Chapter 5

Conclusion
CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION

Every end is a new beginning and every beginning is an end. In the light of this statement, it is asserted that Mukherjee’s novels have explored the unexplored areas of expatriate experience in all their dimensions. Abraham, P.A. defines expatriate sensibility for better comprehension:

There is a complex view of the double vision of the expatriates – both a looking forward and a yearning backward. (51)

Expatriates have a sense of dislocation with a state of mind and emotion which includes a wishful longing for the past. They become immigrants when they adopt the bi-culture. They all reflect the consciousness of change and the strange and unexpected ways in which it has come to shape the character of individuals and the temper of the collective life as well as competing structures of human values and human destiny.

Mukherjee’s character creation is different from others. It is of no significance that the novel should primarily be concerned with the creation of male characters. The process of
eliminating the hero however was inevitable in the development of the Nineteenth Century novels. The novels of this era tend to be permeated with a deep sense of frustration and futility. Mukherjee is both an insider and outsider with receptive skills which helped her to create her Characters differently. She believes that improvising is the immigrant’s art of course and it is the means of survival. In an Interview with Moyers, Bill., she herself has stated:

Novels are about individuals and especially larger than life individuals; my protagonists are very feisty characters.

Her characters are caught between their memories of India and the promises of America; they confront the need to adapt themselves to traumatic change. In American Dreamer Mukherjee states that:

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

Her early works generally articulates a pessimism, anger and a sense of loneliness. In her first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, Tara was nostalgic and frustrated because of the foreign consciousness. Tara's visit to India, forced her to look at the inner world consisting of the cultures and her parental home stirs up innumerable memories of the past struggling between two cultures, Tara feels alienated from self and society.

Mukherjee presents the characters like a dramatist who does not describe them in detail because she knows that people are going to visualize them. Mukherjee adopts a different fictional technique in order to know the depth of her characters in her next novel *Wife*. Dimple is closely examined for her disturbed nature which existed within her in India, and aggravated in America. Her husband does not suffer from any of those conflicts because his psyche is structured entirely differently. Observing the neurotic reaction, Rajeshwar. M states:
Psychoanalytic approach thus helps us with a better appreciation of the human situation of the characters of the women novelists and sharpens our understanding of and enhances our sympathy for them.... the endeavour to study the neurotic characters using psychoanalytic insights promises to reveal the new depths in the fiction of Indian English Women Writers. (111)

Tara and Dimple fail to move from expatriate to immigrant adaptation in the diasporic spectrum. Like spirits, the expatriates flutter between the two worlds.

The meaning of alienation for Mukherjee is different from that of other writers. For Anita Desai, it is more related to the emotional and mental moods and attitudes of her characters than to their spiritual, moral or ethical temperaments. But for Mukherjee, the sense of ‘exile’ that leads to the alienation of the characters is cultural confrontation. So, Mukherjee made her characters understand the Culture and made them adjust and reform to that environment. By her futuristic vision, she wishes to
be an enthusiastic, affirmative person facing the multiple
displacements successfully.

The sense of alienation and self-exile often grips the psyche
of modern man. The Characters feel alienated not only from their
immediate environment, but also within themselves. From this
point of view, Mukherjee marks a departure from her earlier
novels in the sense that the characters are not alienated but
adapted. From Jasmine one can learn to adapt oneself to the
emerging complexities of life and society. Jasmine's life
undergoes many changes, and at every step, she feels the
rootlessness and the split-personality. But she has learned to
adjust to new set of values. She herself states: “This is puritan
country; We’re born with guilt or quickly learn it. Guilt twists a
person …” (Jasmine, 228).

The change of names is accepted by her without any
hesitation and forges the new alliances. Jasmine’s success in her
twin venture can be gauged by the determination she discovers
within herself in the end. Like Mukherjee, Jasmine grabs each
and every opportunity to become an American and wants to
prove herself: "... a girl from a swampy backwater could accomplish" (Jasmine 160).

Mukherjee deliberately avoids characterizing her heroine as a victim. It is that she simply wants to focus on the positive aspects of immigration rather than to create stereotype victims. Instead of a delicate, submissive woman who feels out of place in U.S.A, she now grows bold in her new home, but still feels the pull of tradition. Mukherjee in a conversation with Schoch, Russel states:

To make people realize that we have to get away from thinking of ourselves... of our identities....as fixed, as dependant only on inherited things: language, race, class, culture. And instead to improvise identity, to see ourselves as part of a changing community in which our loyalty depends on what community we have adopted and decided to give our loyalty to.

Mukherjee’s characters take a new phase in life and after their adaptation they are not shunt. They face life with more confidence, shedding all the trials and tribulations aside. In her later novels *The Holder of The World* and *Leave It to Me*, the
author strives to make us understand what is meant by the idea of an American identity and whether in a world of hybridity and multiplicity such a notion can exist. Hannah Easton in *The Holder of The World*, journeys from West to East, an expatriate experience where she embraces the new world. Even her marriage is a diversion from the superficial life and she quests for a meaningful life. In this novel, Hannah searches for her locale to settle in her life. Agarwalla, Shyam S. states:

….Hannah longed to escape from the claustrophobic atmosphere and she had found Gabriel Legge in Salem to help her. (204)

There is a hike in the lives of Mukherjee’s characters since they are capable of adaptability. Tara and Dimple struggled to adopt the American culture. Jasmine initially struggled, but soon adjusts herself to the new environment. But Hannah alone wholeheartedly adopted the new culture without any hesitation. It is well known that good fiction concentrates on the emotional, intellectual and physical responses of the characters when they are thrust into a situation that is not routine for them. In this context, Mukherjee presents virtual reality as a device in *The*
Holder of The World to bring out the emotional and intellectual response. In an interview, with Chen Tina and Goudle, S.X she explains the virtual reality:

The people are always going to have their hands and feet in one particular posture, whereas with interactive technology, you’re changing the narrative by inputting new information according to new mood ... The individual experiencing the image, not simply the image itself - both are going to be transformed by interaction.

The basic concerns in most of the fiction of Bharati Mukherjee are – the problem of identity, survival, guilt, alienation, search for a promised land, freedom etc. The main concern in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee is the question of American identity of the characters. Their quest is not a personal one but a collective one. To attain this quest, her characters believe in adaptation and acceptance of bi-culture. Above all, Mukherjee invariably writes about survival which is a fashionable theme and about the Hindu concept of non-attachment. Even in all her public
statements and interviews, she emphasizes that her characters go in for American affiliations. Ketu. H. states:

In conclusion, South Asian writers have made their immigrant, expatriate spaces in North America extremely productive for their creative work ... they recreate their familial, social, cultural, political histories and locate them in their present spaces, giving them “a local habitation and a name”. (214)

The theme of exile is frequently concerned with place and displacement and establishes a new relationship. Her protagonists face a multi cultural society and exhibit a deep awareness of the social reality surrounding them. The multi-cultural ethos with which they are confronted leads to the struggle for a new life but not a complete break with the past. Her characters are not passive women. They are ready to cross oceans, transform their worlds and in the process leave behind their path. They are changing and being changed and respond to new experiences. Journey and destination are important for any immigrant in the world. The success of any inter-personal
relationship depends on the autonomy and strength of each participant.

When the seven years of exile come to an end, Tara sets out for her homeland with great expectations, but to her rude shock she finds a radical change with an unpleasant shock. She is sorely disappointed and it seems as if she has returned to a new world altogether. She encounters the disintegration in the land which is tragic and terrible. When the harmony gets disrupted by the imposition of an alien authority – change of environment – it leads to anarchy, disharmony and self-denigration.

Jasmine’s story reveals her ability to bounce back to life even after a traumatic experience. Jasmine - the joyous, energetic immigrant, with change of identities plunges into the new life whole heartedly. It is as if she is rebuilding herself up from nothing, and existential task of creating herself in her new country. Rao, Krishna A.V. states:

The immigrants in her stories go through extremes of transformations in America and at the same time they
alter the country's appearance and psychological make-up. (114)

Hannah as an expatriate embraces the new world for it is this world that she has been searching for a long time. The story is also a meeting place of three cultures - Christian, Muslim and Hindu. Mukherjee intertwines the Indian culture, Puritan culture and Muslim culture to give a different dimension for her novels to portray a luminous picture of the India that was, in all hues and colours to fascinate the West. She has recaptured the history and related it to the present times in an artistic way.

All her women characters need a transformation to accommodate themselves in the bi-cultural land. This kind of sweeping adaptation is required for every immigrant. Devi Dee, the self - re-christened protagonist in *Leave It to Me*, like the other characters has the quest for her roots even in a multi-cuisine world. She wants to track down her biological mother. Devi is a tough and vulnerable person who is capable of redemption even after she has gone through some of the violence within herself. Devi’s desire to be independent and courageous made her be different from weak will, dependence and shyness,
which are alien to her perception. Even though she is confident, she is portrayed as an emotionally empowered person with intense struggle in order to realize her adoption.

Mukherjee rejoices in the idea of assimilation and makes her characters achieve something in their lives when they move to America. It is hoped that people would notice the change not only in her characters but also the changing of America. The arrival to a new place is not a loss but migration is the arrival of gain. The author is very firm in identifying herself as an American rather than as an Asian American because, like her characters, she also acknowledges that America has transformed her minute by minute. This transformation is a two-way process. It affects both the individual and the national-cultural identity. Mukherjee always wishes that women must be provided with a living strength to overcome the inner terror of truth. Survival and reincarnation are indeed integral elements of her novels. Her protagonists are known by different names at different stages of the narrative, signifying her acquisition of different identities and lives. Her novels are an account of immigrants' metamorphosis, self-invention and self-empowerment.
The depression of expatriates is graphically portrayed in her early novels where the emotional and living sides of the characters are suppressed when they are forced into exile accidentally. They feel betrayed by this ‘unexpected’ exile. They are caught in the complex web by the environment and they wriggle and suffer.

The expatriate writer is always in a mood of complaint and projects the pain of exile and becomes a figure of solitude. So Mukherjee undergoes the changing process to become an immigrant. Assimilation is involved in immigration; however, it does not mean a denial of the past, which is impossible. They accept the dual existence for their survival.

The adopted land should take full responsibility in moulding everyone’s character, deciding one’s position in the society. If the environment and society give the psychological comfort needed by man, the protagonist would live in a prosperous society and environment. Identity and recognition enrich human lives and help every one to create a more wholesome value system, capable of withstanding new pressures, new challenges to make every one a self-esteemed person to create a better society.
They are afflicted with a sense of loneliness and pessimism, due to dislocations in their personal lives and morbidity of temperament. Because of the inherent duality of the situation, she is very confused and was not able to share her views and feelings with her friends. Dimple's life becomes more complicated because of her failure to assimilate herself with the American way of life. Even preserving her identity becomes a problem and a sense of nostalgia overcomes her. Modern man is condemned to suffer the impact of fractured self, which manifests itself differently in the form of generation gap, loss of credibility, compartmentalization of life, and the conspicuous absence of a sense of meaning in life and so on. Dimple is discontented, dissatisfied and considers her life a shadow, absolutely flat and uncolored. Unshared feelings between the couple are alluded to be the main reason for marital discord in both the novels. As David was a foreigner, Tara was not able to communicate with him the finer nuances of her family background and of life in Calcutta. These two semi-autobiographical novels were the by-products of her own experience during her stay in Canada and combine reality and fiction in a judicious manner. They are
blocked by subtle as well as blunt racism that they never expected. They are not able to survive in the new environment and the uncertainty in their minds takes them to weird lengths in a desperate search for identity.

Jasmine is a young Indian woman in the U.S. who, trying to adapt to the American way of life in order to survive, changes identities several times. Her positive outlook made her to believe that she had landed but her destination is not yet reached. She absorbs the alien culture confidently and comes out of alienation. Her novel *The Holder of The World* moves through space and time, between India and the U.S.A. and between historical and contemporary times of Seventeenth Century. Immigration and Travel takes up a major role in the later novels of Bharati Mukherjee.

The Third World passengers migrating with their dreams to U.S. have increased and the displacement arises with the link between first and Third worlds. The Travel motif adopted by Bharati Mukherjee reflects the cultural translation, the Self fashioning and transformation in this life. Her characters are beyond the virtual reality and they recreate themselves to fit in the
environments. Debby's experiences made her take up a multicultu­
cultural personality for herself. The background of these women
with traditional beliefs and western ideas always confuses them.

Her experience in America is not pleasant and promising. She even feels that her husband had forsaken her and she floats in and out of dreams. She suffers from phobias and feels trapped in manic depression. So, Dimple is pictured as a neurotic and frigid character who is always in a state of emotional euphoria. She always feels bored and frustrated by the humdrum of life. Jasmine does not have sentimental longing to return to her homeland and she accepts the immigrant status with true spirits. Debby Dimartino, the heroine of the novel is adopted as a toddler, grows as an exotic girl in an American town and finds herself a misfit. Mukherjee delves into the search of identity of Debby Dimartino which has turned out to be the revelation of sheer evil in her life, consciously and unconsciously moulding her life, to add more to the existing horrid bitterness. Debby Dimartino is portrayed as an emotionally empowered person with intense struggle in order to realize her adoption.
The author feels for her suffering protagonists, at times empathizes with them but seldom fails to underline their human vulnerability. In an interview with Ron Hogan, she herself states about her character Devi:

I hope she’s sympathetic. She’s tough and vulnerable.  
... what she understands, in retrospect, is that there’s a huge difference between vengeance and justice. Once that idea was articulated by my character, I realized that in order to make my concept of divine justice, which sometimes involves great violence, understandable to the reader, I’d have to dig into and share the Hindu mythology of the goddess Devi worshipped in Bengal, who was created by the Cosmic Spirit to do battle with the baddest bad ass of all the demons, the Buffalo Demon, and is therefore quite violent.

Her voice is the universal cry of Indian women in the West to overcome the inner terror of truth. Mukherjee’s images about women are the eye openers to the changing phases of women in Indian writing in English. They are reflective of their condition and
their protest is not for equality but for the right to be acknowledged as individuals. Indian bondage with persons is strengthened with morality and caretaking. American culture is fluid and devoid of love and intimacy since they adjust and change according to the environment.

The immigrants feel more American than their native counterparts in all respects and obviously their cultural elasticity enables them adjust to the new environment. So the author also wishes to be noted as an immigrant American rather than an expatriate Indian. The basic philosophy of an expatriate writer is the apprehension of looking at things critically. Through her first two novels, Mukherjee criticizes the Indian society which has not given the inner resources to cope with the fear and challenging situations and ultimately descends into unexpected traumatic experiences. After the transition, Mukherjee's artistic competence is seen in her later novels. She portrays the immigrants in all their richness, equally varied with fear, low suspicion or pure astonishment. Kumar, Nagendra quotes Mukherjee:

It was not right to describe the American experience as one of the melting pot but a more appropriate word
would be ‘fusion’ because immigrants in America did not melt or were forged into something like their white counterpart but immigration was a two-way process and both the whites and immigrants were growing into a third thing by this interchange and experience. (104-105)

Each one of the frustrated characters adopts his or her own manner of facing the problem, of alienation, suffering, and boredom. Human affection and love are the highest value in life where in the modern world, it has deteriorated and interpersonal relationship has become meaningless. A writer’s vision in general is the result of the artist’s striving to promote human values and these have to be pictured and argued as to how these can contribute to healthy living. Such exploitation and oppression also give rise to a certain positive attitude i.e. humanity is always won by continuing to play in the face of certain defeat.

Many writers are conscious about bringing a change in the individual and in the society through providing models for the readers in their works of art. The combination of literary and social conditions has demanded this sort of writing. The true art
enriches everyone’s knowledge and has the power to pull everyone to see and hear the things which have not been experienced.

As Wiebe, Rudy opines in his article on ‘The Artist as A Critic and A Witness’:

Art’s effect on you depends a good deal upon your knowledge or even on your digestion. Nevertheless, if it is a true work of art it will have the power to pull you around to see and hear things you have not experienced before; and among people of reasonably similar background and emotional outlook it will affect them the same way. This power will be of work itself, not the artist who made it. We can return to great art again and again; and instead of its power over us waning, it will intensify. (40)

A work which utilizes one's experiences, expectations, yearnings and dreams, doubts and dilemmas to look at the world in a different light with the intention of creating a better, more prosperous and more peaceful world stands a better chance of being accepted and acknowledged. Such a work not only draws
the attention of the people but it attains their approval and appreciation too. Most of the great legends, irrespective of the language in which they have been written, stand testimony to this with their deep concern for mankind and its betterment.

Men and women all over the world, irrespective of their differences of nationality, race, religion, colour or government, are governed by more or less the same feelings and passions. Hence the inequality – existing between nations, between classes, between races, between castes, between men and women, between the haves and have-nots – has not remained a matter of scholarly interest but over the years it has become everyone’s concern.

Mukherjee has her own methodology, uniqueness and particular style of looking at the problems. Her writings focus our attention to the play between Dream and Reality, exhorting the oppressed to stand up and fight for justice and equality. They reveal in no uncertain terms that the realisation of their dream will not be possible unless they realise their capability and empower themselves.
The novel, being a form of communication, tries to present a particular experience and this particular experience for expatriates becomes the subject matter of her novels, the subject matter being the life of Indian-Americans.

Mukherjee's omniscient narrative and irony expresses the expatriates' feelings with occasional shifts and authorial comments. But the immigrants' voice appears in the first person narration as in *Jasmine, The Holder of The World* and *Leave It to Me*. She mainly presents immigrants from the American point of view though sometimes the view point is suddenly reversed and America is seen through immigrants' eyes.

Analyzing the characters of the author, we discover that the theme of expatriation is linked with fragmented guilt, problem of identity, survival and search for a Promised Land and freedom. Whereas, the immigrants are well adjusted, adapts to the new country and its life-style. Hence, the management of grief thus becomes a paradigm of immigration.

Almost all the stories of Bharati Mukherjee depict the problems and challenges faced by her characters emigrating to America. The temptations of the immigrants undoubtedly seem to
be irresistible and one can only be tempted to inquire into the nature of experiences or freedom. They are capable of achieving after they arrive in that continent. The main highlight is that even her characters have nostalgic feelings, but they move from that and establishes new relationships. Tikoo, S.K states:

... they look forward to presenting the experiences of the immigrants before and after their immigration.

(137)

The emigration to America is achieved at a heavy price and deep sufferings. They converge in that country, intermix, and promote a new culture. They take up ordinary jobs in the new country of their dreams to earn their livelihood and survive. The transformation of the immigrants is effected in several ways. The simplest one is that of effecting marital union between the characters from two different countries irrespective of their castes, cultures or value-systems they might have inherited and brought along with them into the new country.

Mukherjee's concern in these five novels taken for analysis mainly rests on the survival of her characters with transformation and identity. It is the question whether her novels deal with
The answer to this lies in her own statement in *Darkness*:

> I had thought of myself, in spite of a white husband and two assimilated sons, as an expatriate. In my fiction, and in my Canadian experience, “immigrants” were lost souls, put upon and pathetic. Expatriates, on the other hand, knew all well who and what they were, and what foul fate had befallen them. (1-2)

**Scope for further Studies and Research**

Any research paper attains a sense of fulfillment only when the discussions lead to avenues for further studies and research. The expatriate - immigrant relationship is not confined to the United States of America alone. A study of the expatriate - immigrant relationship in the context of race conflicts in India, Canada etc., offers a rich and thought provoking field. The frustrations of the oppressed expressed in other Literatures may be a source of highly interesting studies. The reactions of some of the Indian- expatriate writers – to the problem of quest for identity – the writers like V.S.Naipaul, Gita Mehta, Sasthi Brata, Rohinton Mistry etc., writing in English, may prove to be
fertile fields of research with more possibilities. One may conclude by saying that the end of this work is not its real end in the sense that the findings of this particular work will be the foundation and beginning for many more projects of research yet to be started. The purpose of this thesis will be fulfilled and amply rewarded, if this thesis and its findings serve as an inspiration to future research scholars urging them to more fruitful ventures.