CHAPTER: III
Chapter: III

*Indian Diasporic Fiction – An Analysis*

It is important to trace the shifting nature of cross-cultural human relationship as found in recent Indian diasporic literature. As we are all aware of the fact, the ‘India incorporate’ idea leading to questions of identity and belonging have become hallmarks of diasporic writing in general. These issues of identity are both opposing and complementary markers to define modern fiction. Rushdie tells us about “imaginary homelands” (1), Indias of the mind; Bhabha explains “Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myth of time and only fully realizes their horizons in the mind’s eye” (2). In this changed scenario, one of the initial questions that come to our minds is how do characters placed in cross-cultural settings interact. What are the different trajectories involved so that the contours of human relationships also change? While conflicting loyalties, conflicting sensibilities and conflicting behaviour patterns form a striking feature on the one hand, there is also a kind of extra-sensory harmony and bonding on the other,
something that is not so overtly seen in earlier writers. Another
direct result of the globalized world is found the way in which
novels are now being set in a contemporary deterritorialised
world spanning different continents and hence the characters
also elude a sort of cosmopolitan identity that was not found
earlier.

Historically speaking, this transformation did not happen
overnight. In an essay entitled 'The Historical Formation of
Indian English Literature', Vinay Dharwadker mentions how
migrant and itinerant writers have energized Indian English
fiction in most of its historical phases: from Din Muhammad and
Ram Mohan Roy at the inception to a host of others in the early
postcolonial decades. Despite precedents, however, the
literary-cultural output of the contemporary diaspora has
metamorphosed the inner kinetics of Indian English fiction on
an unprecedented scale. In the last few decades of the
twentieth century, the very centers of Indian English literary
culture appears to have migrated from the subcontinent, as
writers of the Indian diaspora- particularly in Great Britain and
North America- have rapidly and increasingly come to dominate
the international literary market place in the English language. The principal change is that the zones of contact that have provided a social framework for Indian English literary culture since the late eighteenth century is now geographically located overseas. Now in its foreign setting, the writer comes into contact with people of many more races and nationalities than it did earlier on the subcontinent, absorbing them into a radically multicultural and multilingual international scenario. Well-educated, professionally successful, and financially secure diasporic and itinerant Indians in the zone of employment abroad currently constitute networks of a few million Anglicized, Europeanized, or Westernized men and women scattered around the globe. This fragmented yet interlinked community has produced many of the newest authors of Indian origin in English, besides serving as an extensive, enthusiastic international readership for contemporary Indian English fiction.

The zone that has expanded the most in scope and effect in the diaspora is that of intercultural friendship and social relations that has proved vital for the maintenance of the Indian component in a culturally ambidextrous, cosmopolitan identity.
This division of cultural loyalties in the diaspora has contributed to the extensive revision of a key feature of Indian English fiction. It has altered their conceptions of what constitutes their Indianness vis-à-vis the East-West encounter and done away with the binary formulations offered by some of the earlier writers. In Ruth Jhabwala's fiction, her characters, Indian and Western alike, remain always at a clinical remove. She divides her characters into two groups, the seekers and the sufferers. Cf. How I Became a Holy Mother & Other Stories (1981). In her essay 'Myself in India', she describes how she lived when she was here, retreating from the climate and from the people into the air-conditioned, shuttered solitude of her Delhi flat. Her most of typical characters are prosperous urban Indians whose lives are spent studiously cultivating their ignorance of the country in which they live. Nayantara Sahgal developed Jhabwala's themes and characterization. Rich Like Us (1985), for example, examines and exposes the survival strategies of prosperous urban Indians, and in Plans for Departure, she explores the experience of a young European woman in Edwardian India in a manner that recalls Heat and Dust. The
evidentiary forms of the earlier discussion are very much available in the following works of the diasporic writers.

V.S. Naipaul

V. S. Naipaul himself experienced, and repeatedly described in his fiction, this particular urge. Throughout his life he has desired a place to identify with. From genealogical mining, especially in his homeland (the Caribbean), through the quest for his cultural roots (India), and finally to his place of education (England)—he has attempted to search for his own identity. Being an Indian by ancestry, a Trinidadian by birth, and an Englishman by education, V. S. Naipaul possesses a multi-cultural background. As a colonial, he has always needed to locate his place in the world through writing. Prolific and critical in both fiction and nonfiction, he presents colonial anxieties in his quest for self-identity. For him, travel is a way to understand oneself, to achieve self-knowledge. In Finding the Center, V. S. Naipaul particularly mentions the significance to him of traveling for self-understanding. He states that

to travel was glamorous. But travel also made unsuspected demands on me as a man and a writer,
and perhaps for that reason it soon became a necessary stimulus for me. It broadened my world view; it showed me a changing world and took me out of my own colonial shell; it became the substitute for the mature social experience — the deepening knowledge of a society — which my background and the nature of my life denied me...I learned to look in my own way. (3)

Thus, his physical journey echoes his mental one, and his writing is a journey toward self-identification. As shown in *Half a Life*, the protagonist Willie, just like Naipaul, intends to search for his self-identity and construct his own subjectivity in the world via traveling. Willie initially departs from his hometown India to England in search of his own world at the adolescent age like Naipaul. After that, he goes through Africa and Germany in order to find his own place in the world. Eventually, he can courageously confront his identity loss and open up his new life in the future.

V.S. Naipaul has always constructed his subjectivity in terms of his unique postcolonial cultural perspective and through the sophisticated and subtle art of his fiction. He
attained knighthood in 1990 and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001. He delineates his process of writing by intuition in his 2001 Nobel Lecture entitled "Two Worlds":

I have trusted to intuition. I did it at the beginning. I do it even now. I have no idea how things might turn out, where in my writing I might go next. I have trusted to my intuition to find the subjects, and I have written intuitively. I have an idea when I start, I have a shape; but I will fully understand what I have written only after some years. (4)

Through his writing, Naipaul is able to rediscover a link between his unknown past and his present self-understanding:

I am the sum of my books. Each book, intuitively sensed and, in the case of fiction, intuitively worked out, stands on what has gone before, and grows out of it. I feel that at any stage of my literature career it could have been said that the last book contained all the others. (5)

His West Indian voice is heard from the margins through his writing. Similarly, Willie, like Naipaul, as a writer, realizes the connection between his unknown past and his present
situation through his writing. Willie, in *Half a Life*, implicitly reflects Naipaul's shadow.

The related themes of homelessness, alienation and dislocation are characteristic of Naipaul's novels. Kenneth Ramchand suggests that *A House for Mr. Biswas* is a novel of "rootlessness par excellence" (6). Bruce MacDonald further expounds on the novel using "colonial psychoanalysis" (7). John Thieme penetratingly presents the colonial dislocation of Naipaul's more complicated novel, *In a Free State*. Other critics including Andrew Gurr, Anthony Boxill, Robert Hamner, and Timothy F. Weiss also explicate the interrelated themes of Naipaul's works. However, most critics deal with Naipaul's sense of homelessness, focusing on his early writings, especially those works prior to *The Enigma of Arrival*. Naipaul's philosophy of life significantly changed from negative to positive after the publication of this novel. *Half a Life*, can be regarded as the pinnacle of Naipaul's career of more than four decades, leading Naipaul's life of writing toward self-definition.

Naipaul indeed goes through a series of life-stages between homelessness and home, as so vividly portrayed in his
fiction and nonfiction. In his early fiction, the Trinidad trilogy including *Miguel Street*, *The Mystic Masseur*, and *The Suffrage of Elvira*, the author wields irony in order to manifest the corruption and failure of Trinidad. He cannot bear the stifling atmosphere and must find a position in the world for himself. In *A House for Mr. Biswas* and *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul demonstrates the colonials’ predicament and their struggle for a place in the world stemming from their feeling of alienation, isolation, homelessness, rootlessness, and placelessness. He even lays bare the more complicated problems of dislocation faced by the exile in *A Bend in the River* and *In a Free State*. However, in his later works such as *The Enigma of Arrival*, the author comes to adopt a more conciliatory stance and seems to accept that men, to a certain extent, must adapt themselves to new places. He seems to move toward a clearer feeling of place, of being at ‘home’. I thus regard Naipaul’s novelistic writing as a process of identity recovery undergoing a series of transformations: he denies or negates his Caribbean homeland, adopts a stage of mimicry in England, searches for his cultural roots in India, and finally reconstructs his identity out of his
multi-cultural particularity and uniqueness. His writing career comes in four stages: (1) placelessness and alienation, (2) colonial predicament, (3) cultural heritage in India, and (4) writing for self-definition. By accepting his homelessness and statelessness, he (re)creates a new identity in exile. He makes a voice not only for himself but also for other marginalized people. Through writing, he translates his "cultural incommensurability" to the world and articulates the representation of his cultural particularity.

V. S. Naipaul plays a significant role in the postcolonial writings. For him, identity is not given, but constructed and contingent. *Half a Life* records Naipaul's exiled life and manifests the ruptures among subjectivity, geography, and language toward multicultural and fluid identity. *Half a Life* also delineates Willie's constant exiled life from India, England, Africa, Germany toward affirming self-identity. This study aims to explore the construction of subjectivity and/or otherness, complexity of colonial predicament, rupture of identity definition, sense of alienation of diaspora, among other things, reflected in V. S. Naipaul's *Half a Life* through postcolonial cultural
perspective. In this research, Stuart Hall’s assertion of unfixed identity, Doreen Massey’s concept and definition of place, James Clifford’s traveling theory, Homi Bhabha’s theories of mimicry, hybridity, and ‘third space’, as the identity-making process will be applied to explain the identity-making process in V. S. Naipaul’s *Half a Life*. Simultaneously, this study aims at displaying Naipaul’s heterogeneity of postcolonial writing in the process toward his self-definition.

V. S. Naipaul belongs to the marginalized people. He intends to make a voice for his ethnic identity from the margin to the center. Through *Half a Life*, he successfully makes the mapping for his ethnicity and discovers a position for himself toward self-identity and construction of subjectivity.


Vidiadhar Swarajprasad Naipaul in his lecture on 7th December 2001, said:

The world is always in movement. People have everywhere at sometime been dispossessed. I suppose I was shocked by discovery in 1967 about my birthplace because I had never had any idea about it. (9)
In fact this statement of Naipaul shows that in almost all of his works, the persistent theme of identity finds a direct reflection. *Half a Life* (2001), the latest novel, which is based on the theme of identity of an Indian, who goes to England, for higher education, his trial of adoption of western culture and indulges in sexual activities, visits different African countries make it an interesting piece of work by Naipaul.

In this novel, Naipaul presents characters who are products of a racial and cultural mix and shows how they struggle to find their identity in the multi-cultural society they live in. In general, these characters tend to deny one or more racial characteristics in order to become ‘more respectable’, in their estimation. However, they eventually discover that their identity cannot be fixed because they are the fruits of multiple cultures. All through the novel, Willie is drifting without a solid and fixed identity. His identity is multiple, unfixed, and changing, just like the concept of identity expounded upon by Stuart Hall, James Clifford, Doreen Massey, and Homi Bhabha, etc. He cannot try to achieve one fixed identity because of his multi-background. The novel has three settings: first there is post-independence
India, then London, and finally pre-independence Africa. All three are places that Naipaul can identify with. However, the three locations seem to signify different meanings in the novel. India and Africa are 'inexact and vague', while the representation of London 'with street names and other markers' is clearer; thus, Meenakshi Mukherjee contends that:

For Naipaul, England is situated at a different level of reality, firm and stable, while other regions can be relegated to haziness (10).

In the narrative Willie's preconceived notion is proved false. Like Naipaul, Willie initially thinks of London as a 'solid' place; however, he senses that he is still in limbo as a marginalized wanderer in the big city. This situation is just like Ralph Singh's experience in *The Mimic Men*. Such dispossessed people as the colonial, the exile, the immigrant, the marginal, and the uprooted must confront their being in an indefinite state of suspension. Caught up in this limbo, Willie the Indian immigrant loses not only his native cultural heritage but also his sense of place. He identifies neither with his homeland, an old world, nor with the new world he desires.
The story of *Half a Life* begins with a question of a son to his father, who is an offspring of a Brahmin and low caste woman:

Willie Chandran asked his father one day, 'why is my middle name Somerset? The boys at school just found out and, and they are mocking me. His father said with a great joy, 'you were named after a great English writer. I am sure that you have seen his books about the house.' ...And this was the story Willie Chandran's father began to tell. It took a long time. The story changed as Willie grew up. Things were added and by the time Willie left India to go to England this was the story he had heard. (11)

In fact this is the vital question with which the novel starts and the central character is haunted by these sorts of questions for his name which was answered by his father but he was unknown about those all things which had happened in the past.

The departure of Willie Chandran from his village to England for higher education on scholarship begins a search for solace. His experiences in London and the attempts for literary vocation, the sexual adventure, the decisive shift to the
Portuguese-African colony with Ana, for eighteen long years living with fabricated hallucination for an unknown destination marks the story of this novel. The plot of the novel is a blending of that plight of immigrants of imperial colonies and displacement of the migratory people. Willie Chandran's visit to England, his meeting with Percy Cato a Jamaican, June, a girlfriend of Percy, and after then with Petrida and Roger who are also searching an identity. Willie's creative quality attracts Ana, a mixed racial girl who lives with him for fifteen years, and at the last he thinks to come back to India, because he is afraid of that he may be thrown out from the college and till the time he is living the life of Ana. His story is much similar to that of Mr. Biswas in the novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*, who longs for a house, but couldn't get it. His crisis of identity is similar to that of Willie, when the former looks his own reflection and could not recognize him as one and comments, "I don't look like anything at all shopkeeper, lawyer, doctor, labourer, overseer I don't look like any of them" (12).

Being a writer of diaspora, Naipaul presents the characters of all his novels struggling for their identities for
which they had been suffering throughout, and want to achieve it through the different modes:

Since diaspora writing emanates from identity formations leading to further and more sophisticated articulations of identity, or manifest in community, nationhood, and also larger global contexts, it is important to remember to perceive diaspora space as at all times exploratory, fluid and dynamic so that intersections within histories, pasts and futures, do not congeal into rigid boundary laden states. (13)

In fact, the migration of people from India to Caribbean Islands as an indentured labourer for sugar cane estates, is a story of longing and suffering which cannot be seen only in *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), and, in *A Way in the World* (1994), but this theme continued in *Half a Life* (2001), which is apparently a record of Willie Somerset Chandran's quest for identity. However, this theme of search and unrest towards the end of life remains a persistent subject matter of V. S. Naipaul's work, because the environment of the native land reflects in his art. His views on the Caribbean society of Trinidad - its
multilingual and multi-cultural shape can be seen on his lecture at Stockholm during the Nobel Award Ceremony:

This was my very small community. The bulk of this migration from India occurred after 1880. The deal was like this. People indentured themselves for five years to serve on the estates. At the end of this time they were given a small piece of land, perhaps five acres, or a passage back to India. (14)

This was the condition of people, most of whom settled in that country, but they never adopted it as their own, therefore, the sense of belonging remains throughout in the literature of Caribbean Islands, of which Naipaul is the spokesperson.

Naipaul has presented a background of Indian setting in the novel, the traditional belief of caste and starvation of emotions of the false social taboos, which Willie has to face. His birth in itself is a question mark as his mother was a low caste woman, which Willie realized when he was in the school. This realization haunts his mind and here begins the search for an identity in the society:

And that was how, when he was twenty, Willie Chandran, the mission school student who had not
yet completed his education, with no idea of what he wanted to be, expect to get away from what he knew .... Went to London. (15)

Willie moves to London and drifts into bohemian circles; feeling lost, he half-heartedly faces his English education at school:

The learning he was being given was like the food he was eating, without savour. The two were inseparable in his mind. And just as he ate without pleasure, so, with a kind of blindness, he did what the lecturers and tutors asked of him, read the books and articles and did the essays. He was unanchored, with no idea of what lay ahead. (16)

Like all other works of Naipaul, the crisis of identity continues till Willie went England and lives there a life of an immigrant. His education is a compulsion and not something voluntarily accepted action. He is unanchored without a proper mission. In England, Willie is continually drifting:

He was unanchored, with no idea of what lay ahead.

He still had no idea of the scale of things, no idea of historical time or even of distance. (17)
He intends to discover his own identity. Finally, he apprehends that the construction of subjectivity can be created freely:

Willie began to understand that he was free to present himself as he wished. He could, as it were, write his own revolution. The possibilities were dizzying. He could, within reason, re-make himself and his past and his ancestry. (18)

This is just like Stuart Hall's assertion: the process of identity making is unstable; it can even be created. Similarly, Willie's identity is 'in-between', subject to 'change'. In terms of Stuart Hall's theory, identity-formation is not a static 'being', but a dynamic 'becoming'. Stuart Hall states:

The processes of forced and "free" migration ... have become a global phenomenon of the so-called "post-colonial" world. Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not "who we are" or "where we came from," so much as what we might become, how we have been
represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves: not the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms-with our "routes". (19)

Worst of all, Willie cannot face his real ancestral history, his true genealogy. He employs his imagination to shape a make-believe identity and tries to live behind its mask:

He adapted certain things he had read, and he spoke of his mother as belonging to an ancient Christian community of the subcontinent, a community almost as old as Christianity itself. He kept his father as a Brahmin. He made his father's father a 'courtier.' So playing with words, he began to re-make himself. It excited him and began to give him a feeling of power. (20)

Likewise, Percy Cato, "a Jamaican of mixed parentage who was more brown than black," (21) falsely fabricates his family history. He is in reality Willie's shadow. Willie meets Percy Cato, who has similar background like Willie, but both of them live in a fabricated hallucination without revealing the reality to each other. Naipaul presents in the novel,

...both-exotic both on scholarship, had been wary of one another in the beginning, but now they met easily
and began to exchange stories or their antecedents.

(22)  

Percy Cato, a friend of Willie too hides himself and tells a lie that his father was a clerk at Panama Canal, but Willie understands and reacts, "He's lying. That's foolish story. His father went there as a labourer" (23). Willie and Percy's fictional recreations only seem to end up cheating themselves; they are an escape from an unbearable reality. Their make-believe identities are their performances. The creation of identity here has doubled meanings. Apparently, Willie seems to forsake his Indian tradition and family history. It is his loss of cultural heritage. Even so, when he looks back on his life, he will understand his loss of cultural heritage at the stage of being in London. On the other hand, his performance of creating identity displays Homi Bhabha's so-called 'the third space'. He constructs his own subjectivity in London by learning to create his identity. The content of the third space is what Bhabha called 'hybridity', through which other, non-Western-centric positions may emerge to articulate and set up "new structures of authority, new political initiatives" (24). The process of hybridity thus produces "something different, something new, and
unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (25).

With the help of Percy Cato, Willie Chandran meets June, a prostitute and a fiend of Percy, with whom he gratifies his sexual desire. This sexual indulgence is one of the factors of western culture, which is an attraction for immigrants. Willie's experience with June had a deep impression in his mind and he took it in a different way from the strict moral taboos of his native country. It made him to understand the sexual behaviour of the people of Notting Hill that is presented by the novelist as:

No one he met, in the college or outside it, knew the rules of Willie's own place, and Willie began to understand that he was free to present himself as he wished. He could, as it were, write his own revolution. The possibilities were dizzying. He could within reason, re-make himself and his past and his ancestry. (26)

This indicates the quest of a protagonist which Naipaul presents in contrasts, socio-cultural history and its relationship with modernity. His discard of June and the culture or Notting Hill is strange for Willie; even Petrida who is Richard's friend
leaves Willie aside after the frustrated experience of the night. Different other persons who had come to London from the different places of India and Africa and other countries are continuously searching for something other in the culture of the West, where they had to live but can’t discard the psychology and heritage they stored in their minds:

It was a little world of its own. The immigrants from the Caribbean, and then the white colonies of Africa, and then Asia, had just arrived. They were still new and exotic; and there were English people- both high and low, with a taste of social adventure, a wish from time to time to break out of England, and people with colonial connection who wished in London to invert the social code of the colonies –there were English people who were ready to seek out the more stylish and approachable of the new arrivals. (27)

In fact this was the world different altogether for those people, among whom Willie Chandran an Indian tries to locate himself, and such a long search for that identity of himself which is the most common pursuit of writings of Naipaul. The western world is not at all favorable for him as Rostan Murray comments:
The sense of liberation many experienced is a first encountering with the theories it offered a freedom from guilt where fear and anxieties were now defined as treatable symptoms of childhood traumas, began to be replaced by a bewildering doubt concerning the nature of identity of the individual undergoing these experiences – a doubt different from that implicit in evolutionary theory but equally disturbing, posing once again a problem never faced in earlier generations and hence specific to this century. (28)

For maintaining his identity Willie starts writing scripts for radio which are accepted by Roger with great enthusiasm, who himself is “like a man happy to sink his own identity in the grander identity of his corporation” (29).

Willie gets solace in writing stories and perhaps in this matter Naipaul is personal about his own ambitions and adherence. Willie’s stories about Indian background in London are accepted popularity. The writing becomes a sort of emancipation of his exiled self, whereas the thoughts always remain in those places of his arrival.

Percy’s departure from London to his birthplace and Willie’s creative endeavor attracts Ana, who is admirer of his
writings. She finds in his stories something similar related to her life and background, therefore, she writes a letter to Willie about her feelings:

I feel I had to write to you because in your stories for the first time I find moments that are like moments in my life, though the background and material are so different. It does my heart a lot of good to think that out there all these years there was someone thinking and feeling like me. (30)

Because she herself belonged to a mixed community and was again in a half position of life. Willie desires to visit her African nation where they go together. Ana herself narrates the past of her dynasty and also suggests a plot for his stories.

Failing to obtain a concrete place of his own in London, Willie doesn't know where he is going. He can "only go back to India, and he doesn't want that" (31). The cultural identities focus on searching for a new route and creating new meanings in the flow. Just like James Clifford's assertion on travel, Willie must undergo the journey of traveling toward his self-identity. Willie decides to go to Africa with Ana, the first woman who has admired his writing. Later he marries Ana, who is of mixed
Portuguese-African descent. Willie follows her to her inherited estate in one of Portugal's East African outposts in an attempt to make a new beginning. He intends to construct his own identity. In his wife's home country the colonial system is gradually breaking down. Willie remains a stranger and outsider in this country, just as in India and London; indeed, now he suffers an even greater sense of alienation. Readers know only that Willie has arrived 'at a little low built concrete town' and that he does not want to stay here long:

I don't know where I am. I don't think I can pick my way back. I don't ever want this view to become familiar. I must not unpack. I must never behave as though I am staying. (32)

In Africa, then, Willie does not have a sense of belonging. He feels he is 'nowhere'. Ironically, he stays here for eighteen years. In search of a place for himself, he has gone to Africa, but he becomes lost. In London, at least, he was a writer known as Willie Chandran, but in Africa he becomes merely "Ana's London man" (33). He is unable to find a place for himself in Africa; worse, he loses his autonomy. He goes nowhere. He becomes nothing. His only consolation is that he ironically
discovers an affinity with "half-and-half friends" (34) in this "half-and-half world" (35). These friends regard themselves as "the second rank" (36) including Correias, Ricardo and Luis (the estate manager of Carla Correia) and his wife Grace. Willie portrays Correias's plight:

To destroy a Portuguese like himself would have been to break caste, according to the code of the colony, and to become disreputable. There was no trouble at all in throwing a man of the second rank into darkness, someone from the half-and-half world, educated and respectable and striving, unusually knowledgeable about money, and ready for many reasons to do whatever he might be required to do. (37)

Besides Willie, all other characters have the quest for their identity in the novel. Percy Cato, Roger, Ana, Graca and Sarojini, Julio, Carla, Ricardo and Alvaro all are in the search of their lost past and they are living in hallucination. As the title of the novel goes, there is 'half' in the present, which they are leading, but the other 'half' part is always haunting them. It is very difficult for the characters in the novel to combine these
two lives to make one perfect and complete self. As this has been put by Manjeet Indersingh:

If this is the pattern of unmasked route that Willie's life takes, it brings him headlong into confrontation with other lives, lives half-lived and half-wasted, the version of mixed, amorphous quality of cultural collision that single the uncertainties of post-war world of movement and drift. (38)

This is the story of divided world not only of Willie, but almost of all the characters, including Percy Cato, Marcus, Ana and his sister Sarojini. Willie initiates himself into all that is incomplete in him— the 'art of seduction,' which he tries for perfection in the suburbs of London. It is the novelist’s quest of identity that makes a character learns English there but not forgetting those haunting scenes from the native land. This indicates his trial from the adoption of that culture and discard of his own which at a time becomes impossible for Willie like the other characters of the novel:

The expatriate individual, living in permanent exile is cut off from tradition. Uprooted in time and place he gets fragmented and twisted as a person. Naipaul
explores the failure, futility, isolation, dispossession, rootlessness and valuelessness of persons forming this unanchored community. (39)

The metaphor of half is about the plight of those migrants who neither completely mixed up with the immigrant countries, nor could they follow the traditions and beliefs of their original heritage. Therefore, it is an expanded and divided world that shapes the story which emerges as a sign as a marker of the convulsion of the post colonial world. And Willie is still continuing that search, which perhaps may not come to him as it has already been half lost. He says this to Ana:

When I asked you in London I was frightening. I had nowhere to go. They were going to throw me out of the college at the end of the term and I didn't know what I could do to keep afloat. (40)

And he laments, "But now the best part of my life has gone, and I've done nothing" (41). This crisis continues in his mind and perhaps he realizes as there is no destination for him. V. S. Naipaul’s characters’ quest for identity remains in all his classics and an autobiographical interpretation of the novelist
can be seen through the descriptions of events in the novel as Bruce King rightly said:

Naipaul's fiction often has subtexts: the novel can be understood as autobiographical in the sense that they are projections of his own life and anxieties of homelessness, of living in more than one culture, of needing to find a narrative order for experience, of needing to achieve, of needing to create, of having to build a monument to his own existence through his writings. (42)

The autobiographical writing, *Half a Life* presents a more optimistic attitude toward the future than the previous ones: when a man can candidly face the dilemma of his own situation in life, he will fear nothing. Significantly, Naipaul empowers himself through his writing. Like his father before him, he is seeking his own home in the world; he constructs a home for himself through his creative writing. He constructs his own subjectivity via the powerful writing. Breytenbach discusses the relationship between writing and identity:

The individual creative act is certainly an attempt to make consciousness. This implies drawing upon memory. Memory, whether apocryphal or not,
provides the feeding ground or the requisite space allowing for the outlining of imagination. (43)

Through the 'geographical imagination' of his writing, Naipaul creates a home for himself. He makes an effort to resist the sense of insecurity and of uncertainty. Willie in *Half a Life* decides to start a new life, no longer desiring to live under Ana's protection. He rethinks his life and decides to face challenges of the future without attempting to escape or withdraw. Willie remarkably rebuilds his identity and finds the placeslessness as a kind of placeness. He is caught in in-betweenness. Also, he must enjoy the third space. Naipaul, as an exiled writer, is caught in-between: writing between home and homelessness, he takes advantage of being an exile to create his own space, his own home, one which is simultaneously nowhere and everywhere. This is just like Timothy Weiss's critique on Naipaul's works:

To be on the margins is to be part of yet not part of; in the self's encounter with others, the exile can live a "double exteriority" for he or she belongs to two cultures without identifying wholly with either. The exile can engage in a cross-cultural dialogue and
through that dialogue can affirm both his uniqueness and the interrelationship between himself and others.

(44)

Bharati Mukherjee

Bharati Mukherjee is one of the major novelists of Indian diaspora who has achieved enviable positions within a comparatively a short creative span. The creative odyssey that started with the publication of *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) kept her seriously involved in exploring the complexities of her choicest theme of expatriate experience. Since then she has never looked back and her literary accomplishments have manifested themselves in the five novels and two story collections that have appeared so far.

Mukherjee's fictional writings have been analyzed in three well-marked phases – the phase of expatriation, the phase of transition, and the phase of immigration. The first phase of her development from 1972 to 1979 conveniently termed 'expatriation' forms the content of her two early novels, *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) and *Wife* (1975) were brought out and they address themselves to the trauma of an uprooted identity.
The stories collected in *Darkness* have a pathetic note in that they expose the atrocities heaped on immigrants in Canada. They present a very dismal picture of human life and most of the characters have been drawn as puppets, innocent victims of racial discrimination. That the Canadian experience proved the turning point in Mukherjee's personal life as well, lends these stories a tone of authenticity. The stories included in *The Middleman and Other Stories* were mostly written in United States and they grapple with the quality of experience in American milieu. These stories evoke less pathos and express no apparent animus against the American social system. They concentrate on the nature of individual experience when two culturally divergent characters confront each other to establish a rapport.

The phase of immigration includes *Jasmine*, *The Holder of the World* and *Leave It to Me*. Mukherjee's magnum opus *Jasmine* is story of a fearless girl who crosses one hurdle after the other and never submits herself to the onslaughts of the circumstances. Mukherjee shows a rare gift of fictionalizing history in *The Holder of the World* where two seventeenth
century divergently opposed cultures meet and look for a correspondence between each other. In her latest work *Leave It to Me* Mukherjee reverts to her overriding pre-occupation with immigrant's theme and takes up other aspects of this complex phenomenon.

Like the eponymous narrator of her novel *Jasmine*, Bharati Mukherjee has changed citizenship and lived in various cultural milieus with disorienting rapidity. During her odyssey as a writer for almost three decades her creative sensibility has undergone many changes. There has been an 'on-going quest' from 'expatriation to immigration' 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'. Mukherjee's interpretation of and reaction 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 herself 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.
Bharati Mukherjee admits of being subjected to racial discrimination in Canada. While her husband’s creative acumen was recognized, her potentialities went ignored and unresponded to Canada’s hostility to Indians and the non-recognition of her writing in Canada are the twin recurring themes which appear with almost obsessive regularity in her early works. She also became a Civil Rights activist in Canada and wrote about the crippling effect of racism on individuals.

Viewing herself as a writer with two novels to her credit, Bharati Mukherjee identified V. S. Naipaul as her model in 1977. In *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, she says:

> In myself I detect a pale and immature reflection of Naipaul; it is he who has written most movingly about the pain and absurdity of art and exile, of ‘third world art’ among the former colonizers; the tolerant incomprehension of hosts, the absolute impossibility of ever having a home, a ‘desh’. (45)

Identification with Naipaul at this stage evidences that Mukherjee treated herself as an expatriate writer on the basis of her first two novels.
The process of change from expatriation to immigration
got off during Mukherjee's stay in India in 1973-74. She recalls,
"The year in India had forced me to view myself more as an
immigrant than an exile" (46). The realization of fluid identities
and alternate realizes too could be traced to this sojourn in
India as she further observes:

In India, different perceptions of reality converge
without embarrassing anyone. My fear in India had
shown me that I did not need to discard my western
education in order to retrieve the dim shape of my
Indian one. (47)

In the U.S.A. Bharati Mukherjee sees herself as an
immigrant writer. The movement from expatriation to
immigration is also reflected in the choice of the writers who
shaped Mukherjee's creative sensibility. After out growing 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 as his writings instilled unusual confidence in her.
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 shoe-makers, 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.

**Bharati Mukherjee - *Jasmine* (1989)**

Bharati Mukherjee’s later novels – *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the World* (1993) and *Leave It to Me* (1997) – comprise her last creative phase conveniently termed here as the phase of immigration. By now she has traveled a long distance in terms of thematic perception and character portrayal. Beginning with an expatriate’s uprooted identity in the early 70’s, her creative faculty explored the transitional dilemma of characters in early 80’s, whose acculturation bids were occasionally thwarted by the complexity of cultural plurality in the adopted land. However, after the publication of *The Middleman* (1988), the process of cultural acclimatization appears to be complete and the characters betray the
confidence of an immigrant, almost a naturalized citizen, in facing the challenges of human life.

In *Jasmine* (1989), Mukherjee tries to unravel the complicated layers of cross-cultural reality though a series of adventures which the heroine undertakes during her Odyssey from Punjab to California via Florida, New York and Iowa. Her struggle symbolizes the restless quest of a rootless person piqued by a depressing sense of isolation all around. The story opens with the village astrologer under his banyan tree foretelling Jasmine's 'widowhood and exile.' It all turns out just as nastily as he says it will, but at the same time Jasmine is a survivor, a fighter and adapter. Her journey through life leads Jasmine through many transformations- Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane via divergent geographical locales like Punjab, Florida, New York, Iowa and finally California. At every step Jasmine revolts against her fate and the path drawn for her. The narrative shuttles between past and present, between India of the narrator's early life and America of her present one. The past is Jyoti's child hood in the small village of Hasnapur, Punjab, her marriage to Prakash Vijh and the consequences
leading to her departure to America. The present is her life as Jane in Baden, Iowa where she is a live-in-companion to Bud Ripplemeyer, a small town banker.

Jasmine's transformation from Jyoti to Jane had its own scars and stresses. Jyoti is born in a feudal village of Punjab, eighteen years after the partition riots. The fifth daughter and seventh of nine children of her parents, she is dowryless, undesirable female child, a curse for them. However, she is bold and intelligent, the first ever likely student of Masterji fit for English education. She is a non-conformist, a rebel who questions the prophesies of the astrologer about her 'widowhood and exile' in the harshest terms:

You're a crazy old man. You don't know what my future holds! (48)

This irritates the fortune-teller and chucks hard on her head and she falls on the ground getting a star-shaped scar on her forehead. This scar is seen as a curse to her but she treats it as her 'third eye' and feels like becoming "a sage" (49). She does not believe in the prevalent conviction that "Village girls are like cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will
go" (50). To exhibit the force of her belief she refuses to marry the widower selected by her grandmother and eventually ends up marrying Prakash Vijh in a court of law.

The cursed and hapless village girl in Jyoti becomes Jasmine, a city woman, wife of a modern man Prakash who wishes her “to call him by his first name” (51). This christening means much to her:

He gave me a new name: Jasmine. He said: “You are small and sweet and heady, my Jasmine. You’ll quicken the whole world with your perfume. (52)

After marriage she becomes a true wife in the Indian sense of the term identifying her husband’s wishes with those of hers. Prakash’s ardent wish is to secure admission in some obscure American Institute of Technology. They start dreaming about their life in America but as the ill-luck would have it, Prakash falls a prey to the Khalsa Lions, the rebels demanding a separate land of Khalistan for Sikhs, on the very eve of his departure rendering Jasmine heart-broken and alone. A born fighter as she is, she does not allow this heart-rending tragedy to deter her courage. She plans to visit the supposed institute where Prakash had to get admitted and to burn herself a ‘sati’
on the campus of that engineering school. Jasmine's decision leaves her family aghast and they wonder "a village girl, going alone to America without job, husband or papers?" (53).

Jasmine leaves for America on forged papers knowing not what future holds in store for her. But she is aware of the fate of her likes. She muses:

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 taken 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 witted plumage of intercontinental vagabondage. We ask only one thing: to be allowed to land; to pass through; to continue. (54)

Jasmine is estranged by the uncertainties of her life in an unknown country:

What country? What continent? We pass through wars, through plagues. I am hungry for news, but the discarded papers are in characters of languages I cannot read. (55)
However, she travels to the New World on a shrimper called ‘The Gulf Shuttle’. Jasmine’s first encounter with America is a kind of what Malashri Lal says, “regeneration through violence.” (56) The captain of the ship, an ugly fellow. Half-Face who “had lost an eye and ear and most of his chick in a paddy field in Vietnam” (57) takes her to a remote motel of Florida and makes before her indecent proposals. Jasmine requests him that she is a deplorable Hindu widow and her “mission (is) to bring my husband’s suit to America” (58), he laughs at her idea: “Getting your ass kicked half way round the world just to burn a suit. I never heard such a fool notion” (59). He remorselessly rapes Jasmine and this outrage is too much for an Indian widow. He sleeps after promising more sexual excitement later in the night. Jasmine goes to bathroom and decides “to balance her defilement with my (her) death” (60) but before she could do so she discovers that she wants to live. Instantly she realizes: “I could not let my personal dishonor disrupt my mission” (61). She extends her tongue and slices it, blood oozing - a perfectly vengeful image of Goddess Kali out to defy and destroy the
‘devil’ who has violated her chastity. She kills the demon and for some moment remains perturbed:

No one to call to, no one to disturb us. Just me and the man who had raped me, the man I had murdered.
The room looked like a slaughter house. Blood had congealed on my hands, my chin, my breasts ... I was in a room with a slain man, my body blooded. I was walking death, Death incarnate. (62)

Jasmine’s killing of Half-Face is a kind of self-assertion. Her decision to kill herself first, is a decision of a woman who lives for her deceased husband but the woman who kills Half-Face is prompted by her will to live to continue her life. “In killing Half-Face,” writes Samir Dayal, “she experiences an epistemic violence that is also a life-affirming transformation” (63).

Pondering over the agonizing as well as transforming effect of evil Jasmine says:

For the first time in my life I understood what evil was about. It was about not being human.... It was a very simple, very clear perception, a moment of truth, the kind of understanding that I have heard comes at the moment of death. (64)
After this violent encounter with the ugly world, Jasmine starts afresh; sans money, sans idea about the surroundings — hungry and thirsty, broken both in body and mind. Incidentally she happens to meet Lillian Gordon, a kind Quaker lady who harbours her, pities her situation, calls her Jazzy and teaches her to talk, walk and dress like an American. She advises her: “let the past make you wary, by all means. But do not let it deform you” (65). Lillian Gordon is committed to help the illegal immigrants. Later on she encourages Jasmine to proceed to New York for a suitable job with an introductory letter to her daughter staying there. After reaching New York Jasmine decides to visit her husband’s former teacher Devinder Vadhera who has been instrumental in her husband’s admission. His home in Flushing, Queens, is part of a Punjabi immigrant ghetto. Vadheras never try to come out of their four walls, the “artificially maintained Indianness” (66). Jasmine remembers her five months sojourn at Flushing with pain and despair: “Flushing, with all its immigrant services at hand, frightened me” (67). Again she recalls:
Flushings was a neighborhood in Jullundhar. I was spiraling into depression behind the fortress of Punjabiness.... 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. (68)

Here among the Vadheras she is a helpless widow not entitled to enjoy life. This lie is terrifying to her, “I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti-like” (69). America has so many surprises for Jasmine in its ‘Pandora box’. To her dismay she comes to know that Devinder Vadhera far from being a real Professor is a sorter of human hair. This fact unfolds, for the first time, the reality of immigrant life to her and she rationalizes Vadhera’s act:

   He needed to work here, but did not have to like it. He had sealed his heart when he’d left home. His real life was in an unlivable land across oceans. He was a ghost, hanging on. (70)

This comprehension of reality is further confirmed by the taxi-driver who is a doctor from Kabul and confides to her, “we have to be here living like dogs”. (71)
In New York streets Jasmine sees “more greed, more people” (72) like herself. New York seems to be “an archipelago of ghettos seething with aliens” (73). Her failure in understanding the intensions of the American beggar is symbolic of confusion that grips an immigrant in an alien land. The American beggar abuses her and calls her a ‘foreign bitch’. Jasmine, like the true immigrants is tossed between a desire for remembering her past and an equally pressing urgency to forget it:

I feel at times like a stone hurtling through diaphanous mist, unable to grab hold, unable to slow myself, yet unwilling to abandon the ride I’m on. Down and down I go, where I’ll stop, God only knows. (74)

The freedom loving spirit of Jasmine finds it difficult to cope with the conservative India represented by the Vadheras and after spending five frustrating months at Flushing one day, she deserts the Vadheras and sets forth for another adventure. Next we see Jasmine in an apartment on Claremont Avenue, Manhattan with Taylor and Wylie Hayes as a caregiver to their adopted daughter, Duff. This is the best period of her stay in the States. She discovers to her excitement that Taylor is a true professor and at once feels impressed by his humane conduct:
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 joking. (75)

Taylor gives her a new name 'Jase' and she is all excited about her life with the Hayeses. She recalls: "Duff was my child; Taylor and Wylie were my parents, my teachers, my family". (76)

In the new surroundings marked by personal warmth, Jasmine becomes more Americanized, more confident of her proficiency in English but her instinctive Indian values do surface now and then. For instance, when she comes to know that Duff is not a natural child but an adopted one, her reactions are culturally revealing:

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. (77)

Her Indian sense of values cannot tolerate the sight of "naked bodies combing their hair in front of dresser mirrors" (78). She records her disgust:
Truly there was no concept of shame in this society.

I'd die before a Sob Sister asked me about Half-Face.

(79)

She again feels outwitted at Wylie's decision to leave Taylor for economist Stuart in search of "real happiness" (80). She feels defeated:

America had thrown me again. There was no word I could learn, no one I could consult, to understand, what Wylie was saying or why she had done it. (81)

This is beyond imagination for Jasmine to think of snapping her bonds with her husband. She comes to realize the 'liquidity' and 'transitoriness' of human relationships in America.

She gets the bitterest lesson:

In America, nothing lasts. I can say that now and it doesn't shock me but I think it was the hardest lesson of all for me to learn. We arrive to eager to learn, to adjust, to participate, only to find the monuments are plastic, agreements are annulled. Nothing is forever, nothing is so terrible, or so wonderful, that it won't disintegrate. (82)

However, she is not unmindful of the positive side of American ethos. She appreciates the Americans for their
democracy of thought and their sense of respect even for those doing menial works. The Western civilization has a 'Work-Culture' and in this set up everybody is discharging his duty without any complex. She compares her own situation with the Mazbi woman who worked in her house 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 maidservant. Wylie made me feel her younger sister. I was family, I was professional. (83)

Jasmine has experienced the best moments of stay in America in the company of Taylor and Duff who are like family for her. Taylor also starts loving her and she too wishes that her role as a 'day-mummy' should never end. She is absorbed in the American world forgetting all about her strange mission as she herself accepts:

Jyoti was now a sati-goddess; she had burned herself in a trash-cum-funeral pyre behind a boarded-up motel in Florida. Jasmine lived for future, for Vijh & Wife. Jase went to movies and lived for today. (84)
She thinks that she has got an established home and now she will no longer be haunted by rootlessness, "I had landed and was getting rooted" (85) but still her destination is not reached and she is forced to run from New York. She sights the assassin of her husband, Sukhwinder, and runs for life to Iowa. But her escape is not a sign of her cowardice, it is 'life-affirming, "She (Jasmine) is running away for life not escaping from life which is a positive step" (86). Pushpa N. Parekh thinks that Jasmine's stay at Taylor's for two years is the most fruitful period of her life in America:

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 environment. (87)

Again her observations on Taylor-Wylie episode are very minute:

Wylie's apparent "reasonless" abandoning of Taylor and Duff is a jolt back to the inexplicable and unexplainable nature of human action. 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 while intellectually exploring the new avenues opened to her by the modern value systems.

Jasmine's life in Iowa again begins with her chance meeting with Mother Ripplemayer, the Iowan counterpart of Lillian Gordon. She helps her getting a job in her son Bud's bank as a teller girl and after six months she is the live-in companion of Bud Ripplemayer. It seems that Bharati Mukherjee uses fate and chance as a 'problem-solving-device.' In her use of this device there is something like a 'fairytale'. Bud not only gives her a new life but also a new name- Jane. When Jane meets Bud he is "a tall, fit, fifty-year-old banker, husband of Karin, father of Buddy and Vern" (89) but after six months he is a divorcee living with an illegal immigrant:

Asia had transformed him, made him reckless and emotional. He wanted to make-up for fifty years of "selfishness", as he calls it. (90)
After one year he is a crippled man living with his Asian wife and adopted son, Du who is a Vietnamese brought from a refugee camp by him. Nobody is safe in violence torn America. Bud falls a victim to one Harlan Kroener who shoots him leaving maimed.

Jane likes Iowa because it is very much like Hasnapur. The farmers here are very much like the farmers of her own village “modest people, never boastful, tactful and courtly in their way” (91). Bud is always uneasy with her past and never enquires of it. To quote Jane:

> My genuine foreignness frightens him. I don’t hold that against him. It frightens me too. (92)

It is her strangeness that adds to her beauty:

> Bud courts me because I am alien. I am darkness, mystery, inscrutability. The East plugs me into instant vitality and wisdom. I rejuvenate him simply by being who I am. (93)

Jasmine’s every movement is a calculated step into her Americanization and with each development a vital change is marked in her personality. Jasmine’s flight to Iowa and her renaming as Jane is indicative of a slow but steady immersion
into the mainstream American culture. Here we encounter a changed Jasmine—one who had murdered Half-Face for violating her chastity, now not only willingly embraces the company of an American without marriage but also is carrying his child in her womb. We are simply surprised at her act since every idea revolts at this form of an Indian widow. But one should never forget that she is a rebel who revolts for her. She is an adapter, a survivor. Du is also a fighter who has survived eating worms and rodents in the refugee camp. Jasmine easily identifies herself with Du because both have made odysseous exploits in order to live. They “communicate silently in a no-questions asked relationship of strong identification: they come from the same “third World” and share a common legacy of suffering and survival.” (94)

An immigrant’s life is in fact a series of reincarnations. She lives through several lives in a single life-time. This truth explains the condition of Bharati Mukherjee as well as that of Jasmine. As Mukherjee confides in one of her interviews:

I have been murdered and reborn at least three times,

the very correct young woman I was trained to be,
and was very happy being, is very different from the
politicized, shrill, civil rights activist I was in Canada,
and from the urgent writer that I have become in the
last few years in the United States. (95)

This statement has a marked similarity with Jasmine’s outcry:

There are no harmless, compassionate ways to
remake oneself. We murder who we were so we can
rebirth ourselves- in the images of dreams. (96)

Mukherjee by subjecting her heroine to multiple codes of
society and geographical locates seems to send the message
that if one has to assimilate oneself to the mainstream culture
of the adopted land, one should forget one’s past. This notion
finds ample support from Jasmine’s statement:

Once we start letting go-let go just one thing like not
wearing our normal clothes, or a turban or not
wearing a tika on the forehead-the rest goes on its
own down a sinkhole. (97)

But this assimilation of Jasmine is not so smooth as it
might appear on the surface:

Fear, anger, pain, bitterness, confusion, silence,
irony, humor, as well as pathos-underline her
observations as she discovers for herself the
undefined median between the preservation of the old world and the assimilation into the new one. (98)

All is well with Jane in Iowa till Du leaves for Los Angeles to join his sister. She has started identifying herself with Du because he is an immigrant like herself. Both are in a great hurry to become American, to forget the nightmares of their early lives. But Du's sudden departure shatters her world. She has been so delicately nursing. Her passionate cry bursts out:

How dare he leave me alone out here. How dare he retreat with my admiration, my pride, my total involvement in everything he did. His education was my education. (99)

Jasmine knows that "blood is thick" but the very "prospect of losing him (Du) is like a miscarriage" (100). He has been a silent companion of Jasmine/Jane in all her bright and gloomy moments. Jasmine tries "to think like Lillian Gordon" at the moment who had put her on the Bus without showing any kind of grief, she orders herself "Don't cry, don't feel sorry for yourself" (101) but this does not prove helpful. This sense of bereavement acquires intensity by suicide of neighbouring Lutz boy Darrel who has been in love with her though she never
responds to his love. The accumulated effect of these incidents and at this moment a call from Jasmine's former lover Taylor sets the path ready for her last adventure. Though "Bud's face, gray, ghostly, bodyless, floats in narrowing circles" (102) around her she does not care for this man "who is losing his world" (103). Already she has stopped thinking about Bud and at this moment Taylor and Duff come to take her to California where the new world, the promise of America is eagerly awaiting her. In deserting Bud and choosing Taylor Jasmine does not exchange between men but she changes her whole world. As she herself confides,

I am not choosing between men I am caught
between the promise of America and old-world
duti-fullness. (104)

All though her stay for more than three years in Iowa, Jasmine has been faithful to Bud. She has acted like an Indian wife who exults in her loyalty towards her husband. She has identified all her dreams and wishes with Bud's. She has scarified all her individuality at the holy shrine of matrimony. She thinks that even the memory of the past life amounts to a kind of disloyalty to Bud because he feels frightenened by her
stories of Hasnapur. At Iowa she is a perfect who tries to please her husband by all means. She plays the temptress at his behest and hangs up all decency to yield to the sexual passion of a crippled person. Here she is very much like Indian women, bound to the 'old world dutifulness' but the woman who walks out at last with Taylor “greedy with wants and reckless from hope” (105) is positively an entirely different woman. This is a woman who is ready to see ahead to ingratiate the best that future holds in store for her. She has no moral scruples and never feels guilty of her decision:

It is not guilty that I feel its relief... Adventure risk, transformation: the frontier is pushing indoors through uncaulked windows. (106)

She challenges the mocking astrologer who had declared her star-crossed:

Watch me reposition the stars, I whisper to the astrologer who floats cross-legged above my kitchen stave. (107)

T.Padma (108) sees Jasmine’s linking with Taylor as a validation of her avowed belief –“Treat every second of your existence as a possible assignment from God” (109)– a
reaffirmation of the courage she mustered in killing the mad dog saying "I was not ready to die" (110). From Jyoti to Jasmine, Kali to Jazzy and Jace to Jane is a long and arduous journey "hurried through time tunnels" (111), surviving the worst in life. From the special and unique nature of her evolving 'Jasmine' self, Jane becomes, as her name implies, a non-entity, even a conscienceless 'gold digger' in Karin's words. From the 'Sati-goddess' Jyoti to the Kali-Jasmine to 'adventurous Jase' to 'Plain Jane' has been an eventful, uneven odyssey; the protagonist's name changes as well as her shifts in places of residence become metaphors for an immigrant woman's process of uprooting and re-rooting.

Jane is expected to eventually become Bud Ripplemeyer's wife and the mother of their expected child, She, however is a complex blend of the 'silent woman', 'the speaking person' and the 'teller of tales'. As the 'silent woman' she accepts the almost preplanned and tailor-made itinerary of a certain predictable way of life with Bud. But her increasing sense of isolation and loss of self in this suffocating world is heightened by her inability to share with him her memories or
reflections of the past which are as much a part of her identity as the present. Bud prefers not to discuss her painful past. This is in sharp contrast to Taylor’s disposition- “Taylor didn’t want to change me. He didn’t want to scour and sanitize the foreignness. My being different from Wyllie or Kate didn’t scare him”. (112)

Ready to sacrifice her own happiness and dreams, Jane almost acquiesces to become Bud’s wife. It is through Du, their adopted Vietnamese son that she wishes to sustain her identity as an ‘immigrant’. All the forces in Iowa would eventually freeze her to conformity or continual alienation. Bud is uncomfortable with her tales of Hasnapur. He wishes her silent while Du, driven to quickly become thoroughly American, only cursorily pays heed to her stories about her Indian life. She realizes she cannot remake herself through Du “my transformation has been genetic; Du’s was hyphenated,” (113), in evaluating her future she confronts the complicity and multiplicity of her identity as an immigrant woman.

Appearing self-possessed and patient, Jane, as we discover her through her interior monologues, is seething.
Likening herself to a ‘tornado’ she wonders over the changes that are yet to reshape her destiny:

I still think of myself as a caregiver, recipe giver, preserver. I can honestly say all I wanted was to serve, be allowed to join, but I have created confusion and destruction wherever I go. As Karin says, I am a tornado. I hit the trailer parks, the pretabs, the weakest links. How many more shapes are in me, how many more selves, how many more husband?

In ‘telling her tale’, the Jane and Jasmine selves of the protagonist seek to blend their ‘want’ and ‘dreams’ into possibilities and realities. The range and the texture of the narrative voice reiterate the immigrant woman’s personal journey as a new questing pioneer’s movement from self-denial to self-realization.

Jasmine’s restless move from one to another betrays her gripping alienation and bewilderment. On more than one occasions she realizes that she is an ‘outsider’ and ‘other’ in America—an illegal immigrant without passport, living among aliens whose ways she knows nothing about. She is always
apprehensive about American being and thinking, suffers humiliation and disappointment. As she mutters: "This country has so many ways of humiliating, of disappointment" (115), again her failure to understand Wylie's decision to leave Taylor testifies to the fact that she is a poor immigrant. She comes from the third world where experiences are always painful and it is in sharp contrast to her experience of America. As she says: "For them, experience leads to knowledge, or else it is wasted. For me (or likes), experience must be forgotten, or else it will kill" (116). She dresses like an American, puts on an American name but she can trust only Asians: "I trust only Asian doctors, Asian professionals. What we've gone through must count for something" (117). She is loved by all for her Indianness which has made her a lovable and caring wife, an affectionate mother. She echoes her sentiment again and again:

A good Hasnapur wife doesn't eat just because she is hungry. Food is a way of granting or withholding love. (118)

I will wait supper for you. Indian wives never eat before their husbands. (119)
The above statements show that even if she is living with an American in an American household, among American appliances her ideal is an Indian wife who is by nature self-sacrificing. Jane does not pay heed to Bud’s entreaty to marry her because she thinks she is responsible “for Prakash’s death, Bud’s maiming”. She is “a tornado, blowing through Baden” (120). Jasmine never forgets her past which impinges upon her senses like the stench of the carcass of the dog she encounters early in her life. “She perpetually haunts, and is haunted by, her ghostly identities... she shuttles between differing identities”.

Indeed, Jasmine is a rebel and revolutionary. She protests against rigours of Indian culture. Her protest, like that of Bharati Mukherjee herself, is not against its retentiveness, its particular way of partially comprehending the world. She revolts against conservative Indian attitude towards poor widows who are treated like non-entities, she resents against the ‘Sati’ system which compels Indian Women to sacrifice their life although they want to live. She rebukes the male dominating Indian society which discourages self-reliance in women. Her
grudge is against the artificially maintained ghetto which bars the non-resident Indians from identifying themselves with the progressive ideals of the West. However, her native values determine substantially the quality of her life.

Bharati Mukherjee does not consider Jasmine 'a good person”, she is a “black mailer” and a “murderer” who has dumped a good crippled man. But she considers her a “love goddess” a “life-force” (122). She is not moral in the conventional sense but her morality is her own way of looking at life. She is a ‘path-finder’ and pierces her way through the dense jungle of problems. Every movement adds to her self-confidence and her experience guides her future course of action. She is fluid and adjusting and justifies her each and every role. Murkherjee’s following observations border on confessional note:

The kinds of women I write about… are those who are adaptable. We’ve all been raised to please, been trained to be adaptable as wives, and that adaptability is working to the women’s advantage when we come over as immigrants. (123)

Outwardly Jasmine responds very promptly to the behavioural patterns of the American society and instantly
includes it in to the behavioural patterns of the American society and instantly includes it in her character. However, a tenacious Indianness seems to cling to the subsurface of her adaptations. Indira Bhatt pertinently comments:

Jasmine takes a bird view of the American life and does not touch the deeper layers of values there. (124)

Had she been purely guided by the American values, she should have abandoned Bud at the time of his disability. She abandons Bud later on, no doubt, but this decision is a cumulative effect of the happenings-Du's departure, Darrel's suicide and Taylor's proposal:

Evan Jyoti to Jasmine, to Jase and Jane may appear to be real transformation of the personality of the protagonist; from Hasnapur to Jullundhar to Florida, Manhattan, Iowa may appear to be moving from old world values to the brave new world. But the person we see at the end of the novel moving away with Taylor is very much the same person we encounter at the earlier stages in the novel. (125)

Sarah Curtis also subscribes to a similar view:

By the end of the book she is almost all American, but quintessentially she is still Indian. (126)
In Jasmine's tug of war between 'old world dutifulness' and the 'progressive America', a perceptive reader can unmistakably mark that the ongoing conflict hardly reaches a happy reconciliation. Ingenious attempts have been made by some scholars to trace autobiographical touches in Mukherjee's works and this is obviously a common-place criticism on expatriate writers. Identifying Jasmine's predicament with that of her creator, Malashri Lal observes:

A passport gives instant legal recognition; it does not determine instant cultural transfers. That truth explains Bharati Mukherjee's dilemma as also her Jasmine's restless moves. (127)

In attempting to resolve her crisis of identity through now en-denture –from Jyoti to Jasmine, to Jase and to Jane- compelled with changes in geographical contours–from Hasnapur to Jullundhar, to Florida, Manhattan, Iowa–Jasmine tries all external alternatives but to no avail. The person one sees at the end of the novel moving away with Taylor is very much the same one encounters at the earlier stages in the book. The movement without cannot necessarily mean
transformation within in repeat of one with the inherited Indian ethos.

**Bharati Mukherjee- *Wife (1975)*

Bharati Mukherjee’s second novel and a finalist for Governor General’s award, *Wife* (1975) takes up a more complex dimension of the theme of immigrant experience. It centers round the life of a middle class married Bengali woman who migrates from Calcutta to New York. After a ten year sojourn in Canada Mukherjee returned to her native country in 1973 and encountered an India which she had never anticipated: a world far less innocent than the one she remembered. During her visit to Calcutta, she got the material for this novel as she recalls, “quite by an accident, I heard the question that shaped my second novel—‘what do Bengali girls do between the ages of eighteen and twenty one....” (128)

Mukherjee opens her novel in a true Indian tradition of story-telling. The simple opening line- “Dimple Dasgupta had set her heart on marrying a neurosurgeon” (129) is quite telling and at once sets the scene that anticipates something
unnatural. For Dimple Dasgupta, neuro-surgeon is a very strange choice. Mukherjee's choice of the name of the heroine as Dimple is a deliberate one and her intentions are quite explicit from the cover page of the novel where she quotes the OED definition of 'Dimple' as – 'any slight surface depression'.

From the very beginning we feel that Dimple is far from normal girls. Dimple has nothing to do except thinking about marriage because she thinks that marriage is a blessing in disguise. It will bring her freedom, fortune and perfect happiness:

Marriage would bring her freedom, Cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, fund-raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love. (130)

Dimple thought of premarital life as a dress rehearsal for actual living. Years of waiting had already made her nervous, unnaturally prone to colds, coughs and headaches. Dimple is twenty but she bewails for wasted years. Nothing pleases her more than the imagination about marrying a fellow who provides her all creature-comforts. She is supposed to be studying for university examinations but books irritate her.

At last Mr. Dasgupta finds a suitable match for Dimple. Amit Basu, a Consultant Engineer is the match for Dimple. He
has already applied for immigration to Canada and U.S. and his job application is also pending in Kenya. Dimple is all ecstatic about her marriage and does a lot of shopping becoming the occasion. She comes to Amit's residence at Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road after her marriage. Basus are good people but their house is not that spacious and attractive. From the very beginning Dimple does not feel easy there. She does not like Amit's mother and sister also. Her mother-in-law dislikes her name 'Dimple' and wants to call her 'Nandini' instead which simply infuriates the bride. However, Dimple thinks that all these problems are temporary and with the confirmation for immigration they will eventually come to an end. She frequently talks with her husband about the anticipated foreign trip though “Thoughts of living in Africa or North America terrified her”. (131)

Dimple Basu has always lived in a fantastic world, a world which is created by herself. But when she confronts the hard realities of life the feathers of her imagination are clipped. All her dreams crumble one by one and she is deeply upset. She thinks that waiting for marriage was better than getting married. She starts hating everything:
She hated the gray cotton with red roses inside yellow circles that her mother-in-law had hung on sagging tapes against the metal bars of the windows. (132)

Her friend, Paramita Ray, whom everybody calls Pixie, had brought for her magazines in the days of waiting and she had seen in those magazines how 'young married' were always going to decorators and selecting 'their' colours, especially their bed room colours. "That was supposed to be the best part of getting married: being free and expressing yourself" (133).

Dimple thinks that marriage has robbed her of all romantic yearnings so tastefully nourished.

One evening Amit takes her to Kwality's by taxi and orders chili chicken, chicken fried rice and chicken spring rolls. She feels uneasy handling the chicken pieces with fork and thinks that it would have been better if Amit had taken her to Trinca's instead:

He should have taken her to Trinca's on Park Street, where she could have listened to a Goan band play American music, to prepare her for the trip to New York or Toronto. Or to the discotheque in the Park Hotel, to teach her to dance and wriggle. (134)
Amit was not the man Dimple had imagined for her husband when he is out of the house she starts creating the man of her dream:

She borrowed a forehead from an aspirin ad, the lips, eyes and chin from a bodybuilder and shoulders ad, the stomach and legs from a trousers ad and put the ideal man. (135)

With the passing of time the excitement of marriage diminishes and she becomes pregnant a stage known for vomiting tendency. However, her nauseating proneness is abnormal because she deliberately vomits and never leaves any opportunity of doing so at all hours of the day and night. She feels a strange sensation:

The vomit fascinated her. It was hers; she was locked in the bathroom expelling brownish liquid from her body, She took pride in brownish blossoms.... (136)

Pregnancy is a boon for Indian women because they are supposed to maintain the continuity of the clan. They are 'shakti-incarnate'. They are the very source of 'creation'. If a woman fails to reproduce a child she is condemned and becomes an object of hated in society. But Dimple is singular
in that “she thought of ways to get rid of... whatever it was that blocked her tubes and pipes” (137). Her killing of the mice which looked pregnant also suggests that she does not feel at ease with her pregnancy. She becomes almost hysteric in killing that tiny creature without any rhyme and reason:

She pounded and pounded the baby clothes until a tiny gray creature run out of the pile, leaving a faint trickle of blood on the liven. She chased it to the bathroom. She shut the door so tit would not escape from her this-time..."I'll get you" she screamed. "there is no way out of this, my friend..." And in an out-burst of hatred, her body shuddering, her wrist taut with funy, she smashed the top of a small gray head. (138)

This act of killing is a manifestation of violence is smouldering inside her. Her repulsion with her own pregnancy is born out of her hatred for Amit who fails to feed her fantasy world.

Dimple is about to migrate but she does “not want to carry any relics from her old life” (139). She thinks that old thing will remind her of frustrations and irritations. She courts her pregnancy also among the relics and ponders over the ways of
getting rid of it. At last she decides to end it by skipping ropes. The description of her self-abortion is very poignant and touching:

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 off her legs; then she had collapsed. (140)

This is something which only Dimple can do and her self-abortion raises serious questions regarding her very womanhood. After terminating her pregnancy she hardly gives only after thought to it. She never repents for the cruel deed she has committed by killing a prospective human life. She remains poised and dispassionate while it should have led her to an emotional upheaval. Rosanne Klass counts it as a serious mistake on Bharati Mukherjee's part questions her understanding of Indian culture. In a review of Wife, she comments:

For an Indian wife, childlessness is a disaster, pregnancy the achievement that seals her status. To
overturn such ingrained values would involve a major emotional upheaval; yet Dimple acts on the vaguest and the most undefined impulses, and thinks no more about it. (141)

Of course, Dimple’s reactions have not been given due attention but it should be remembered that Dimple is simply an individual and her strange actions should not be equated with the values of Indian culture. In the very beginning Mukherjee has hinted at Dimple’s ill mental state. In the view of some critics Dimple’s act of abortion “is a sacrament of liberation from the traditional roles and constraints of womanhood” (142). Symbolically, by revoking her motherhood Dimple liberates herself from the traditional role of Hindu wife of just bearing and rearing a child. Like the Western feminists she asserts her will but her abortive act is a kind of ‘moral and cultural suicide’.

When Amit’s confirmation for migration to U.S. comes Dimple’s happiness is inexpressible. She prepares well and sees to it that nothing she misses which is necessary for a new life. She feels like being freed from the brazen fetters of servile domesticity. On the eve of their departure, Pixie organizes a grand party at which she invites mostly the media persons.
Dimple meets Ratna Das, a middle aged modern wife of a media brat there who does not give any importance to America. She says "It might be fun to go for a vacation ... But I would not want to settle there" (143). Pixie echoes the same sentiment "I wouldn't want to feel foreigner all my life" (144). But this hardly deters Dimple from her resolution. For her "real happiness was just in the movies or in the West" (145).

The long awaited day of migration comes and Mr. & Mrs. Amit Basu set their feet at the Kennedy Airport where Jyoti Sen, Amit's former classmate at the I.I.T., Kharagpur receives them. In the way he talks about the triple-murder case which is the talk of the town. A guy murders three persons including the ice-cream vendor just for the simple reason that the fellow doesn't have a chocolate ice-cream cone. On the way to the Sens Amit is unmindful of the scenes outside the car and is busy enquiring about job opportunities in America. Dimple feels excited and a little scared as well. She has never been to a city bigger than Calcutta and the magnificence of the city of New York terrifies her:
She had never seen such bigness before; the bigness was thrilling and a little scary as well. She could not imagine the kind of people who had conceived it and who controlled it. (148)

The Sen apartment at Queens is all Indian inside. Dimple’s searching eyes notice a framed batik wall hanging which shows “King Ram and his court in splendid array” (147). Sens are very conscious of their identity and they never try to come out of the ghetto, their ‘little-India’ which is around them:

Because there are no chairs, we realize that the Sens never entertain Westerners in their home, a point confirmed in conversation noting their disgust with beef eaters and American insincerity, insecurity with the English language, and projected losses on inexpensive furniture for those returning home. (148)

The Sens disgust with Americans and English language is quite in keeping with the feeling of insecurity in an expatriate People raised 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. After all the thousands of professional, doctors, engineers, management personnel etc, who migrate to America or other European
countries mostly they do it for the sole purpose of earning a high
salary and after a considerable period of time to return to their
native land and enjoy a life of prestige and comfort. For them
the country of adoption is a temporary abode and they just try
to pass their time preserving their own cultural and religious
values. This is confirmed by the simple 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. (149)

Getting a job in America is not an easy cake especially if you
happen to be an Indian. Should one get an opportunity, it is
very difficult to sustain it. There you have to bear all sorts of
humiliation and exploitation without giving any vent to it. Jyoti
Sen teaches Amit all tricks of the trade, the codes of conduct
for an Indian professional in America to thrive:

Work twice as hard, keep your mouth shut and you'll
be a millionaire in fifteen years. (150)

One day Dimple goes to the market with Meena Sen and
wishes to buy a cheese cake. She is afraid to go to the shop
alone but when Meena encourages her she goes there. She is
taut with fear and notices one by one inside the glass cake
pickles, salads, hanging salamis, pink roast beef, roast duck
and turkey etc. at last she reaches the shop and asks for cheese cake and the shopkeeper starts staring at her to her great embarrassment. Everywhere there is stench of blood and it is getting intolerable for her nostrils to bear the stink of beef. Instantly she fails to understand the shopkeeper and repeats her sentence. He asks whether she does not know the law and starts searching for something in his drawer. Dimple is so afraid, she thinks that the man is taking out his gun and she is left with no option but to be killed without crying. Here she realizes the difference between Calcutta and New York:

In Calcutta she'd by from Muslims, Biharis, Christians, Nepalis. She was used to marry races; she'd never been a communalist. (151)

This very first exposure to America leaves a traumatic effect on her mind. She fails to understand the reason why a man selling beef etc. cannot sell cheese cake. What is the law of America? Did she really insult the man by asking for cheese cake? Does this provide him with sufficient reason for killing her? She runs from there for life forgets to buy anything herself. Her bewilderment with America is due to her sheltered childhood. She had hardly ever been out of Calcutta. She did
not know what might offend anybody there to cost her the precious life itself. How a boorish, an innocent Indian wife can keep her nerves in a country where murder was like flapping the bugs? Dimple thought:

She was caught in the crossfire of an American communalism. She could not understand. She felt she'd come very close to getting killed on her third morning in America. (152)

The party at Vinod Khanna’s place was splendid and Dimple saw Indian Americans in flying colours. This was for the first time, Dimple happens to see so many Indians since she left Calcutta. She realized, a ‘little India’ had come alive. People like the Sens, Mehras, Khannas and Bhattacharyas, Miss Chakravorty all talking in familiar language. Everybody full of praise for Indian things—culture, food, habit etc. Everyone showing disgust with Americans are ‘dirty people’ who bathe only once a week. Not only this they ‘use a lot of perfumes’. This is just beyond Mrs.Bhattacharya’s understanding why they wash their clothes in the bathroom sink in which they spit and wash their dishes? Way back to Queens Jyoti is full of praise for the feeling of unity among Indians abroad, Jyoti said:
Wasn't it wonderful that Indians abroad were so outgoing and open minded. They didn't give a damn about communalism and petty feelings. They personally counted a number of Punjabis and Gujaratis and South Indians among their friends. (153)

Amit's frustration is now obvious because he finds himself still jobless. In the parties his opinion does not matter. As the days pass by, he becomes more impatient and his confidence starts shaking. This embitters his relationship with Dimple and petty-fogging becomes the order of the day. On the other hand Dimple helps Meena Sen in domestic works and spends her time in watching T.V. or reading newspapers. Dimple always lives under fear—everything terrifies her. All she hears about is murder, smugglings in the basement of the building etc. She is afraid of the policemen:

She was scared of the policemen, they just did not look inoffensive, like the ones back home. (154)

The party at Mullicks (Ina and Bijoy) gives Dimple an opportunity to meet people both Indians and native Americans and study their behaviour. Here she meets Ina, the notorious wife of Bijoy Mullick for the first time Sens and others are
disgusted with this Indian lady because “she wears pants and muscara” (155) and is “more American than the Americans” (156).

She is a chain smoker, drinks, flirts and goes to night schools.

She has particular theory about Indian immigrants:

It takes them a year to get India out of their system. In the second year they've bought all the things they have hungered for. So then they go back, or they stay here and vegetate or else they've got to live here like anyone else. (157)

Indian society is a patriarchal society and it hardly permits a woman to talk of liberation and equality. Here male members decide the fact of their female counterpart. Time and again the Sens have cautioned Amit to keep Dimple out of touch with Ina, otherwise she will get corrupted by the latter’s crazy ideas. It is this caution which prompts Amit to restrain her from accepting Ina's drink: “She does not like alcoholic beverages”, Amit said, “she does not even the like coke” (158). It really astonishes the Western feminists who expect a straight answer from Dimple. It is at this party that Dimple and Amit meet Marsha Mukherjee and Prodosh Mukherjee – their future benefactors. For Dimple Milt Glasser, brother of Marsha is like a riddle. She is instantly
attracted towards his tall and lanfy personality and his courteous manners though “Dimple could not follow the way he talked, the things he talked about the amazing leaps between his conversations” (159). Later in the novel, we see how Milt plays a pivotal role.

With the passage of time, Dimple starts breaking after the realization that she is deceived in marriage and a good- far-nothing husband like Amit will not cater for her dream world. She cannot tolerate his snores any more and insomnia becomes her accustomed habit. She suddenly realizes that “she hated the Sens’ apartment, sofa-bed, the wall to wall rug” (16). Now she gets disturbed at those habits of Amit which she ignored at Calcutta:

In Calcutta she had trained herself not to see his hand (always the left) as it stopped carefully at each button, then slid up and down a few times before hanging limply at his side but in New York these little gestures had begun to irritate her. (161)

Amit’s unemployment was the root cause of all troubles. He was not the man Dimple had wanted as husband:
She wanted Amit to be infallible, intractable, godlike, but with boyish charm; wanted him to find a job so that after a decent number of years he could take his savings and retire with her to a three-storey house in Ballygunge Park. (162)

She thinks that her marriage to Amit is a failure of her dreams:

She was bitter that marriage had betrayed her, had not provided all the glittery things she had imagined, had not bought her cocktails under canopied skies and three A.M. drives to dinzy restaurants where they sold divine Kababs rolled in roti. (163)

Her confusion with the names of the places like Nebraska and Nevada, Ohio and Iowa is only an external manifestation of the confusion growing within her mind. She is equally unhappy with her physique also because she sees herself now with the eyes of Ina Mullick. America underscores Dimple’s inferiority and she contemplates ways of bringing an end to this torturous existence. The second movement of the novel ends with Amit getting a job with their decision to move to Greenwich in Marsha’s flat.
The third and the final movement is the climax marked by intense dramatic scenes punctuated with Dimple's growing abnormality. She had always dreamt of a splendid apartment fully furnished and accompanied by all sorts of appliances. Marsha's flat is like a dream come true for her. However, the burden of responsibilities in terms of watering the plants and cleaning the kitchen, etc. is to her greatly annoying. Amit feels lonely and wishes if they could have shifted near the Sens. Quite often Dimple feels irritated even over trifles. One day while Amit is reading something she complains of exhaustion, which he attributes to her merge diet. She loses her temper at this interference:

I feel sort of dead inside and you can do is read paper and talk to me about food. You never listen; you've never listen to me. You hate me because I am not fat and fair. (164)

The furious outburst of Dimple shows her accumulated frustrations. She is suffering from inferiority complex and thinks that she is not able to win her husband's love and affection. Amit may also be blamed for his ignorance of female psychology. He thinks that providing creature comforts is
enough and hardly bothers for her emotional needs. He takes her out of four-walls very rarely and goes on admonishing instead:

You must go out, make friends, do something constructive, not stay at home and think about Calcutta. (165)

To be fair to Dimple it can be said that with her deficiencies in English she could have hardly conducted herself well in a city of enormous size like New York on her own.

America has outwitted her and now she is gripped by a sense of nostalgia. It is just beyond her understanding “how could she live in a country ... where every other woman was a stranger, where she felt different, ignorant, exposed to ridicule in the elevator?” (166). Her whole world is limited to the four walls of the apartment and media becomes her only friend. She feels like writing to Pixie but drops the idea because she thinks:

Friendship was impossible through letters. Conveying New York, Ina Mullick, her nightmares, the “phase” (as Amit called it) she was going through—all impossible to talk about ... . (167)
In leisurely hours she tries to dream about Amit but fails to do so because...

Amit did not feed her fantasy life; he was merely the provider of small material comforts. In bitter moments she ranked husband, blender, colour T.V., cassette, tape recorder, stereo, in their order of convenience. (168)

Dimple’s bracketing of her husband with the electronic appliances evidences that Amit is just a robot and not an actual human being for her.

Dimple’s disgust with American English and American system gets accentuated even by small things. She is afraid to operate the self-service elevators. Linda Sandler explains it in terms of her traditional upbringing:

Dimple emigrates to the electronic age with her traditional values almost intact, only partly modified by the pop culture of modern Calcutta, she is unable to make the transition from Before to After and chooses violence as a “problem-solving” device... (169)

Dimple finds life impossible “with the people who didn’t understand about Durga Pujah” (170). For Indians religion is an integral part of life and Dimple’s failure at assimilation with
America is due to a lack of 'shred faith'. An expatriate is tenaciously conscious of preserving his identity even in most trying moments of life. In America, she realizes how easy it was to live, to communicate, to share with people in Calcutta. She never felt frightened at the sight of the policemen whose faces were so friendly, but the scene has changed completely in the new environment:

She is scared of self-service elevators, of policemen, of gadgets and appliances. She does not want to wear Western clothes as she thinks she would be mistakenly taken for a Puerto Rican. She does not want to lose her identity but feels isolated, trapped, alienated, marginalized. (171)

At Queens Dimple had a confidante in Meena Sen with whom she could share her private feelings but at Greenwich she is all alone. Here, her depression manifests itself in different ways. She fails to write to Pixie though in her imagination she begins many a time. The greatest alter ego of a girl after marriage is her husband with whom she shares her inmost heart, but Dimple cannot do that. She keeps everything secret from Amit:
She does not tell him about these imaginary beginnings. She didn't tell him about her immoderate day time sleeping either. They were unspeakable failings. She thought of them as deformities —sinister, ugly, wicked. (172)

Dimple did have expected some trouble in American setup when she came to this city because pain was part of any new beginning. But never in her wildest dreams had she imagined 'to be strained like this beyond endurance':

She had expected pain when she had come to America, had told herself that pain was part of any new beginning, and in the sweet structures of that new life had allotted pain a special place. But she had not expected her mind to be strained like this, beyond endurance. She had not anticipated inertia, exhaustion, endless, endless indecisiveness. (173)

Asnani pertinently ascribes Dimple's mental state to the 'dilemma of cultures'—

Dimple is entrapped in a dilemma of tensions between American culture and society and traditional constraints surrounding an Indian wife, between a feminist desire to be assertive and independent and
At times when loneliness becomes unbearable Dimple contemplates as many as seven ways of committing suicide. It seems as if she is in love with whatever is dark, evil, sinister, gruesome-murderer, suicide, mugging these are all fascinating words for her. Even her ways of getting rid of life are fanciful like a television advertisement. She cannot trust anybody but media. Even "Her own body seemed curiously alien to her, filled with hate, malice, an insane desire to hurt, yet weightless, almost airborne" (175). Linda Sandler accounts for this feeling of 'emptiness' as follows:

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 frustrations and unhooks her further from reality... (176)

The dinner party arranged by Amit and Dimple is appreciated by everybody. People enjoy delicious food and share jokes but Dimple is lost in her own world of reverie. Next
day she sleeps till 4 O'clock and wakes up only when she feels hungry. She whispers to herself:

She would not discuss her dreams with anyone. One must draw the line somewhere; one must stand on principle. After the fifth spoonful, she realized she was not hungry, was on contrary, feeling ill and had spilled milk and cereal flakes on her clothes. (177)

Her mind is always full of news about mugging and rape; she always feels that someone is breaking window. When Amit points out her foolishness as they occupy the fourteenth floor, she retorts: "In America anything is possible. You can be raped and killed on any floor" (178). In a state of nervousness she hurts Amit with knife when he comes from behind to embrace her. She is all apologetic and blames America for her timidity.

This wouldn't have happened if we had stayed in Calcutta. I was never so nervous back home. (179)

One day Ina Mullick comes to her in an utterly disappointed mood almost grasping 'I'm bitterly unhappy'. Dimple fails to understand why Ina Mullick is so unhappy despite all her apparent fulfillments. At this moment she thinks herself lucky "to be alone among Marsha’s appliances, to
explore the wonders of modern American living, unencumbered by philosophical questions about happiness" (180).

In the meanwhile Dimple’s mother Mrs. Dasgupta writes about Pixies marriage to a fifty three year old actor and this news makes her very happy. She feels glad to be the friend of a to be super actress. Ina Mullick starts bringing her American friends to her apartment for a get together. “To Dimple they all looked alike; even their clothes were similar. She felt too shy to talk to them” (181). Milt and Leni Anspach often come to her with Ina. One day Leni starts quarreling with Ina and accuses her of spoiling her love-life with Milt. Dimple tries to pacify her but she flungs her rhinoceros shaped ashtray is symbolic of freedom from servile existence for Dimple.

As the novel advances to this end, we notice Dimple anxious to settle her scores with America. Her spirit rebels, she starts going out with Ina and Milt, wears Marsha’s pants etc. and enjoys all the prohibited freedom. She seduces Milt and keeps it a secret from Amit. When she goes out she puts on Marsha’s tinted sunglasses because:
The purple-tinted sunglasses are perhaps the most typical index of American culture. For Dimple, they are disguise, borrowed from the west, just like Marsha's clothes and the apartment in which she is living. (182)

This outing leaves her all the more confused. She turns neurotic and fails to differentiate between what she sees on T.V. and what she experiences herself in real life. She is now an alienated being undergoing the supposed after effects of alienation. One day while serving tea to Leni and Ina she engages herself in a reverie:

After Leni removed her cup Dimple kept on pouring, over the rim of Leni's cup, over the tray and the floating dentures till the pregnant-bellied tea-pot was emptied and Leni and Ina were standing and shaking her, Dimple, Dimple, stop it! (183)

She has numerous complaints against life:

Life should have treated her better, should have added and subtracted in different proportions so that she was not left with a chimera. Amit was no more than that. He did not feed her reveries; he was unreal. She was furious, desperate; she felt sick. It was as if
some force was impelling her towards disaster, some monster had overtaken her body, a creature with serpentine curls and heaving bosom that would erupt indiscretely through one of Dimple's orifices, leaving her, Dimple Basu, splattered like bug on the living room wall and rug. The cataclysm embarrassed her.

Dimple's gloom deepens with every passing day. She starts realizing: "Her life was slow, full of miscalculations" (185). Amit could only visualize the external changes in Dimple and he explains it as a case of 'culture-shock'. He even promises to take her to Calcutta. This does not prove helpful. Dimple starts contemplating the murder of her husband. The violence outside turns inside. She now fails to differentiate between what she sees on television and what she thinks. The idea of slaughtering her husband fascinates her. She thinks:

She would kill Amit and hide his body in the freezer.

The extravagance of the scheme delighted her, made her feel very American somehow, almost like a character in a T.V. Series. (186)
The problem with Amit is that "he lacked extravagance; he preserved the immigrant virtues of caution and cunning "(187).

He fails to mark the emotional cracking up of Dimple:

- He never thought of such things, never thought how hard it was for her to keep quite and smile though she was falling apart like a very old toy that had been played with, sometimes quite roughly, by children who claimed to love her. (188)

The trouble with Dimple is that she loses touch with reality. Guilts of seducing Milt and also of keeping everything secret from Amit vex her. She loses her sleep and becomes a sleep-walker like Lady Macbeth and ultimately kills Amit without actually thinking about its consequences:

- She sneaked up 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 like 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 the detectable spot, then she brought her right hand up and with the
knife stabbed the magical circle once, twice, seven times, each time a little harder, until the milk in the bowl of cereal was a pretty pink and the flakes were mushy and would have embarrassed any advertiser, and then she saw the head fall-off – but of course it was her imagination because she was not sure any more what she had seen on T V and what she had seen in the private screen of three A.M.- and it stayed upright on the counter – top, still with its eyes averted from her face, and she said very loudly to the knife that was redder now than it had had ever been when she had chopped chicken and mutton with it in the same kitchen and on the same counter...women on television got away with murder. (189)

The above description shows that it is a case of 'cold-murder'. By stabbing seven times, it seems Dimple frees herself from the marriage tie. This is the only act of assertion she can make. Some critics are of the view that Dimple's gruesome act has nothing to do with 'cultural shock'. She is not a victim of 'expatriation' but is, instead, 'a victim of her own neurotic sensibility fed on popular advertisement fantasies'. K.S. Narayan Rao looks at it from a specific angle:
The novel raises an important question: was the Indian wife happier in India with her limited freedom and greater docility, or does she achieve happiness in her painful search for more individual freedom and in the process of maturing? (190)

No doubt, this is a valid question and one can easily clutch the matter by saying that yes, the Indian wife was not happy in Calcutta either. But if she could have stayed back she should have reconciled to her frustration. She should have been made to realize that for an Indian wife her husband is all—

he is her breath and spirit and whatsoever may be his physical feature or achievement he should be loved and respected, or utmost she should have ended her own life. But the violence that is passively lying in her spirit gets multiplied on coming to America where "talking about murder is like talking about the weather" (191). It is American notion of freedom for women which makes her question her own happiness and freedom. Her emotions which need outlet burst at last and she suffers feats of madness, nightmares, reveries and insomnia and what one can expect from such a heroine. Her 'splintered—self' finds solution to her problems only in murdering her husband. Thus, it is
America which intensifies her confusion and turns the violence inside out and she ends up as a murderess.
References:


5. Ibid, P. 480.


12. Ibid, P. 159.


17. Ibid, P. 58.

18. Ibid, P. 60.

22. Ibid, P. 61.
25. Ibid, P. 211.
27. Ibid, P. 72.
31. Ibid, P. 121.
32. Ibid, P. 135.
33. Ibid, P. 145.
34. Ibid, P. 162.
35. Ibid, P. 160.
36. Ibid, P. 160.
41. Ibid, p. 228.


46. Ibid, p. 284.

47. Ibid, p. 284.


49. Ibid, p. 5.

50. Ibid, p. 46.

51. Ibid, p. 77.

52. Ibid, p. 77.


60. Ibid, p. 117.
61. Ibid, p. 117.
69. Ibid, p. 145.
71. Ibid, p. 140.
72. Ibid, p. 140.
73. Ibid, p. 140.
74. Ibid, p. 139.
75. Ibid, p. 167.
76. Ibid, p. 165.
77. Ibid, p. 170.
78. Ibid, p. 171.
79. Ibid, p. 171.
82. Ibid, p. 181.
83. Ibid, p. 175.
84. Ibid, p. 176.
85. Ibid, p. 179.
86. Dimri, Jaiwanti. "From Marriage to Murder: A Comparative Study of Bharati Mukherjee's Wife and


88. Ibid, p. 113.


91. Ibid, p. 11.


97. Ibid, p. 29.

98. Parekh, Pushpa N. p. 117, op. cit.


100. Ibid, p. 221.


102. Ibid, p. 239.

103. Ibid, p. 239.


110. Ibid, p. 56.

111. Ibid, p. 240.

112. Ibid, p. 185.

113. Ibid, p. 222.


115. Ibid, p. 29.


117. Ibid, p. 32.

118. Ibid, p. 216.

119. Ibid, p. 213.

120. Ibid, p. 206.


125. Ibid, p. 177.


130. Ibid, p. 3.
131. Ibid, p. 17.
133. Ibid, p. 20.
137. Ibid, p. 31.
138. Ibid, p. 35.
139. Ibid, p. 42.
140. Ibid, p. 42.
142. Sharma, Maya M. "The Inner World of Bharati Mukherjee: From Expatriate to Immigrant". In


144. Ibid, p. 46.

145. Ibid, p. 47.

146. Ibid, p. 52.

147. Ibid, p. 53.


150. Ibid, p. 56.

151. Ibid, p. 60.

152. Ibid, p. 60.


156. Ibid, p. 68.
157. Ibid, p. 76.
158. Ibid, p. 77.
159. Ibid, p. 83.
162. Ibid, p. 89.
163. Ibid, p. 102.
164. Ibid, p. 110.
165. Ibid, p. 111.
166. Ibid, p. 112.
167. Ibid, p. 120.


178. Ibid, p. 129.

179. Ibid, p. 132.


181. Ibid, p. 146.


184. Ibid, p. 156.


188. Ibid, p. 212.


==========