Bharati Mukherjee is an important writer of the Indian diaspora. She is a versatile writer and has to her credit six novels, two collections of short stories, some essays, and two works of non-fiction which she co-authored with her husband Clark Blaise. Her fiction reflects Indian diasporic experience and her characters are third world immigrants who attempt to assimilate into North American life styles. Mukherjee represents in her fiction a quest for identity and fulfilment which is traced through a journey from expatriation to immigration. The quest captures a sensibility and a complex state of mind symbolized by the pain of exile and alienation. In her narratives she gives expression to the dialogue between the self and society in the immigrant environment which illuminates in varying degrees the phenomena of ethnic heritage, alienation, and hyphenated identity.

In the introduction to Darkness, Mukherjee sets forth her literary agenda. She says that she has moved away from the “aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration.” Her Indianness is no longer a fragile identity to be preserved but a “set of fluid identities to be celebrated.” Her fictional works celebrate flux and change. Like Bernard Malamud, Mukherjee writes about a minority community adapting itself to the patterns of the dominant culture. She plunges into the present rather
than nostalgically long for the past in the sharp studies she offers of the edgy inner lives of her characters.

Mukherjee's early novels, *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife*, are novels about the isolation of the Indian expatriates. Her first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* is a novel of contemporary India seen through the eyes of a sensitive and confused daughter of Bengal. The novel reflects how Mukherjee was torn between two worlds. She was detached enough from India so that she could look back at it with irony. Tara, the protagonist of the novel, is an expatriate and looks at India through the eyes of western imagination. Not able to feel part of her family which represents for her an old and rapidly fading Bengal, Tara registers the frailities and contradictions of her ancestral way of life. The reader who is made to feel that he is observing somebody "disoriented and floundering," gradually discovers that it is not Tara as much as the world around her that is crumbling. In *Wife*, Mukherjee depicts the dehumanizing effects of urban American society and indicts Indian cultural values that discourage self-reliance in women. In *Jasmine*, the protagonist's transformation of herself and her re-inventing herself are dramatized in such a way that the novel fashions itself out of the narrativizing of fluidities of identity. *Jasmine* is perhaps Mukherjee's strongest feminist statement. In her novels, as traditions break down characters try to make lives out of the pieces.
Mukherjee’s fourth novel *The Holder of the World* depicts the life of Hannah Easton whose journey is from the west to the east. She is a brave woman from Salem who travelled to the distant Coromandal shores in the seventeenth century to carve out a new life for herself. The protagonist of the fifth novel, Debby Di Martino alias Devi, sets out in search of her true identity and on a voyage of discovery of her parentage. The novel depicts the anguish of an abandoned child and shows Devi as an avenging angel.

The thesis primarily focuses on the major themes in Bharati Mukherjee’s novels and examines how her creativity is focused on the diasporic imagination and the cultural implications of this imagination. The trope of diaspora and dislocation becomes the material core of Mukherjee’s narrativity such that what obtains in the novels is a sensitive, observant recordation of the mutations of her time. Each one of Bharati Mukherjee’s texts is wrought at a different angle of the diasporic predicament and the abyss of dislocation, and thus Bharati Mukherjee can be read as a psychoanalyst of culture and a resonant voice of the voiceless. Each of her characters serves as a model of representation of human caprice caught in a moment of self-preservation evaluating the horror of difference.

In this study which focuses exclusively on the novels draws upon the short stories and non-fiction at a number of places in the individual chapters while especially threading through the autobiographical instances and dislocated cultural topographies in Mukherjee’s narratives.
Mukherjee's latest novel *Desirable Daughters* which came out after the argument for the thesis was formed could not be accommodated for a full-length study.

I have drawn considerably upon the divergent studies of and approaches to Bharati Mukherjee and I have acknowledged my debt to those sources in the course of this dissertation.

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