CONCLUSION
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Bharati Mukherjee is an Indian born American writer who has so far published seven novels. Her early work like the novel *The Tiger’s Daughter* (1971) caused critics to locate her fiction under the elastic heading “Indian Writing in English”. It is a label that Mukherjee herself has never embraced - an identity which she appears to see as confining rather than defining, a means of marginalizing a group of writers or confirming them as other and thus making them mute.

This study focuses on the struggles, pains and joys of the immigrants trying to realize their dreams in America. Bharati Mukherjee being considered as an Indo-American or Asian American writer emphasizes in her writings, the problems of after effects of migration. Though she claims citizenship of America, writes about her native India. Bharati Mukherjee, a writer of the Indian Diaspora presents herself through the dominant characters in her writings. Having migrated to America, alienated in the land of her dreams struggling herself for an identity, first as an exile from India, then an Indian expatriate in Canada and finally as an immigrant in United States, she experiences current discontentment of being an immigrant in the country of migrants.
The present work is a detailed analysis of her novels from *The Tiger’s Daughters* (1972) to *The Tree Bride* (2004), with a focus on the identity issues of immigrant experience. Since no full-length study of Bharati Mukherjee’s fiction has so far been made, from this standpoint, it is hoped that the present study will be of great interest to the academic community and the young generation hoping to migrate to the materialistic wonderlands.

Identity is a hard term to define. A few definitions that we came across are vague and flawed. Longman Dictionary of Psychology and Psychiatry (1984) defines it as a sense of uniqueness and independence. A person is thus defined to experience identity crisis when he or she has a difficulty to establish a clearly defined personal identity and a consistent role in society. The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001) defines identity as a person’s essential, continuous self, the internal subjective concept of oneself as an individual. These definitions are complex, in that, the first one considers identity as a stable and personal matter, while the second considers it as an internal subjectivity. The definition given by Encyclopedia of Psychology (2000) overcomes the above weakness and defines identity as a set of phenomena, which is not easily delimited. On one hand identity is a feature of the individual, reflecting an internal process of self-definition. On
the other hand, identity engages in a social context and is shaped by the immediate circumstances as process occurring and changing over time.

This definition is much better as it points out personal, social and changing natures of identity. Nevertheless, it is also not satisfactory one, hence we define identity not as a single or isolated category within the inner power of the individual, but as an interaction between the individual and social context he/she lives in. Identity is influenced by many forces such as race, class, politics, religion, language, gender and sexuality.

In idealizing American life and striving for an independent identity, a young person may attempt to disown all traces of the home culture – wearing only foreign clothes, changing one’s given name, adapting Anglo music, preferences, habits and rejecting all the restraints imposed by a more traditional culture or origin. While these may appear to be sign of progress to the American community, a too-rapid or extreme acculturation, may result in false self, in which essential aspects of personal history and background are psychologically disowned. The task of constructing an identity in an adapted country requires a realistic appraisal of both the new culture and the one left behind, the selective adoption of aspects of both cultures and in many instances, an adequate mourning for what has been lost. If these things are not traced, we are into the vicious circle of identity
crisis. The focus of this chapter is on the problems, which we face while constructing our identities, nevertheless if we fail, there is a deep crisis in identifying ourselves.

Bharati Mukherjee in her first novel, *The Tiger’s Daughter* explores the postcolonial dilemma of an English-educated elite expatriate on a visit to India. The central character, Tara, is something of an outcast in this society because of her ‘mleccha’ husband and she feels alienated from her friends and their way of life. The narrator mourns the decline of Calcutta in the face of communist-inspired populist uprising. There is no place in this world for the likes of Tara. The world-weariness and angst of this novel culminates in the violent metaphor of rape.

The experience of Tara is inevitably ‘biculural’ and biculturalism is an experience of detachment and irony. Tara feels that the old world no longer excited her, in a way that new world did. The loss of old culture was exciting. She was thrilled to have the opportunity to give up the old culture or her Indian identity, to embrace the new identity, that of an American. The chapter *The Tiger’s Daughter* explores the process of abandoning the old identity and acquiring a new one. In the process, needless to say Tara had a crisis in identifying herself. The tussle in the mind of Tara is created in enabling her to seek proper identity. A woman lost in the muzzle of
American neuro-centric civilization seeks in this novel, an old society for reconciliation. The novel deals with two different cultures conflicting in person of Tara.

*The Tiger’s Daughter* appears to be a novel reflecting Mukherjee’s personal choice. She has become a major spokesperson for an assimilationist perspective among migrant writers, with respected polemics against hyphenated identities. One can read the novel as a working out, in fictional form, of the author’s recognition that she no longer belongs to Calcutta but she belongs to North America.

*Wife*, in its depiction of the central character’s alienation and depression, also articulates a bleak vision of an immigrant woman’s failure to assimilate into Western culture. Although the novel is set in New York City, it reflects Bharati Mukherjee’s life in Toronto. The novel brings a unique Indian perspective to the standard themes of immigrant fiction, failed quests, thwarted dreams, dislocation and isolation leading to marital stress, demand of new and hostile culture environment, loss of supportive community and loss of relatively earlier identity. Dimple has a crisis in identifying her identity becomes isolated in an alien country with no supportive base, no traditional values to hold onto and no handy rules of dominant culture. It is a story of a relatively docile person’s inexplicable
explosion into violence. The senseless, violent act of the protagonist in murdering her husband Amit may be viewed as a desperate act on the part of Dimple in Americanizing herself or searching for a new identity in a new location.

*Jasmine* is a woman who survives poverty and ignorance in a small Indian village, only to be rewarded with brutality. Her journey to America is beyond taxing and what she did to survive is harrowing. Jasmine in India, as Jyothi, is seen against the backdrop of the rigid and patriarchal Indian society. In America, her self-awareness is reflected in her relationships with Bud, Taylor and Du. However, her first husband Prakash initiates her transformation from Jyothi to Jane. After her husband's death Jasmine tries to establish a new cultural identity and in exile, she cultivates new habits and expressions of life. Thus caught between the two cultures of the east and west, past and present, old and new, Jasmine constantly shuttles in search of a concrete identity. Bharati Mukherjee ends the fiction on a novel note, and re-emphasizes the complex and alternating nature of identity of a woman in exile.

*The Holder of The World* portrays an entirely different picture of jostling cultures, the Eastern and the Western. Hannah Easton's voyage is mental and very much interior rather than physical. The movement of the
narrative is circular since the story ends on the same note as it opens, but Hannah does not remain the same. Her personality changes during her restless moves from Salem to Stepney, Coramandel to Devgad and then back to Salem. Hannah Easton buries her puritan past and emerges as a real fighter for life. Creation of Hannah is very stunning and bold; she strives for an identity in a rigid society.

*The Holder of The World* is an experiment in virtual reality, a way of revising, and relieving history instead of rewriting it. The novel highlights how much Asia has contributed to the notion of an American or European identity. Contact with others, changes the way we see ourselves. It also forges link between the seventeenth century Massachusetts and the pre-colonial Mughal India. The writer creates a vivid complex; talks about the dislocation and transformation in identifying oneself that arise in the face of a meeting culture.

*Leave It To Me* novel continues the theme of immigration. The protagonist is saved from death in the Indian desert by Grey Nuns. She is adopted by Italian-American parents from New York. The novel depicts the story of twenty three year old Debby Dimartino’s quest for discovering her real identity. The names constantly change as the plot progress, from Baby Clear Water Iris-daughter-Faustine-Debby Dimartino – Devi Dee.
When her lover Frankie betrays her, Debby casually torches his house, and then takes off for California to look for her birth mother. On the way she recherrishes herself as Devi Dee, the name reminiscent of the Indian Goddess, which also refers to a myth told in the novels prologue of a Hindu Goddess charged with slaying an evil buffalo demon. Debby is a modern day incarnation of Devi who fights and destroys people who come in her way. Her identity crisis looms large by the time she arrives in San Francisco. Devi Dee displays an underlying drive to build up life with fragments, how so ever fragile they might be. In trying alternatives, Devi Dee sometimes appear abandoned in her behaviour but this trait should be viewed from the angle of her innate bid to live a life on her own terms.

*Desirable Daughters* presents a portrait of a traditional Brahmin family on the brink of dissolution. Tara, the novel’s narrator, divorced from the husband and moved to San Francisco, teeters between the India that she left behind and the dizzying California she now calls home. The irony lies in the arranged marriage resulting in divorce. Through evocative, elegant prose, Mukherjee keenly observes the identity issues as Tara struggles to reconcile the ancient traditions of her past with the modern demands of her new life.
It is one of the novels in the sequel consisting of three novels. All these novels are narrated by Tara Chaterjee, the protagonist of the story. Tara is meshed with innumerable questions related to her new responsibility. The novel also deals with hegemony of the American civilization and the life grounded in human concern in India.

Though separated by geography and by radically different lifestyles, Tara and her sisters remain close, and when the problems prevail, Tara turns towards her sisters and her ex-husband for comfort, renewal and help in resolving the mystery that threatens to destroy her and her family. In telling the complex story of a protagonist, Bharati Mukherjee upholds the struggle for identity in an alien land.

Bharati Mukherjee, moving back and forth between cultures and cross continents, weaves an enchanting and disturbing story that is as much as it is a history lesson. *The Tree Bride* delves deep into the complex story of India’s struggle for freedom from the British Raj.

In fact the novel is an onion skinned detective story, with each subplot acting as new layer of discovery. Contrary to the author’s premise, the mix of ghosts and contemporary technology neither shocks nor surprise, as belief in ghosts is as much a fact of European Christian mythology as it is of Indian. What unfolded in Desirable Daughters was the beginning of a
riveting mystery tied to Tara’s family past. In *The Tree Bride* Mukherjee picks up the story as Tara explores further the life of her namesake. This root search is spurred on by the threat to Tara’s life. Tara’s intriguing journey into the revelations of the past is bound by a series of odd connections and coincidences. Tara, escaping the death when her house was firebombed begins to understand that the indiscriminate killer in India and America is born and possibly raised in her family house. The novel fuses history, mysticism, treachery and enduring love in a suspectful story about the lingering effects of the past secrets. In piecing together her ancestor’s transformation from a docile Bengali Brahmin girl-child into an impassioned organizer of resistance against the British Raj, the contemporary narrator discovers and lays claim to unacknowledged elements in her “American” identity.

Postcolonial authors frequently rewrite about nationalism to empower local traditions, cultures and institutions depreciated by the colonial past. Mukherjee classifies herself as an American writer and disdains an identity that ties her to her Indian roots.

Mukherjee has often gone on record in her insistent desire to see herself as a main stream American writer. But, being a woman, she occupies a position outside the main stream, sometimes defined as “male stream”.

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Besides, despite her denials she belongs not to the dominant culture but to one of the Asian American sub-cultures. So, as the product of two sub-cultures, she remains an outsider, though aspiring eagerly for assimilation. Constantly, the woman characters who, people her novels, are sometimes central and at other times the marginalized other. In her fictions, Mukherjee tries to move them from margin to the centre, toward their empowerment and toward an affirmation of their identities.

Through her stories Mukherjee vindicates her position as an American in the Asian immigrant history with her various transformations – an Indian girl, a Canadian wife and a naturalized American. There are struggles Mukherjee addresses in the cultural differences of her characters; in order to diminish the cultural conflicts, she releases her characters into a freedom without Indian confines. Therefore, her characters construct their new selves through a series of experiences. Tara, Dimple and Jasmine keep transforming to perceive freedom. Although they are forced to exile by family, marriage or prophetic fate, atlast, Mukherjee and her protagonists face crisis in their identities though dominating their fate and decide a place to live in. This story of Bharati Mukherjee is the best example for the current younger generation or the skilled workers dreaming to settle in an unknown, totally different cultural set up. A greed for money and yearning for an
aristocratic lifestyle should not end up in identity crisis. Marching with globalization, living in a global village with a constant brain drain to a materialistic wonderland, America, this exhaustive study would go a long way in analyzing the identity issues of younger generations.