CHAPTER - VI

SUMMATION

Literary creation is the endeavour of a creative writer to respond to his/her milieu. Of all literary forms, the novel is considered to be the most society-oriented genre for it depicts the pre-dominant social, political, cultural and economic problems that reveal the writers' insight into the fundamental aspects of the society of their times. The later part of 20th century is a period of great changes at all levels- social, economic and cultural owing to many influences. The changes are rapid beyond the conceptual power of ordinary men and women. These aspects are very much so in the novels of Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee. Their deep sense of involvement in the social, political, economical and cultural life of India is seen through their works. It is worth mentioning to note that there are similarities in their outlook and their attitude towards the problems concerning an individual.

Though the forte of these three women writers is different in many ways they are also similar, as all of them deal with cultural interaction and the mind of the displaced in most of their novels.

The exhaustive analysis of the select novels of these writers undertaken in the preceeding chapters from a cultural perspective
demonstrates that writers have addressed themselves to all issues associated with the experiences of the displaced.

Kamala Markandaya invariably focuses upon sensitive protagonists who suffer from cultural alienation due to their displacement. The same kind of focus is seen in the novels of Anita Desai who without fail demonstrates in all her novels the psyche of the protagonists. The select novels of her are peculiar in their nature where she probes into their identity. The youngest in the line Bharati Mukherjee focuses upon the protagonists who lack a firm sense of cultural identity and are natural victims of racism, sexism, and numerous forms of social oppression. The beauty of much of her fiction lies in its being informed by her personal experience. In an interview, Mukherjee clearly states:

We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate. Many of us have lived in newly independent countries or emerging countries...When we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb 200 years of American history and learn to adopt to American Society...I attempt to illustrate this in my novels and short stories. (1)
The aim of the researcher is to present in his thesis the similar ideas of these novelists (Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee) about their treatment of cultural interaction and the immigrant psyche. Simultaneously he points out the dissimilarities in their handling of the particular theme.

Worked out in six chapters, the first chapter entitled "Introduction" takes up the major concepts of culture as propounded by T.S. Eliot, Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, Homi K.Bhabha and others. The importance of the language for the growth and development of culture is highlighted. Culture gets its nourishment and life from the environment. It also defines certain key terms like acculturation, assimilation, migration, hybrid culture and so on. It is pointed out that the post-modern culture is the capitalistic culture.

It is convincingly highlighted that the immigrant writing is the fashion of the post colonial narratives. Every attempt has been made to reveal the psyche of the immigrants and the views of the renowned psychologists are also brought to the light.

A graphic description of the life and works of these writers informs us of their involvement and commitment towards their task. It is very
interesting to note that all these novelists are women hailing from India settled in abroad and married to foreigners except Anita Desai. Even her mother is a German.

The review of literature given in this chapter shows the fund of knowledge already available in this area of study.

The second chapter titled "Identity in Alien Environments" analyses in detail the two select novels of Kamala Markandaya - *Possession* (1963) and *The Nowhere Man* (1972) with reference to the cultural interaction. In *Possession*, the story of Valmiki and Caroline suggests that India has to draw sustenance from life giving springs of its own culture. Valmiki is a rustic Indian artist, and Caroline Bell, symbolising the Western civilization, makes an all out effort for the possession of his soul. Alienated from spiritual root of the country Val’s artistic talents stifle and smother. One can find the sharpened contrasts of culture in the depiction of an individual’s crisis when forcibly caught in the clash of intercultural values. While groping towards some kind of self-existence in freedom, it mirrors the growth to realization in the mind of Val as he resolves the complex dilemma of personal and artistic freedom, and responsibility and returns to the traditional values of spirituality and duty which alone give him a true sense of freedom and identity.
The experiences of Srinivas, the nowhere man in the *The Nowhere Man* occur against the background of intercultural conflict in the social situation in England and expose the individual consciousness to an alien and hostile cultural milieu. The dichotomy of East-West axis becomes more prominent in this novel because it is shown through the undeserved plight of an old and friendly immigrant in England. The portrait of the protagonist's misery is probably the result of a deep study of the helplessness of Indian immigrants in Britain.

The mental agony of the protagonist is well pictured in the novel. There are cultural conflicts throughout the novel resulting cultural interaction.

Both the protagonists of *The Nowhere Man* and *Possession* lose their identity in the foreign soil. While Val does not choose to go to England, Srinivas chooses to migrate to England. While Val eventually returns to India, Srinivas dies there with a feeling that he is a nowhere man.

The third chapter with a title “Alienation of Uprooted Individuals” is an attempt to make a study on two of Anita Desai’s novels *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*, and *Baumgartner’s Bombay* with a focus on the uprooted
individuals namely Adit, Dev and Baumgartner. According to R.S. Sharma the novel *Bye-Bye, Blackbird* is about the alienation and accommodation of the immigrant (Dev) in a world which is attractive and appalling at the same time. It deals with the self-awareness of the educated Indian immigrants, who keep wavering between acceptance and rejection of a world they have been educated to admire and love and which they find, on an actual contact, either to be strange or to be hostile.

Frank Johnson opines: “Alienation is meant a mode of experience in which a person himself as an alien” (11).

According to him, the alienated person has no touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person. Alienation takes a person to the problems like disillusionment, desperation, fear psychosis, rootlessness etc.

*Bye-Bye, Blackbird* opens with the arrival of Dev in England with an ambition to join London school of Economics. Initially, he is an Anglophobe, which stems chiefly from the sort of treatment the Indian immigrants get from the English. They are openly insulated and abused. A pedlar refuses to tell Dev the price of a Russian icon, considering him too poor an Indian to buy it. Dev is also contemptuous of the climate of
England. On the contrary his friend who had settled in England already is an Anglophile. Dev condemns openly England while Adit highly commends it. Later in the novel, as Dev begins to wander about in London like a tourist, observing its various attractions and allurements with wondering gaze, he begins to have a slow change in his attitude towards England, ultimately yielding silently to the irresistible spell of English life. This change in his attitude has been beautifully depicted:

And so he walks the streets and parks of the city grateful for its daffodil patches of sunshine... His heart expands and with warm at the sight, from a rain shrouded window in a bus... It is a strange summer in which he is bewildered alien, the charmed observer, the outraged outsider and thrilled sight-seer all at once and in succession.

(BBB-91-96)

As the slow change in the attitude of Dev takes place, he feels a strange sort of schizopherenia in him. In the end it is found that Dev does not want to return to India, where as Adit's attitude towards England undergoes a sea-change. His Anglophilia gives way to a sudden, disturbing nostalgia for his homeland. He longs for Indian landscape. He considers himself to be a stranger, a non–belonger in England. He continues to talk to his wife about India, and Pooja season in Calcutta.
Adit's wife Sarah is concerned, hers is a dual loss of identity. She remains an outsider in the Indian community because she is English. By marrying an Indian, she has "lowered" her position among her fellow-countrymen. She is not a physically uprooted person.

The cultural interactions of India and England are delineated, through the images and the mind of the leading characters.

In Baumgartner's Bombay Desai pursues the solitary life of Hugo Baumgartner. He is a homless and nationless man. He is the same in Germany, his native land and in India with no identity. His is a dual alienation, both cultural and linguistic estrangement. Hugo also suffers from fear phychosis. When he fails to effectuate his identity in the society he recalls his past memories and gets solace from them. He often tries to accept India as his home, despite a lot of inconveniences to him. In India the immigrant-resident syndrome takes over. He understands that the difference in colour and language throws him out of the orbit of normal existence. He is an alien in his own country and is disowned by his own countrymen. His frantic quest for roots is indeed a journey from one state of void to another from nowhere to nowhere. Despite the adjustments, cultural displacement makes these men alienated and lonely.
Chapter IV titled "Disenchantment and Assimilation" analyses Bharati Mukherjee's two earlier novels namely *Wife* (1975) and *Jasmine* (1989). *Wife* is a psychological study of Dimple, a young woman from Calcutta, and of her problems in settling down in New York with her new husband. Brought up to passive and dependent as per Indian standards of womanhood, she lacks the inner resources to cope with the year and challenging situations and ultimately descends into unexpected violence. Dimple, the protagonist of the novel shows the symptoms of psychic dislocation. The mind and the body do not have co-ordination, such symptoms are of schizophrenic. She thinks marriage will bring all happiness in life, but feels fully dejected when it turns out to be the opposite. She lives in a fantastic world, a world which is created by herself. Dimple remains isolated and she is unable to connect herself with an alien culture. Initially she imagines that moving to the US will bring about a sea change in her life, but after landing in America she realizes that her bitterness and loneliness only increase in the US. Her attempts at acculturation are limited to going to super market, watching television and listening to discussions on mugging.

Dimple's rootlessness is caused by an inherent psychological trait. She is incapable of accepting her surrounding or adapting herself to them. She could never feel at home anywhere in the US, because, as Amit
rightly points out, Dimple's heart is still in Calcutta. Her attempt at Americanisation is very superficial.

Inspite of her failure to have a meaningful relationship with her husband, Dimple goes through the traditional gestures of a dutiful wife like leaving the tastier portion of the meat for her husband. She aspires to the roles traditionally assigned to women but fails to achieve them because of her innate weakness. At the same time she is incapable of breaking away from these traditional shackles and forging ahead. For Dimple, the desire to belong is a deep felt need but her neurotic splintered mind makes life both in India and in the US equally frustrating. She is a disillusioned self in the end of the novel.

*Jasmine* is an attempt to synthesize in the protagonist the essence of two cultures, Indian and American. The novel also orchestrates a quest for identity. As Sumita Roy points out : "Jasmine’s search for self-recognition takes her in social and spiritual directions...till she arrives at a time when she can view the future greedy with wants and reckless from hope" (203).

With infinite care Barati Mukherjee sketches her protagonists' gradual transformation but sometimes there is a conflict between
Jasmine's two selves, one still holding fast to traditional Indian values of life and the other an adventure in a capitalistic culture as she so succinctly puts it:

"For every Jasmine the reliable care giver, there is a Jas the prowling adventurer. I thrilled to the tug of opposing forces" (Jas-176).

The Struggling between the opposing forces does not intimidate her, rather it excites her. Jasmine feels proud that she is getting rooted in the new world. Gradually Jasmine understands American culture and gets assimilated. She is not sentimental about her Indian identity, nor does she suffer from nostalgic longing. Instead she has used all her strength and resolve to forge new alliances in the friendly soil of the adopted homeland. The fusion between the East and West pleases her and she rejoices that her journey to America has unfolded her affirming self.

Bharati Mukherjee admits in an interview: "My characters are a breed of pioneers who have the guts to forsake a predictable life in order to throw themselves into a new one" (3).

In the end of the novel Jasmine is seen as an assimilated self and has no regrets for her American identity.
The fifth chapter "Varied perspectives and representations of reality" makes a comparative study delineating the similarities and dissimilarities in the select novels of Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee. Protagonists of Kamala Markandaya are compared with Anita Desai and Bharathi Mukherjee. Cultural interaction that plays a very important role in these novels are convincingly described with substantial facts from the texts and other renowned critics.

The quality of cultural interaction in all its multiplicity forms the crux of the accomplishments of Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee. More over their treatment of this aspect in their novels is similar and at the same time different in many ways. All the three novelists give entirely a varied treatment with the immigrant psyche.

Kamala Markandaya's protagonists in Possession and The Nowhere Man are men, moving from India to England and lose their identity. The trauma that they undergo in their exile is enormous. At least Val comes back to India in search of his roots but Srinivas remains a nowhere man till he breathes his last. Anita Desai's main characters in both the novels suffer from identity crisis. In Bye-Bye, Blackbird Adit and Dev in the end reconcile to any one culture of their choice where as in
Baumgartner's Bombay. Hugo remains a nowhere man in both the lands - Germany and India. He is a 'Permanent Refugee'. Desai is successful in handling the nuances of immigrant psyche as she herself opines that she has written it in an effort to understand the double loyalties of the immigrant.

Bharati Mukeherjee's protagonists Dimple and Jasmine are Indian women taking shelter in the US. Dimple is schizopherenic and finds no satisfaction not only in her own land but also in the foreign soil. Jasmine's final absorption in an adopted culture is a significant mile stone. The nuances of Indian cultural life provide a living ambience to the triad, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee. They respond to the chaotic state of the man with bicultural exposure. The companions of the immigrant characters in the adopted land are pain, fear, frustration and disillusionment. The analysis of these novels has clearly demonstrated how displacement disturbs mental and physical harmony of man. Each one faces a strong threat to his sanity.

With immigrants, one may say, a process has started that of fusion of cultures to come up in life as international citizens. The displaced ones do develop “an immigrant psyche,” which shows particular stresses that are symptomatic of mental aberrations. The analysis of the novels has
concentrated on the damaging disturbances caused by the change in the place. The life undergone by the immigrants in another country testify the axioms in social psychology and affirm that much is to be endured and little to be enjoyed when one chooses to make an abode in another country.

Without restricting the study to the select novels of women novelists (Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee) exclusively, one or two diasporic men novelists of the same concern may be selected and compared with any two of the diasporic women novelists. Beyond any doubt it would have far reaching conclusions. A critical analysis of this field would be a fruitful reading for researchers-to-be.