CHAPTER III

THE STRUGGLE FOR ASSIMILATION

Assimilation is the process by which immigrants remake themselves as Americans, through the acculturation of their values, norms and beliefs. New immigrants are socialized to believe in the value of equality of all men and women, the norms of freedom, and the pursuit of liberty in America. The challenge of assimilation in America is to create and recreate an inclusive American identity, based on different regional and transnational expressions of culture without perpetuating prejudice, stereotype, and social distance. Assimilation is a process during which immigrants embrace a country's cultural philosophy. They incorporate into and adapt to American society. Assimilation is only a gradual sequence since the immigrant in his early period of migration suffers very hard to shed his past life and accommodate to his new surroundings. But later the successful immigrant adapt into the new land, while the sufferers are branded expatriates who alienate themselves from the society.

Bharati Mukherjee considers her work a celebration of her emotions and herself a writer of the Indian diaspora who cherishes the American "melting pot" of America. America was given the "Melting Pot" metaphor by the British playwright Israel Zanwill in his play The Melting Pot:
There she lies, the great melting pot. Listen can’t you hear the roaring and bubbling? There gapes her mouth the harbour where one thousand mammoth feeders come from the ends of the world to pour in their human freight. Ah, what a stirring and seething? Celt and Latin Slav and Teuton. Greek and Syrian - Black and Yellow – Jew and Gentile- Yes, East and West, North and South, the Palm and the pine the pole and the equator the crescent and the cross – how the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame! Here shall they all unite to build the republic of man and the kingdom of God. Ah, Vera, what is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem, where all the nations and races come to worship and look back, compared with the glory of America, where all races and nations come to labour and look forward.” Peace, Peace to all ye unborn millions fated to fill. This giant continent!

(The Melting Pot 198-99)

Mukherjee’s main theme throughout her writing discusses the condition of Asian immigrants in North America with particular attention to the changes taking place in south Asian women in the new world. While the characters in all her works are aware of the brutalities and violence that surround them and are often victimized by
various forms of social oppression she generally draws them as survivors. When the women in Mukherjee’s fiction immigrate to America, they encounter feminism and American representations of Indian women as seductive, wise, and all-knowing. The women must therefore struggle with their gender and define themselves in new territory. Mukherjee has established herself as a powerful member of the American literary scene, one whose most remarkable works reflect her pride in not only Indian heritage but also in her celebration of embracing America. She has said in an interview in the Massachusetts Review, “the immigrants in my stories go through extreme transformation in America and at the same time they alter the country’s appearance and psychological make-up” (Carb 645-54). And so we are given a writer whose voice tells the tales of her own experiences to demonstrate the changing shape of American society. Mukherjee narrates the assimilation by taking into consideration the struggle that subaltern women have to undergo in the first world.

Mukherjee’s plots move across culture, and the immigrants leave their homes, usually Calcutta to take up residence in the United States. Beena Agarwal puts it thus: "Bharati Mukherjee through her female protagonists expresses her concern for the problem of assimilation, the assimilation of traditional Indian mode of living with new materialistic values encouraged by American society"
(“Cross Cultural Dilemma” 272). She portrays paradoxically the eastern culture where the heroine was born and bred and the western culture in which she experiences a new life. The immigrants carry the original cultures with them and simultaneously must change to survive in the new world. Nalini observes:

Unlike the expatriate with his nostalgia for the past, the immigrant plunges into the present and gets enthusiastically involved in the environment around him. While the expatriate parades pain and grievance, the immigrant celebrates the fact of being alive in a new world, of being reborn. Immigrants are energetic, resilient and able to accept changes. They themselves change in the encounter of cultures and they also bring about change in their environment. The assimilation involved in immigration does not mean a denial of the past. It only means giving a rigid holding on to the past. ("Sharpened Sensibility" 192)

Mukherjee has carved out the assimilation of the third world immigrants into American Melting pot which is itself enriched by those she describes as new pioneers. Jasmine is one of those pioneer a survivor with courage. Indira opines, “Jasmine takes the bird-view of the American life and does not touch the deeper layers of values there. The novel looks at American life from an immigrant point of
view leaving aside the American experience of the immigrants, their legal and illegal entry into their country and its consequences” (“Jasmine: An Odyssey” 176). Jasmine, Mukherjee’s most popularly read novel was generally received enthusiastically, but there was some criticism that it was too short and its plot too contrived to be really a successful work of fiction. It is a novel that stems from an earlier short story collection The Middle Man and Other Stories and was expanded to a story of a young widow who uprooted herself from her life in India and re-roots herself in search of a new life and the image of America. Using techniques such as flash backs and cross cuts, the novel tells the story of Jasmine’s life from her early days in Hasnapur to her extraordinary adventure in the United States. It is a story of dislocation and relocation as the title character continually sheds lives to move into other roles moving further westward while constantly fleeing off her past. As the novel gets going with its multifarious techniques a portrayal of mutually alien cultures and locals is effectively displayed. Jasmine is a perfect example of Mukherjee’s concept of assimilation leading to complete Americanization of the protagonist.

In this novel Mukherjee rejoices in the idea of assimilation and makes it clear that Jasmine needs to travel to America to make something significant of her life because in the third world she faced only despair and loss.
Jasmine is herself dizzy at the speed of her transformation the fluidity of American character and the American landscape. In *Jasmine* the protagonist’s struggle symbolizes the restless search of a rootless person irked by a depressing sense of isolation all around. Her journey through life leads Jasmine through many transformations in various locations. In her land of opportunity, Jasmine is thrown from one state of insecurity to another and she lets go all her hold on things which she could have held dear in India. She realizes she has become a drifter moving in a world of uncertainties. “I feel at times like a stone hurting 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” (*J* 139).

In *Jasmine* Mukherjee recounts the Americanization of the Indian protagonist. In today’s multi-ethnic America the path to become an American is easier but still it is not without thorns. On the one hand there are restrictions imposed by the ethnic group, on the other hand the social decoy presented by contemporary Puritan Anglo-American mainstream brings disillusion. As the novel gets going with its multifarious techniques such as flash backs and crosscuts, a portrayal of mutually alien cultures and the tensions inherent in the process of Americanization of the Asians are admirably displayed. The protagonists of her first two
novels Tara and Dimple are completely dislocated both in India and in America whereas Jasmine survives and reinstates herself to a new life. The exuberance of immigration which comes with the acquisition of Americanness and the immigrant Indianness as a sort of fluid identities to be celebrated does not come easily. The definition of America as a country which promises a brighter future is shared by Mukherjee in her novel. As Grewal has mentioned, “Even though the protagonist in *Jasmine* encounters many kinds of violence in the United States, the country offers her something that India cannot which is the choice to reinvent herself” (*Transnational America* 69). And it is in this continuous effort of deconstructing and reconstructing selfhood that Jasmine encounters violence in every step of her identity formation.

Jasmine, the protagonist of the novel is born and bred in a small village in Punjab named Hasnapur. She is given the name Jyoti by birth but then she is called as Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase, and Jane during different periods of her life that correspond to different persons in it. Though born to poor parents she is a bright student who more enthusiastically learns English. Her passion for the language certainly helps her in her days in the new land. She is married to a young ambitious engineer Prakash who unlike other Indian husbands encourages his wife to
maintain an identity. It is he who changes her name from Jyoti to Jasmine. Prakash’s renaming of Jasmine is a sign of her new and modern identity that represents her initial migration away from traditional Indian customs and culture. "He wanted to break down the Jyoti I’d been in Hasnapur and make a new kind of city women. To break off the past he gave me a new name Jasmine....Jyoti, Jasmine I shuttled between identities" (J 77). Jasmine becomes a more modern and free thinking woman but ironically this transformation also occurs through the means of a traditional Indian male.

Prakash’s dream was to migrate to America, to study and open an electronics business, a career which will include Jyoti as his partner. Jyoti has already undergone major identity shifts from feudal Hasnapur to urban Jullundar. Her traditional cultural desire to have children early is curtailed by Prakash who says “We aren’t going to spawn! We aren’t ignorant peasants! (70). Prakash’s great ambition was to go to America and live a “real life.” His inspiration was a professor who had migrated to America and often wrote to Prakash about the glittering life style of America. America appears to him a land of technology and bright lights. So he prepares to leave for America. As he is about to complete his formalities to migrate he is accidentally killed by a bomb meant for Jasmine and hidden in a portable radio by Sikh terrorists.
After leading a short term of the life of a widow in Hasnapur along with her mother, Jasmine decides to follow her late husband’s footpath and migrate to America. She vows to complete Prakash’s dream to go to the intended school in Tampa, Florida and sacrifice herself in the campus. She decided to go to America to commit “Sati,” burning herself along with her husband’s suit at the place where he intended to go. “Prakash had taken Jyoti and created Jasmine and Jasmine would complete the mission of Prakash” (76). Armed with forged papers and illegal documents she becomes another illegal immigrant reaching the US soil through dubious means. She travels by a plane to Amsterdam and starts acknowledging her uprooted identity and her minority status in the big airport lounge. Transmigration begins, “we are the outcasts and deportees, strange pilgrims visiting outlandish shrines, landing at the end of tarmac, ferried in old armied 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 wilted plumage of intercontinental vagabondage. We ask only one thing: to be allowed to land: to pass through; to continue“ (101). Thus in all ways possible Jasmine enters America. But violence is what Jasmine encounters as soon as she lands in the US soil. Upon her arrival in Florida Jasmine meets Half-Face
the captain of the ship which she took to Florida. Half-Face does not see Jasmine as Indian but rather simply another black person he can treat with disrespect. Hopeless and finding no place to stay Jasmine trusts the captain and accompanies him. He takes her to a remote motel and there he reveals his true intentions. He exploits her innocence and seduces her. Jasmine could not tolerate the feeling that she has been molested. She is filled with the feeling of shame and fear of her sexuality due to the manner in which Half-face sees her. Jasmine then stabs Half-Face to death and in this act finds the strength to continue living instead of committing “sati” over the burned clothing of her husband. Sumanna Coopan observes, “Jasmine expresses more of a transformation of self after this incident with Half-Face than she ever did with Prakash who had acknowledged her as an independent and autonomous woman. For Jasmine the trauma of her rape results in the great change in her identity; the experience that breaks her down the most is also the one that builds her up and allows her to come into her own” (Creating Consciousness and Inventing Identity 44).

Jasmine is lucky to be befriended by a kind Quaker lady called Lillion Gordon. Lillion Gordon provides her with a temporary home while teaching her how to “become American,” and also teaches the process of getting assimilated into the American melting pot. Lillion calls
Jasmine “Jazzy” a kind of a Westernized name which symbolically suggests her entrance into and acceptance of American culture. Lillion teaches her how to walk, dress, and speak like an American. She says, “....if you walk and talk American they’ll think you were born here. Most Americans can’t imagine anything else” (J 81) Jasmine soon realizes that American does not necessarily mean being white or actually born in the US but rather it is the appropriation of the cultural norms of social behaviour that defines what it is to be American. Jasmine is very happy at the sea changes in her when she looks at the mirror. “Jazzy in a T-shirt, tight cords and running shoes. I couldn’t tell if with the Hasnapuri sidle I’d also abandoned my Hasnapuri modesty” (82).

After some days stay at Lillions home Jasmine decides to go away from there finding her own way. Now she has gained a certain degree of self confidence and with the help of Lillion’s daughter Kate, Jasmine manages to find Prakash’s friend and professor Mr. Vadera and family and joins them. They are a traditional Indian family in Flushing, New York. The family lived in a block in the Queens with Indian families as neighbours. They spent their whole time speaking their native tongue and watching video cassettes of Hindi movies. There is an “artificially maintained Indianness” (145) in their home. The professor is so Americanized in the way he pronounces his name making
it sound an Anglo Saxon one. He does not work in an academia as he has made everyone to believe but as Jasmine has an occasion to find out that he is a dealer in women’s hair who has rented a room in the basement of an Indian Barbeque shop.

Jasmine suffers a kind of miserable life as in Hasnapur in Flushing. The home was completely isolated from everything American. Jasmine feels as though she is living in India, “It was as though I had never left India...I had travelled the world without ever leaving the familiar crops of Punjab” (83). Jasmine wanted to forget all her past and to begin a new life. “In this apartment of artificially maintained Indianness I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian everything Jyoti-like” (84). But the more she contemplates to forget her past the more she remembers it. The past has become a part of her that she could not forget it.

The depiction of Indians trapped in New York behind the Ghetto walls, sad yet so realistic, is one of the most poignant parts of the novel. The parents of the novel are old and unhappy. In India the mother-in-law always dominated and suppressed the daughter-in-law. But that right was denied to the professor’s mother as they live in America. “But in New York with a working wife, the mother-in-law was denied her venomous authority. The bent old lady who required my arm to make her way from the television to
the bathroom had been harboring hatred and resentment of her mother-in-law for sixty-five years. Now that she finally had the occasion to vent it, Nirmala was not around to receive it. This was the tenor of all the old people’s complaint- we have followed our children to America and look what happens to us! Our sons are selfish. Our daughters want to work to stay thin. This country has drained my son of his Dum. This country has turned my daughter-in-law into a barren field” (147).

Jasmine is a born rebel who could not adjust with her life in Flushing. She had revolted against many of the Indian system which treated women and widows as non-entities. She was against the non resident Indians in Flushing who restricted themselves from the progressive ideals of the west. To Jasmine “Flushing was a neighbourhood in Jullundhar. I was spiralling into depression behind the fortress of Punjabiness. ... an imaginary brick wall topped wire cut me off from the past and kept me from breaking into future. I was a prisoner doing unreal time” (148). The freedom loving spirit of Jasmine finds it difficult to cope with the conservative India represented by the Vadera and after spending four frustrating months in Flushing one day she sets out in search of a new job and a new identity. This time with the help of a forged green card which she managed to get with the help of the professor. Now she enters into a white
family that of Mr. Taylor and Mrs. Wylie Taylor where she faces the real expatriate experience. She works as a caregiver to their adopted daughter Duff. It is here the initial changes of Jasmine to belong to America are to be found. She says, "I became an American in an apartment on Claremont Avenue" (165). Had she not left the professors home she would never have belonged to America. While living with the Taylor’s family Jasmine learns to master English language. Language becomes Jasmine’s key to understand American culture. Sumanna Coopan observes, "To fully learn a language is to appropriate a culture for language affords the means by which the identity is expressed, thus as Jasmine becomes more fluent in English discovering the intricacies of vernacular expressions, she becomes more American" (Creating Consciousness and Inventing Identity 47).

Language becomes Jasmine’s key to understand American culture. She learnt the language with the curiosity of a child. "I took in everything, every morning, the news sank into my brain and stayed. Language on the street, on the forbidden television, at the Hayeses’ dinners where I sat like a guest and only helped with the serving (and increasingly controlled the menu) all became my language which I learned like a child from the first words up. The squatting fields of Hasnapur receded fast" (J 174). Jasmine had many new experiences at Taylor’s home. “Even on the
first morning I saw naked bodies combing their hairs in front of their dressing mirrors. Truly there was no concept of shame in this society” (171). Jasmine was getting Americanized in the Hayases apartment day by day. She was shocked at the idea of Taylors bearing up a non-genetic child and equally shocking was the concept of a small child sleeping in a separate room. Jasmine’s loved her life at the Hayases. The two cultures she knew got blended in Jasmine and it leads to a gradual transformation in her. Though she willingly gets transformed into an American, she does not forsake her innate Indianness and feels uncomfortable at the speed of her transformation. She could not believe herself when she holds the giant lizard in Kate’s apartment. She feels “Truly I had been reborn. Indian village girls do not hold large reptiles on their laps” (16).

Jasmine enjoyed her days in Taylors home. She falls in love with Taylor on the very first day. "I fell in love with his world, its ease, its careless confidence and graceful absorption” (92). As days passed by Jasmine could not ignore her love towards Taylor nor his to her. Taylor attracted Jasmine very much. She loved his goofy smile. She tried to compare him with the other men she knew and felt him to be much better. “He was the only man I knew who didn’t mind getting caught looking silly. Prakash’d want to be infallible and professorji’d act pompous. Taylor was
fun. Could I really have not guessed that I was head over heels in love with Taylor? I liked everything he said or did. I liked the name he gave me” (176). Parekh N. Pushpa 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” (Pushpa 113).

Jasmine was treated with full respect and grace in the Claremont Avenue. When she was informed that that Duff would sleep alone she could not believe it. “I could not imagine a small child sleeping alone. I had trouble enough with it myself never having spent a night alone until I got to Lillion Gordon’s” (J 172). Jasmine was given the name “care giver.” It sounded much adorable to her like that of a school teacher or a nurse. It did not sound degradable like a maid-servant. Wylie’s treatment of her made her feel like a sister and not like a maid-servant. Wylie used to share even her personal matters to her. It was she who revealed to her that due to low sperm count they could not go for a normal baby and so they had gone for the adopted child Duff. This was shocking news to Jasmine. She could not believe mothering a non-genetic child. “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” (170). Everyday she gained an experience that was new in her American adventure at the Hayeses. But she loved it. She prayed to live forever as Duff’s care giver at their home. As she was spending nothing on food and rent, her money was piling up. In the second year Duff was in school for full day and so Jasmine was free in the day time. So Taylor arranged a part-time job for her at Colombia in the mathematics department to answer phone calls for six hours at six dollars per hour. As her salary was doubled, she offered to move away which was the perfect American way to do but she had to stay as Wylie compelled her to stay.

Jasmine was slowly and steadily immersing into the American mainstream. She perfectly knows that nothing lasts in America. “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 so 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” (181). Though she had the mind to digest any news in America, Wylie’s decision to leave Taylor for her new love was a thunder-bolt for Jasmine. Sushma Tandon opines, “The characters in Jasmine are all exiles, expatriates, wanderers, and people on the move, casting off
old lives easily as a snake sheds its skin. They are third
world refugees fleeing poverty and oppression but they are
also American moving from coast to coast, small towns to
cities, exchanging one partner for another in search of a
dream that always seems to elude them. A feeling of
dislocation, displacement and rootlessness is a heavy price
they must pay for the infinite freedom and possibilities
that America offers” (Bharati Mukherjee’s Fiction 148).

Even before revealing it to Taylor, Wylie reveals her love
for Stuart, the economist, to Jasmine. Jasmine could not
believe her ears.

I realized for the first time in at least a year
that 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. She wasn’t happy? She looked happy,
sounded happy acted happy. Then what did happy
mean? Her only chance? Happiness was so narrow a
doors selective? …I started crying for my own
helplessness and stupidity but Wylie grabbed me
and hugged me and started crying herself telling
me it was okay. I would stay on here with Duff
and Taylor: Taylor loved me and needed me even
more now that there was Stuart” (J 182).

Jasmine cries in vain not to go but Wylie leaves the
family and goes to Paris to meet Stuart. After the
departure of Wylie Taylor lived in hope that she would return back. But as days went by he comforted himself “It won’t be Okay by itself. But you'll make it okay Jase. If you hadn't been here I'd gone crazy” (183). The love Taylor had for Jasmine made him forget the memories of Wylie. Duff, Taylor, and Jase became a small sufficient perfect family. They were happier than the days they were with Wylie. Taylor did not try to change Jasmine. But she changed on herself “because she wanted to.” To bunker oneself inside nostalgia, to sheathe the heart in a bullet proof vest was to be a coward. On Clarament Avenue “In the Hayeses' big clean brightly lit apartment I bloomed from a different alien with forged documents into adventurous Jase” (185-86).

Such a happy and pleasant life in the Hayeses ends abruptly for Jase as she happened to see the murderer of Prakash, Sukhwinder Singh in a park. She was in the park spending the day pleasantly with Taylor and Duff when Sukhi crossed her. On seeing him her past emerges in her mind, her life suddenly becomes distorted by the different consciousness through which she now experiences the world. She is afraid that he may harm her or her lovable family to make her suffer. So she seeks Taylor’s permission to leave him and flees to Baden country Iowa to start her life anew. M.B.Gaijain observes, “Woman’s life passes through many uncertainty right from childhood. Her misery is that in
many cases she is not responsible for that but her feminine sensibility and love create problems in her life” (“Environmental Changes and Social Values” 247). This truth often reflects in the novel *Jasmine*. She has to leave Taylor and Duff because she has seen Sukhi, the killer of her husband.

Jasmine begins her life as a teller in a bank in Iowa. Her employer is Bud Ripplemeyer, a 55-year-old married man, father of two grown up children, falls in love with Jasmine at the very first sight. Bud does not view Jasmine as Taylor did. Taylor never tried to change Jasmine. To Bud she is an alien, a mystery. He treated her not only as a companion but as a sexual being. Jasmine knows this well, "Bud courts me because I'm alien. I'm darkness, mystery, inscrutability. The east plugs me into instant vitality and wisdom. I rejuvenate him simply by being who I am" (*J* 200). Bud Ripple Meyer divorces his wife of 28 years, Karin, to live with Jasmine. To Bud she is "Jane." "Jasmine’s every movement is a calculated step into her Americanization and the 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 and steady immersion into the mainstream American Culture" (Kumar 115). Though she adapts to the American life style she could not kill the Indian woman residing in her. She is loved by all for the Indianness in her, which had made her a lovable mother and
a caring wife. She says to Bud, “I’ll wait supper for you. Indian wives never eat before their husbands” (J 213).
Again at another instance she would say, “A good Hasnapur wife doesn’t eat just because she is hungry. Food is a way of granting or with holding love” (216). Such statements reveal that though living an American lifestyle she is an ideal Indian wife. Indira Bhatt rightly observes, “Jasmine takes the bird-view of the American life and does not touch the deeper layers of value there. The novel looks at American life from an immigrants point of view leaving aside the American experience of the immigrants and their legal and illegal entry into their country and its consequences (“Jasmine: An Immigrants Attempt” 176).

Life is not so smooth in Baden. Jasmine has to face violence again in the form of a discontent client who shoots at Bud on a Christmas Eve. The shot cripples Bud and makes him invalid. When he and Jane decide to have a child it was possible only through artificial semination. Before opting for the child the couple also adopt a Vietnamese boy from the refugee camp. The boy's name is Du, a survivor from the refugee camp. His parents and his brother were killed in the fighting and a sister alone survived. Du now became the son of Bud and Jane and grew up as an American teenager. In Du's narrative the strongest links between technological mutability and the promise of America are articulated. Du is linked to technology from the beginning
of his appearance. He could very well assemble and reassemble electronic parts for unimagined purposes. "It is not engineering. It's recombinant electronics. I have altered the gene pool of the common American appliance. I have sliced the gene of a Black & Decker paint sprayer unto the gear drive of a repaired mix master I have created a multi use super air blower with a variable speed main drive.... I didn't have to learn it, it's what I do (139).

Du's mastery over electrical technology helps him to adapt to the new atmosphere. Jasmine and Du have many similarities in the novel. Both have their cultural values and tradition rooted in the past. Rather than suffering in nostalgic memories both try to assimilate into the mainstream American culture by shedding off their past. Both have lived through many worlds, undergone many hideous experiences and survived. Nagendra Kumar compares Du with Jasmine, "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 mad Odysseus exploits in order to live" (The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee 115).

Darrel Lutz is the neighbour farmer who has inherited his farm from his father but is clearly unsatisfied to simply propagate that legacy. When he is seen sitting on his father’s tractor, it is quite large for him signalling a mis-match. He desires to sell his farm and open a Radio-
shack in New-Mexico. But it is a failed attempt. With his desires suppressed, he drinks heavily. One drunken evening he reveals his love to Jane and his wish that she should run away with him to the Radio-shack in the desert. Darrel's suicide is both a striking climax to the Iowa section of the narrative and a powerful figure for Mukherjee's message of the dangers of tradition.

Jasmine has almost totally assimilated into the American culture in the Baden County. Her friends and neighbours attempt to diminish Jasmine’s differences by describing her as though she were European and essentially white, all traces of her Indian ancestry are wiped away. "They tell me I have no accent but I don’t sound Iowan, either. I’m like those voices on the telephone, very clear and soothing. May be northern California they say" (192). Once again Jasmine's racial identity is contingent upon her environment and its other inhabitants, and in Baden she is been as "almost white" but in no way South Asian or African American or Caribbean as she was perceived at other points in her life. When Jasmine perceives herself as being assimilated she in fact becomes the "typical American" that she always wanted to be. Sushma Tandon opines:

The exuberance of immigration which comes with the acquisition of Americanness and the immigrant Indianness as a sort of fluid identities to be celebrated does not come easily, for it is
difficult to divorce oneself completely from one’s own past nor it is easy to overcome the aloofness of expatriation or sever oneself from the roots and tradition of the culture that one comes from. No doubt the liberated Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane who make a lifetime for every name, look like a possibility for every exuberant immigrant. (Bharati Muherjee’s Fiction 141)

One day Du suddenly leaves them as he comes to know of his sister’s arrival at California. He leaves their home along with a Vietnamese man speaking Vietnamese with him. Du’s departure foregrounds Jasmine’s own going away. When Taylor comes there with Duff to reclaim her she readily goes with him without feeling the least for the crippled Bud. For Jasmine there is no going back: the only home is the one she has created for herself. She has found identity in an alien nation. She is an immigrant who is reborn in an adopted culture. Her getting assimilated in the “American Melting Pot” is certainly better than being torn between two cultures.

Jasmine stands on a uniquely constructed bridge connecting the painful past with an optimistic vision of the future wandering between two worlds. She realizes the American dream with all its dangers as well as its possibilities. Anita Myles, while talking about Jasmine
“She has the courage to transform her dreams into reality and is not only a path finder full of self confidence but also an example, a leader for all woman kind desirous of liberation from the shackles of age-old dogmas” (Feminism and Post Modern Indian Women Novelists 109).

Jasmine’s desertion of Bud for Taylor at the end of the novel suggests that she will create yet another identity for her new environment wherever the location may be. Jasmine believes to “reposition the stars” to change her fate and consciousness as she chooses to leave the crippled Bud for her lover Taylor. It is very clear from Jasmine’s decision to go away with Taylor that she is growing very confident. Jyoti Tabita Hermit views, “Her love for Taylor and responsibility to Bud are at loggerheads with each other. She finally chooses to leave with Taylor without any moral scruples or feeling of guilt. The woman who walks out with Taylor “greedy with want and reckless from hope” is entirely different from the woman we had encountered in the beginning of the novel. Here is a woman who is ready to explore best that future has in store for her. (“New Woman in Bharati Mukherjee” 6).” Her decision to leave the crippled Bud shows her asserting self which tries to seek an individual identity. In America nothing lasts for a long time and so she need not feel for her decision of deserting Bud as American life is not a life of mere duties and she decides to seek a life of
happiness with Taylor. Usha Anand rightly observes, “the new woman in the novel Jasmine rejects the moribund traditional values and avidly accepts America and American values. The scales are heavily loaded in favour of new western values” (Jasmine: A Study 123).

One of her latest novel is Desirable Daughters, which presents the tale of immigrants and their attitude to the situations they face in the new land. It is the story of three sisters, Padma, Parvati and Tara, who are a blend of traditional and modern outlook. Desirable Daughters is a tale of immigrants and the attitude of three sisters and their ways of dealing with situations. Desirable Daughters as the title suggests, are such daughters, for whom every parent would crave for. The three sisters, who are the daughters of Motilal Bhattacharya and the great-grand-daughters of Jai Krishna Gangooli, belong to a traditional Bengali Brahmin family. Padma, Parvathi and Tara are symbolic names of Shakti (Goddess). Padma and Parvathi do not regret their choices, the former marries an immigrant of ethnic origin in New Jersey, and the latter is married to a boy of her own choice and settled in the plush locality of Bombay with many servants to attend on her. Tara, the narrator of the novel goes on an arranged marriage with Bishwapriya Chatterjee, a big shot of the Silicon Valley. Tara begins the narration with the mythical character Tara Lata who was one of her great grand-mother
with whom Tara feels an attachment for her name-sake. The mythical Tara Lata had never left her home in her days. But the narrator Tara had to leave her father’s home both physically and emotionally. Tara Lata of the colonial period was a bold lady who had the boldness to help the colonial fighters. This Tara Lata almost became a widow on the same night of her wedding as her boy groom died of a snake bite. But her father who did not want to see her widow got her married to a tree. In those days it was a practice to get newly widowed girls wedded to a tree so that she can at least enjoy the attributes of a married woman. There after Tara Lata resided at her father’s home till the British Police took her away finally for her act of helping the colonial fighters. The story of her great granny had always enchanted Tara. Yet she leads a complete contrasted life from that of her.

*Desirable Daughters* is the story of the three different paths taken by the three sisters- Padma, Parvati, and Tara. Tara and her sisters were renowned for their beauty, intelligence, wealth and privileged positions in the society. The three sisters were given enough freedom and expression at its furthest from its realities in their up-bringing. They were inculcated with convent education by catholic nuns in their convent constructed school and college. However, acquiring knowledge was not the true end of their convent education. Such education really “meant
that until we reached the age of marital consent, we would be certified (of course) as virgins, but also as never having occupied unchaperoned confined space of any kind with a boy of our own age who was not a close relative” (DD 28). Of the three sisters two get married and immigrated to America while the other settled at Bombay. The three sisters were born exactly three years apart from each other and shared the same birthday. Their mother named them after Hindu Goddesses hoping they will prosper in their lives. Tara remembers the song “Sisters three are we ....as like blossoms on a tree but we are not” (21). Despite the long distance between the three sisters, they remained in constant touch with each other. Padma and Parvati were the links that remained Tara of her past that she began to forget.

Padma is forty-two years old and gains a prominent place in the novel. The mystery Tara tries to resolve the whole narrative revolves round her. Padma’s story is accessible to the reader only through Tara’s narration. Padma was born into a privileged elite family from Calcutta. She was a Hindu Bengali Brahmin and was given convent education. Although that was the last generation of Calcutta high society, the Bhattacharjee sisters benefited from having a high social status in India. She was raised and educated in order to get married and become a traditional Hindu wife. The Indian tradition of her class
and caste demands that the first born daughter should be the first to get married, so there was a lot of pressure and expectation. The sisters' lives were controlled in many ways. They were not allowed to go out all alone on the streets. They had a car to go out which was equipped with window shades and a driver to the beck of any call. Such a repression and protection was too much for Padma to bear. She wanted to break the hurdles. She trespasses her limitations by falling headlong in love for a Christian boy. But as her parents come to know of this they send her abroad for higher education.

After marriage Padma lives in New Jersey with Harish Mehta, her husband. She is a TV professional anchoring a famous programme on an Indian channel run by her lover. Padma is the provider of her family. She is an actress who performs for local schools and community centres shows. She also works for the owner of the Indian channel and has plans to film a soap opera. She is described by her friend as “Padma Mehta is a television personality. She is an icon among Bengalis of the Tristate area. What she wears and what she recommends are taken as fashion statements in the community” (231). Padma is a type of Indian celebrity in New York. Padma is entirely Indian in her attire and cuisine. She maintains her image as an Indian symbol in all ways. She always advocates the eastern tradition and is seen criticizing Tara for being too Americanized. Her
defense of her tradition seems to be ironical to the reader as she does not have a conventional marriage. “She did not wear western clothes, but she’d always had more confidence than the rest of us. She could play the New-York designer type. I’d been so many years out of saris and gold accessories that I felt like an American bride trying to please her Indian in-laws” (196). Moreover she has not revealed the mystery of Chris Dey. But Padma even after long years of stay in the US has not assimilated into the American main stream while Tara has fully immersed herself.

Padma tries to maintain the appearance of a traditional Bengali woman. She was more of the Indian type who was afraid of rumours. When Tara tried to open the topic of her illegitimate son on a crowded subway she stops her and says “Don’t you ever let up? If you must bring up unpleasantness can’t you find a better place than a New York subway? Just watch your tongue this train is full of Bangladeshis and they pick up every word. You say police and their heads jerk around. Then they see me and believe me, they know who I am and before you know it, this famous person on television is in trouble with the police and it will be all over New York in a Calcutta second. You know how these people are Tara, they’re terrible gossips, they’ll have me smuggling gold or falsifying visas or being involved with some cabinet minister. May be you’re shameless enough out there in California with all your
money and your American friends not to care about your reputation, but it’s all I have. Now that’s my last word on it” (197). Mr. Harish Mehta best suited in his position as Padma’s husband. He was merely living off her fame. As Padma was six years senior to Tara she did not understand her well as she had understood her second sister, Parvati. She had remained a mystery and still remains so.

Parvati is the second sister, who is a typical Indian wife and whose home was always open for her huge number of relations. She had gone for a love match which was unthinkable for the Bhattacharjee family. She was the first to get married. She met her husband Aurobindo in Boston where he was working in a bank and was also doing his M.B.A., at Tufts. Though he belonged to a reasonably good Tollygunge family he was not a correct match to the Bhattacharjee sister. “He was certainly not what brains-and- beauty Parvati Bhattacharjee could have commanded on the Calcutta marriage market. Small, dark, and nervous he was frightened by my parents, and the splendour of the marriage reception. His mother, who spoke no English, refused to come. His father worked on The Statesman not as a writer, but as something like a type setter” (51). A love marriage certainly brought disgrace to the Bhattacharjee family but more worse was that “Parvati was jumping the marriage queue” (51) They had an older sister Padma, who according to tradition and custom should get married first.
“...custom dictated that the first born had to be the first married even if she had not expressed an interest. Otherwise we were sending a message to all the families in Calcutta with eligible sons that Dr.Bhattacharjee could not control his daughters. One of them may be two of them, had stepped out of line. What kind of husband would rise to such a challenge? She had to be pregnant. The rumours went” (51).

Though Parvati was married to a man of unequal status, she lived a contended life. She was only leading a perfect married life among the Bhattacharjee sisters. She lived with her husband Auroboindo and her two teenage sons, Bhupesh and Dinesh on the fifteenth floor of a spectacular high apartment at Nariman point. Aurobindo’s company paid twenty-five thousand US dollars as rent for their luxurious apartment. Her life style was more luxurious than that of Padma’s and Tara’s. Aurobindo had a huge number of relations who used to visit their home very often. Their house was always open to his huge relations.

The longterm house guests are mostly Auro’s relatives and family friends, modestly middle-class Bengalis from provincial towns. They are convinced as is Auro, that they have earned the right to enjoy the sumptuous hospitality that God’s grace, parents’ sacrifice, neighbours’ encouragement, and of course, their dear Auro’s
diligence at universities in India and America and his masterful job performance in Bombay have finally produced. They come to Bombay to interview for jobs or to get Auro’s advice on whether they should specialize in marketing or finance or human resources if they can get into an M.B.A., program. Or they come to Bombay to catch a flight overseas –to Frankfurt, London, New York San Francisco - Because besides Bangladesh’s Biman Air, how many international carriers design to touch down in Calcutta? Forget flying out of smog-shrouded Delhi. Besides Auro-da loves company and is a good, generous benefactor, a source of dollars and deutsche marks. Parvati jokes that she manages a hotel, not a home. (54)

Tara is the most detached Indian of the three sisters. She is a divorcee who lives in San Francisco. Her marriage was a purely arranged one unlike her sisters. She was married to a multi millionaire, Indian Silicon valley Icon Bishwa Priya Chatterjee. She married Bish simply because her father told her to get married. She says, “I married a man I had never met, whose picture and biography and blood lines I approved of because my father told me it was time to get married and this was the best husband on the market” (26). Soon after their marriage was over her mother-in-law
took her still in her wedding costume, to pay her respects to a bedridden uncle in law. She was also introduced to the learned middle-aged wife of the sick uncle-in-law. She was the model Indian wife who was doing service for her husband affected by Parkinsons. Her mother-in-law introduces her to Tara and tells "She holds the bed pan under him. She cleans him with her own hands. And she has a master’s degree from the Delhi school of economics. How many modern girls are prepared to do that? (83). Her main motive in introducing this wifely character to Tara was to indirectly preach her the wifely duties.

After the marriage customs were over, Tara lived in Atherton with her husband in a gated community. Being a successful businessman and excellent provider, Bish did not allow Tara to engage in any kind of activity. “I wanted to work, but would people think that Bish Chatterjee couldn’t support his wife? In his Atherton years as he became better known on the American scene- a player, an adviser, a pundit-he also became, at home more of a traditional Indian” (82). When Tara first came to America as a newly wedded wife to Bish, she was deeply rooted in Indian Tradition and culture, and exhibits the behaviour of a typical Indian wife. She was too submissive to her husband and was well versed in domestic duties such as serving pakoras and freshening drinks while Bish and his friends enjoyed watching Sunday football game. Bish takes great
pride in showing his parents particularly his mother
“....how well trained this upper class ... girl had become,
what a good cook, what an attentive wife and daughter-in-
law. What a bright and obedient boy she was raising” (82).
She wanted to pursue her higher studies but had to stay at
home to take care of her son just like all the other Indian
wives in Atherton, California. Tara devotes her entire life
to supporting Bish and raising their family because the
traits of fulfilling the domestic responsibilities that
have been inculcated in her since birth.

Yet as Tara assimilates herself to life in California,
she begins to dispense with certain age old traditions and
finds adapting to a Western environment as an increasingly
easier process. “The boy (they were boys when fathers
choose them for their daughters) who was selected to
jumpstart my life, to be worshipped as a god according to
scripture was and is Biswapriya Chatterjee...his American
friends call him Bish... I, of course as a good Hindu wife-
to-be could not utter any of his names to his face. But
we’re progressive people: after crossing the dark waters to
California I, called him Bishu, then Bish...” (23). The
crossing of dark waters represents the new beginning, the
period of transition for Tara.

In Atherton Tara states that her husband wanted her to
“look like a princess and live like a queen” (75). In the
beginning days after her married life, Tara admits that her
life in Atherton was happy as she wished it to be. She was enjoying accompanying Bish to social gatherings at students’ pubs and brilliant academias. She believed that she was leading a very content life. She describes herself at that time as a teenager “trained to be adoring, sitting in California bar with the most brilliant boys in the world listening to ideas that would shape the twenty first century” (81-82). As time goes by, she feels that this form of life is not fulfilling for her. She realizes that the promise of life as an American wife is not being fulfilled and she wanted to do something creative in her life. Tara comes to California to fulfill the role of a traditional Indian wife but instead realizes that she is not the fittest to play that role. So she asks for a divorce. “When I left Bish (Let us be clear on this) after a decade of marriage, it was because the promise of life as an American wife was not being fulfilled. I wanted to drive, But where would I go...” (82). Tara’s decision to divorce Bish represents a new consciousness in Tara where the regulations of Indian traditions and culture no more binds her actions. The patriarchal Indian society can no more dominate Tara’s actions and the opinions and judgements of others do not pose a constant threat. After the divorce Tara becomes more independent and more Americanized; she ceases to be a good Hindu wife. As Padma Rangasamy puts it “The only way for many of Mukherjee’s heroines is to
discard the past totally and irrevocably and embrace total Americanization” (Namaste America 91).

As Tara moves far away from the suppressing Indian culture she ceases to be a good Hindu wife. She is now a more independent and a progressive Californian, whose perception of many ideals has changed, including her concept on sexuality. When Tara left Bish she realizes that sexuality is an aspect of her identity that she can possess and embrace. She is approached by many of Bish’s friends to be their companion. Tara realizes that Indian men in America do not hide their sexuality as they do in India. This kind of disturbance urges Tara to leave Atherton to completely escape from the patriarchal cultural restraints placed upon her.

In the months after I left Bish, one by one nearly all of his oldest friends, those boys who had sat in the Stanford put with us while I sipped my coca-cola, found my new address in Palo-Alto. I gratefully opened the door of my new apartment to them, thinking that divorce did not necessarily spell the end of my old social life, and I’d ask about their wives and children and where by the way, where they still in the car? And within minutes they were breathing hard and fumbling with my clothes. Your life is already shattered, they said, what more damage can this
do... I left the peninsula because of them and moved to the city. (DD 188)

Tara’s view of both Indian culture and American culture is slowly changing, thereby influencing her perception of her sexuality and her coming to view herself as a more sexually liberated woman. Though Tara moves towards new consciousness she still succumbs to the Indian patriarchal culture. One evening at a party amongst many South Asians, an Indian man approaches Tara and pricks her conscious. He says, “You divorced ladies have not lost your charm. You have grown only more desirable. Divorced ladies must be oversexed, isn’t it? For some ladies one man is not enough. Always looking for adventure isn’t it?” (DD 188).

While Tara is at this party she sees her sexuality as it is perceived by those around her, as the Indian males’ ideal amalgamation of the stereotypical conceptions of the subservient Eastern woman and the sexually free western woman. Tara as a typical American lady, started to believe that a woman’s sexuality is a selfish act. She herself is embracing this selfish act by having an intimate relationship with Andy.

Her concept of sex undergoes a vital change while she starts living with her boy friend Andy whom she describes as her “balding, red-beared, former biker, former bad boy, Hungarian Buddhist, contractor/ yoga instructor” (25). Her idea of sex has completely altered and begins to resemble
the sexuality portrayed in the American Magazines she used to read with her friend Meena. She and Meena used to amuse themselves while reading topics discussed in the magazines: “Does your husband know how to satisfy you? ("First time I have heard ‘husband’ and ‘satisfy’ in the same sentence,” giggled one of us.) Are you his breakfast, his snack, the main course or the dessert. (Definitely his Alka Seltzer!” We giggled again. These American magazines and American marriages were not geared to the lives we led.) Do women marry the best lovers they ever had? (I think unfortunately we can all say yes)” (83). The fear instilled in her by the Indian culture in sexual matters has dissipated as Tara assimilated to American culture. She is no more bounded by the chains of Indian culture and tradition. She is free to act as she pleases as no one had the right to question her. Tara reveals her relationship with other men to her sister Padma: “I may be alone right now, this week, but these past three nights are the first time I’ve been without a man or the attention of many men, most of it unwanted, in seventeen years! You thought that my world ended when I left Bish, You think I’m so unattractive, so uncomplicated and so unadventurous that I’ve been sitting at home for five years just raising a son? I never told you about Andy, or Pramod or Mahesh or Donald – but could you not have guessed” (DD 184). Although she mentions several names of boy friends, it is her affair with Andy that is described
in more detail. Tara’s divorce and her ensuing relationship with other men also makes her an untraditional mother. Being a divorced mother and having relationship with many men, she has the trouble in raising her son.

As her son Rabi was born in the US and is much more assimilated to the country, it is difficult for Tara to raise him according to the Indian traditional ways. But Bish wants his son to be brought up as he was raised in India. That is why he sends his son to a school much like the one he went to when he was a boy. He sends him to a conservative school in California which “prided itself on the English model” (DD 152). But after getting the divorce Tara liberates her role of a traditional Hindu Brahmin mother and tries to be an American mother. As the first step towards it she does not force Rabi to study in Atherton school. Instead she sends him to the academy of Atherton, a more liberal school in which he can develop his artistic abilities. Her inability to deal with her son does not seem to be exclusively a matter of generation conflict, but also a matter of cultural conflict. In spite of their clashes, Tara moves to be an understanding mother since she does not demand that Rabi becomes a traditional Brahmin son and nor does she react with prejudice when he tells he is gay. The protagonist becomes, therefore, a very untypical mother especially by Indian standards as she destabilizes the traditional role of mother that she has learned in
India. Bhagabat Nayak observes, “Thinking herself as an archetypal immigrant she is in a bizarre obsession of grief between her emotion and reaction in her cocooned Indian self and coddling American life” (“Quest for Identity” 277).

It could be boldly stated that Tara is a valley lady; being a divorcee, she works as a volunteer at a pre-school unmindful of her husband’s high position in the social ladder, she is a single parent of a teen-age son, who reveals him to be gay and has a life with lover Andy who is an ex-biker, Buddhist, Hungarian. The Protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee successfully overcome their deep-rooted traditional rules and regulations by enjoying sexual freedom. Brinda Bose opines, “In Mukherjee’s fiction a woman’s sexual freedom often functions as a measure of her increasing detachment from traditional sexual mores and correspondingly of her assimilation in the new world through her rapid westernization/ Americanization (“A Quest for Identity” 47). Above all she is also caught in the mystery of a stranger who claims to be the illegitimate son of her elder sister Padma and a Bengali Christian Ronald Dey.

Tara sees herself an American but is constantly aware of the India that is always with her. S.P. Swain rightly observes, “Tara belongs to both tradition and modernity. Her identity is highly assimilative. She can adopt and
accommodate herself both to her traditional Indian way of life and to her newly adopted American ethos. But she does not stick to the value systems of either of these ways of life. She moves on both planes— the Indian and American” (“Problems of Identity” 263). At one instance she says that though she has distanced herself from the Indians in San Francisco she has not rejected her Indian identity. She still possesses the memories of her family and culture so much that many a times they have overwhelmed her. When she went to Jackson Heights along with Padma for a shopping, the Indianness of the area awed her. “The attraction of Jackson Heights, for me has always been people pleasures sidewalks full of Indians every face is Indian every shop and store front features Indian jewellery Indian clothing, Indian travel, Indian food, and Indian spices... it’s intoxicating” (DD 199). She reveals her deep-rooted Indianness every now and then. Even Bish, the traditional Indian husband turned to a typical American when he hired Andy for work on his Atherton house. “That hasn’t stopped Bish from hiring him for work on his Atherton house. He considers the fact that Andy sleeps with his ex-wife the best possible guarantee of quality work. It’s one of those San Francisco things I can’t begin to explain in India, just like I can’t explain my Indian life to the women I know in California” (25-26). When her fully accultured son, for the first time revealed him to be a gay she is fully
taken back. But the American mother in her teaches her to handle the situation tactfully. Rabi once criticized her sisterly affection for which "I want to slap him, scream at him and tell him to shut up, but parents can’t feel this way. No, that’s not right; I’ve seen them in parking lots and supermarkets. They get furious and make fools of themselves and security guards have to be called and they get in the papers for child abuse and end up in jail. Indian mothers don’t; we don’t have violent feelings except against ourselves, and never against our children, at least not against our sons" (40).

Life goes smoothly to Tara until a young man called Chris Dey turns up at her doorstep and introduces himself to be her sister’s illegitimate son. She is forced to look at the relationships she has with her three sisters and their past: three different people within a specific upbringing and rigid cultural context. The plot swings back and forth from the small village in East Bengal where her ancestors live and San Francisco. She indulges in a deep enquiry with the help of police and a detective to find about the real motive of the boy who claimed to be Chris Dey. But this, in turn, irritates Andy who leaves her forever. As Tara begins to solve the mystery of Chris Dey she comes to know that as much as she does not live in the past it is nevertheless an important factor in the development of her multiple consciousness and identities.
As Tara delves deep into the scandalous and secretive history of her family she also explores the making of her own consciousness for in the narrative that emerges from her search is also the consciousness that she has created over the years. In essence, Tara’s covering of her memories and familial history parallels the revelation of her own identity; as she chronicles the story of her family from Ballygunge road to the streets of upper Height: she also records the development of her very self from Indian immigrant to assimilated American. Tara began her story with the singular and set identity of the devoted Indian wife and mother, but soon discovered that these roles and a life of such expected order is not the only aspects of her identity. Thus she moves towards embracing the multiple aspects that comprise who she is, accepting and even celebrating the chaos of multiplicity. Tara muses herself, “out of order I created chaos. Out of Chaos one will create something resembling a new American consciousness” (DD 153). The uncertainty of time, space, culture and identity are representative of Tara’s chaotic experience in formulating her identity, but they are also harbingers of what will become of the new American consciousness comprised of many and with many more to come. At the climax, her house is bombed causing injuries to her ex-husband Bish. The wealth that Bish earned made them victims to underworld robbers who were after their big money. As
Bhagabat Nayak puts it, “Her experiences bring it to realize that wealth is a perishable commodity, the self formed by inputs from this perishable commodity is equally perishable and big money invites big blackmail from big under world” (“Quest for Identity” 277). Towards the end of the novel Tara goes back to India along with Bish and Rabi looking forward for protection, comfort and healing. As her house is destroyed in the bombing she goes back to her home in India. Still hurt and traumatized by bombing which also causes Bish serious injuries, it is in her sister’s and parents’ company that she looks for protection comfort and healing. As Sushma Tandon puts it, “The exuberance of immigration which comes with the acquisition of Americanness and the Immigrant Indianness as a sort of fluid identiness to be celebrated does not come easily, for it is difficult to divorce oneself completely from one’s own past, nor is it easy to overcome the aloofness of expatriation or severe oneself from the roots and tradition of the culture that one comes from” (Bharati Mukherjee’s Fiction 141).