PREFACE

In post-colonial parlance, Bharati Mukherjee (b -1940- ), a writer of Indian origin, as a diasporic writer, has passed through the three-stage transition of Adopt, Adapt and Adept detailed by Peter Barry in his book *Beginning Theory*. It began with her adoption of Eurocentric norms in *The Tiger’s Daughter* and *Wife*. During this phase, she came under the influence of Jane Austen and E.M. Forster. Later with *Jasmine* and *The Holder of the World*, she passed through the Adapt stage with mentors like Bernard Malamud and Isaac Babel. Mukherjee reached the Adept stage with the publication of *Leave It to Me, Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride, Miss New India*, articulating in her unique voice and experimenting with hybridity, multiple belonging, and cultural syncretism. The narrative structure also reflects this three-stage transformation.

Mukherjee begins with the use of the omniscient point of view. Influenced by V.S. Naipaul’s ‘expatriate’ sensibility she uses irony as a technique extensively and continues the same technique of omniscient narration in her second novel *Wife*. She consciously positions herself as a writer in the tradition of other American immigrant writers like Bernard Malamud and Isaac Babel. In *The Holder of the World* Mukherjee uses an American narrator who simultaneously narrates her story and the story of Hannah Easton. The First-person narration continues in *Leave It to Me*. With tremendous confidence Mukherjee uses American expressions and makes
references to American popular culture. Her use of similes and metaphors is also bold:

*Tonight, in the cabin of this houseboat off Sausalito as curtains of flame dance in the distance, and a million flash bulbs burn and fizzle, and I sit with the head of a lover on my lap, the ferrous taste of fear invades me as though my whole body were tongue.* (Leave It to Me 10)

By making her novel American in tone and even perception she finds a sure accommodation for Indian immigrant writing in the body of contemporary American fiction.

In *Desirable Daughters* also, Mukherjee prefers to use first person narration in a multi-dimensional craft of her writing which is evident as Andy uses American slang as freely as Rabi. Tara is comfortable both in the use of American slang and Indian expressions. Her use of language, narrative techniques, descriptions, images and the use of myth, both Hindu and Greek, demonstrate her evolving immigrant sensibility. In *The Tree Bride*, the first person narration of her ‘roots search’. It is interesting to observe that Mukherjee’s oeuvre begins with Tara Banerjee’s exile search for roots in *The Tiger’s Daughter* and comes full circle with Tara Chatterjee’s typical American ‘root search’ for Tara Lata, her ancestor in *The Tree Bride*.

Violence dominates the novels as it is the stark reality in the contemporary world and, therefore, it forms an integral part of Mukherjee’s fictional world too. Moreover, violence has close connection with all the
immigrants because transformation is a violent process in the lives of immigrants. Jasmine and Hannah emerge as classic examples of liberated women, in the true sense of the term, in a male dominated world.

Mukherjee’s contribution to diasporic literature lies in her significant analysis of cultural collision in *The Tiger’s Daughter*, disillusionment in *Wife*, assimilation in *Jasmine*, cultural translation in *Desirable Daughters* and diasporic convergences in *The Tree Bride* and *Miss New India*. The novelist takes up these strands of immigrant experience and creates various models of expatriates/immigrants. Immigrant sensibility in the novels of Mukherjee becomes an artistic expression of both cultural loss and gain, a redefining of cultural identity, cultural syncretism and a definite revisioning of the American national identity. In her opinion, fiction writers see a literary text as a process, whereas readers reduce it to a product. As Mukherjee’s immigrant ideology undergoes the process of evolution, her immigrant politics is also ever changing along with the growth of the artist and her personality. The present study has made an attempt to read her fiction as a process and not as a finished product. It is a thematic study of Bharati Mukherjee’s fiction as diasporic literature.

The present thesis has been divided into six chapters including Introduction and conclusion. Chapter I titled as “Introduction” deals with the novelist’s shaping of her vision and sensibility. Chapter II, titled as “Diasporic Sensibility in Literature” attempts to define the term diaspora, meaning and
its sensibility in literature, Chapter III, titled as “Diasporic Sensibility in Her Novels” deals the voices of dispora in her novels.” Chapter IV titled “The Art of Characterization” deals with the artist’s art of Characterization. This Chapter probes the mode which is pivotal to the beauty of her fiction writing. Chapter V, titled as “Her Fictional Technique” focuses on the narrative technique of the novels of Mukherjee, which is an important aspect of her fictional presentation, the last chapter, titled as “Conclusion” deals with the findings of the present work. By choosing her protagonists from all parts of the world having divergent ethnic, religious and cultural pre-occupations, she has attempted to explore the multiplicity of her theme which is centered in their struggles to outgrow inherited values.