill. This giant continent! (qtd. in Sushma Tandon 8)

American society constituted a federation of cultures. He denied that it was possible or desirable for the immigrant groups to lose their identity and argued that their culture had much to gain by permitting each of them to develop its own particular tendencies. According to him, America, starting with existing ethnic and cultural groups, “would provide conditions under which each may attain the perfection that is proper to its kind” (ibid. 9)

EXPLORATIONS

In the context of its varied problems, the inventing’ of the American nation has been an ongoing process that began in the nineteenth century and these issues are alive even today. In the case of India also, the quest for identity has been a significant issue at the social, cultural, literary, emotional and psychological levels. In India, the long spell of colonial rule, though it initiated the process of modernization and industrialization, also set in motion the process of enculturation of its rich heritage and the whole
phenomenon was geared to provide all kinds of benefits to the rulers and exploitation of the ruled.

The resultant phenomena are too glaring to be ignored. With political freedom came the trauma of partition from whose ill effects India has not been able to recover even today. Modernization having degenerated into blatant aping of the West, the edifice of one’s traditional value system that has all along been oriented towards the spirit of self-denial, self-sacrifice, limiting of worldly desires, etc, has started developing cracks. Materialistic and consumerist tendencies are developing fast, generating a dialectical relation between tradition and modernity.

Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee and Arundhati Roy are essentially articulators of the middle-class and upper middle-class psyche in the main and of the urban elite sensibility up to an extent, particularly with reference to the emerging phenomenon of gender-discrimination and assertion of female identity vis-a-vis the patriarchal character of the Indian mindset.

They use modernist narrative strategies and techniques, experimenting with the form of the novel and the art of characterization in the Anglo-American tradition of the psychological novel, thus exploiting the potential of the narrative to mirror the confounding and at times perplexing reality
depicting the society in turmoil and transition through the identity-crisis of the protagonists in their novels.

India has a complex literary heritage. It is written in more than one language. If reflects a regionally diverse and multicultural society. The wide variety of literatures in India fosters the growth of a unique composite identity in each case. India today is a complete world in microcosm because it has various distinctive ethno cultural groups and communities. Diversity of cultures has given rise to the emergence of varied literature, the most important being Indian American literature. It constitutes the works of those writers who show a marked Indian sensibility or maintain a distinct South Asian identity.

The last decades of the twentieth century saw the emergence of this new generation of writers – poets, dramatists and novelists – who have achieved their separate and distinct identities both in subject matter and style of their works. Notable amongst them are Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Uma Parameswaran, Himani Bannerjee, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Anita Rau Badami, Rahul Varma and Rana Bose.

When a person visits the unknown land, he is an outsider in a no-man’s land and there he has to struggle a lot for its survival conquering the new feeling of nostalgia. He carves out a new territory and warps himself to
tally with the lure of the west. He creates himself into a new personality, and forms emotional ties with the place he lives in the discovery of a new self, forgets his own native culture. On his return to his native land he finds that his native taste and touch have turned alien to him. His mind is again torn apart between the cultural clash of two environments and he is forced to fight with his split personality.

Cross-cultural conflicts of Immigrants in any country culminate ultimately in acculturation or multicultural co-existence. But the tension that the expatriate experience creates is deep, strong and crucial. The most common manifestation of these is identity crisis, alienation, cultural disintegration, marginalization, racial discrimination and social indifference. The problem takes different dimensions according to the personality of the individual involved.

Literary writers have explored into the 'collective unconscious' of the immigrants and have crystallized their observation in the form of characters and themes. Some have constructed their super-structure on the foundation of personal experience. Others have attempted a vicarious portrayal. Bharati Mukherjee has spotlighted the psychological and emotional lacerations of persons who are placed in that situation in a foreign land.
The title “The Theme of Disintegration and Reincarnation” is taken from Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine* where she declares finally regarding the Hindu Reincarnation Philosophy. In one of her interviews Bharati Mukherjee explains her ideas on Hindu Reincarnation:

I was born into a Hindu Bengali Brahmin family, which means I have a different sense of self, of existence, and of mortality, than do writers like Malamud. I believe that our souls can be reborn in another body, so the perspective I have about a single character’s life who believes that he has only one life. (qtd. in Nagendra Kumar 21)

According to Hinduism a soul reincarnates again and again on earth till it becomes perfect and reunites with its source. During this process the soul enters into many bodies, assumes many forms and passes through many births and deaths. This concept is summarily described in the following verse of the Bhagavad Gita: “Just as a man discards worn out clothes and puts on new clothes, the soul discards worn out bodies and wears new ones”. (2.22).

There is a slow but steady progression from disintegration into reincarnation in the works of Mukherjee. The disintegration of social and cultural identities is accompanied by multiple mutations that have affected
the cohesion of communities, their very basic organization. Needless to say, existing gender inequalities have also changed with modernization, just like other social inequalities. Often the imbalances have been exacerbated. As modernization creates a crisis of identity, religious fundamentalism is one of the forces that steps in to restore the cohesion that has been thrown into disarray. It is crucial to remember that religious fundamentalism is also often a nationalist project, in that it often aspires to create a different kind of ‘national identity’ that will serve as an answer to the crisis that has gripped many modern nation-states.

It is the objective of the researcher to study the process of “Disintegration into Reincarnation”. While the first chapter introduces the theme, the second chapter offers a detailed account of the features of the disintegrated protagonist. The subsequent chapter deals with the hyphenated identity of heroine’s cultural tension, acculturation and the disintegration of their value system. The fourth chapter explains the too many inventions in the main character of Jasmine - Jasmine as a fighter, survivor and achiever, and the final chapter “Reincarnation” sums up the findings of the researcher. The project is undertaken within this framework as the basis for study.

The caption for Chapter I, Multicultural Mosaic is taken from the “Canadian Multicultural Mosaic” written by Subash Chandra, SBS College, University of Delhi. Multiculturalism is seen as a policy for the ethnic
minorities that has little to do with the mainstream Canadians. Some of the academics have begun to think the policy has eroded national and communal social goals and values; multiculturalism has come to be termed as “mosaic madness.”

When an Asian lives in a European country, the Europeans do not treat him on par socially. In general there is a pathological racial superiority feeling among the Europeans and however much they cloak their content with their civilized behaviour, it gets revealed now and then, when they are off the guard. This veiled indifference would breed an inexplicable distemper leading to sulking and this in-turn will snowball into hatred. The bottled up hatred finds outlet depending upon the forces of circumstances. It is the unwritten natural law that when two cultures come into contact with each other, the dominant culture acculturates those who cannot take changes at their stride, and they will be disintegrated.

The immigrants are like plants that are uprooted from their native soil and planted on an alien ground. They need nourishments like love, warmth, friendship, identity, acknowledgement, recognition, cordiality and congeniality. If these are denied, like the plant that wilts and withers in a climate that is not conducive to its growth, the personality of these people gets disintegrated. Here the survival instinct operates and those who have
the zest for life would overcome the hurdles and surface up and others would succumb to the pressure.

The survivors of this inevitable phenomenon of acculturation emerge with new personality, new identity and a new being as though they are re-born or reincarnated. In the collision of cultures, the less forceful culture yields to the strong. The immigrants lose their cultural mooring and struggle initially. Then they look for a strong hold elsewhere. They may either totally disown their culture and embrace the new one or strike a via media combining the best of both cultures, and bring forth entirely new culture. This is the process of reincarnation.

Nowadays, many use expatriation and immigration as synonymous. However it is important to draw the line of demarcation between the two though that line is a thin one. As the term implies expatriation forces on the native land that has been left behind, while immigration denotes the country into which one has ventured as an immigrant. According to Stainslaw Bernezek, “the words ‘exile’, ‘emigrant’ and ‘expatriate’ are sad prefixes that conjure up states of exclusions” (qtd. in Sushma Tandon 50). However he points out that “the excluding “e” has its opposite in, as immigrant or inclusion. In other words the expatriate lives on his “ex” status while the immigrant celebrates his present in this new country” (ibid. 51)
Today in post-colonial literatures “the expatriate sensibility” has been accepted as a legitimate literary term. This impulse to take the literary journey home, towards history, towards memory, towards past is the result of the expatriate’s longing to his ethnic identity. Irwing Howe has identified nostalgia as the real reason for the expatriate’s need to evolve ethnic origins (174). Bharati Mukherjee declares in Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalists:

Personally I consider ‘ethnic’ to be a derogatory term. The expressions ‘mainstream’ and ‘ethnic minority’ should be replaced by ‘ethnic majority’ and “ethnic minority” as the terms imply a more balanced and comprehensive framework for Canadian life and which can be meaningfully related to the historical and social reality (169).

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

These immigrants simultaneously cherish a nostalgic attitude towards their home culture, thus glorifying the later. Owing to this kind of conflict, the immigrants’ cultural assimilation or dislocation is never total. They are dislocated and, at the same time, assimilated. Where are they? – In the new soil? Or, in their native land? Which is their real home? – The new land of which they have many dreams? Or, the one they have left behind? Post-Modern Culture is the internal and super-structural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the World. Fredric Jameson in his Post – Modernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism observes that: “in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and terror” (5).

In “Delineating the American cultural landscape in the 1960’s” Lewis Parry observes:

In the wake of the 1960’s, some analysts viewed society at large as catering to immaturity and anti-rationality. The snares of advertising adolescent goods; the sexual revolution and the
discipline of genuine intimacy, the collapse of faith in common purposes of higher laws, taken together such as realities suggested that the counter culture of the 1960s has succeeded in portraying American society as self-centered, alienating and unfulfilling even though it failed to establish any condition that alternatives were available. (80)

CROSS CULTURAL CONFRONTATIONS

Cross-cultural transaction is an interactive, dialogic, two-way process rather than a simple active-passive one. It is a process involving complex negotiation and exchange. In the postmodern climate, the notion of America as a 'melting pot' for different cultures and the need of assimilation into what was thought to be the American culture is passé. Today the American attitude towards ethnicity and foreignness has changed. Ethnic difference is no more a matter of embarrassment. It is a matter of pride, instead. The metaphor of the 'melting pot' has been replaced with that of a mosaic – an image used by Joan Morrison and Charlotte Fox Zabusky in their book American Mosaic (1980) and they perceived alien, and ethnic as part of the larger whole.

Immigration differs from colonization in being a coherent mass-movement composed of individuals or families not forming a coherent
Association. It is essentially a peaceful movement in which the citizens of a foreign country are allowed free access to a modern state, provided they come as individuals and on their own initiative. The new country is attractive economically, politically and religiously.

Nowadays the problem of migration is different from that of prehistoric and early times. Today people are leaving their countries willingly under certain motives for the satisfaction of some personal ambition. But in early times, it was not migration at all. It was the transportation of third world people as labourers to a slave Island. T.S. Eliot in his Notes on Culture says that today people migrate only with “a part of the total culture in which so long as they remained at home, they participated?” (64). Therefore it was a total culture that moved away. This shows their outer migration because their inner world is occupied by their mother country.

This outer migration of different races and communities creates racial, cultural and linguistic confusion and this becomes a great hurdle in the formation of a national culture. The new culture, which develops in this island, is bafflingly alike and also different from the parent culture. As the time passes, the old values gradually diminish leaving their remnants in their memories while the migration in modern times is entirely otherwise.
The immigrants in America feel more American than their native counterparts in all respects and obviously their cultural elasticity enables them to adjust to the new setup comfortably. But it is rarely so that every one who goes to America finds the same amicable environment. Some people are lucky enough to get their dreams fulfilled while others become victims of circumstances and are forced to lead worse lives than the ones they left behind. No doubt, cultural conflict has minimized in modern times because people have become primary and all other things have become secondary. The finesse of culture has lost its lustre in the dazzling light of American discothe. Madera and Michael Jackson have obscured the chanting of The Ramayana and The Gita.

In fact, the class, which moves out of its cultural contours, has no love lost for its motherland. Moreover there is so much of cultural mixing in the post-colonial era that it has given birth to “hybrid-culture”. In every country the highest class especially in India is worse affected by this phenomenon. As Ashcroft and his colleagues observe in their The Empire Writers Back:

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

(195)
Bharati Mukherjee herself being an expatriate and an immigrant has felt the pangs of disintegration and the new life she hoped and expected in the process of the emergence of a new life – reincarnation has become a popular theme in her works. Her writings largely reflect her personal experience as a woman caught between two cultures. Bharati Mukherjee, an Indian born American novelist has received considerable critical attention from almost all the quarters of the globe in a relatively short period of twenty years. She had been widely acknowledged as a ‘voice’ of expatriate – immigrant sensibility. Bharathi Mukherjee was born on 27 July 1940 in a Bengali Brahmin family of Calcutta. Her father Sudhir Lal Mukherjee was a pharmaceutical chemist and her mother; Bina Banerjee Mukherjee was a housewife. She spent her first eight years as a member of a large extended family. Shortly after India gained independence, she lived with her parents and two sisters in London where she became fluent in English. In 1951 the family returned to Calcutta, and Mukherjee joined the English – speaking Loretto convent school, run by Irish nuns.

She lived with her parents in a fairly comfortable circumstance since her father was a co-owner of pharmaceutical factory. Theirs was a spacious house tastefully furnished with furniture and artifacts, quite typical of the post – independence era; there was rolls top desks, Victorian love seats, carved tea tables and ornate lamps. Adapting to the hot and humid climate of
Calcutta was a modified colonial architecture sporting sheltered green windows and gargoyle – beaded storm water drains.

An Indianness was noticeable in the framed portraits of ancestors, reverentially mounted on the walls of the drawing room or study. On special days of remembrance, Hindu rituals used to obscure the Western artifacts – garlanded portraits flickering brass lamps, *alpana* on the floors, banana leaves strung along the doorways.

**PLEASANT CHILDHOOD**

In view of her privileged childhood, Mukherjee and her sisters were chauffeured to school. Quite characteristic of this class of Bengalis, the family was westernized in the sense that English education was valued, and much literature, philosophy, social principles got transmitted through the language. Bharathi Mukherjee completed her B.A. (Honors) in English at the University of Calcutta in 1959. Subsequently she took her M.A. Degree in English from the University of Baroda in 1961.

Sensing his daughter’s creative work, Mr. Mukherjee encouraged her to join creative writing program in the United States. She went to the University of Iowa’s writer’s workshop with a P.E.O., where she obtained an MFA in creative writing in 1963 and a Ph.D., in English and Comparative Literature in 1969. It was during her stay at the university of Iowa that
Mukherjee met Clark Blaise, the Canadian novelist, professor and journalist and married him in North American style in one lunch hour in September 1963. In 1966, the couple moved to Canada and lived there as Canadian citizens, till 1980, first in Toronto, then in Montreal, a period that Mukherjee looks back with pain and anger. However the couple took a bold decision to move to USA in 1980 and since then they have been living there as U.S. citizens.

After moving to Canada and before settling down finally at the University of California, Berkeley, where presently she is a professor of English, Mukherjee worked on several teaching assignments. She worked as a lecturer in McGill University in Montreal, Quebec from 1966 to 1969, where she was elevated to assistant professorship in 1969 and to associate professorship in 1973.

THE LIBERATION OF THE SELF

Bharathi Mukherjee’s academic and professional career won her many laurels. Twice she availed herself of Grants from McGill University in 1968 and 1970, besides winning Canada Arts Council Grant twice in the years 1973 - 1974 and 1977. She was also awarded the prestigious Shastri - Indo - Canadian Institute Grant during the year 1976 – 1977. She was a recipient of Guggenheim Foundation Award in 1978 – 1979.
She also won the first prize from periodical Distribution Association in 1980 for her short story “Isolated Incidents”. Mukherjee has also been awarded with the National Book critics circle Award for her short story collection, “The Middle Man” and Other Stories in (1989). Her creative oeuvre comprises five novels. The Tiger’s Daughter (1972), Wife (1975), Jasmine (1989), The Holder of the world (1993) and Leave It to Me (1997) and two Collection of Short Stories – “Darkness” (1985) and “The Middle Man” and other stories (1988). She has also co-authored with her husband two non-fictional works.

The expatriate sentiment is one of the reasons for the disintegration of the immigrants in an alien country. Uma Parameswarn in her What Price Expatriation? explains the phrase “the expatriate sensibility” as a legitimate literary term in the context of today’s Commonwealth Literature. Christine Gomez gives a still more perceptive definition of the term ‘expatriation’ in his The On Going Quest of Bharati Mukherjee From Expatriation to Immigration:

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

MUKHERJEE'S ASSIMILATION

Mukherjee's Writing career began in 1970, with The Tiger's Daughter. Her popularity shot up when "The Middleman" and Other Stories bagged the 1988 National Book Critics Award in America. In an interview, Mukherjee clearly states her aim in her writings in The Times of India, 1st October 1989. "This collection seeks to dramatize the immigration experience".(20)

Bharati Mukherjee, after fifteen years stay in Canada, felt an expatriate and became an immigrant as she became one with the Americans. One needs a theory to realize and evaluate the corpus of her writings, since she declares herself an immigrant and writes about immigrants. She has dealt with Indian life realistically and poignantly in her fiction, depicting her diction and heartaches with irony.

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

There has been an ongoing quest on expatriates and immigrants in her writings. Her major concern as a writer has been the life of South – Asian Expatriates, Immigrants in U.S.A. and Canada and the problem of ‘Acculturation and Assimilation’. An examination of the works of Mukherjee reveals a movement from expatriation to immigration. This movement coincides with her immigrants from Canada to U.S.A. Mukherjee’s interpretation of and reaction to her experience in Canada led her to see herself as an expatriate and this theme of expatriation is reflected in her writings in Canada. In the U.S.A. there is a growing recognition of her self as an immigrant with an increasingly strong attachment to America and this experience of immigration is reflected in her writings in the U.S.A.
MULTIDIMENSIONAL ASPECTS

The movement from expatriation to immigration is also reflected in the choice of the writers who shaped Mukherjee’s creative sensibility. After outgrowing and discarding the posture of an expatriate she rejected Naipaul as a model and chose Bernard Malamud whose central concern was the life of minorities and its agonies. Though partially influenced by Isaac Babel, Conrad and Chekhov, she followed Malamud and his writings instilled unusual confidence in her. She says in one of her interview with Alison B carb, The Massachusetts Review:

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

Malamud taught Mukherjee how to overcome being viewed as ‘the other’ in a diagonally different cultural milieu. While Malamud’s characters are from poor classes, humble shoemakers, tailors and bakers; Mukherjee’s immigrants are doctors, University professors, businessmen and women married to upwardly mobile professionals. Both address themselves to the diasporic experience of cultural alienation. The immigrant characters of both the authors dream Westward, especially to California, the further
geographical distance from the Eastern roots. It was this indebtedness to Malamud that prompted Mukherjee to dedicate her first collection of stories “Darkness” to the great Jewish writer.

Mukherjee explores other ramifications of cultural confrontation in *The Holder of the World* (1993). It is also a tale about dislocation and transformation arising when two cultures come into contact with each other. This novel has a wide canvas that sweeps across continents and centuries, cultures and religions. Immigration, exile, alienation and foreign lands have always been the colour of Mukherjee’s palate and with *The Holder of the World*, she uses the familiar tones and shades to create a universe of infinite possibility and eternal time.

Here one witnesses an unlikely and intriguing meeting of two worlds, the Puritan, seventeenth and early eighteenth century American world trying to come to terms with the Mughal view of Indian life. In a startling commingling of history and imagination, Mukherjee lights up the making and very nature of the American consciousness in this novel. The inspiration behind this “fantastic” story is an ordinary incident on an ordinary day.
In *Leave It to me*, the novelist realizes the dilemma of the immigrant Di Martino. The protagonist suffers from an intense psychological problem of isolation and alienation. She is adopted and brought up by Italian-American parents, Di Martinos in an atmosphere of affluence and abundance. But she remains deeply distressed. Debby De Martino is the Italian name she received from her adopted Italian parents. She feels that her "conscious" life is the terminology of Freud that reveals only the superficial side of her peripheral existence.

Her life in the cradle of adopted Italian parents is only peripheral existence and her fundamental ground of her being lies elsewhere. She knows that she is a peculiar conglomeration of many odd realities: Indian father, American mother and Italian foster parents. It is in this process of taking revenge on her Indian father, she makes the search for her American mother. The novelist brings in Indian mythology to throw more light on this cultural crisis. There are two cultural passages Euro-American and Eastern-Asian. The protagonist Di Martino is tossed between these cultural passages. Her difficulty of getting anchored in one or the other is the result of the cultural complexity hidden in her being. Perhaps cultural immigration can be taken as a synonym for cultural complexity. The heroine loves a Chinese but is incapable of loving china. It is true that cultural landscapes have particular psychological characteristics.
Bharati Mukherjee in her *Leave It To Me* captures the critical dilemma of an immigrant and offers a fluid solution, which arises out of many factors, and the solution lies in this diversity. One owns nothing and simultaneously one owns everything. This message is the novelist's answer to the challenge of cultural diversity. In the collection of the stories entitled *Darkness* published in 1985, four were written in Canada, in Montreal and Toronto. They are "The World According to Hsu", "Isolated Incidents", "Hindus" and "Courtly Vision". They are uneasy stories about expatriation. In "The World According to Hsu", Ratna of Indian origin and her husband Graeme clayton, a Canadian professor of psychology are on a holiday trip. Three incidents of violence against Indian women and children are reported in the story.

In the short story "Isolated Incidents" the expatriate is viewed from the point of view of native Canadian. Cases of discrimination or hostility towards the visible minority will not be related to racism but always be ignored as 'Isolated Incidents'. Here the implied authorial stance is that of the injured expatriate. In "Hindus", Mukherjee juxtaposes an expatriate against an immigrant to draw out the contrast. The story, though written in Canada, reveals the movement of expatriation to immigration.
Tamburlaine written by Mukherjee, in the USA in 1984, is set in Canada focusing on the illegal immigrants at the Mumtaz Bar B-Q. Here Mukherjee reverts to the violence that Indians are subjected to in Toronto. The author exercises the pain of the Canadian expatriate experience. Vinita, a young Bengali wife in Visitors is caught in the horns of the expatriate dilemma of being transfixed between two worlds. Analyzing the characters in Darkness, one can discover the theme of expatriation linked to fragmented, disintegrating, alienated character, while the immigrants are fairly well adjusted to the new country and life – style.

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

Mukherjee’s best work is “The Middle Man” and Other Stories. It consists of eleven short stories and depicts the problems of emigrating to America and the dream of a new life, which tempts them to go there. The characters hail from the different countries of the world – India, China, Italy, Hungary, Iraq, Trinidad, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Germany, Philippines and Vietnam. These immigrants from the Third World countries undergo
considerable suffering. The immigration to America is achieved at a high price. The middlemen claim a big chunk of money as they arrange fake visas, passport, transport jobs to the intending travails and tribulations, because of their realization that America is the ultimate destination. They take up menial jobs in the new country of their dreams to earn their livelihood and survive. However they do hope that ultimately they will get permanent settlement and they will tide over the present situation somehow.

In “The Middleman” and Other Stories Mukherjee is straightforward and unsentimental. One finds a remarkable change in her writing style, because she has been becoming more Americanized with each passing year. In American fiction, she finds a kind of energy that fiction from other culture seems to lack. The stories in the middleman have this passion and energy as well.

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

"Danny's Girls" is a first person narrative of a thirteen-year-old boy of Indian origin, born in Uganda, driven out by Idi Amin, debarred from England and finally sponsored to the USA. "The Management of the Grief" is dealing with the four stages, the phases of movement from expatriation to immigration-rejection of the new country and clinging to the past, depression and a lost feeling, acceptance of the new way of life and finally "Grief Management" thus becomes a paradigm of immigration.

Of these four stories, the characters in *Middleman*, and "Danny's Girls" are successful immigrants who are hustlers. "Loose Ends", "Orbiting", "Fighting for the Rebound" and "Fathering" are first person narratives by Native Americans who have felt the impact of expatriation on their lives. These stories mainly present immigrants from the American point of view. Reviewing three novels and two collections of short stories it may be suggested that the personal odyssey of Mukherjee from the position of expatriate to immigrant is reflected in her writings at the thematic level, as movement from expatriation to assimilation.
The novel *Desirable Daughters* ends some 120 years later, when Tara, the 36-year-old narrator, returns to this same village in winter with her teenaged son. Like her ancestor, Tara Bhattacharjee is the youngest of three sisters of a Brahmin family. Although they grew up in Calcutta, Tara and the oldest sister now live in America while the middle sister lives in Bombay. Tara was married (in an arranged marriage) at the age of 19 to Bish Chatterjee, a genius who makes a fortune from a cutting-edge computer process. He and Tara are estranged when the novel opens, but when a stranger claiming kinship shows up at the house that Tara shares in San Francisco with her son and her boyfriend, she reconsiders her assumptions about her entire family. In the course of the novel, a sister's secret and a murder are uncovered, and a near-fatal bombing occurs. Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* is yet another of her magically written, compelling novels. In *Desirable Daughters*, Mukherjee accomplishes these admirable ends and more in an intriguing tale of three sisters and the divergent paths their lives take in the wake of their privileged Brahmin beginnings.

Told from the point of view of Tara, the youngest sister, the narrative takes us from Calcutta to San Francisco to Bombay to Jackson Heights. The cultural, historic and geographic details rendered in vivid masterstrokes one will not soon forget. Highlights are many. In the opening chapter, Tara visits her sister in a luxurious Bombay apartment that overlooks the Arabian Sea-
and the terrifying baggage such a lifestyle engenders. The people, the shops and the interplay among the Indian community of Queens find a place in the novel. Mukherjee deftly weaves the unshakeable sense of impending horror throughout the text.

Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* is a stunning novel that combines serious, literary exploration of issues of identity and ethnicity in a multicultural world with mystery, adventure and cutting social commentary. It has one of the all-time great opening chapters. But the main story, though it seems at first more mundane because of its contemporary setting, is ultimately just as compelling and rewarding. Drawing on her own experience as a member of a Hindu Brahmin family who has successfully spanned cultures, Mukherjee introduces readers to a world that most Americans know not at all. This aspect of the novel is found to be fascinating, while the mystery that perks along in the background makes *Desirable Daughters* a real page-turner: "By the end, I literally couldn't put it down."(30)

In *The Tree Bride*, the narrator, Tara Chatterjee picks up the story of an East Bengali ancestor. According to legend, at the age of five Tara Lata married a tree and eventually emerged as a nationalist freedom fighter. In piercing together her ancestor's transformation from a docile Bengali Brahmin girl-child into an impassioned organizer of resistance against the British Raj, the contemporary narrator discovers and lays claim to
unacknowledged elements in her "American" identity. Although the story of the Tree Bride is central, the drama surrounding the narrator, a divorced woman trying to get back with her husband, moves the novel back and forth through time and across continents.

Tara Chatterjee, the main character and a descendant of the tree bride, is an orthodox Bengali Brahmin from a well-known Hindu family, someone who accepted without question the groom, her father chose for her and who settled in the U.S. where he established a business in California. A woman in her mid-thirties residing in Atherton, California, she is divorced, raising her son alone, living with a red-haired biker, and teaching kindergarten. When a stranger, Christopher Dey, arrives at her house claiming to be the illegitimate son of one of her older sisters, she is shocked and forced to contend with the issues he raises, while facing possible dangers, as she tries to check out his story.

The United States Information service was the proud host to the new celebrity of the American world. At the Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, Mukherjee spoke at length about her writings. She said that she was nostalgic about India but had no regrets. ‘America is my home’ (qtd. in Sushma Tandon 51), She declared proudly that she has assimilated American culture and ethos and she wants to fall in line with American literary
tradition rather than Indian. There is a discernible movement from the theme of expatriation to immigration.

Immigration from the Third world to American country is a metaphor for the process of uprooting and rerouting. In these stories that deal with energetic immigrants, there is a definite movement always from expatriates who were marginal men and women to immigrant who are middlemen in more sense than one. This on-going journey becomes a metaphor for the universal quest from alienation to integration. Expatriation was a metaphor for existential alienation in all the three novels. According to Roshni Rustomji Kerns in her Expatriation, Immigrants and Literature: Three South Asian Women Writers, that "in these novels Mukherjee presents some of the more violent and grotesque aspects of cultural collisions", (650)

The following are the problems that an immigrant undergoes in a new land that lead to disintegration in their lives:

- Displacement manifests itself in varying degrees and ways
- Immigrants are accustomed to lapsing into nostalgia and regret.
- Some immigrants are continually haunted by the past and are unable to strike a balance between two cultures.
Some, whom life has not treated well, become psychological cases, demented, paranoid and insomniac.

The novelist Bharati Mukherjee has given solutions to the disintegration problems in her novels. The characters prove by their grit and determination that change and adaptability are the keys to survival. One should symbolically assert his / her right to try and move her stars, instead of passively accepting her fate. Self-assertion is a power. The author brings into focus how exiles, émigrés and outsiders tirelessly reinvent themselves, shedding their old life and lovers, and thus undergo a process of metamorphosis. Mukherjee views America as a country in which freedom has been translated into rootlessness and possibility into dislocation.

The ultimate hope and desire of a human being is to search for everlasting and enduring happiness. If this view is taken as the yardstick for measuring life, then topography, geography, continents and landscapes have their role in determining the mental state of the human being.

The researcher after reading Bharathi Mukherjee’s novels has come to find out the following problems discussed in her works: -

- The immigrant’s experience of the loneliness.
- The uncertain hazards of New Lands exposing them to perilous risks.
➢ The compulsory condition that make the aliens live in crowded tenements.

➢ The shattering and shocking separation of the immigrants from their native land.

➢ The feeling of self-alienation and reaffirming their sense of Indian identity.

➢ The heroic struggle of the characters to reinstate themselves successfully.

➢ The foreignness of the spirit induced by language.

➢ Finally the characters' unquestioning acceptance of Americanness. The characters move from alienation towards expatriation and towards the exuberance of immigration.

America is a continent peopled by immigrants. The early immigrants were from Europe and these white immigrants assimilated into Anglo–American Culture of the English Settlers. The thesis is projected to expound how exiles, émigrés old lives and lovers undergo a process of metamorphosis. The writer in all her novels realizes the dilemma of the immigrant, tracing his quest for inheritance. The analytical study investigates where the immigrant agrees with the paradigm. Uma Parameswaran, in her *What Price Expatriation? Themes of Exile and*
Expatriation observes: “Home is where your feet are, and may your heart be there too, or not”(41)

The thesis is divided into five chapters, expostulates how Bharati Mukherjee makes a concerted effort to conceptualize the image of immigrants, who make a claim to an American identity by struggling heroically to reinstate themselves successfully in a new cultural landscape. Through her novels Bharati Mukherjee shows how they strive and find a niche and give themselves a second chance to build their lives. This study intends to examine three of her novels, the Tiger’s Daughter, Wife and Jasmine. There is a definite movement from disintegration into reincarnation. Tara and Dimple are dislocated both in India and America. In the third novel Jasmine, one can see the protagonist Jasmine conquering all the depressed conditions and become a reinventor, moving towards reincarnation.

The first chapter Multicultural Mosaic, discusses the expatriation, immigration and assimilation in general. It throws light on Bharati Mukherjee as an immigrant by analyzing critically the select three novels of her. ‘One owns nothing and simultaneously one owns everything’ (41). This message is the novelist’s answer in all the three works selected for study. Expatriation, Immigration and Diaspora are mutually exchangeable terms.
All these immigrant's problems are focused in the introductory chapter leading towards assimilation of the characters. There is an on-going quest of the characters from expatriation to immigration and assimilation. The three novels *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife* and *Jasmine* are chosen for the special reason since Bharati Mukherjee has dealt with the pangs of the immigrants in these novels poignantly.

Chapter I entitled *Multicultural Mosaic* discusses the entry of an Indian into the new 'melting pot' of America. They find out that they cannot blend easily into American society because of their distinctive and cultural characteristics. The experience of adapting to a new society is a process for each person. The degree of 'adaptation of making it' is affected by individual needs and the possibility of participation in the new society and transfer are over the process of establishing new roots and a new life starts.

Chapter II entitled *Confluences and Divergences* discusses the aimlessness and diffusiveness of Tara, the protagonist of the novel *The Tiger's Daughter*. Tara's westernization has opened her eyes to the gulf between the two worlds that still make India the despair of those who govern it. The Tiger's Daughter pursues an opposite direction with the return of Tara to India as a twenty-two-year old daughter of a wealthy and prominent Bengali Brahmin.
Vassar educated Tara has married an American and has been away from home for seven years. Although she has always regarded herself as an Indian she discovers that she is more an outsider than a native, concerned with the complex and confusing web of politics, poverty, privilege and hierarchies of power and class in India. She has dreamt for years of this return, but finds herself imbued with the 'foreignness of spirit', which attributes not only to her domicile but also to her early education in Calcutta at a private school run by Belgian nuns. Mathew Arnold’s famous lines aptly describe Tara’s dilemma in this novel: “Wandering between two worlds”. While the Indians condemn her marriage to a 'mleccha' as having stooped too low, her husband David does not give her any recognition.

Chapter III, entitled **Exploring the Hyphenated Identity** expostulates Dimple’s specific depression in the novel Wife. This chapter attempts to focus the psychological strains and causes of abnormal behaviour of Dimple Basu, who tries to relate her Indian traditional values with modern American culture. Her marriage was settled with Amit Basu, a consultant engineer. After marriage Dimple tried to please every member in traditional Calcutta based Bengali joint family. Both the husband and wife planned to go to America. The major cause of going to America for Dimple was to be liberated from all customs and traditions. In order to fulfill her dreams she aborts her child, which can be an obstacle in her happy life. Moreover she
The story is an account of the conflict between Indian and Western cultures and the modern and conventional tradition. For Dimple murder evolves into an acceptable signifier for discarding nostalgia and starting over. It is neither the end nor even merely the means to an end; it is a beginning. Bharati Mukherjee has beautifully portrayed her protagonist, Dimple Basu who is in her crisis and self-individualization.

In chapter IV entitled Reinvention the researcher highlights the protagonist Jasmine to be a survivor, fighter and a trendsetter. In this novel the immigrants are 'wily participants' in the dominant culture. The potential of fluidity which Bharati Mukherjee attributes to American culture is epitomized with main character's metamorphosis from Jothi to Jasmine, from Jasmine to Jazzy, from Jazzy to Jase, and finally to Jane. Each of the character transformation is marked by changes in behaviour and personality. Bharati Mukherjee has carved out the assimilation of third world immigrants into the American 'melting pot', which is enriched by those she describes as pioneers. Jasmine is one of these pioneers, a survivor with courage.
The concluding chapter entitled **Reincarnation** discusses how Bharathi Mukherjee in her novels makes a concrete effort to see immigration an opportunity to redefine herself as an artist in an immigrant tradition and not as an aloof and alienated expatriate writer, concerned only with the subversive potential of life on the margin.

In the conclusion the researcher analytically sums up all the points discussed in the previous chapters. All the characters in the three novels taken for study survive and reinstate themselves to a new life. Bharati Mukherjee defiantly announces to her American readers, "I am one of you" and in this assertion she has declared herself as an American in the immigrant tradition.

The following chapter entitled **Confluences and Divergences** deals with the aimlessness and diffusiveness of Tara. Tara's sufferings from the relentless anticlimaxes are discussed in an episodic way. The psychological, social and cultural displacement that she suffers from makes her nervous and excitable. The theme of adjusting to a new culture, the trials, tribulations and traumas that afflict immigrants, trying to make it in the new world have been deftly handled by the writer. Bharati Mukherjee appears to be presenting some of her own experiences through the characters. One can see Tara, a foreigner in India as well as an America.