CHAPTER FOUR

TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITY

*The Holder of the World* (1993):

Mukherjee has left behind the phases of expatriation and immigration and entered into the new phase - the transnational / transcontinental phase. Since *Jasmine* (1989) Mukherjee is widely known as the immigrant author of the mainstream America. *The Holder of the World* (1993) establishes her identity as the transnational. She redefines the meaning of America and what it meant to be American. Alam Fakrul calls this phase of her life – ‘Hunger for connectedness’ (119). She is firmly rooted in her second homeland of her desire – America, but maintains multiple linkages to her first homeland, the country of her origin / birth. Her roots are in Bangladesh for which she doesn’t feel intensely ‘belonging’ like her Hannah Easton, the protagonist of *The Holder of the World*. The latter’s roots are in England but she says “England is not my home” (255).

Today diaspora is considered “deterritorialized” or “transnational” – i.e., which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe (Vertovec, 1999). In the era of “transnationalism” and “globalization” when we talk about transnational identity we are talking about people who are with more than one culture, more than one country. As the world is knitting together, there is connectivity of people / places and all are global in their social and cultural reach: external ties that bind people together. Now diasporas are the transnationals who have multiple ties and interactions that link people
across borders. So the conventional assumptions regarding the ‘identity’ which is defined by traditional borders and boundaries and ‘Home’ are problematic. The stages like ‘Home – Away – Return’ in the case of diasporas have changed today on account of the – goal of their dispersal / migration and the advanced technologies of transportation and communication. They do not renounce a ‘national’ identity like the expatriates or do not accept a different ‘national’ identity like the immigrants.

Robin Cohen (2000) classified communities into three categories – (1) Local (2) National and (3) Transnational. Transnational communities “Foster creative and positive bonds between people of different national backgrounds.” This tendency is called ‘transnationalism’ (Cohen, Global Sociology, 342). Modern diaspora is a transnational community which is not ‘uprooted’ but has firmly rerooted itself. So “the process of ‘homing desire’ does not imply a nostalgic desire for ‘roots’ nor it is the same as the desire for a homeland. It is realized instead as a construction of multilocationality within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries” (Brah, Cartographies 197).

Whatever the impulse for migration, for many people there is no longer the need for ‘identificational assimilation’. ‘Home’ and ‘away’ are connected by rapid transport, electronic communication, and cultural sharing (Cohen, Global Sociology 353). So there are multiple identities. They act as a bridge between the particular and universal and can detect ‘what is missing’ in societies. The transnational communities are not of place but of interest, shared options and beliefs, tastes, ethnicities and religions. They accept the cultural and religious diversity. Cohen acknowledges the postmodern reality of diasporas and sees them as builders of transnational community. He states diasporas “are positioned
somewhere between nation-states and traveling cultures …” (rpt. Global Diaspora). Transnational postmodern diasporas are neither assimilationist nor separatist but with multiple cultural attachments. Their subjectivities are formed, in the words of Bhabha, “in-between” national and cultural boundaries.

Stuart Hall in his Modernity and Its Future (1992) poses questions about identity and provides the description of what may constitute identity. He presents three distinctive concepts of identity in terms of different types of human subjects: the ‘Enlightenment Subject’, the ‘Sociological Subject’ and the ‘Postmodern Subject’ (275).

The Postmodern Subject is formed in relation to how the subject is represented in different surrounding cultures at different times. As time changes, identity shifts likewise, as cultural space alters, identity transforms. Hall attributes the fact to the idea of change: the change of time and space, causing “discontinuities” in modern societies (278). The ‘post-modern subject’ can be located nowhere as a result of its de-centering. Accordingly, the ‘post-modern subject’ unable to keep stabilized or unified, has no choice but to accept each of all these shifting identities, always contradictory and problematic because of the various contexts in which they are constructed, remaining fragmented at all times because of their temporary and therefore incomplete formation. It is obvious that this post-modern human subject is “framed against the background of metropolis” as an “isolated exile, estranged individual”, whose inner core has been displaced and whose center has been eliminated.

Hall, et.al. examine the forces reshaping modern industrial societies and the patterns, structures and relationships that are emerging in the contemporary world. The Holder of the World (1993) narrates the
forces which had / have shaped the societies and the patterns of relationships that had / have emerged in 17th c. and in the present. Puritan pre-America and Mughal India, the 20th c. de–Europeanized America and multicultural India are drawn by Mukherjee in this novel. She focuses on the need of immigrants to choose their home by constantly adapting themselves to the new homeland and renegotiating their relationship with the old homeland. Their relationship with the old and the new world is not static. In this novel, says Nalini Iyer, “she (Mukherjee) works toward a transnational, transcanonical position” (Iyer, ARIEL 32). Certain aspects of globalization – such as hybridity, multirrootedness and multi-location are increasingly present in this literary text.

The novel spans historical period – the 17th c. and 20th c. The 17th c. Puritan New England / Pre-American America and Mughal India/colonial India were the colonies of England. So there is the encounter and negotiation of Indian – English - and Americans, the ruled and the rulers who have crossed the borders of the Nation –states for different reasons (trade, imperial expansion, and market). In the words of Judie Newman “… Bharati Mukherjee’s The Holder of the World excavates links between seventeenth century Massachusetts and pre-colonial Mughal India. Through the quest of a 1990s asset hunter for a lost diamond, the ‘Emperor’s Tear’… transaction between cultures are presented in the novel. It draws upon research into the trade between colonial America and the East” (Journal of Literary Studies). The characters are the transmigrants regardless of their physical dislocation, deterritorialized like the modern diasporas. Having multiple ties and the interactions that link people across the borders, they identify with more than one culture, one country, and go beyond the borders of their homeland. Their network spans the globe, - connects ‘here’ and ‘there’. They are aware of
multilocality and connect with those with whom have the same routes/roots. They bridge the local and global, personal and universal, and have their own desire. Their perspective is transnational.

The genesis of *The Holder of the World*, Mukherjee points out, was in “Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, … I was more interested in Pearl, the ‘legacy of Passion’, … trading … from the Coromandel coast in India. So Pearl Prynne was one of the inspirations for my book. But then I also saw a painting … A miniature painting at Sotheby’s in New York that was entitled *An European Woman in Emperor Aurangzeb’s Court*, (who) was a woman in the splendid court heroine outfit … Hannah Easton, but as, somebody writing in the 1990s … bored, creating a straight historical novel” (Edwards 64).

The aesthetics of Mughal Miniature painting and computer programming combined with colonial American history and *The Scarlet Letter* compose Mukherjee’s *The Holder of the World*, exploiting the intertextuality. Hannah, the protagonist of Mukherjee’s novel is an intertextual parallel to Hester Prynne, the protagonist of Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* (1849-50). Nathaniel Hawthorne has written this tale of the 17th century Boston as one “exploring his own regional past and ancestral mind” (Hawthorne, ‘Introduction’ to *The Scarlet Letter*, V). Mukherjee’s connectedness appears in her novel. It is her attempt to be connected with the countries of origin and adoption, she is a transnational who balances her relations with both the countries and others – like Canada, without nostalgia and surrender. She is an immigrant like other white European immigrants in America. She is interested in the 17th c. European travellers, the Anglo-Indians, in a very alien country like India, where they had to survive. She searched for its roots in 17th c. travel documents, memoirs, and trading journals. She thought of these travellers as people like her or
her characters who make their living in rather frightening or perilous surroundings. They are the ‘Other’. She reminds Americans that they are all immigrants; if not literally, by inheritance and their links to South Asia. She reveals the double transformation: immigrants are refashioning America and America transforms them into Americans, though they are connected with the homeland.

Bharati Mukherjee changes the direction of the travel of her tale in *The Holder*. The novel is not about the travel of an Indian immigrant to America struggling to establish identity in the Dreamland (USA). It is the travel to India from America. It is the story of the encounter of the two American women belonging to different periods – 17\textsuperscript{th} c. and 20\textsuperscript{th} c. in India, the magic land and its people. It is a remarkable story of an American immigrant (Transnational) Hannah Easton in the main plot and in its subplot the tale of Beigh Masters, the narrator of the novel.

*The Holder of the World* (1993) is a tale of “… a life through three continents and thirty years” (Mukherjee, *Holder* 279), of a transnational diaspora (imperial ?) - Hannah Easton Fitch Legge, the Salem Bibi, Precious-as-Pearl. It is told by the 32 year old narrator, Beigh Masters. She lives “in three time zones simultaneously” (5). She is a reader of *Auctions and Acquisitions*, a research Scholar, ‘searcher-after-origin’(9), asset hunter, assets researcher, and ‘…part of this story’ (21). A Graduate from Yale, Masters is looking through the lens of history at her project (to locate the diamond) and is aware of multiple contingencies. She has devoted eleven years to the reconstruction of time, place and also person, and as an asset hunter knows when to continue digging long after economists and historians have stopped. Hannah Easton’s distant relative, Beigh loves the Indian immigrant - Venn Iyer. An owner of the ring on which Raja Jadav Singh etched, Masters is transformed into
Hester/Bhagmati, and knows where the diamond – ‘Emperor’s Tear’ is. A dreamer and narrator Beigh and Hannah - the main character of Beigh’s narrative, contain multiple personalities on the forging of national identity.

Beigh Masters is hired by a client to locate the fabulous diamond once owned by the 17th c. Mughal Emperor–Aurangzeb. Twelve years ago Asa Brownledge’s American Puritans seminar at Yale had set in motion her “hunger for connectedness … (who) can deconstruct the barriers of time and geography” (11). Beigh Masters, like her boyfriend cum lover - Venn Iyer, doesn’t believe in accidents. She believes in her efforts and says - “… eleven Years, I have been tracking the Salem Bibi…who ended up in the Emperor’s court…Three hundred years ago…” for the diamond - Emperor’s Tear. Eventually she finds that “Hannah Easton is a relative (of mine)” (22). Beigh Masters and Dr.Venn Iyer, the transnational friends, would be a couple, with research attitude and goals, are engaged in the projects. Yale seminar leads her to Salem Bibi and tangled lines of India and New England and to Venn who knows the potential in his programme – X2989 and technology. Beigh, searches for a legendary, the most perfect and the biggest diamond in the world – the Emperor’s Tear, which “existed in her (Hannah Easton) hands” (19), three hundred years ago. She holds it. How? It’s reply is the conclusion of Beigh’s research. By searching and recreating the history of Hannah Easton she knows that she has come “imperceptibly closer to the Emperor’s Tear” (19) and eventually she says “I know where the diamond is” (283). She unearths a distant relation to Hannah Easton. So Hollywood Mogul Bugs Kilken wanted her to work for him as his private art advisor.

Computer scientist Dr. Venn Iyer, a South Indian immigrant, the father of fractal and designer of inner space, who animates information,
works to construct X2989, a programme that will make virtual time-travel possible. He is a time-traveller, who has absorbed Beigh’s manuscript, all the documents, the travelogues and computerized East India records. He is a thorough researcher. Art and technology motivate Beigh and Venn.

A doctor- mother’s son, Venn, works in an MIT lab for “a virtual reality project” which feeds data into computer to recreate the time past. Beigh is surprised by this programme. Finally he is successful in his project. It puts in the objective information of “all the world’s newspapers, weather patterns, telephone directories, satellite passes, every arrest, every television show, political debate, airline schedule…” (5-6) into virtual reality programme to create the past time and place. The projects of Beigh & Venn converge in The Holder of the World. The narrator says “the past presents itself to us, always, somehow simplified” (6).

The protagonist, Hannah Easton’s strange and surprising adventures design the main plot of the novel. She is honoured by the Emperor as “Precious-as-Pearl, the Healer of the World” (20). She bridged colonial / Mughal India and New England (America) and their culture. She is the possessor of the ideology of compassion and love. It raises a question, because Hannah Easton, the only surviving child of Edward and Rebecca Easton was born in 1670 in Brookfield, Massachusetts, New England (Present America). Edward Easton arrived in 1661 in New England from London who finally “walk(ed) away from his old self ? As his wife and daughter would do again and again” (24). The next year of Hannah’s birth in 1671 Edward Easton died of a bee sting. Rebecca, 22 year old widow, whom Hannah lost when Nipmuc laid siege to Brookfield in 1675. Hannah “had one long, disturbing memory” (26). Rebecca left Hannah for her love, the Nipmuc Indian lover, “the ultimate unnatural crime of Puritan life” (30). Hannah is orphaned but
adopted by Mr. & Mrs. Fitch. She is survived to see “Rebecca’s fall…, more sinful than the fall of man” (30). Hannah is now Hannah Easton Fitch, an adopted daughter of the Puritan couple, Robert and Susannah Fitch from Salem. Hannah, says Beigh Masters, “loved her mother (biological) more profoundly than any daughter has ever loved a mother” (30). Like Rebecca, Beigh admits “I have a lover” (31), a scientist shorter than her, the most modest man from India – Venn.

Rebecca’s love for Nipmuc man stimulates Hannah to go beyond Puritan life and its parameters. She is expert in embroidery, the needle work, and singing and nursing. Beigh tells us that “Hannah took that embroidery with her to England and then to India when she married” (47).

Hannah’s parents (adopted) “wanted her to themselves” for money, and as a maid for the multiple contingencies. But her life is at the “crossroads of many worlds” (60). She stays in Salem, through the famous witch trial, being a counselor of women. Hannah, undreamed of in puritan society, marries Gabriel Legge at 21, in 1692. He is from London, a mysterious visitor from Ireland, going to marry her friend Hester Manning who dies of drowning. Hannah is suspicious of her death. She doesn’t believe and trust Gabriel but “longed for escape” (67). Her “passion was more to leave that place, Salem … father, than to settle in another place with him ” (67-68). Like an expatriate Hannah wants to escape from the old world limitations and enters into the orient’s emotional and passionate life, which is denied in Puritan New England. In the Puritan world of America Hannah is exposed to a lot of violence since her childhood. Nipmuc warriors frequently raided New England settlers. She grew up in the world which was “ripping apart, thieves and cut-throats walking the streets in open defiance of common decency,
crafty, devious merchants …” (41). So Hannah is made to marry Gabriel Legge, (who plunders ships, even the ships of Hajj Pilgrims in India). He is on a wife-hunting mission, thinks Venn.

Hannah Easton Fitch Legge left Salem for England in 1692. “The English, like her husband, seemed vastly more exciting and … than the men of Salem …. there was wealth and trade and culture, history and … Humanity, …” (73). Hannah keeps a diary in England. Gabriel is often gone to sea. She learns to cultivate a garden and remains busy with her nursing. She remembers how Englishmen in Salem dreamed of “return” to England.

Gabriel, who had wooed Hannah “with tales of adventure and travel, wants her to overcome her puritan life. He is an artful Salesman, a stranger and a nectar gathering bee. The news of Gabriel’s death is received at twenty three by Hannah. As a widow she becomes a nurse, a woman blessed with healing powers. “Hannah’s married life in England is itself a testament to the total absence of passion, personal involvement and love between her and her husband” (Dhawan 195). She encounters Hubert who encourages her feelings.

After a year he suddenly appears at home and joins the East India Company as a junior factor. After two years stay in England Hannah goes to India. Strictly raised, Hannah, a puritan orphan, follows him due to “her curiosity, the awakening of her mind and her own sense of self and purpose” (89). The flower of the New World Zion, Hannah wants “to earn… dignity” (90). In 1695 they arrive at Coromandel Coast of the Bay of Bengal to enrich themselves (Being English). She knows that “she had been transported to the other side of the world, but the transportation was more than mere ‘conveyancing’, … Many years later she called the trip, and her long residence in India, her ‘translation’(104). She takes sheer
pleasure in the world’s variety being a tourist but her voyage is mental and interior. Yet it is a pleasure for her to watch “her life being transformed…, she did not hold India up to inspection by the lamp of England, or of Christianity, nor did she aspire to return to England upon the completion of Gabriel’s tour” (104). Hannah is not as malleable as an English factor’s wife has to be.

They live in the two storey house of Henry Hedges, who had died there. Bhagmati, the gift of God, a Hindu, servant girl, who loved Mr. Hedges, now serves Hannah, who keeps journal in India. She tells something about Henry Hedges – a displaced person, self-indulgent nobleman, ‘a man of new science’ and ‘of old Humanism’ (126), brilliant and passionate, the appearance of Sir William Jones.

Like an expatriate, Hannah’s social world is confined within the circle of Englishmen and English-women, “the fort was little England” (127). She feels the “household ran itself – Hannah didn’t think of it as being run by the servant woman and the peons ….” (128). Through her transcultural embroidery and Memoirs she reveals to herself the deepest secrets. She is geographically replaced in India but psychologically and culturally she is redisplaced in England. She knows the invisibility of Bhagmati in the women of the White Town.

Hannah is deserted by Gabriel in India. She is a faithful wife but he sees her as secondhand. She knows that “she could never be content in England” (156). She felt “herself no more at home in England than she did in the Coromandel” (164). Legge is offered a way out of the Company, and he gets emancipated from it. His restlessness drives him out of his career into a life as a pirate. He is “the Robin Hood” of the Coromandel Coast.
In the isolation, on the long nights of Gabriel’s absence, Bhagmati becomes her friend and the only link to the outside world. They speak a common language. Bhagmati is now a guide for her and she talks of the Epic – Ramayana – Captivity of Seeta, her exile etc. Hannah compares herself with Sita and Mary Ronaldson, the virtuous Puritan woman. Gabriel relates and visits Zebu-un-nissa, his black Bibi. Hannah sees chaos all around her, his unfaithfulness, his preference for the bibi, a matter never forgiven by her pride. She decides to return to London. Meanwhile she shifts from new Salem (New Town of Gabriel in India) to fort St. Sebastian; Gabriel is at sea in a dangerous season. He died in 1720 and was buried in Calcutta’s British Cemetery.

Bhagmati begs Hannah to reconsider her “return”. Hannah is now real widow, husbandless yet wouldn’t go away, “did not board…” (208) like Venkatesan in ‘Buried Lives’. She doesn’t like to be the governess, job in Cambridge.

Having no place in old Salem for an Indian lover’s daughter and no welcome for a pirate’s widow, where could she run to? During the anti-British riots Hannah is brought by Bhagmati, meets with an accident of the Bridge-collapse and becomes the “guest” of Raja Jadav Singh in Panpur palace. She is protected only by her servant – friend Bhagamati. She is cut off from white Towns. King of Devgad, Raja Jadav Singh is busy and at war with the Emperor Aurangzeb, who abandons his palaces at Agra and Aurangabad in order to come south and personally directs fighting with Jadav Singh. Jadav Singh hates all Sunni Muslims. He plans to diminish the revenue the ‘Firangi’ paid to the Grand Mughal Aurangzeb. So he has harassed the ‘firangi’ trade. The Grand Mughal calls him-’Rat of the Coromandel’ (218).

Hannah is now in a totally Hindu world. She is a pure product of her time and place. “Hannah Easton Fitch Legge was dying” (222). The
forces of the universe are working within her. Muslim Roopconda and Hindu Devgad is separated by a river. Nawab Haider Beig knows lion (Singh) rescued the English widow. Hannah wonders at Emperor’s crossing the life of Hannah, the Brookfield orphan. Actually she is the cause of Nawab’s encirclement.

Bhagmati/Bindu Bashini, the best cook, painter, singer, tailor, swimmer, at her age of ten she had been set upon by river pirates, violated and thrown into the river to drawn. She survives. Mahouts have saved her. She runs from her family, village, taboos and tradition due to disowning by her own people (relatives). She becomes a servant-scrubbing the cooking pots at Henry Hedges. He treats her at first as a slave then like a queen and gives her the name – Bhagmati. He takes her with him when he has moved from Hugali to Kasimbazar to Dacca to Madapollam and finally to Fort St. Sebastian. She is transformed “… (a) Reborn self” (224).

The distance between Hannah and Bhagmati, ruler and ruled, has vanished. Like her mother, Hannah is attracted by Raja Jadav Singh, falls in love with him and they enjoy true love. She is ready to sacrifice anything for him. He has saved her life like God. Only her mother can understand her feelings, thinks Hannah. Raja Jadav Singh is the child of his mother’s miraculous relation with a court painter.

Jadav singh is a lover, an artist, a care giver and a justice dispenser. His ferocity, and the purity of his heart and motive make Hannah loyal and grateful with his love. She is no longer “the woman she had been in Salem or London” (234). Everything is in flux on the Coromandel Coastline. She is the survivor who improvises the rules. She is now the ‘bibi’ not a wife. Love made her selfish and she has isolated Jadav Singh from his subjects. She is sensually awakened, glimpses a world “beyond
duty and patience and wifely service” (237). She is aware of her passionate nature.

Jadav Singh is seized by Morad Farah, the ruthless Commander of Nawab Haider Beg and is defeated in the battle in which Hannah had accompanied Jadav Singh. Confidently she killed Morad Farah and brought the wounded Raja at home and is saved with her fine nursing. She is a ‘bibi’ who lives to love, confesses her love for him and says “England is not my home. My home is America”. She tells Raja the nature of change with her own example – “I was once a respectable married English Lady and look at me now – a bibi in a sari. We can all change” (256). She is now going to be a mother of his baby. The Raja loses interest in pregnant Hannah and shifts her alongwith Bhagmati to “the women’s rooms … attached to my mother’s palace” (256).

Hannah has a vision – “would offer her life… to end the war” (259). She has the capacity to do it, because she is outside the pale of the two civilizations (Hindu & Muslim). The pregnant white woman Hannah visits Aurangzeb to negotiate. She is taken hostage by the Emperor. She is on a mission but he has seen her as a pawn in his endless game of Shatranj. She has expected that “she could free the two warrior-kings from their self – destructive obsession” (261). She is the peacemaker. But unmoved by her appeal, he decides to send her to her people-British/English? Angrezi and says “You are the prostitute of infidels and idolaters, and you reject the offer of my protection” (267). She doesn’t like to return to England, God has “conspired to put her Christian-Hindu-Muslim self, her American–English–Indian self, her orphaned, abandoned, widowed, pregnant self, her firangi and bibi self, into a single message…” (268). She desires nothing for herself. It is the love for a man, a place, a people; it is the ‘one world one people’. She has seen a diamond, the
largest, and the most beautiful in his tent. Emperor informs her that he
doesn’t “fight for treasure and glory … This diamond is the tear I shed as
I discharge my duty… called the Emperor’s Tear” (265).

He calls her Tigress and Precious - as - Pearl and forces her to view
with him the battle: the destruction of Raja Jadav Singh. Hannah pleads
the Mughul Emperor to reconsider but he refuses.“She had failed in her
mission…she prayed… for the strength of survival” (273). Devgad battle
is Aurangzeb’s last victory in which Raja Jadav Singh is killed. Bhagmati
calls her ‘Mukta’ means ‘pearl’. She gives Bhagmati the new name –
Hester “after the friend she had lost. The friend who had indirectly
brought her to the Coromandel Coast” (271).

Beigh Masters has seen the Emperor’s end as – “He died of a
thousand small wounds… having alienated… He carried the soul of the
Mughal Empire with him to his grave; what lingered was the vacuum that
invited the British in” (277). Beigh turns herself Bhagmati and knows
“where the diamond is…Hester Hedges in the graveyard of Fort St.
Sebastian … her body as a carrying case, (of diamond)” (283), i.e. the
diamond is in India not with Hannah in America, it is “in the remains of
Bhagmati “Hester Hedges”.

Hannah with the infant of the Raja returns to Salem, finds her
mother with the shameful ‘I’- that is Indian lover, who had been killed.
Hannah has a badge – Pearl Singh, the lively daughter of Raja. Rebecca
lives in Salem until 1720 with Hannah and Hannah lives there until 1750.
Her Pearl, born in 1701, is the eye witness of birth of America.

On Hannah’s return she meets Joseph Hawthorne. His great
grandson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, born in 1804, is author of *The Scarlet
Letter*. The circular Journey of Hannah starts and ends at Salem but “she
had travelled the world …” (238). The final part takes a quick look at Beigh’s and Venn’s Herculean task and its conclusion, Hannah’s “return”, meeting with Hawthorne, diamond’s secret place, Beigh’s role as Hester / Bhagmati, the results of war between Raja and Aurangzeb, Emperor’s death.

Mukherjee asks readers “to view my writings in the context of diaspora and transnationalism” (Edwards 171). *The Holder of the World* contains the attempts of dislocated individual to forge connections in a foreign land and the efforts to define her (Hannah) as a pre-America American, who represents the making of America and American national mythology. The idea of being “American” in the 1990s is presented through Beigh Masters, the post de-Europeanized American, “By American, I mean an intensity of spirit and a quality of desire” (Edwards 36) says Mukherjee. The idea of America as the melting pot where immigrants of different nationalities and creeds abandon their individual identities and get happily assimilated into the grand stew of American culture can be traced back to the writings of J. H. St. Jean de Crevecoer (1735-1813). An American, for him, is one who, “leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced … . He becomes an American” (*Letters from an American Farmer* 233, (qtd. in M.Ray, *Literary Criticism*, 244)). Hannah is an American who abandons her identity and gets happily assimilated wherever she lives.

**Transnational identity: The Holder of the World** –

Multi-names: a marker of transnational / multiple identities: Mukherjee’s usual pattern of the change in name to present the transformation, fluidity of identity, works here also. Name is the indicator of a ‘given’ identity (nation, class, religion, gender). Hannah Easton and
Bhagmati are renamed frequently. Their names display their national identity, where they are born and reside. Multi-names of the protagonist – Hannah Easton / Fitch / Legge / Salem Bibi / the Precious-as-Pearl / Mukta present Hannah’s identity as a transnational, transcending the national boundaries, geographic space and relating to several nations. The change in the surname instead of first name, is applied in the first three names. Hannah’s surname – ‘Easton’ is ‘given’ by her biological father, ‘Fitch’ – by her adopted father and ‘Legge’ – by her husband. The father and husband are the identity providers of a woman. She is also called Salem Bibi. It marks her origin and her role in (Moghal) India. The name indicates that she is - “neither wife nor queen” (254). She is aware of her relation with Raja Jadav Singh and her duty – “To live for love”. It is the ointment/balm to relieve/ to cure loneliness, the product of the lack of communication and alienation of diaspora. Aurangzeb names her – Precious-as-Pearl. Actually she is a prisoner of war, his hostage which makes him remember the diamond – Emperor’s Tear. It is the tear he/Aurangzeb shed as he discharged his duty. She is called ‘Mukta’ by Bhagmati, it means also ‘pearl’. It is an Indian name. Mukherjee marks each transformation by renaming the character(s). Each of the names represents the hybrid persona on her continuous journey of the three continents. Hannah’s fluid sense of race and ethnicity is signified by her constant renaming. Like Jasmine, she is renamed from – Hannah Easton to Hannah Fitch to Hannah Legge to Salem Bibi to Precious-as-Pearl to Mukta. Mukherjee shows the transformation of migrants with the change in name. It suits her female characters. “A new name for a new incarnation” (222).

Hannah also gives Bhagmati, her Hindu servant and friend, a new name – Hester, the name of her lost (dead) friend, “The friend who had
directly brought her to the Coromandel Coast” (271). It is a name of love between the two close friends. It suggests a global sisterhood. “Hannah spun the alliterative name like a ball on the tip of her tongue” (222). Bhagmati’s name is changed thrice in the course of her life. She has been born in a merchant family with the name of Bindu Bashini. She is violated / dishonored and is not accepted by the family. She has run away from her family and works at the English factor in Hugali, who loves her like a queen and renames her Bhagmati. Bhagmati is the name given by Henry Hedges, the British. Her transformation from Bindu Bhasini to Bhagmati is a consequence of the turning point in her life. She is the victim of her society and gender, but has survived. It is not her identity of origin but is ‘made’ to survive like Hannah, her mistress. Mukherjee shows that identities are constituted by violence and become survival tools” (Iyer ARIEL, 37). Hester and Pearl are the mother and daughter in The Scarlet letter, the literary predecessor which directly brought about Beigh Masters’ (Mukherjee’s) story, as she confesses herself at the end of the story – “As the focus narrows, the facts grow surer. … we have The Scarlet Letter. Who can blame Nathaniel Hawthorne for shying away… Salem mother and her illegitimate daughter? (284). Change of identities initiated by the change of names is a common feature of Mukherjee’s novels. Naming has frequently been a powerful instrument in her fiction as it also helps in construction of one’s identity. Socially and patriarchally she is defined as Hannah Easton Fitch Legge before becoming Raja Jadav Singh’s ‘bibi’ or lover.

Travel/displacement/relocation/translation/ transformation /transnational Hannah:

James Clifford’s (1989) ‘Notes on Travel and Theory’ in Travelling Theories, Travelling Theorists describes travel as a metaphor
for the contemporary post-colonial condition. It is a “figure for different modes of dwelling and displacement, for trajectories and identities, for story telling and theorizing in post colonial world of global contacts” (177). Edward Said writes “seeing ‘the entire world as a foreign land’ makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that is contrapuntal” (Reflections on Exile and Other Essays 186).

The novel shows shifts in Mukherjee’s concept of immigrant identity. In her first three novels, protagonists travel to North America, USA from India. Hannah is the first full drawn portrait of a white woman who travels from the present USA to England to exotic India in the opposite direction for the travel. Mukherjee presents it to focus that Americans are immigrants or their descendants like the Third World country immigrants in USA. “… The story of the Coromandel Coast is the story of Europe…. It is the story of North America turned inside out” (160). Hannah embarks on her journey of self-discovery and negotiates between cultures. She transforms herself as well as others.

“Whatever the name she (Hannah) carried in Massachusetts, in England, in India or even into the history…” (30), it shows Hannah’s transnational migrations, the move beyond the immigrant narrative Jasmine. Hannah’s relationships with each nation are transformative. Her multiple migrations change not only Hannah but the cultures she encounters – the individual influences national imagery as the national culture influences the global. So the term ‘transnational' is a signifier of cross – cultural movement and mobility as it is also geographical. Cross-cultural movements lift the ‘nation’ away from old pattern of fixed boundaries.
Hannah is displaced / replaced frequently. Her mother Rebecca displaced her into the puritan world. But then by choice she is displaced in England by marrying Gabriel Legge. “Her passion was more to leave that place, Salem…”, because “She too longed for escape” (67). Hannah is waiting to escape from the restrictive puritan world of Fitch which deflected forever the natural course of her girlhood. By the time she left America, Hannah has transformed herself twice, adopting the names Fitch and Legge, and moving from the woods to Brookfield settlement to Salem she heads for England, and is back to the colonizing center. She is searching through geographic movement her American origin. Her migration to India with Gabriel is due to “her curiosity, the awaking of her mind and her own sense of self and purpose” (84). She wants to earn dignity. She knows that “she had been transported to other side of the world, but the transportation was more than mere ‘‘‘conveyancing,’ … Many years later she called the trip, and her long residence in India her ‘translation’ ” (104). Bhabha says “culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational….translational because of such spatial histories of displacement …” (247). She acknowledges the global flows of commerce that connect India – England – America. She translates the trade, commerce, culture and politics of these countries. She enjoys it without nostalgia and feeling of homelessness, homesickness, alienation, “… the sheer pleasure she took in the world’s variety” (104). It is her transnational identity. She is the traveller of the world, she is a tourist and her “voyage was mental, interior. Getting there was important, and watching her life being transformed, that was the pleasure” (104). Cristina E. Dascalu, in her *Imaginary Homelands of Writers in Exile*, observes “Hannah begins her journey as a good puritan woman and concluded it as the Bibi … of Hindu Prince” (78-79). She doesn’t see India through the glasses of England / Christianity, so she doesn’t aspire
to return to England. Transnationals neither complain about homelessness nor offer nostalgia as a way to cope with the feelings of loss. “Past events surfaced only in images of pale dreary colors” (109). Homelessness is the condition of the life in transnational world, but it is not a condition that determines people’s life completely. Hannah seems to feel neither particularly rooted nor uprooted – looking for a sense of home by achieving a sheltered life. It is surely important but she cannot ever succeed once and for all. She positions herself and constructs identity not as something fixed and for all but as an identity in ‘becoming’. She is the transnational American immigrant in India. So Hannah’s journey finally leads her back to America. It is a circular journey which starts and ends in America but is interconnected. She feels at home everywhere - America, England and India.

Placing Hannah in India, multicultural, multireligious, multilingual, Mukherjee creates new connection between characters of different origins and supersedes differences. Hannah relates with the non-whites/non-Europeans in India which relationship transforms Hannah, and is called “translation”. She is aware of her transportation to the other side of the world – India. “She was alert to novelty” (104). Her travel is psychological and cultural. She is not as malleable as an English factor’s wife has to be.

Initially Hannah resides in White Town at fort St. Sebastian, an East India Company hub and English settlement in India, where she meets Bhagmati, the gift of god, who is born – Bindu Bashini and dies as Hester. She links Mukherjee’s protagonists like Dimple, Jasmine, Hannah who are in constant evolution. While “Hannah Easton Fitch Legge was dying” (222), she is going to transform in the company of Bhagmati. Both women adopt the name “bibi” as a reflection of their status as mistress to a married man. Bhagmati has an Anglo-Indian lover/partner and the
white American/English Hannah loves Raja Jadav Singh, Indian Raja, a guerrilla warrior. Their relationship as friends crosses the racial boundaries. Bhagmati is a confident, reluctant guide, stout protector, rescuer and facilitator of Hannah. Her transformation takes place by assimilating into Hindu/Indian culture. Both acculturate the foreign culture and name each other with names from different cultures’ (Bhagmati – Hester, Hannah – Mukta). It is the double transformation of transnational character.

Hannah is relocated in India frequently (White Town, New Salem constructed by Gabriel, with Raja Jadav Singh at Hindu Devgad & finally at Emperor’s Muslim Roopconda). Hannah is a Tigress and Precious–as–Pearl for Aurangzeb. Her relations with Raja Jadav Singh transforms her into the Salem bibi – it is a compound of her American self and Indian (Hindu, Muslim) selves, because “Hannah felt herself no more at home in England than she did in the Coromandel” (164). She puts herself in the hands of an Indian woman “…ostracism opened up unwalled worlds for her” (164). She is in the Hindu World. Bhagmati is not seen as her servant. She is the “pure product of her time and place” (220). She has transformed herself into a Hindu and learns to “… put on a … sari… Bhagmati … taught her… the art of pleating and folding a sari, the two women shared confidences” (222). She is no longer a woman from Salem or London. Everything appears “in flux on the Coromandel Coastline. The survivor is the one who improvises …the rules” (234). She is the ‘bibi’. In India she feels “her own passionate nature for the first time, the first hint that a world beyond duty and patience and wifely service was possible, then desirable, then irresistible” (237). She compares her life in India with Raja and with Gabriel in India and England and her life at Salem – Puritan world which condemns Hester Prynne of The Scarlet
Letter. It emphasizes the difference, because “she had traveled the world, a witness to unimagined visions, merely to repeat her mother’s folly, and to live her mother’s life over” (238). It is the universal biological approach of Mukherjee. Everywhere in the world an individual has similar desires of love and sex. It is India where she understands it and remembers her mother as it is the positive aspect of her transnational life and understanding of the ‘other’. It is the translation. Geographical distance is lost /finished/collapsed to assert universality of experience. Through her travel, transformation, translation Hannah/Mukherjee creates these connections and appears transnational - the healer of the world.

Finally she plays the role as a peace maker. She knows it very well that “we can all change” (256). To end the war of Raja Jadav Singh, “Peter the Great of India” (257) and Mughul Emperor Aurangzeb - the holder of the world, Hannah goes to negotiate with the Emperor. But she is taken hostage. Raja Jadav Singh is killed in the war. Her only friend is Bhagmati/ Hester with whom she shares everything in her life, “the language they communicated in was more of Bhagmati’s than hers” (271). It is her translation from an American into the Indian. Yet she returns Salem with the infant of Raja, the Black Pearl. It is her connectivity with homeland though she transforms with Indians in India. She states “my home is America” (255). She doesn’t consider England her home though her origins are there. But for Raja Jadav Singh – “England, America, Fort St. George, Pondicherry… (are) same” (255). It is the Hindu culture, Indian culture in which the idea of Home is wide and universal – ‘Universe is the Home’, ‘one world, one people’. So Indian diasporas like root anywhere and in any soil.

Transnationlists maintain connections in the countries from which they emigrated and the country of their adoption. The researchers, critics,
scholars of Diasporas (immigrants) viewed the immigrants as uprooted who leave the homeland behind and face the painful process of either expatriation or immigration into different societies and their culture. But according to the new approach they look at the homeland and also hostland as they have become transnationals whose identity is configured in their relationship to more than one nation-state. They are interconnected with the country of their origin and adoption or settlement. They sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. Hannah is the model of this phenomenon though she is placed in 17th c. by the very postmodern Bharati Mukherjee. She, a pirate’s restless widow (Hannah), cried “this is no country for Christians” (215) after the death of her husband, Gabriel when she feels heaviness in her bones and she sleeps. It is a cyclone that awakens her. She is – who is she now? She transforms herself into Salem bibi, Precious-as-Pearl, Peace maker – it is her transnational identity not national. She is connected with the country of adoption by relating Raja Jadav Singh and with her homeland by returning and reminding ‘homeland’. Her life in three continents is the token of her transnational existence. She is neither impatient nor melodramatic at any place. Place is place everywhere – where she is survivor and improviser of the rules. She assimilates with the people wherever she lives - England, India (at White Town, Devgad) and America. She is turned multicultural and ‘Healer of the World’ by crossing the borders of the nation–states. Like Forster and Edward Thompson, the Anglo-Indian novelists and the historical figure - Dr. Annie Beasant, she is sure that the British rule is unfair in India. The significance of national boundaries is diminished for her. Transnational processes are located with the life experiences of individuals. Might be it is due to Hannah’s position being ‘imperial Diaspora’ (Cohen). Her grandparents immigrated to the New England in 1633 on Angel Gabriel
as historical Walter Raleigh on his expedition. Her grandparents moved from colonial center (Boston or Rhode Island) to Brookfield, Massachusetts, a Puritan colony in Nipmuc Indian territory. So widowed Rebecca had taken Nipmuc lover.

Hannah is the possessor of love and compassion and she is raised as a Puritan. So it is possible to feel at home everywhere in the world. Or might be she is assimilating for American Dream to imperialize. Her role of peace–maker appears diplomatic like present America’s stance to keep the hold on the ‘other’.

Hannah’s difference from others lies in her ability for establishing connectedness across cultural boundaries. Laxmi Parasuram comments that “The book (The Holder) is an attempt to release consciousness from the shackles of Time and Space and bring a sense of global connectedness” (Dhawan 197). Beigh Masters believes in the ability of deconstruction of time and space barriers.

Like Hannah, Beigh Masters is hungry for “connectedness”. The Yale seminar “set in motion a hunger for connectedness … may be that led to … Venn” (11) who realizes the power of technology, which is able to present the past itself. “He wants to avoid that fatal unclutteredness, … can’t (6). Hannah’s distant relation with Beigh is unearthed by an asset hunter Beigh. Her origin is transnational. Venn Iyer, her boyfriend is a south Indian immigrant in America i.e. his origin is transnational and the setting of the novel is in south India. The place and character Hannah of 17th c. is connected with 20th c. Beigh Masters and Dr. Venn whose projects make it possible to travel in time and space, and it is visible now due to technology. Mukherjee herself is connected with American Hawthorne, English Keats and India by using intertextually The Scarlet Letter, John Keats’ ‘Ode on a Gremial Urn’, the captivity of Sita, her
exile and then war in Ramayana. Each Part of the novel begins with an epigraph, the lines from Keats’ ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ and novel ends with reference to the birth of Nathaniel Hawthorne “in Salem in 1804” (285). Actually he is the great grandson of John Hathorne. The novelist added ‘w’ in his surname to avoid the shame of his ancestor who emigrated to Massachusetts in 1630 - William Hathorne, a persecutor of Quakers, a fighter and his son John presided at Salem witchcraft trials. The Holder of the World begins in another place and another time, in 17th c., Puritan America & Mughal India, with a legendary diamond,

Beigh researches her own genealogy when she is engaged in her undergraduate degree in history. Her roots are in England, she lives in America (De-Europeanized) with an Indian immigrant. Here is the connectivity of three continents. Since long back the English have been rulers and traders in its colonies. Their encounters with natives/subjects have created historical connectivity among the migrants/transmigrants and their descendants. Though transnationalism has recently emerged in the theory it was in practice since long back.

Beigh reconstructs the life of Hannah with the help of various texts, paintings, museum in Massachusetts, graveyards in India, auctions in Bangkok and through a computer simulation made by Venn. It consumes eleven years of B.M.(Beigh Masters/Bharati Mukherjee).

Interconnections of immigrants/transmigrants at transnational level, multiple identities/fluidity of identity, its increased density and importance is made possible and sustained by transformations in the technologies of transportation and communication in the postmodern period. Jet planes, telephones-/mobiles, faxes, internet, web cameras certainly maintain and create immediate ties to home and multiple linkages with their ethnic groups wherever settled. Nafisa Hatmi states “Computer software and
technology enables Beigh Masters to ‘live in three time Zones simultaneously” (Chakrawarty 158).

In *The Holder of the World* technology is employed throughout as a literary and thematic device – such media (virtual reality) actualize the data gathered by sensitive and careful studied human beings like Beigh Masters(B.M.). Dr. Venn Iyer tries to experience the past using the interactive computer programme and ends up with nothing more than a ‘postcard view of modern Madras’. But he can’t cultivate Beigh’s sensitivity resulting from Hannah’s life.

The novel documents the “exploding possibilities of the digital age and marks the flourishing of Mukherjee’s fascination with information technology” (Edward XVI). Mukherjee asserts in an interview by Francisco Collado Rodriguez in 1994 that she has been always interested in technology and science as a way of interpreting the world, as an access to it. Mukherjee considers technology or computerized virtual reality is complementary to art. With the help of Dr. Venn who is working on virtual reality programme at MIT, the narrator Beigh is able to take the data she has gathered and approximate time travel for an encounter with Hannah. The Mughal Miniature painting is combined with *The Scarlet Letter* and computer programming to produce 17th c. American history, Mughal India - the centuries past in time, place and person.

Beigh constructs the narrative of Salem Bibi through research into artifacts such as paintings, embroidery, diaries, folk narratives. The traditional research and narrative method are contrasted in terms of objectivity with the virtual reality programme created by Venn. His programme X-2989 (virtual reality project) is an advanced technological facility to present the past. Beigh says – “… technology will enable any of us to insert ourselves anywhere and anytime on the time-space
continuum for as long as the grid can hold” (6). So history, according to Venn, is “a big saving bank.” He can put data ‘more boldly, more mischievously” (91). Venn knows that “data without design is a muddle” (206). Venn’s perfected project X-2989 might be able to generate three millisecond of virtual reality running time, in which all data of Beigh’s project would be stored.

After a year’s work of Venn and his assistant, Jay Basu, Beigh “walked in virtual reality for ten seconds on a Boston street, sat in a classroom at UCLA… I was with them … I was physically reacting to virtual space, … I have constructed a life through three continents and thirty years … Venn’s program has ingested to create ten seconds …” (278-79). Venn rendered her words into images. Emperor’s tear, a diamond has given him the clue, an idea of virtual reality. The present new technologies of transportation and communication have compressed the ‘space and time’, served to connect the networks of people with high speed. So Beigh visits the places where Hannah lived for her project. Technology helps and supports Beigh Masters to find out Hannah’s role as transmigrant in India.

Trading: Many transnational communities have spread themselves for economic purpose. The current global economy leads present day immigrants to settle in countries that are centers of global capitalism and to live transnational lives. Similarly in the colonial period imperial expansion was the need of western countries for the market. For trade / market the West ruled the East.

Mukherjee describes port cities like Salem as “nerve centers of their time” (47) and she compares 17th c. Coromandel Coast of the Bay of Bengal to “Manhattan in the mid eighties” (101–2) as a “kind of late stage capitalism” (101). The chain of multinational factories “stretched up
and down the Coromandel like condos on the Florida coast…everyone grew rich” (102). Mukherjee’s The Holder of the World is foregrounded in the last decade of 17th c. India when the country was undergoing a transition of power from the Mughals to the English. The Narrator tells “… all their related remnants of English and Portuguese colonialism are now located in the northern outskirts at the modern city of Madras” (95). India was a colony of the British.

The 2nd part of The Holder of the World gives details of Englishmen and their East India company. One of them Cephus Prynne says “It is the duty of all persons in the Honorable Company’s will and power…” (114). The company is “not in want of tender heartedness” (118). English Women like Martha and Sarah don’t forget their Englishness.

“The India trade … has achieved on the English market an enviable level of acceptance” (193) but Englishmen have used the ‘divide and rule’ method in India, dividing Hindus and Muslims. The character Tringham suggests to Raja Jadav Singh “Turn your hate into action, friend. Join the enemies of your enemies. Avenge this day!” (213). Raja’s rivalry against Grand Mughal Aurangzeb is intensified by this Englishman. But Hannah wants peace, to negotiate “to free the two warrior–kings from their self–destructive obsession” (261). Her Christian, Hindu, Muslim self, her American, English, Indian self, desires to stop the war. The life inside her (Raja’s baby) turns her a peace-maker, possessor of love having compassion for all. The ‘other’ can understand the ‘other’.

Tricontinental relations of Hannah enforced her to be a peacemaker. She understood ‘what is missing’ in them. But she fails. The possessor of love and compassion, Hannah, can live life wherever it leads her but she follows her will/impulses. ‘Love’ has released her pains and tensions of transnational migrations. It is her pleasures in exile. She is the
healer of the world and is expert in needle work, embroidery, gardening, and even surgery. ‘Love’ is the tool of Hannah to cure the ‘self’. She loves not only Jadav Singh but also Bhagmati/ Hester, her mother, she says “Love for a man, love for a place, love for a people” (268) and she asks Aurangzeb “… stop this war before it destroy the world!” (269).

The 20th c. transnational identity is restored in Hannah’s distant relative Beigh Masters and her boyfriend Venn. Beige’s love for him, his response to her project, help to develop their transnational relationship. After all there is a connection between India and America, which she unearthed in her research.

Cosmopolitanism, the new township is an aspect of transnationalism due to global economy. Narrator Beigh tells ‘A satellite town has grown around, and on the remains of old Fort St. Sebastian… parasitic’ (96). It is 20th c. picture but in 17th c. ‘White Towns’ also were built where rulers lived. Such towns were the centers of trade. They linked people across the borders of nation-state, created multiple ties and interactions of people, despite great distances.

Tololyan, editor of Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational studies, calls the ethnic diaspora “the exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (1991 : 5). Diasporas are transnational; embody a variety of historical and contemporary conditions and characteristics, trajectories and experiences. The Holder of the World is the model of diaspora – historical and contemporary, Hannah and Beigh who crossed the borders of nation-states, willingly, in different times who remain connected ‘Here’ and ‘There’. They were displaced, relocated, transformed, translated, and had multiple ties / networks, their consciousness was transnational. Their identities are fluid, as their ‘roots’ and routes’ are the same. The Holder of the world “is a poem” written in the form of fiction (A. Khan, 110) with
rhyme and rhythm of transnational identity. Initially “Hannah sees her identity as transcending space, nation, race, and ethnicity, but this construction of identity by Hannah changes as the narrative progresses” (Iyer 37). She turns transnational a compound of Christian – Hindu – Muslim culture and England - New England (USA) – India – by violating colonial laws of inter-racial relationships. Mukherjee dramatizes the transnational identity through Hannah’s transforming character as she travels through and engages other cultures of New England, England, and India where she becomes the Salem Bibi. Mukherjee claims transnational networks are not new. There were passages to and from India even in the colonial New England and that lives have been lived across cultures in all centuries (Fakrul 122). Mukherjee shows races interacting with each other across space and time since long back, just these are easy and speedy in the present due to modern technology of transportation and communication.

**Leave It To Me (1997):**

Bharati Mukherjee’s fifth novel *Leave it to Me*, the third of American trilogy, came out in 1997. It is a statement of the crisis/dilemma of identity in national and cultural terms. Devi dee, the protagonist of the novel, is a transnational and belongs to the universal culture, rainbow culture, hippie culture of America. Mukherjee is the author of transnational age and world, of the process of universalism which destroys the ‘difference’ between ‘us’ and ‘them’ ‘here and ‘there’, ‘center’ and ‘periphery’. Mukherjee tells Ron Hogan in an interview that Devi was meant to represent the divine justice in the Indian Hindu tradition. She says “I realized that in order to make my concept of divine justice, which sometimes involves great violence … I’d have to dig into and share the Hindu mythology of the goddess Devi worshiped in Bengal,
who was created by the Cosmic Spirit to do battle with the baddest bad
ass of all the demons, the Buffalo Demon,...”. Mukherjee utilizes the
myth of the Hindu Mother Goddess – Durga for Divine justice. Devi Dee,
the protagonist of *Leave it to Me*, understands the huge “difference
between justice and vengeance” (Mukherjee, *Leave it to Me*, 53).

Mukherjee’s aim in *Leave it to Me* is also to display the Greek
concept of Destiny, and the changes in the way America thinks of itself
and is seen by the rest of the world as a result of the division of Vietnam.
Romeo Hawk / Haq terms Ham in the novel “big stick bullies, you
Americans” (233). Mukherjee draws attention to the consequences of the
Vietnam War and Hippie culture of 1960s for the Devi’s generation,
which is the victim of it and damaged by it. The downside of American
life is drawn through the search of Devi’s biological roots. This
transnational novel demonstrates an anchoring in more than one distinct
cultures that exist and co-exist independent of each other and its impact
on an individual’s identity.

The flashback technique of the novel displays that the novel begins
exactly where it ends. Initially Debby DiMartino / Devi Dee is “in the
cabin of … houseboat (Last Chance) off Sausalito as curtains of flame
cdance in the distance and a million flashbulbs burn and fizzle, and ( I ) sit
with the head of a lover on my lap, … (10). Finally, prior to the Epilogue
Devi “cradle(s) Ham’s tormented face to my(her) bosom. I am screaming
as I dial 911” (235). Devi is aware of her mugged identities (16). The
quest of identity, the ‘given’ identity, the attempt to know the past/
origins / biological roots is at the centre of the novel. There is no way to
change an individual’s past which is the foundation of present. Devi
“cannot change (her) … grandfathers” (Handline, *Immigration* 154).
Devi’s present identity is mistaken, Devi Dee Considers “Debby
DiMartino is a lie (10). A haunted past and quest for personal identity dominates *Leave it to Me* as it follows a young woman’s search for her bio-parents / true parents to know what is her ‘given’ identity. Origins display the class, race, nation, gender, religion. Her physical traits and the made identity (Italian - American adopted daughter) do not match with each other. So what she is and would like to be is less important than what she was, her past / lost identity / ‘given’ identity for Debby DiMartino. Mukherjee’s usual pattern of crisis of identity in her fiction is successfully drawn here but the earlier heroines Dimple, Jasmine, and the protagonists from the short fiction are engaged in the transformation, forming the new identity especially American. But Debby, the American, is engaged in search of the past identity. The age old story of a foundling in search of parents is the canvas for Mukherjee to portray Devi Dee / Debby DiMartino / Debby Dimartini / Debby Fong / Faustine /Tiger/ Baby Clear Water Iris–Daughter’s dilemma of identity. She needs to find her true identity. Mukherjee is writing from America. Debby’s search for roots is neither motivated by any mother–daughter bond nor a diaspora’s nostalgia or homesickness. She is, like her mother, the product of her time, the American liberalism and the hippie cult of 1960s and 1970s. “Pursue happiness: that’s the American Way” (61), it says.

The novel opens with the prologue, which is the essence of the theme of the novel and tells the tale of the goddess Durga / Mahishasurmardini / Devi. It is retold to the children by old Hari in Devigoan village. Devi / Durga / Mahishasurmardini kills the Buffalo Demon, who “Declares himself destroyer of gods and goddesses’ (6). By listening to the tale, the children are comforted and “curl into sleep’(6).

In this tripartite novel ‘I’ – the narrator and protagonist, is 23 year old adoptee of an Italian–American family. A graduate from SUNY, Devi is a good listener and a news junkie (like Mukherjee). She is a bastard
child of California Hippie Jess from Fresno and Eurasian ‘Thug’, a sex-
guru and serial killer, Romeo Hawk. Her Eurasian origin makes her an
orphan, but a tall, beautiful girl. Alone and exotic girl in a very American
town is a telemarketer, and works for Media Escort agency- Leave it to
Me. She is a Sexy nun with 800 number selling contrition by UPS. She
loves Frankie Fong. He wants her to be Chinese, calls her Tiger. She
invents herself. Devi has a chance after chance to have “life after life to
get it right” (45). Half American mainstream and half Asian, Devi “needs
to know” (49) her toddler days, medical history and psychic legacies. She
is looking for the westward passage. She is brought up as Catholic -
Debby / Faustine. She renames herself Devi. Other heroines of
Mukherjee are named by the ‘other’, the identity providers.

Devi encounters the problem – “Who are you when you don’t have
a birth certificate, only poorly typed, creased affidavit sworn out by a nun
who signs herself Sister Madeleine, Gray Sisters of Charity?... No
mother’s name, no father’s name, just Baby Clear Water Iris - Daughter ...
” (16).

But Debby DiMartino, young, learned, graduate, charming, tall and
exotic girl in a very American town makes her mind “… to find out if I
was someone special or just another misfit” (16). Henceforth she is busy
in searching her true identity.

Debby DiMartino grows up in a middle class Italian American
family of three DiMartions: Mama – Serena, Pappy- Manfred and Angie,
their daughter. Up to 23 years of her life she lives in Schenectady, up near
Albany, upstate New York. Debby is adopted by them from an Indian
Catholic orphanage when she was a two year old baby girl. She had been
abandoned by her biological American hippie mother and Eurasian father
- Asian National, Jess and Romeo - the lousy people who considered her
lousier. They had left her “to be sniffed at by wild dogs, like a carcass in the mangy shade” (10). In the mid seventies, 1974, she was “just a garbage sack thrown out on the hippie trail” (13). Debby DiMartino knows now that “debby DiMartino is a lie” (10). She abandons her adopted parents, joins the telemarketing job where she meets the CEO of FHP, Frankie Fong. After a disastrous love affair with him, she burns his house for his betrayal and Debby decides to find who / what she is. She finds out from her adopted mother that she was discarded by Fresno biological mother and later bartered away by the woman to the DiMartinos for a return ticket to San Francisco, California. She also knows that her father is in an Indian prison.

“Debby DiMartino died and Devi Dee birthed herself on the Donner Pass …” (62). Debby has self–rechristened herself as Devi Dee for the search of her biological parents. It takes her to California, multicultural San Francisco, and she begins her new life with the new name. She even lives in her Corolla car, in Haight Asbury, sheds her old identity and tries becoming “… Devi the Tenderloin prowler, all allure and strength and zero innocence, running away from shame, running to revenge? ” (66-67). She befriends immigrants like Gabe, Loco Larry, Stoop Man, Duvet Man. She says “All neighbours had come to Beulah rooming house from somewhere. Vanuatu … Somalia …Vietnam, Belgium, India, Schenectady …” (98). She assumes a hippie style – uses drugs, has sex irrespective of class, caste, country, and religion, ethnicity of partner and without any prejudice. She begins to track down her bio-mom and dad, who gave her life. Her quest of parents leads her to multicolored San Francisco, and confrontation with unexpected demons (buffalo) like Ham alias Hamilton Cohan, a movie-man, Jess Du-Pree, owner of media escorting business, “the woman … whom he (Fred
Pointer) had courted …” (214), Fred pointer, the detective, and her bio-dad Romeo Hawk. Like Frankie Fong Devi loves Ham (??) to trace her true parents. Ham loves Jess and Devi (Electra complex). Ham helps to get her a job and also detective to handle her case as mission. Fred pointer, the detective connects Rajeev Raj from Bombay, the Bombay associate of Vulture, to search her case in India. He meets Sister Madeleine in Mount Abu, the place of Gray sisters. They had named her Faustine, and taken the child to her imprisoned mother. Rajeev Raj also meets Romeo Hawk, Devi’s bio-dad. The Bombay associate of Vulture, Raj meets an old Hari, the witness of the crime. With the help of Raj Fred discovers Devi’s bio-parents with evidence – conversation transcripts, court records and he himself is very close to Jess.

Romeo Hawk, Released from the jail after 20 years, arrives in San Francisco, dressed as a woman to meet Devi. He undresses himself “with the taunting efficiency of a professional stripper” (212) in front of her, then dressed as a man, claims “I’m your father” (213) and proves with passports how Jess was changing her identities. She was “Jeanne Jellybean, a citizen of France, Sigrid Schlant, west German, Veronica Alexandra Taylor, South African, Magda Lukacs, born German and Margaret Rose Smith born Trinidadian but a British citizen. Romeo has come to take revenge upon the woman who had turned approver on him, made him to be imprisoned. She thinks he would never get out. So he says, in their final meeting, “If roses are red, and violets are blue, our hate is eternal, and our love absolute…” (222). He drags Jess from Ham’s nest, the houseboat -Last Chance and disposes her. Devi is filled with revenge and resentment against her parents and Ham to whom she destroys like goddess Durga. On his return Romeo Hawk murders Ham brutally and for domestic violence Devi “dial(s) 911” (235). Devi is the
bastard child of the American Hippie, Jess, a flower-child, has opposed the Vietnam war but embraced sexual revolution and used drugs. Her father Romeo Hawk’s origins are in Peshawar, Pakistan, but his ancestors had migrated to Vietnam. So Devi is half Pakistani, half Vietnamese, half Californian, half American, and the Asian-American like her father.

The plot focuses on the search for the biological roots of Devi, who wants to take revenge on her parents because they had thrown her being lousier, a garbage sack. It is a natural instinct to know one’s ‘given’ identity and she is motivated by Mr. Wyatt, then Angie, Mr. Bullock, Frankie Fong.

**Transnational Identity: *Leave it to Me***

Changes in the name of the protagonist, the multiple names - Debby DiMartino / Faustine / Baby Clear-water Iris-Daughter / Debby Fong / Devi Dee are the transformations of an individual, the protagonist of *Leave it to Me*. Her name is constantly changed, mispronounced and misunderstood. The question of naming becomes highly symbolic in the context of integration into American society with the issues of racism, awareness of difference, and desire to belong. In a diverse society, names become signifiers of more than merely individual or familial identity, but of gestures toward membership in a particular-racial, ethnic or cultural group. Mukherjee is cautious in naming the characters. The names are metaphors or symbols (of myths, legends, history, community country, religion, class) in her fiction.

The name Debby DiMartino is given as – Baby Clear water Iris-Daughter on affidavit of Indian orphanage “until it was christened in a catholic orphanage” just tells that her mother “was the product of her times” (88) and was from another country, belongs to the hippie culture and was on a “love - and - peace” flower trip to India. “…Mother
identified herself as Clear Water Iris- Daughter…” (13). Fred Pointer
informs her “Two continents went into your making. That means you are
one up on Kurtz, Devi” (105). Devi’s origins are transnational as her
mother is from USA, California. Her Mama kept her origins simple
“… hippie backpacker from Fresno and Eurasian loverboy, both into
smoking, dealing and stealing” (41). Devi says “I need to know …. What
you (her adopted mother) know” (49). She tells her as she
enquires,“what kind of a real last name is Iris - Daughter … some of the
documents were sealed … lawsuit… Indians were pressing those charges.
The Indian government … lawyer said … in our favor… the woman was
an American citizen … she would sign the adoption papers if they got us
to pay her airfare back to the States … Delhi - San Francisco” (50-51).
Her father is Asian National, a ‘thug’ Romeo Hawk, whose origins are in
Peshawar, Pakistan, who is transnational in relation, and connected with
India, Vietnam, America. He is the wanderer of the world. On meeting
with them at a time in the third part of the novel Devi feels that they are
as strange as honeymooners from Mars. Devi was born in India, at
Devigoan, and abandoned during a night of music, drugs and frenzied
dancing. She is rescued by the nuns and given to the family of adoption.
She is named as Faustine by Madeleine, one of the Gray Nuns. She is
adopted into a decent Italian–American family of DiMartino, from
Schenectady, New York.

To give a clear start DiMartinos (Serena and Manfred) have
changed her name which was given by the Hindi speaking nuns in Indian
catholic orphanage. The name ‘Faustine’ appears foreign to her adopted
mother - Serena DiMartino. She has changed her name officially to
“Debby DiMartino after Debbi Reynold, Serena Dimartino’s all–time
favorite” (41). According to Davis “when the name is rejected as too
foreign, it alienates the child from his or her peers. But a name shift for the sake of adaptation often has more insidious consequences on the child’s evolving sense of self-in-place”. (Shirley 175).

What is her ‘given’ identity? is she Indian/Asian, American, or both? She is both because of her origins / birth. By adoption she is Italian- American, and because of her twenty years stay in America, she is an immigrant American of mainstream. She doesn’t have clear memory of her birthplace, and bio-parents, so she encounters the identity crisis. A 23 year old, fun-loving American girl, who has just completed graduation, faces the problem of her biological roots. She is now aware that –“Debby DiMartino is a lie”, “I hadn’t born a DiMartino” (96), “… the DiMartinos were aliens” (27). She is brought up as a catholic being Faustine and Debby and she is made aware of her identity, - true / real identity by Wyatt, the MSW student for whom she is a project. Her adopted family, her teacher Mr. Bullock, the junior high geeks and creeps – all of them have slowly led her to find out her identity. The present ‘made’ identity is different from the past ‘given’ identity; Debby is caught into the dilemma of identity. It is supported by her physical traits - “tall … beautiful … exotic girl in a very American town” (16). She is confident of the inheritance of her beauty, and says to herself “I’ll bet. I go to my good looks from him (father) and my fantastic good luck” (124). Her search for identity / biological roots is the “side effect of adoption” (28).

Debby DiMartino’s next incarnation is Debby Fong, a new name/new identity, because she joins the telemarketing job which makes it possible for her to move out of DiMartino split–level. She is a telemarketing Elastonomics, the product manufactured in Asia by Fong Home products (FHP) and whose CEO is Francis A. Fong, Hong Kong
movie star, who needs to remember the Asian childhood and Debby needs to discover it.

Frankie Fong invites her for lunch, takes her to bed on the first date and hands her the keys to her first apartment three nights later. He doesn’t ask her origins. By listening to Frankie-stories of Asia she feels “connected”, she takes it as a careless hippie mom’s Asia. He hands her key to her apartment and says “Now you, too, are part of the Fong family Resettlement scheme” (29). She translates him ‘a cornered rat’ (30). He knows her exotic appearance. Both have invented themselves. He wants her to be a model, his PA, a movie star, and calls her Tiger. He loves her, and wants her to be more Chinese than great China Wall. She now takes interest in her life, likes to be a concubine of Frankie. But his love for another sexy Asian woman - Ovidia turns Debby his secretary. She knows now “… a few of us are given chance after chance because we have life after life to get it right” (45). She hammers down the truth that a transnational individual’s life is in fact a series of reincarnations as he / she lives through several lives in a single lifetime.

Debby signs on as a client with Finders / Keepers, a family reuniting service in Albany to find/trace her biological parents. Her file/case has been transferred to San Francisco office, she follows it but before that she burns her boyfriend Frankie’s house on Union Avenue, as her revenge on him because he has been disloyal in love. Now she is obsessed with discovering her bio-mom, although it is not motivated by any mother-daughter bond. On the contrary she is filled with revenge and hatred for her parents, because they have abandoned her like “a garbage sack thrown out on the hippie trail” (13).

“Debby DiMartino died and Devi Dee birthed herself on …” (62). She has rechristened herself - Devi Dee, her new identity, which tells her origin, the place of her birth, and her bio-dad. This is the ethnic identity
of Devi. She says “As Devi, I came into possession of my mystery genes” (64). “Devi is the female gender of Deva … Deva comes from Sanskrit word ‘shine’ (204). Ma Varuna(?) takes objection to her name – Devi, because according to her Devi Dee is not a shiny woman. Devi, the product of American liberalism, the hippie cult of the 1970s, says to Ma Varuna - “This is a free country … you can give yourself any name you want (203). Mukherjee is speaking here from America. Nyman sees the novel Leave it to Me as an immigrant’s praise of America and its opportunities (35). Devi now does express remorse for not having her own family of uncles, aunts grandparents and cousins. She says “I didn’t fit into Hudson Valley any more comfortable than I did into the Asia of Hippie mothers and Catholic missionaries” (65). So she herself has said farewell to her old identity as Debby DiMartino.

She is confused at what she has inherited but thinks “when you inherit nothing, you are entitled to everything …” (67). She follows – Hare Krishna’s, Buddhist, Baptists, Black Muslims, and some religions that mix love and profit, charity and sex, faith and ecology. She adopts the hippie way of life. She feels free and doesn’t appear to be jobless and homeless. She lives in her car, befriends the strangers to find out her bio-mom. She meets here Ham Cohan who knows Francis Fong, his Flash Films. Ham is a movie man and her mother’s boyfriend. With his help she discovers her bio-parents, mom’s hippie life, dad’s Asian life (Pakistan and Vietnam) and the American hippie life. According to Ham Jess had helped Romeo to Kill “a total of seventeen men and women and bump off Fred” (226). There is an entry of her bio-dad who kills Ham, who keeps relations with the mother and daughter at the same time. Eventually she claims her “inheritance” (235). Like Romeo Hawk, directly or indirectly she destroys Frankie Fong, Fred, Loco Larry, and even Ham
and Jess with the help of Romeo, whom she finally kills with cleaver. Like the Goddess Durga Devi has destroyed the evils in her life.

The changes of identities are initiated by the change of names. It is a Mukherjee pattern of ‘Fluid’ identity. Bharati Mukherjee draws each new identity by renaming Debby DiMartino. Like, Dimple, Jasmine and Hannah Debby DiMartino’s new names in *Leave it to Me* mark the changes in her identity. The meaning of her final name ‘Devi’ is ‘Mahishasuramardini’ which is exposed in destroying the evils like the buffalo demon. “Debby DiMartino’s change of name to Devi Dee is a statement of the writer’s intention of giving Debby an Indian identity” (Eapen, 123). She moves from New York to California (San Francisco) after burning down the house of her boyfriend Frankie Fong due to his betrayal. Here begins the process of purification of impurity.

Her Identity is caught into a dilemma due to her Eurasian origins. She has an unethnic appearance, her American look, outwardly mainstream American. Frankie considers her to be a Burmese. The Chinese waiter communicates in his language and waits for an answer from Devi. An Indian blurts out to her “Wanna catch a new Amitav” (66). She feels “The whole world was mine to claim” (129). She appears Pakistani, Bangladeshi - this mixed identity hurts and piques her so that one day she resolves to find out the truth about her roots. It is for her medical history and psychic legacies. It denotes that though she is neither homesick nor nostalgic like expatriates, but she likes to know who she is. Her efforts reveal to her that she is a half–American bastard child of Jess, the American hippie and Romeo, an Asian national, born in India and adopted into America. Her roots are transnational, her identity is transnational. She is Asian–American, in the third space, productive. Her name is mispronounced like “day –Vee, “Di”. According to Shirley Geok
– Lin Lim (2006) “one’s ethnicity and nationality in post–colonial or transnational literatures is defined by the transgression of boundaries or by the hyphen in a hyphenated identity” (260). Jopi Nyman in her *Home, Identity and Mobility in Contemporary Diasporic Fiction* has remarked that “The various identities of (the novel’s) main character Devi/Debby DiMartino, born in India but adopted into the US, contribute to a critique of fixed identities and emphasizes the fluidity and per-formative character of identity” (34-35). Both these remarks indicate Devi’s dilemma of identity.

Mukherjee intends to show that Devi was “part of a larger design in which some highest power uses her to restore some kind of balance and purge evil out of (our) California” (Edwards xvii).

Her biological mother has many names - Clear Cater Iris-Daughter, Jess DuPree, Petunia, Miss Free Love from Fresno, Jeanne, Magda Lukacs, Sigrid Schlant, Veronica Alexandra Taylor and Margaret Rose Simth. She has gone through more transformations and incarnations than Debby DiMartino. She has also travelled more than Debby has and connects transnationally being a hippie - who has tried headbands, drug, Buddhism, travel, fancy clothes, the counterculture of 1960s America.

She travels from America to India, “… (makes) her way through England France, Greece and Turkey and Afghanistan, sharing rides with the world’s waifs, strays, seeks, sickos, sensualists and stopped for a while in the Indian village of Laxmipur” (154). There she meets Romeo, in her late twenties (28years) and delivers a child. By leaving behind her child in a catholic orphanage she returns to the homeland America and again joins Ham as it was before 1968s spring. Jess is also loved by Fred pointer. There is a love triangle - Ham - Jess - Fred, Jess - Ham - Devi like the triangle of Devi - Frankie - Ovidia. Devi thinks “We know what
men who’ve shared the same woman are like, but what are women who share the same man like?” (152).

Romeo Hawk, the scatterer of seeds from which Devi is sprouted, is an Americanized fellow. His Surname ‘Hawk’ is drawn from H-a-q-u-e, the Muslim nomenclature. Then H-a-q-e, ‘Hawk’, is the invention of catholic nuns in Saigon. His wife is a Eurasian, his origins are transnational and connect him with India / Pakistan, Vietnam, and America. His ancestors migrated to Vietnam. Bette Ann Krutch of Delaware changed her name to Ma Varuna, the Mother Wind-Goddess who objected to the name of Devi. Romeo dressed himself as a woman to meet Devi, asks her to “drive …to (your) boss’s foxhole…to settle with that bitch” (213). He claims his daughter immediately – “I’m your father … daughter” (213). Very earnestly Devi asks her mother - “Why? …why didn’t you want me?” (223). But Jess denies her relationship to Devi, even in the final scene she says “I’ve never been pregnant … I wasn’t that dumb … never” (224). But the similarities between Devi and her parents indicate that Devi is their daughter. She is the inheritor of her parents, of their hippie culture, killing nature, free sex, drinks, and carelessness. She kills her ‘self’ to transform the decent Debby into Devi, to kill the evils in California.

Every migration leads to travel, displacement, translation, transformation and the construction of transnational identity. It involves not only geographical journey but also emotional severing of bonds with homeland, followed by transplantation in the new country and culture. The identity issue is problematic for the expatriate or immigrant diasporas but for the transnationals since 1980s it is different. They feel at home everywhere, and are not homeless like the expatriates or do not engage in the process of ‘rehousement’ like immigrants. They keep connected with
the homeland and its culture equally and assimilate in the new culture. They do not bother for or remain obstinate to keep either this or that cultural practice. Devi Dee doesn’t feel homeless even though she is an orphan. She migrates and easily gets mixed with the senior ex-hippies in America. Might be it is due to her early migration and she has been living in US since childhood and through the formative years of her life. In the words of A.S.Bagul “In … Leave it to Me Bharati Mukherjee deals with … quest of identity and biological roots … transformation … Electra complex … migration …” (202).

The prologue of Leave it to Me begins with the description of the village –Devigoan, west of Delhi, India, where Goddess Durga’s story is narrated to the children, her would be the followers. Goddess Devi, the cosmic spirit, is powerful enough to destroy the evils. The setting of the first part immediately shifts transnationally to Schenectady, New York, USA. Devi Dee travels from Devigoan, India to Schenectady, America as the toddler with adopted parents. It is her migration by force. The society and her parents made situation like ‘holocaust’ for her. This is her transnational travel and displacement. She is by birth displaced in the world due to the American hippie culture of late sixties-early seventies type. She “tries out all the good stuff like communes, beads’ curtains, Buddhism, headbands, drugs, lots of drugs, …” (86). Free sex, careless life, rejection of conventional values were in practice. The American hippie mother and Asian national, serial killer, sex-guru father, their counterculture have made Devi Dee a displaced, an orphan, careless, and street-smart hippy like her mother. She says “An orphan doesn’t know how to ask, afraid of answers, and hopes instead for revelation. Ignorance isn’t bliss, but it keeps risky knowledge at bay. I never badgered Mama to tell me all she knew about my toddler days. Mama
must have liked it that way too. .... She left my biodata minimal. ....” (41). After her graduation, 23 year old Debby/Devi Dee is Eurasian orphan (origin) and Italian-American by adoption and her stay in America. But her physical features don’t match to this identity. For medical history and psychic ligacy, she needs to know her bio-parents. She feels compelled to address herself to the origin. So she hires a detective from Finders and Keepers. They transfer her case to San Francisco. So she travels actually from Schenectady to San Francisco and encounters the ex-hippies like Hamilton Cohan, Jess DuPree, and Fred Pointer. She doesn’t travel across the nation-states as grown-up Debby/Devi. Only once she has crossed the borders of her birth-country with DiMartinos. But throughout the novel Mukherjee makes her to dwell between the hostland and birthland. It is possible due to advanced technology of communication and her advanced search through the detectives in USA and India. Fred Pointer, from Vulture in USA and Rajeev Raj, Bombay associate of Vulture, get connected and they dig her case with success. The airmail of court transcription, telephone and laptop help them to discover her bio-parents. Without physical transnational travel Devi is successful in her research. “The flashback technique helps to develop the physical as well as mental journey of the protagonist” (Bagul 202). In her mental journey she travels from her birthplace (Laxmipur, Devigoan, Mount Abu, India to Schenectady, New York, San Francisco, California, USA). Rajeev Raj travels to Devigoan, Laxmipur, Jaipur Court, and the prison where he meets Sister Madeleine, one of the Gray sisters, Romeo Hawk, and Old Hari the eye witness of crime. They are travelling within the country.

Ex-hippies - Ham, Jess and Romeo have by choice travelled transnationally. Jess has travelled through America, England, France
Greece, Turkey, Afghanistan and India. She is transformed in it. Ham and Jess, the lovers, near about 25 years, in Berkeley, moved to Napa in 1968 and worshipped Baba Lalji. Devi thinks, “My mother’d committed follies on the other side of the moon and now a lover or blackmailer was hounding her” (182). She had seen her self as a missionary. She had mailed Ham from–Surakarta, Seremban, Chaing Mai, Mandalay, Tabriz, and Ranpur, how widely she travelled in her youth. She tells about R (might be Romeo Hawk), her lover and guru. “Half the girls of Berkeley were on those trips” (87) across three continents, in the countries like – Nepal, India, Sri Lanka.

Frankie Fong travelled throughout the world – wherever the Chinese settled – Calcutta, Bangkok, Saigon, Singapore, Manila, Jakarta, Sydney, San Francisco, Kuala Lumpur etc. Similarly Romeo Hawk travelled from Vietnam to India to America for different goals. Devi’s mother, a missionary travelled to India and adopted two year old girl named her Debby. She has given her the identity. The following paragraph is the best example of characters’ transnational travel and their transformations, which is information for Devi in her search-

“In Bangkok the lovers quarreled … made research in Bali, to break up again in Surabaja … Katmandu … In Colombo … In Kabul … in Chiang Mai, Srinagar and Taipai … In Singapore … the woman went to the Singapore police … locked her …. said nothing about two killings in Devigaon … Interpol tracked her lover through, Turkey, Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka to a hill station in India …” (123).

Though grown up Debby doesn’t travel across America but her network establishes the connectivity of her birth country and settled country. Really there is a dilemma as to which country does she belong? She has lost her birth country, the ‘given’ identity by parents’ abandonment
and migration. In her origin there is transnational union, she is the 2nd generation of transnational immigrants. She is ‘translated’ (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 17) and translates both cultures, but like Jess she loses and gains something in the translation. She transforms herself into an American. Debby is grown in Italian-American family. Up to 23 she is a decent graduate, though her police file is with Wyatt, she erases it by getting into school. Once again she is caught into ex-hippies’ net and transforms herself into a hippie. Bharati Mukherjee asserts in an interview by Ron Hogan, Devi Dee is, “…. a part of a larger design in which some higher power uses her to restore some kind of balance and purge evil out of our California” (Edwards 118). For the ‘Divine Justice’ Devi, like Goddess Durga destroys evil men and women by living among them, even she allows them to seduce her, to use her for sexual union.

People who have “… more than one house in more than one country” (171) are the transnationals. Frankie Fong, Jess, Fred, Beth, Ham’s ‘A’ list people are belonging to this category. Their network, social, political, and professional, is transnational. Frankie Fong is at home everywhere – ‘Fong diaspora’ / Chinese diaspora, China-towns are everywhere in the world. Frankie is “not an immigrant the way that Paolo DiMartino had been” (29). He asks “what your new country can do for you” (29). He is in the position to rebuild an empire and relocate his vast family. His FHP (Frankie Home Products) are manufactured in Asia, and it is a multinational fitness equipment company. His network of business is transnational. He is a movie-man, Hong-Kong star, wants co-starring Devi as an orphan in a Flash Movie.

Jess lives everywhere - even in the Ashram, in the East and the West and feels at home everywhere due to her transnational attitude. She keeps connected irrespective of race, religion and country of the man with
whom she lives. e.g. Romeo Hawk, whose baby she has delivered. She
doesn’t have racial discrimination. Just it’s a by-product of the hippie
culture and not of racism or difference. Devi also does not feel homeless
and jobless wherever she goes. Devi has lived in an Indian Catholic
orphanage, in Schenectady with DiMartinos, in an apartment offered by
Frankie Fong, in a car- Carolla - as - Motel - Room and a house on a
second floor no-lease rental in a rooming house on Beulah Street off Cole

All these characters have travelled and got transformed due to their
capability of translating the transnational cultures. Journeys are evidently
an effective metaphors for imagination as well as soul-making or self-
development, and transformation. The passage means a journey from old
world culture to a new socio-political scenario. Hence transmigrants are
connected with more than one country and more than one culture. Devi
doesn’t have ties of birth country yet necessitates to know who she is.
Devi’s journey of self-discovery is marked by violence. “Destruction is
creation’s necessary prelude” (211). The killing of her own selves,
psychologically, is necessary to be reborn many times. For new identity
she murders what she was. Also diplomatically she destroys the evils in
California, in the form of Loco Larry, Fred Pointer, Beth, Salome, Ham,
Jess and Romeo. She burns down her ex-lover’s (Frankie Fong) house
and transforms herself into Devi Dee. The transformation of a Catholic
decent Debby DiMartino into an American hippie involves the violence.
Bharati Mukherjee knows that ‘Divine Justice involves great violence’.

Home-away-return: the three stages of the diasporas are changed
for Devi due to her reason of migration and modern communication-
technology. Today the birth country and adopted country of the
transmigrant easily get connected by modern electronic technologies of
communication and transportation. But she does not have the ties of
homeland / birthcountry for which diasporas need to be connected. Accidentally she is born there, abandoned by bio-parents and is adopted by Italian-Americans. So she travels from Devigaon, India as a baby into the hands of the foster parents to America where young Debby easily changes names, boyfriends, destinations and of course identities. It is the fluidity of identity.

Devi does not feel nostalgic for homeland, there is no bonding and ‘belonging’, just she wants to know her ‘medical history’ and ‘psychic legacies’. She doesn’t miss her parents (biological), birthcountry or its culture. There is nobody with whom she would be connected. What attachment can a poor Asian emigrant have for a country where she had nothing? She is an American, who receives the new manners from the new mode of life she has embraced. She is a new woman, who acts upon new principles, form new ideas and look forward. This is the Americanization of an immigrant.

Debby’s telemarketing job indicates use of modern technology of communication in business and marketing. Elastonomics, the FHP’s fitness equipment, is telemarketed by Debby. She has a telephonic voice and has graduated from SUNY Albany in telemarketing. Her CEO of FHP calls her from Kuala Lumpur - the telephone, communication media is widely used in the personal and professional life of Frankie Fong, Devi, Ham and Jess. FHP - products are produced in Asia but its marketing is throughout the world. This is the effect of globalization.

The following expressions in the novel prove the use of modern technology of information and communication – “Ham had to be a chain-telephonner” (83), “file had been electronically transferred” (52), “I’ve exchanged a couple of faxes with a fellow in Bombay” (105), “… desks,
filing cabinets, computers, a printer, a fax machine, a copier” (148-49), “The laptop was lighter than the other two carry-ones’ (158), ‘Journalist tapped her tape-recorder’ (160).

The professional network of all major characters is transnational. Professional network of Francis Fong whom Devi loved is transnational. His father is the Don Ho of a dozen South-Asian China-towns. His mother is from Manila. Frankie is the owner-cum CEO of FHP, a multinational fitness equipment company that manufactures Elastonomics, an exercise device. He has made New York his home, though he travels from country to country: “he’d scouted London, Vancouver and Toronto, Wellington and Auckland, Sydney and Perth and chosen cheap and serene New York City” (29). Chinese Frankie is born in Hong Kong or may be Manila or Surabaya. His made-up childhood is loved by Debby. Life becomes interesting for Devi because of Frankie. His Asian stories keep her connected. She says, “Thanks to those stories, for the first time, I felt connected. The DiMartinos were the aliens” (27). Frankie wants to make her a Hollywood star.

Jess, Devi’s biological mother and American California hippie, Clear Water Iris Daughter, Jess DuPree’s fate is very dynamic, “… owns the hottest media escorting business in the country” (83).

Devi’s origins are in Asia and she resides in USA, but her network crosses the borders of nation-states, and it spans half the globe. She is familiar with more than one culture / country and goes beyond her host land as well as birth country due to her incarnations in a single life like her mother. “Jess had gone through more melodramatic incarnations than Debby DiMartino” (124). Devi goes through a series of incarnations - a daughter of Clear water Iris-Daughter, named Faustine by Gray Nuns and changed into Debby DiMartino due to her adoption by Serena and
Manfred DiMartino. As Debby Fong she plays a role which creates her new identity. Her multiple names are markers of her incarnations, the new roles and identities. Then she herself renames as Devi Dee, unknown for its meaning and the role but it’s her fate. Devi has destroyed evils like Goddess Durga. Her transformations from Baby Clear Water Iris-Daughter to Faustine to Debby DiMartino to Debby Fong to Devi Dee, the multiple identities within a single life are possible only in the country like America, where all immigrants gather from the all corners of the world. Bharati calls America “a stage for transformation” (interview by Bill Boyers). Though abandoned and orphaned, she thinks “I’d had a life and chance at a Big life … Devi the Tenderloin prowler …” (66-67). Because her philosophy is – “When you inherit nothing you are entitled to everything …” (67). So she is a street smart, savvy, manipulative young woman, tough, vulnerable but not a mean person, capable of redemption after she’s gone through some of the violence within herself.

This is the most American novel, portraying the 1960s counterculture - hippie culture and Vietnam war consequences, which makes Mukherjee a transnational writer. Mukherjee has long used fiction to explore the issues of identity through the displaced characters – Indians coming to the US. Devi Dee is one of them but she is by birth half American, Eurasian and she does like to be connected with her birth country, unlike expatriates. She thinks “I’ve known that I did not fit into Hudson Valley any more comfortably than I did into Asia of hippie mothers and Catholic missionaries” (65). The various identities of Debby show the fluidity of identity, the multicultural new America only because of transnational flows of migrants whose presence is transformative. “Mukherjee’s novel (Leave It To Me) serves the link between the nation-states and the home by locating them in the context of transnational networks and
globalization. As Debby / Devi is at the same time inside and outside the nation, she is able to resist the dominant narratives of nation and Americanization” (Jopi Nyman 34-35). Transimmigrants like Debby have enhanced the sense of their American identity and a new transnational identity, created through their experiences and interactions within their new society together with their continued contact with country of origin –the homeland.

Debby struggles to define her identity based on the conflicting claims of her multicultural background. Her desire to belong persists to find out her biological roots. Yearning and recreations of home are infused with the memories of the past which is seemingly lost. It is Mukherjee’s writing from multicultural America, the platform of transformation and multiple identities. But eventually it creates the dilemma of identity, because the diasporic journey is from cultural alienation, through cultural assimilation, to cultural augmentation.

Desirable Daughters (2002):

Identity construction is the passion of each and every individual. Every effort of his/her contributes to this age old passion. Diaspora individual encounters different cultures and it reshapess or reconstructs identity. But in this process he may lose his ‘given’ identity or reshape for itself the ‘made identity’. There is fluidity, shift in his/her identity. Adaptation, acculturation and assimilation in the host culture create new identity for them. Transnationals are successful in creating the new identity - by mongrelization of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ identity. It is possible due to the voluntary migration and the technologies of transportation and communication, which make it easy to stay in touch with the homeland and hostland. The nation-state borders are open today.
Mukherjee draws her characters as transnationals who remain connected to their homeland and hostland equally in *Holder of the World, Leave it to Me, Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*. They are neither expatriates nor only immigrants in their values and attitudes but transnationals, whose networks cross the borders of the nation-state.

The ‘Melting Pot’ idea of America is discarded in Mukherjee’s *Desirable Daughters* (2002). It focuses on the typical American search for ‘roots’ (Family/Place of origin /Culture), the origins of an individual which establish his/her identity in the homeland society but raises a crisis in the adopted country/the hostland. Mukherjee has confessed to Dave Weich in an interview that she is here playing with the author–protagonist relationships due to her wish to write an autobiography.

The Transnational Mukherjee, who crossed the phases of the exile, expatriate, and immigrant American draws the portraits of her characters with the shades of these colours of different phases of her own life. *Desirable Daughters* is the best example of Mukherjee’s ‘Two Ways to Belong in America’. She has been dubbed the ‘grand dame’ of Indian diaspora literature.

*Desirable Daughters* grew out of Mukherjee’s close conversation with her two sisters at the home of her India-based sister in Bombay. Their conversation was about the choices they had made, how different their lives were and how each of them had married the man of her choice. In *Desirable Daughters* Bharati comes to terms with what her Indian heritage has left her as residue and what America she has discovered. It is a novel of three sisters, two continents and a perilous journey from the Old World to the New World, and again to the Old World. It allows characters (mostly female) to move beyond the traditional boundaries of identity / culture and national geographical boundaries.
Her novel is Indian and American in its setting, theme, characters and cultures. Hence Tara in Mukherjee’s *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride* is Indian / Bangladeshi / American by culture at the same time. Her identity is, in the words of Rushdie, “at once plural and partial (*Imaginary Homelands*, 15). Like Mukherjee her “Tara Bhattacharjee (’s identity) is fluid. She adapts to both the traditional culture and her adopted American ethos” (V.Singh 188) and questions her own identity. The identity crisis and a longing to define one’s own identity are triggered off when she is faced with the illegitimate son of her much idolized sister – Padma Didi

*Desirable Daughters* begins with the story of Tara Lata and ends with the protagonist’s / Tara’s return to Tara Lata’s home. Mukherjee says, in an interview by Gabriel Sharmani Patricia, that “… the beginning comes back to the end and the ending comes back to the beginning” (137). The novel ends where it starts and vice-versa. Tara’s roots are there. She is linked cohesively to Tara Lata, ‘a tree bride’ whose supposed husband died of snakebite before the marriage. To save her from a lifelong cursed widowhood, her father Jaikrishna Gangooly, a pleader in High Court, marries his 5 year old daughter Tara Lata to a tree in 1879, in Bengal, “today’s Bangladesh” (5). He was caught in the conflict between Hindu consciousness and modern Science. His tradition tells him “a woman had to marry and worship the husband as a god in order to go to heaven” (Edwards 124).

Jai Krishna Gangooly had repositioned the stars of Tara Lata by marrying her to a tree. It was her fate (“lifetimes’ virginity” (14)). At least she may remain a wife, a wearer of vermilion powder in her hair–part, and not a widow. It will save her from a lifetime of disgrace and misery. So later she could help the beggars, sick people, young soldiers
fighting the Raj and turn herself – Tara Lata: the saint, spiritual healer, and the freedom fighter. Tara Lata never left her house in Mishtigunj for the rest of her life, but she helped “the Cause of an Independent India and United Bengal and protected Young Freedom Fighters from British arrest” (20) and “she herself was Dragged from her Home on the Night of October 12, 1944, by Colonial authorities and Never Heard from Again. Her death was announced on October 18, 1944, and Attributed to a heart attack” (20). She had lived 70 years life and gradually changed the world. The life of rooted Tara Lata becomes a milestone for the rootless Tara, who writes by recounting Tara Lata’s marriage.

Like Tara Lata, self-propelled Tara, the protagonist, narrator, 36 year old, convent school educated writer, is the youngest of three daughters of Dr. Motilal Bhattacharjee from Ballygunj, Calcutta. She shares her name with Tara Lata, Tara says “… I had been named for her” (16), and her history begins with Tara Lata’s wedding in Bengal Presidency. Like Tara Lata, Tara has two sisters “we are sisters three as like three blossoms on one flowering tree” (16). They are from Calcutta but reside at three different places of the world. Tara is “on a mission of discovery” (17), search for roots of her family.

Beautiful and talented, the three sisters - Padma, Parvati and Tara from a civilized, wealthy Brahmin family of “Bhadra lok, are born exactly three years apart from each other on the same date in the month of October. They are named after goddesses to survive and prosper. Tara is a modern, postgraduate (MA), convent educated, divorcée, highly Americanized. Her childhood was spent in Calcutta in the sixties with her elder sisters – Padma and Parvati. At 20 Tara’s life begins after marriage to Bishwapriya Chatterjee, who comes from a wealthy family. Tara let her father to choose for her a husband. Bishu/Bish is not – quite an
appropriate nickname, since it means “poison”. She has crossed with him the dark waters for California, where he “developed a process for allowing computers to create their own time, recognizing signals intended only for them for instantaneously routing information to the least congested lines” (23-24). The system is called “CHATTY”. He formed a company. “Money is no longer the point, if it ever was” (23). For ten years Tara is a married woman, the wife of Bish, living in a gated community in Atherton, California. They have a son Rabindra/Rabi. But they are thrown into the middle of a modern enigma. Tara interrogates “what do they know of the need of a modern woman? (27)

Being a good Hindu wife she never called the husband by his name whenever in India, but in America she calls him Bish. He is a generous, protective provider, to whom love “is the residue of providing for parents and family, contributing to good causes and community charities earning professional respect and being recognized for hard work and honesty” (27).

Bish is an electrical engineer, a scholar of Stanford, who could transport Tara from the enchanted garden of Ballygunge to Stanford University in the early 1980s but can’t provide what she desires. After a decade of marriage, she understands that the promise of life as an American wife is not being fulfilled. She wants to work somewhere, but is not allowed as Bish is a traditional Indian Husband. His 15 hours’ office, and his public functions in “Boston, New York, Tokyo, Taiwan, Malaysia, Manila” (82) make Tara alienated. Tara’s world is only Atherton gated community; she feels “sick… alien” (87).

Mrs. Billionaire, Tara is looking for respect, for a life apart from her husband’s identity, while he is expecting her to be a good cook, an attentive wife, and raise a good boy. She wants to join the community college but can’t. Hence Tara has “left Bish …. after a decade of marriage
…” (82). Then she lives in San Francisco, Upper Haight, or Cole valley, with her son Rabi.

She has also a live-in lover, Andy, a balding, red-bearded, former biker, former bad-boy. He is a Hungarian Buddhist contractor, Zen retrofitter, Yoga instructor, and carpenter, “Tara’s Mistri” (25). For Andy “love is having fun with someone, more fun with that person than with anyone else, over a longer haul” (27). It is her American adventure to take a lover outside of marriage.

Padma condemns and considers Tara’s divorce as shame to the Bhattacharjee family. Though Tara and Padma reside in USA, they are strangers to each other. Tara says “I never told you about Andy, or Pramod or Mahesh or Donald…? (184). Tara has become “American”, self-engrossed, for whom her past is now ‘the darkest cave’ (133). The Americanized Tara accepts her son, Rabi’s confession about different “sexual orientation”. He is a gay.

Her American life is blasted by the sudden arrival of her so called nephew Chris Dey, who is looking for Padma, his mother. Padma’s secrets are thus being exposed. Chris Dey appears in Tara’s living room and the identity of her family as Bengali Brahmins of “Bhadra lok”, is called into question. Tara initially is outraged and cannot believe that her unmarried sister could have become pregnant and have a child. She suspects and starts her investigation of the family secrets and origins. Tara thinks that the boy – Chris Dey, is trying to set up a scam of some sort. Rabi and Andy suggest that she should call her sisters and discuss it. She calls Parvati and Padma. Parvati lives in Bombay, India and is happy with her husband, (a love-match) and two sons - Bhipesh and Dinesh. Actually she has shocked her family by choosing a husband, Aurobindo Banerji, a Bengali Brahmin from a Tallygunge family, but the match is
Padma Didi is the elder sister. She has married Harish Mehta a non–Bengali businessman; twenty years older than her. He had previously married and had children. She lives now in New Jersey (Montclair). She is Indian in her clothes, cuisine and work as a television anchor of Indian television programme set in Jackson Heights, Queens, run by her Indian lover, Devanand Jagtiani (Danny). She doesn’t accept Chris Dey as her son (bastard).

Tara complains to the police as she asks her sisters and Ronald Dey about Didi’s lover in India, and Chris Dey, her child who had grown up in orphanage and was sent to USA for education but was killed and “body found in the delta. It was Mr. Christopher Dey, the Indian national, of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India” (276). Even Ronald Dey had died in an accident(?) in Bombay. The Dawood gang has been active in India and USA. Actually posing as Chris Dey, Abbas Sattar Hai, a member of the gang, wants to kill the techno-guru Bish and his family. He is wanted internationally for murder and arson. He visits Tara and Rabi frequently at home and at public places.

Tara is assigned to Jasbir “Jack” Singh Sidhu, the Americanized Indian policeman for investigation. He makes her aware of dangers to their (Tara, Rabi and Bish) lives. He retaliates by bombing her house where the three (husband- Bish, Tara and Rabi) are present. Bish rescues Tara from explosion in her house and is badly injured. He is admitted and
recoveres but is crippled. When Tara’s house is bombed by an unknown person, it is suspected that the imposter Chris Dey is, in fact, Abbas Sattar Hai of the Dawood gang, who intends to destroy Bish and his worldwide communication network, high techs in USA and India. In the final, third part of the novel, Tara visits India and Bangladesh with her son. She meets her parents at Rishikesh and visits the home of Tara Lata of Mishtigunge.

**Transnational Identity: Desirable Daughters**

Contemporary migration in the process of globalization, their transnational linkages and the collisions of culture make the transmigrants somewhat different. The fixed notions of identity are changed in the process of migration, globalization and transnationalism. The narratives of transmigrants tell a tale of their crossing continents, countries leaving behind their family, culture. They talk of their transformation into a new world citizen and its impact upon their identity. The migrant writers often use the metaphor of travel to question fixed understanding of issues of home, identity and nation.

The epigraph of *Desirable Daughters* narrates the journey of Tara’s life on the road not taken by the others. It is the road where rules are unknown to the transmigrants. They do not know what is ahead of them. There is no pattern that they can fall back comfortably on to comfort them. They are improvising rules on how to behave. It’s the means of survival.

Tara is multicultural and by birth belongs to the Indian Bengali Brahmin culture. By her staying on in USA, she is an immigrant American and a follower of American culture. She lives with a Hungarian carpenter, whose culture has an impact on Tara. She belongs to more than
one culture / country. Mukherjee asserts in an interview by M. Krasny that “Tara… is living in a world where ‘East is East, West is West’ is no longer possible because of globalization, art, culture, trade” (Edwards 123). Her identity is in crisis as she dwells between India and America. She lives among the people of different national backgrounds (Hungarian, Indian, Chinese, American, Argentine etc.).

Tara is a cosmopolitan, is familiar with Gilbert and Sullivan, and also the Indian way of life, Indian culture, American culture and all that. But she doesn’t have the tradition that could have supported her. She is the only sister who obeys her father and lets him find a husband for her. Later she realizes that those traditions were either fraudulent or not worth hanging onto. The Indian cultural traditions don’t support any of the sisters. The white America is not the America of the mythological melting pot. Both the white Americans and the Third World immigrants/ non-Europeans have discarded the melting pot myth. So Tara is alone and goes on in her efforts to find her way.

Indian traditional cultural society doesn’t allow them to commit the mistakes the three sisters have committed. But Padma and Tara still commit mistakes; they act out all their fantasies. “Only America gives you the opportunity for those kinds of melodramatic errors” (Mukherjee, an interview by Dave Weich).

The three desirable daughters construct themselves in the space of in-betweeness. They reform identity as a result of travel and relocation. Tara’s path is from India to USA: from Atherton, California to San Francisco and back to India: Bombay, Missouri, Rishikesh and Mishtigunge (Bangladesh). The novel begins and ends at the same place, Mishtigunge, Tara Lata’s homeland. 36 year old Tara, Tara Lata’s
successor tells the tale of her past and present. She is “free and well travelled” (18).

The transnational migration of Tara makes her evoke the homeland she left behind, and relocate her and reorient her home. But “the rhetoric of modern San Francisco makes me (Tara) invisible”, yet Tara considers herself “I am all things” not ‘Asian’ / oriental because of the innocent multicultural kids in the school who don’t think her as ‘other’. The invisibility frees her to make herself over.

For diasporic Indians travelling is not going away from Home but rather from one home to another. Tara frequently visits ‘lost home’ / homeland, India and also she visits her land of origin- Bangladesh. Throughout the novel India and Bangladesh are in her conscious and unconscious mind. She wants to restore the past to herself. It is neither homesickness nor nostalgia. As a transnational character she visits her birth place in search of roots but does not want to be there permanently. This approach is her dilemma of identity.

Marriage and migration have given her limitless and undreamed independence. But she separates from her husband for her own independent life, her identity. Her wish to be an American wife is not fulfilled by Bish. The divorced couple stays in touch with each other. He is the provider even after divorce. Tara lives in San Francisco and relates sexually with many men whom she likes and wants. Andy is one of them, a live-in lover. She works in a school but doesn’t teach there due to lack of certificates. She offers her time and money to the school where 90% Asian children are admitted but to where mostly European-American teachers are appointed. They can’t understand the students.
Her San Francisco adventure wouldn’t happen in India as there are restrictions laid for women. They won’t be allowed to have a live-in-lover being a divorcee. She lives this kind of life in America. It is a question why should Tara “decide to leave her protector and provider” (66). Is it for the American adventure? Bharati tells Dave in an interview “Tara leaves him in a huff because she has fabricated an image of him as a kind of father figure and she has decided in her quest for freedom that the gated community in Atherton is prison” (Mukherjee). Thus her psychological condition makes her divorce her husband. Mostly she is alone at home, is not allowed to work, and wants to drive but she thinks what will the society say, and where should she go? This is the way a typical Indian woman would think. Bish is a typical Indian husband who can’t understand her needs and problems, yet allows her what she wants to do – divorce, job, and live-in-relationship too. They stay in touch with each other for the sake of their son.

Thus Tara, the desirable (Indian) daughter combines in herself elements of a typical Indian mindset along with liberal adjustment for freedom offered by her acceptance of the new American culture manifested in her live-in relationship with the Hungarian lover. The transformation in her even after retaining the old world mores and morals indicates the identity dilemma at the heart of her position. She is unable to accept the fact of her sister’s adultery and the existence of her bastard son which shows that Tara, with her American clothes, hair-cut and language, is after all a typical Indian housewife.

Tara Lata’s transformation from a docile Bengali Brahmin girl child into a freedom fighter/organizer of resistance against the British Raj is the source of Tara’s American identity and her own transformation. Tara’s return to the rooted self and infusing it with new meaning or
understanding is for transformation/ mongrelization. There is a hunger for connectedness.

Mobility plays an extremely important role in the construction of the identity of Mukherjee’s female protagonists. It creates double consciousness in an individual. America is the emergent space of a transnational consciousness for Tara. There is a cross-cultural encounter. Padma Mehta, Tara’s elder sister, Didi, is a well travelled woman. She is the follower of the Indian tradition in her clothes, hairstyle, food, but her values are American. Her relations with Ronald, Sohrab, Danny, Harish, Darshan indicate her American values.

Parvati, another sister, also migrates to the USA for studies. There she meets and marries Aurobindo Banerji who works in the Boston Bank. After marriage the couple has settled in Bombay.

Tara’s husband Bish Chaterjee is born and brought up and educated in India but for higher study he migrates to Stanford and works there, becomes a billionaire. He is a widely travelled man, a transnational scholar. Tara migrates with him to California. He has formed the company, projected CHATTY, the operating system for the world. The following expressions show his transnational network – “I went to Bangladesh. (269), where his family origins are (East Bengal), “He had started an assembly plant in Bangalore, a marketing arm in Bombay … to start up in Bangladesh … Taiwan and Malaysia, Chet Yee … Chinese front … Australia (261), like the Mughal Emperors, Bish maintains a series of palaces around the known world, and bestows news wealth. His professional network is transnational. But he is not transformed like Tara. After divorce he too experiences loneliness outside marriage. The loneliness which made Tara a wanton, doesn’t affect Bish. He is unable to understand Tara’s problems as he remains a typical Indian husband.
Tara’s ‘Mistri’ Andy is an immigrant American whose origins are in Hungary, who has migrated to America, has travelled in India, Japan, crossed Austrian border as a two year old during the 1956 uprising. He is also a hippie biker turned Buddhist carpenter, a Zen retrofitter.

Almost all the major characters in Desirable Daughters have origins in a land other than where they reside. They have crossed the borders of nation–states, travelled, migrated, and they are at least bi-cultural, and transnational. They have been displaced and replaced, de-territorialized and re-territorialized. But some of them are transformed into the new identity. Tara, Danny, Harish, Padma, Mr. and Mrs. Ghosal, Bish, Andy are ‘translated’ men.

Transnationalists remain connected with their homeland, the country from which they are emigrated. Tara a transnational is more connected with Paravati than Padma who is in USA. Parvati is the only sister who resides in India. Tara says “At least once a week I talk with Paravati in Bombay and about once a month with my parents in Rishikesh.. (52). Tara doesn’t know Padma like she knows Parvati. She muses “I’ve been trying to catch up(Padma) for thirty years” (197). Padma and Harish have been married for 20 years but Tara has never met him.

Americanized Tara “…. had been named for her (Tara Lata)” (16), it displays Tara’s profound connection with her ancestors and homeland and she feels it. Unlike Jasmine, Hannah, Devi, Tara’s identity transformation is not displayed through the renaming or change in the name. She is the mixture of Indian expatriate, immigrant American and transnational identities. Her search for ‘roots’, her divorce as an American wife and her live-in relationship, her job in the school, her encounter with Chris Dey, alertness of danger, curiousity to know the
family history, her visits to homeland, her reconciliation with Bish, her husband, are the indicators of her compounded identity.

The names of Bishwapriya Chatterjee, Rabindranath Chatterjee, Devanand Jagtinati, Christopher Dey, Andras Karolyi, Ronald Dey are shortened into Bish, Rabi/ Rob, Danny, Chris, Andy, Ron. It is a token of their Americanization.

The multiple identities of the imposter Chris Dey are represented with multiple names. Danny knows Chris Dey as Abdul Rehman, who worked in Danny’s restaurant and had been caught stealing. Abdul Rehman is one of the aliases like Abbas Sattar Hai, Diego D’ Souza, Sunil Ghose, Harilal Guha, and Wahid Ali Ahmad. He is “known to assume the identities of his victims… a true chameleon” (220). He is born in Bihar, raised in Calcutta and later joins Dawood gang in Bombay.

Transnational Network of Bish: Tara is aware of Bish’s transnational network of his CHATTY. In the *The Tree Bride* the sequel to *Desirable Daughters*, Tara tells “At the time of bombing, CHATTY had assembly plants in twenty countries, research facilities on three continents, and a worldwide workforce of well over a hundred and fifty thousand” (17). “Wealthy beyond counting” (23), Bish has developed a process for allowing computers to create own time, recognizing signal intended only for them, for instantaneously routing information to the least congested lines. He is the poster boy of Indian entrepreneurship, the guest of trade magazines and financial networks, a provider, protector, speaker in Boston, New York, Tokyo, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Manila. The CHATTY network, with which Bish, Andy, Jack Sidhu, Rabi, Parvati, Tara, Auro – are linked, is the operating system of billion cell phones with the ever–widening chips. So “the world is getting smaller
every day” (256). Bish is thinking of CHATTY’s second and third
generation.

Bish has started plants in Bangalore, Bombay, Taiwan, Malaysia,
China and wants to start one in Bangladesh. The family origins of Tara
and Bish are in East Bengal and India is their homeland but he is the
reigning genius of Silicon Valley. He is on vacation with Rabi in
Australia. This gives an idea of his transnational network.

Vandana Singh observes that “After 9/11, Desirable Daughters
flaunts introduction of underworld network and terrorism on the American
scenario” (Singh 193). Transnational network of crime is drawn through
the portrait of fake multilingual Chris Dey who claims Tara as his aunt,
‘Tara mashi’. “Globalization greatly enhances the possibilities of white
collar crime because of more open borders, computer link-ups and
enhanced links of transport and communication” (Cohen, Global
Sociology, 158). Bharati Mukherjee tells Michael Krasny in an interview
that “the gangsters that I’m writing about in this novel are … smaller in
their vision, narrower in their vision, and they go for not the World Trade
Centre but for the house that the ex-husband of the narrator, Tara, is
visiting, because he’s the Bill Gates” (Edwards126-27). Mukherjee was
thinking of it as a way for a political group working together with the
underworld trying to destroy the economy of repatriation by getting one
of the intellectually and monetarily rich Silicon Valley Indo-Americans.

The real Christopher Dey of Indian national of Bhopal, M. P.
India, is probably murdered (?), whose body is found in the delta, whose
identity is used by Abbas Satar Hai, a member of the Dawood gang. They
are into drugs, prostitution, movies, home invasions, kidnapping, extortion,
arson, and bombing. Singh informs Tara “They go where the money is …
high tech… software designers and chip engineers” (223). The Dawood
gang “controls organized crime in Bombay … criminal … networks all over Asia and the Middle East … Gulf” (222). Eventually Tara’s house, when Tara, Rabi and Bish are at home, in San Francisco, is attacked in which Bish is injured badly, loses his consciousness, is admitted in the hospital for a long period of time and then in the rehabilitation center. But he saves Tara. They are the victims of international crime. It is his crime that “Once, I (Bish) held the world in my hand …” (279).

Enhanced links of Transportation and communication and information are very useful for the transnational work of diasporas. Advances in transportation and communication technology connect America to the world; it is not only expanding American culture to the globe but also bringing the world into America.

**Dilemma of Identity**

The phase of Bharati’s career in 21st c. shows a blending of all the phases – expatriation, immigration and transnationalism. All these identities are blended in *Desirable Daughters*. The novel displays her own stance getting into each phase / identity. Might be the final phase of her life, in her 70s, makes her look into the mirror of her past. So Tara, the protagonist of *Desirable Daughters*, is a mixture of all these identities. Tara’s identity as a transnational, immigrant American and expatriate Indian in America creates dilemma of identity. She is a transnational, who has migrated, travelled, crossed the nation-state borders. She is transformed, and mixed with past and present, ‘given’ and ‘made’ identities. Yet she earnestly feels compulsion in searching for her ‘roots’ / family history. She does it without nostalgia. She is tired of explaining India to Americans. She is “sick of feeling an alien” (87). She says “I don’t belong here … I don’t want to belong” (79). But she enjoys the American life, an independent life, as she likes and wants.
Her values of life have changed. Tara lives her life on her own terms and free will. Being an immigrant American, “self–appointed Joan of Arc” (221), Tara doesn’t wear red “sindur” in the parting of her hair. A Hindu married woman cannot dare to leave the use of ‘sindur’, symbol of a living husband. Tara calls her husband by his shortened name – “Bishu, Bish”. She separates herself from the husband for her own identity – immigrant American, American wife, and lives in San Francisco in the live–in relationship with Hungarian Andy. She now feels, “for the first time in (her) life totally at home, unwilling to leave” (25). This feeling at home can be an indication of a process, known as adaptation. America has provided her an opportunity to acquire modernity. She shows her ‘Individuality’ which gives license to act out your desires. Her divorce is in an attempt to develop her own individuality. She accepts coldly her son’s confession: “I am a gay”.

Americanized Tara is aware of her own blind vanity of Bengali Brahmin identity consisting of the Brahmin’s pride, Bengali arrogance, and Calcutta sophistication. Mukherjee’s ‘alter-ego’, Tara’s ‘given’ identity is “smashed by hammer blows melted down and reemerging as something wondrous or grotesque” (196). Tara realizes her identity as the family chronicler.

Tara says. “I finally yielded to that most American impulses or compulsions a “roots search ”… (17). “Though the female protagonist is comfortable with her American identity, she identifies with her Indian roots” (Singh 189). She goes back into the past – the life of her great-great grandfather, Jaikrishna Gangooly and his three daughters especially his youngest daughter Tara Lata, the tree bride, a lifetime virgin. Mukherjee highlights here the cultural restraints for women in India. But they can change the people around them and themselves. Tara Lata, the
victim of tradition, transforms herself into a freedom fighter and a spiritual healer. Her successor Tara, a diaspora, feels connected to Tara Lata and wants to know more of her. She is proud of her Bengali Brahmin origins but is also a critic of the Indian practices of polygamy, child marriage, dowry system, and insistence on virginity. Tara reminds how in India every word relating to family carries special meaning. The elders are not called by their names, family friends are called ‘mashi’ and ‘mesho’ for mother’s side and Pishi and ‘Pishemashai’ or Kaki and Kaku for the father’s side” (36). Similarly Tara mentions that “No middle-class Bengali man would smoke in front of his elders” (38). She is a follower of the Indian and American cultures in her life. Tara’s identity is dual, she keeps double consciousness - partly Indian (Bengali) and partly American. Tara “hadn’t stopped praying to Adya – Ma” (69).

Tara thinks that the (dusty?) Indian identity is as fixed as any specimen in a lepidopterist’s glass case, confidently labeled by father’s religion (Hindu), Caste (Brahmin), sub caste (Kulin), mothertongue (Bengali), place of birth (Calcutta), formative region of ancestral origin (Mishtigunj, East Bengal), education (postgraduate and professional), and social attitudes (conservative). She is still timid, too, to feed her Ballygunge Park Road identity in USA. Indian identity is fixed, static formed by an individual’s religion /caste /subcaste /birth place /origins/social attitudes.

Indian expatriates are always careful of their reputation, ex-status in both societies. Tara’s confession is “If we are unhappy, we’re expected to suck it up for the kids’ sake or our reputation. We worry what our parents will think, even when they’re halfway around the world and we’re middle aged adults” (162).
The references to the Indians like filmy fellows Satyajit Ray, Madhur Jaffrey, Madhuri Dixit, Sumitra Chatterjee, Sharmila Tagore, Aparna Sen, Babita, and to the Indian writers like Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie, painter/cartoonist like Hussein stamp Tara’s Indian expatriate position in the hostland. She doesn’t forget India. Tara feels alienated in San Francisco. Tara is ‘uprooted’ in USA, needs to be rooted, hence her search for roots takes her to Tara Lata.

Being immigrant she repeats “I have lost my Indian radar” (118), “My radar was down” (195). ‘Radar’ here indicates her Hindu virgin protection. She feels exotic. She says “we were exotics to each other (Tara and Andy)” (71). Throughout the novel she swings between Indian and American culture/identity. Bharati Mukherjee confesses to Dave Weich that “Desirable Daughters is the product of an Indo-American writer and that’s what it’s about, having one foot in each culture.” Eventually Tara returns to homeland. It indicates her belongingness, and search for identity in her homeland which is lost by her migration to USA, like Tara Banerjee Cartwright of The Tiger’s Daughter.

The characters in this novel show that they have developed multiple identities /selves due to their position – as Diaspora. The transnational identity, immigrant identity and expatriate identity are mixed in Tara Bhattacharjee – Chatterjee. They contradict each other and left uncertain to the holder of multiple identities. An Individual plunges into crisis of identity and not certain of her ‘home’ / society / nation / culture. Eventually she is capable of living with multiple identities. She is neither separatist nor assimilationist but transnational, keeps skillfully her connections with homeland and hostland. Her communication in Bengali and English, the food she cooks is Indian and Amerivan, the clothes she wears are Indian and American, even her sexual life indicates that she
sustains both the Indian and American identities. Because South Asian American immigrants have been formed not just by desire, ambition to go as far as you can. They have been shaped by political, social, colonial forces. Mukherjee uses the flash back technique and makes Tara to recollect the past events to form her present identity. It is a crisis of her identity due to her space: in-between / Third space.

Migrants encounter with another culture and in the process of mongrelization, embracing the host culture for survival of the fittest, their identity is caught into the crisis. Migrants can turn as an expatriate or immigrant or transnational, it depends on his/her approach and attitude to the hostland hostculture and his/her acceptance by them and acceptability of himself/herself. Mukherjee highlights their dilemma of identity out of her own realization of identity crisis. She is the voice of them. Tara in the novel is rediscovering her past from the perspective of an expatriate Bengali and a naturalized US citizen. Hence she is caught in the dilemma of identity.

The Tree Bride (2004):

Mukherjee’s The Tree Bride (2004), a sequel to Desirable Daughters (2002), the second in her trilogy, deals with the ‘colonial legacy’/ imperial British diaspora/ global modern diaspora /search for roots / exploration of heritage and identity. The novel connects present day America and colonial India / British India. The Third World migrant/ immigrant in the western countries is conceptualized as ‘uprooted’, displaced, other, outsider, marginal but English officials who were in their colonies like India were not. It is the political power which forms concepts and speaks of meanings. British commercial contact was followed by the settlement and colonization (Cohen, Global Diaspora, 68) in India. How the British colonizers in India assimilated into or separated from the rich Hindu
culture is her theme here. They were either expatriates or immigrants or transnationals like the present day modern transmigrants. Like Hannah in *The Holder of the World*, the characters such as John Mist, Coughlin Nigel, Vertie Treadwell, Owens, Olivia in *The Tree Bride*, the 19th c. and early 20th c. British diasporas, were either assimilated or remained alien/outsiders in the British India. Mukherjee draws John Mist, Nigel, and Owens who are more Indian than Indians themselves like George Orwell and Edward Thompson, the friends of natives. They were assimilated wholeheartedly, and transformed themselves into immigrant Indians like Tara Chatterjee, Bish Chatterjee, Victoria Treadwell, Yash Khanna.


*The Tree Bride* (2004) is dedicated to Quinn Xi Anand Blaise, Bharati Mukherjee’s first adopted Chinese grand-daughter, from her elder son who is married to an Irish and German Catholic girl out of Chicago.

Bharati Mukherjee is thinking of national identity in an age of mass movements, mass migration and globalization. She asserts “if my children are a quarter French, quarter Anglo-Dutch, half Bengali …. My grandchildren are one hundred percent Chinese, what does it say about what it means to be an American today? … Indian?” (Edwards 158). Mukherjee is aware of migrants’ (Third World) identity which is shaped / (de)formed by political, social, colonial forces. She considers that the language in which she writes is the consequence of Macaulay’s educational policies in colonial India. She had realized that she had to do
a roots’ search, which is different from American roots search. Hindu vision of roots, in which an individual tracks the “colonial forces – the encounter between imperialistic white man, good and bad, and the language imposed, the sense of right and wrong, democracy or feudalism imposed - has gone into the very shaping of what language I write in” says Bharati in an interview by Angela Elam (Edwards 134). Bharati tells Elam more about the colonial legacy.

Mukherjee creates a plot that spans through three centuries, three continents, intertwining the stories of two women Tara and Tara Lata. But her British colonials do create the foot-prints here. The title character, the Tree Bride - Tara Lata encounters the colonials like John Mist, Nigel, Treadwell, the British trading diasporas. Tara bridges that colonial India and the present day multicultural America where Treadwell, Bhattacharjee (Gangoogly) and Hai the multireligion characters, whose origins are in pre-Independent India, are interrelated like Hannah Easton, Raja Jadhav Singh and Mogul Emperor–Aurangzeb in The Holder of the World.

*The Tree Bride* is divided into four parts. It begins with prologue and ends with epilogue. Its epigraph, taken from the Mahabharata, Ch. XCVII, (translated by C.V. Narasimhan), focuses on the colonial aspect of the colonizers and the colonized. The Emperor should know the sorrow of his subjects. To know it he must see the hell at least once. The story of *Desirable Daughters* is continued here.

*The Tree Bride* tells the tale of 21st c. recently returned from homeland, divorcee but pregnant Tara Bhattacharjee in San Francisco, an American immigrant and 19th c. Tara Lata, Tara’s great aunt in pre-independence Bengal, now a visible ghost for Tara. Tara Lata is the tree bride. Tara narrates Tara Lata’s fated relationship with the ‘other’, the
British diasporas during the days of East India company and British Raj. So the novel moves back and forth in time and space.

The Calcutta born American Tara traces the story of her namesake, – Tara Lata. Her search takes her deep into the history of her family, ancestral village and nation – unearthing discoveries that are surprising, shocking and ultimately cathartic.

Divorcee and pregnant Tara is looking for an Indian lady doctor in USA. She meets Dr. V. Khanna. She is the wife of an Indian immigrant, Yash Khanna. She is earlier named as Victoria Alexandria Tradewell and Victoria Treadwell-Percy. V. Treadwell-Khanna is ob-gyn at Standford University Medical Center. Tara is writing a book. The sources of her writing are Tara Lata’s writing about herself and struggle for independence and the pamphlets stored by Tara’s parents, Treadwell papers, Mistnama of John Mist given by Hajji, Coughlin Nigel’s monograph and a memoir of his friendship with Tara-Ma of Mishtigunj and Tara’s own memories of the family, “who suddenly knew the future and the past ” (117) in the present. Her six years research unearthed the discoveries of Tara Lata’s transformation, the British colonial India and the British diasporas like John Mist, Owens, Treadwell, Nigel, Victoria, her Indian origins, their displacement, relocation, transformation and assimilation. Tara “dreams of the past” (51) and finds Hai’s intension of fire bombing her house, she says “The target of Abbas Sattar Hai’s bomb wasn’t Bish or Indian money in Silicon Valley, It’s me he wants to kill” (239-40).

While a headstrong Tara is engaged in her research for a book about Tara Lata, Bish, her husband, is working on “The Natural History of Coincidence” (13). Bish and Yash are working on their all embracing mathematics of communication, the Khanna Chatterjee protocol for Universal Data Retrieval. “Nothing in the world is ever lost and
everything in the world is somehow connected (232). Bish always says “Nothing in the universe is ever lost … It’s physical and chemical and historical and finally psychological” (36). There are no coincidences in the universe.

Ironically Victoria Treadwell–Khanna considers it a coincidence that her Indian husband, Yash Khanna taught computer engineering to Tara’s Indian husband, Bish Chatterjee. He is an “Atherton Communication guru”, “the swami of Stanford”, “the Rajah”, “Broadband Mogul” and “Yogi” (15). He has invented wireless communication. But Tara is enough of a mystic like Bish, to believe “there are no coincidences, only convergences” (27).

Tara’s native place, ‘desh,’ is the immutable place – Mishtigunj / Razakpur. It is her ‘home’ and Calcutta and California are the adopted homes. She believes Faulkner who said “the past isn’t past. The past isn’t dead” (29). Her grandparents were born in present Bangladesh and their oldest relatives lived in Mishtigunj. Tara Lata (the Tree Bride of Mishtigunj), Jai Krishna Gangooly (Tara Lata’s father), Rafeek Hai, John Mist were the residents of Mishtigunj. John Mist is the founder of Mishtigunj where Jai Krishna and Rafeek Hai were the lawyers. Mist’s biography Mistnama is the story of English boy’s life in his homeland (England) and adopted homeland – Mishtigunj. He was hanged in 1880. Tara Lata’s favourite uncles John Mist and Rafeek Hai were also hanged. They are the martyrs of Mishtigunj to whom Tara Lata “never forgot and never forgave”. She turns herself into a freedom fighter and martyr of her homeland. Tara has bought this Mistnama from Hajji Gul Mohammed Chowdhury (Hai). She visits Mishtigunj thrice to know the roots of the family and discovers Taras Lata’s transformation, Mishtingunj and its creation, the history of her family and homeland.
To write the history of Tara Lata, Tara keenly reads *Mistnama*, Treadwell papers given by Victoria, Coughlin Nigel’s monographs while she is carrying Bish Baby, serenely and with incredible devotion. She belongs to the baby-raising Indian culture. American Tara does not feel compulsion to remarry Bish for motherhood. Victoria is inspired by Tara’s earnest desire and her hard work to know the roots. She is doing some research on a possible New World *Treadwell-nama*. Victoria desires to know the first love of her grandfather Vertie Treadwell, her Bombay-grandmother. Her grandfather was a district commissioner in East Bengal (ICS officer) until 1947. His personal record is given to Tara. His record reveals the effects of colonialism in India, esp. Bengal. His record tells something about Tara Lata. There is the connection between Mist, Gangooly, Hai and Treadwell. So Tara and Victoria are “Newly discovered sisters of colour…” (234). Victoria has a deeper relationship to India than a mere second marriage. “A drop of blood reveals all of human history” (235). Victoria is Indian by marriage and by adoption. She is the victim of Abbas Hai’s second attack to kill Tara. Victoria dies as an Indian, and is cremated being a Hindu. Tara feels guilty of Victoria’s death and Bish’s crippledness. Gangoolys, Tara’s ancestors, and Hais have a history in Mishtigunj.

In her research she has found the transformation of her great aunt Tara Lata, born in 1874, who had been married by proxy to a tree at the age of five, after the death of her would be husband to avoid the life of a cursed widowhood, in 1879. She taught herself to read Bengali, English and Persian like Helen Keller and taught other boys and girls like Annie Sullivan, and fought against the colonial authorities. She is a Joan of Arc. Tara Lata grew up in Mist Mansion and never left it. Her dowry gold was offered for freedom movement, she had been financing Gandhi and
supporting Subhas Bose. Her house was used for seditious elements, Network of informants.

At 54 she discovered human love. Nigel Coughlin, born and brought up in India, understood Tara Lata’s confusion over “... Netaji is a lover”. In their meeting Nigel asks her to change the definition of “illegal acts”, sedition. Coughlin Nigel, like John Mist, transformed immigrant Indian left the legacy of scholarship – monographs, memoir of Tara–Ma, history of Mist Mahal, which belongs to Gangooly’s but becomes “Sameena’s dowry .... The house she never owned” (277). After Tara Lata’s death her house was passed to Begum Sameena Choudhary (Hai), Tara Lata’s childhood friend whose great grandson Abbas Sattar hai, in San Francisco, twice attacked Tara Bhattacharjee-Chattejree in which her husband was crippled and left Victoria dead. He has seemed the “Muslimisation” of East Bengal. The displaced Englishman rooted in India like Tara in America.

Tara Lata was inducted into the war of Indian independence. Tara Lata of Mishtigunj / Modern Razakpur, is transformed into a freedom fighter, a martyr, is known as Tara-Ma, Virgin mother, revered as Goddess, eye witness of John Mist and Rafeek Hai’s hanging by the colonizers in 1880.

Tara Lata, rooted to her father’s house, left it only on three occasions - 1) her marriage to a tree in the forest (1879), 2) to witness the hanging of Mist and Hai (1880) and 3). In 1943, prodded by British rifles. She was arrested by the British, the Inspector of Police – Dominick Mackenzie and District Commissioner – V. E. R. Treadwell. She was hanged in the jail but reported – died of heart attack and dead-body was not given to her relatives to avoid the violence. Proper rites were not
performed. Both John Mist was charged with disobedience and Tara Lata with sedition, treason and disobedience.

Tara Lata’s spirit possesses Tara in San Francisco. The Tree Bride’s ghost visits Tara, who is trapped in between two worlds. The soul is wandering, since she is hanged in a jail, and hoping to be liberated, asks Tara to perform the rites. It is for her soul’s release that the ritual is performed in Kashi. Before the birth of Tara’s daughter, Victoria Kallie, Bish and Tara get married and finally Tara, her parents, husband and her children- Rabi and Victoria Kallie perform the rites of cremation for Tara Lata.

The story traces the British colonial rule in India, its contribution and eventually downfall in 1947. Tara thinks “it has taken me twenty years to realize that Muslims had nothing to do with our “relocation”. It was the British, always the British and it wasn’t the 1947 partition. It started in 1833” (44), the year when Macaulay delivered his ‘minute on Education’, and said that “to trade with civilized men is infinitely more profitable than to govern savages” (46). This mood of 1833 is figured in Tara Lata and Tara. Tara’s convent school education, British Council debates, Gilbert and Sullivan have trained her to trust the English models, the most reliable sources.

Tara Says “Many Britishers came to India and became more Indian than the natives, learning the languages, practicing the religions, eating the food …. holding important offices within the East India Company …” (119).

Illiterate John Mist is one of them, an orphan, brought up in an orphanage in England and boarded as a cabin boy. He becomes a murderer and emerges as a man in India, the creator of Mishtigunj. He is
saved by Rafeek Hai, the faithful stenographer of David Owens. Owens is born and brought up in Calcutta, and is known as a “British Hindu” (118). John Mist is totally assimilated and transformed in India. When Tara crossed ‘Hai in Mistnama she shouted out “Eureka”, because it relates with firebombing of her house. He (Abbas Sattar Hai) is her would be assassin, crippler of her husband, Victoria’s murderer, the killer in India and America.

Vertie Tradewell, a District Commissioner, is in Third Space, served British Raj in India and returned to England like an expatriate. His children never meet him. Nigel Coughlin is another white Hindu, a transformed British in India who stays on after 1947 and becomes citizen of the Indian India. Olivia Todd and Mr. Todd Nugent experience the painful life in their migration which is a loss for them.

Transnational Identity: The Tree Bride

The Tree Bride deals with the forces shaping the societies and patterns of relationships in 19th c. colonial British India and 20th and 21st c. America and India. Adaptation of the New homeland and negotiation with the old is necessary for the transnationals. Nalini Iyer in her “American/ Indian: Metaphors of the self …” states that “Mukherjee’s work emphasizes the need for immigrants to choose their home by constantly adapting themselves to the new homeland and by constantly renegotiating their relationship with the old homeland ” (29).

There is a rejection of “othering”. Migration shapes and redefines the national identities. A transnational doesn’t root in any one home country but more than one. He is neither an oppositional nor assimilationist. In The Tree Bride Tara, Victoria, Bish, Yash are rooted in the countries of their residence and origins. Even though Tara and Bish
have encountered a serious event like firebombing of her house, they are staying on in USA. Tara doesn’t think of a permanent return to the native country. In her research she sees the British diasporas plainly and not through the lens of her Indianness. The portrait of John Mist doesn’t seem as “other”. Like the historical figure of William Jones he was assimilated in India and its diverse culture (Hindu/Muslim/Sikh). Mukherjee’s *The Tree Bride* displays different effects migration has on the identities of the migrants. The traditional notion of stable national identity is blasted in Mukherjee’s fiction.

Long held conception of an immigrant as uprooted and facing the painful process of assimilation into the New World has changed today. He is now a transmigrant whose daily life depends upon multiple and constant interconnections across international borders. The transmigrant’s identity is configured in relationships to more than one nation-state (Glick Schiller et. al. 1992). He/she assimilates in the country of his residence. However he/she engages in the country from which (s)he has emigrated. The trasmigrant maintains connections (local/national) in homeland and hostland.

Transnational migration is the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi–stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. Bharati Mukherjee’s struggle for identity, first as an exile from India, then an Indian expatriate in Canada and an immigrant in United States has led to the transnational identity in a country of immigrants by keeping relations to the homeland and hostland, India, Bangladesh and America. For the first two novels of her trilogy she visited parents’ ancestral towns - Faridpur and Dhaka, Bangladesh. She remembers and mentions in an interview that “Because of political conflicts after the subcontinent was partitioned into India and
Pakistan at the time of Independence in 1947, I had not been able to visit my ‘homeland’. The first ever trip I made to Bangladesh … was because I was starting *Desirable Daughters*. If I had stayed in India I would probably never have felt compelled to write *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*” (Edwards 143-44). She blends several lives, backgrounds for her ‘new immigrant fiction’. She sees migration as a gain while other Diaspora writers see the arrival in the new world as loss. This is a basic difference in her attitude and approach to the issues of migration. She is ahead at least a quarter of century to other contemporay writers. Transnationalism is the late 20\textsuperscript{th} c. and 21\textsuperscript{st} c. theoretical concept. So there is a mixture of western social values and traditional Indian beliefs. Mukherjee’s writing has become an expression of her transnationalism, immigration and expatriation. Her *Desirable Daughters* and its sequel *The Tree Bride* are the indicators of such mixed identities.

Mukherjee has embraced America very passionately, and expressed it by opposing hyphenations in her identity to avoid ‘otherization’ and ‘marginalization’.

Migration / transmigration ignites transnational connections. Migration involves the issues of historical re-writing. In *The Tree Bride* Mukherjee superbly mingles past and present as she traces the migration of British colonials to India and some of them like Virtie Treadwell eventually return to England. The story of John Mist, Vertie Treadwell, Nigel Coughlin, Owens and Tara Lata Gangooly, an Indian freedom fighter, is meticulously tracked down by the narrator Tara Bhattacharjee-Chatterjee, a researcher, an American immigrant and descendent of a Hindu Bengali Brahmin from India. The six years search for roots leads her to Tara Lata. Later Tara proves that there is a substantial relation between them. Through her maternal grandmother Tara Lata is a relative
of Tara. Tara Lata doesn’t leave the place / home of her father. But whoever encountered her they have left the places of their origin especially the British and her own successors like Tara, her sisters Padma and Parvati. The concentration on connection underlines the story that “… there are no coincidences, only convergences” (27).

Tara learns from her research that Tara Lata was the daughter of a partially westernized and partially traditional – Jaikrishna Gangooly, polygamous lawyer, whose daughter Tara Lata was married to a tree at 5 to avoid widowhood after the death of her would be husband. A docile Indian girl is transformed into a freedom fighter, who faces the British colonials like John Mist, Treadwell, Nigel, and is bold enough to retort to them, that she desired the communion between the two great cultures of the world – English and Bengali. She thought it was possible, as it had been in the time of Mist, Hai and Jaikrishna Ganoogly.

Mukherjee’s pattern of change in name to indicate the fluid identity and transformations of central characters is slightly changed in The Tree Bride. Instead of female, the male character is renamed. John Mist, an orphan, is renamed like Mukherjee’s female protagonists - Jasmine, Hannah, Devi, and Dimple. He is renamed from Bast’d Snow to Jack Snow to Jack Snow Mute to Master Snow to John Mist. He is an orphan but his parents intended that he be saved, so in 1820 he was deposited outside the doors of Orphans and Foundlings Betterment Trust, where he is called Bast’d Snow to distinguish him from the half dozen other bastards. At six he was called Jack Snow and was sent to the work of sweeping animal waste and gutter line. But he spoke rarely and was called Jack Snow Mute. Illiterate Jack Snow signed on with an Indiaman on its second voyage out to India and China, where Captain Partridge called him Master Snow. He turned the captain’s pet, surgeon’s assistant,
a bright lad for a lady passenger – Miss Olivia, the future wife of an East India company director, Mr. Humphrey Todd-Nugent (mid 40s). But Miss Olivia was presumed lost at sea. So Todd Nugent brought charges of mutiny against the surviving crew. At this moment Jack Snow the boy had died and John Mist, the young man was born.

Acting Captain and John’s mentor Tom Crabbe and Jack Snow and others in the crew were punished on their arrival in Calcutta in 1832, for the damage to Malabar Queen, the ship in Mutiny. John Mist is sent to an orphanage to learn useful trade for three years. Again he is placed in an orphanage to learn trading. Here Rafeek Hai and Owens helped him, Mr. Owens wants to fight the company and win but Captain Todd- Nugent will not rest-until Mist dies.

After his release, he found that “I no longer speak English” (137) only Bengali. He is released on parole ahead of schedule and is given the job by the Company. But he feels guilty that he had betrayed Olivia by refusing to identify her. He didn’t mean it, but he wanted to bring Todd Nugent down to the mud but failed. They planned how to reach Soonder Bon. Before that he murders Todd- Nugent and his assistant. He decides “… never to wear English clothes again … Native…” (144). He built the village Mishtingunj where Jai Krishna Gangooly and Rafeek Hai were the lawyers and Tara Lata spent 65 years of her life in Mist Mahal. Mist and Hai are hanged in 1880 by the British for disobedience. Tara Lata is an eyewitness of John Mist and Hai’s hanging. Hai saved him but they died together. Mist is the “British Hindu”, “…. Such a total transformation … John Mist …. , British Hindu (149), who had barred Christians from Mishtigunj. Mishtigunj is originally named as George’s Bight, later renamed as Razakpur, after the local nawab, Razak Abdul Mohammed, whose father was a nominal owner of Mishtigunj.
There is another English female character with multisurnames. She is V. Khanna. V. stands not for “Veena or Vibhuti?” (7) but for Victoria. She is Victoria Alexandria Treadwell /Victoria Treadwell Percy /Victoria Treadwell-Khanna. She is the ob-gyn at Stanford University Medical Center. She is the granddaughter of Mr. Vertie Treadwell, a British District Commissioner at Mishtigunj. She is the wife of Yash Khanna, an American immigrant from Delhi, India. By origins and marriage she has acquired these multisurnames. Father and husband are the main providers of identity for women in India. She is linked to India by Treadwell family’s imperial diaspora state and by marriage. She is transformed even at the psychological level. So she says to Tara – “I’m Indian … Just us five (Victoria, Yash, Bish and Tara, and their unborn daughter) little Indian” (242).

Her grandfather is Virgil Earnest Reginald Treadwell, born in India, educated in England. He had worked as an ICS officer in India but died in England in 1948 at Brynnsmere. But he is called Vertie, almost an acronym.

Tara Lata is called the Tree Bride due to her marriage to a tree in 1879. From 1879 to 1943 she is the Tree Bride in the novel. Later she is called Tara-Ma by the villagers. She is a transnational who imagined that “she would live to see the day when Indians and Britishers could sit together sharing only the best of their common foods and experiences” (267). By meeting Coughlin, she thought it was possible.

Travel/Displacement/Relocation/Transformation and the Transnational:

The migration and chain of its impact is crystal clear in The Tree Bride. It is a sense of migration which brings about a change to identity of migrants. It involves the remapping of cultural identities. Travel, a
metaphor for colonial/post-colonial condition of displacement and identities and the world of global contacts, displays the transnational position of the migrants. Tara is a transmigrant but her journey is more temporal than physical. Tara is pregnant and a little less mobile in The Tree Bride than in Desirable Daughters. The visible ghost of Tara Lata visits Tara in her house on Beulah Street, whom she hears and feels her presence. She pleads to Tara to perform the rites of cremation. Tara trolls the internet for a round trip, San Francisco - Varanasi airfares and hotel rates. Ridiculously, Bish says “I don’t think commercial airlines like to fly eight and a half months – pregnant ladies” (283). Yet she decides “… to go to Kashi” (284) and in the Epilogue of the novel Bish, Tara, and their children – Rabi and Victoria (of 8 weeks) return to India to perform the rites of Tara Lata. The travel of Indo-American Tara is not from India to America but in the opposite direction. Mukherjee commonly uses journey image to present the change in the identity of an individual ‘self’. There is Tara’s journey/return to the homeland - is it looking back like expatriates, psychologically or is it her transnationalism? It is the transnational attitude of Tara that makes her the traveller of the world. Psychologically Tara travels wherever her roots go after reading of the sources of her research and her book.

Tara Lata, the title character doesn’t step outside the father’s Mist Mahal compound. “She was rooted to her father’s house” (251). Only three times she has left it. But her soul travels in the ‘vayumandala’. Between incarnations the soul wanders in a dreamless state. It is the Hindu concept of ‘soul’ and ‘rebirth’. She muses “Hinduism is very scientific very mathematical” (284). So Tara believes in the ghosts. The sage of Mishtigunj - Tara Lata encounters the migrants like John Mist, Treadwell, Coughlin and can understand and judge their feelings.
John Mist, Being a teenager travelled from England to India (Calcutta). His individual traumatic life possibly turned him immigrant in India. His Mistnama, ‘mini – epic’ (66) narrates the story of his journey from England to India and his life, poor English boy’s life. He had boarded in London as Jack Snow; cabin boy... emerged as a man ... John Mist” (120-21). There is also a psychological journey, the transformation of John Mist who “Felt reborn” (137). In India “he trekked to Amarnath … Himalayas … visited Benaras … he tramped the length and breadth of India … A hundred miles east to Burma, a hundred miles north into Assam …” (149). He was removed over half a world from his London origins. He is called cast-exempt Hindu. He has regarded the villagers of Mishtigunj as his children. This spiritual sensibility has nothing to do with religion, culture, country. This is the change in his sensibility. His transformation is mysterious.

Nigel Coughlin, ‘avatar’ of John Mist, has origins from Irish (parents) but is born in India, near Darjeeling and lived the childhood days in India but got educated in England and joined ICS. So he travelled from England to India. He has written for the Asiatic Society a monograph entitled “The True Crime and Infamous Execution of John Mist” (264). The quarrel among themselves, he calls “a regular British Mahabharata”. His is the 5th generation of his family with Indian ties. He is a Hindu at heart, a white Hindu, pan – Indian, in religion – Indian. He visits Tara Lata to offer his services to her. He visits Burma to see Eric Blair (George Orwell). He is transformed, is an immigrant, assimilated. He stays on in the independent India.

Treadwell family is transcontinental. The correspondence of American Victoria Treadwell and Ian Stone from New Zealand displays it. Ian writes – “… the world was far more intergrated in those years than
it is now … that members of single family residing on the five continents and significant islands … the British diaspora to the corners of its late Empire” (229-30).

Vertie Treadwell was born in India and was sent to England for education and then he was in ICS, at Bombay, posted to Bengal, being a district commissioner from 1930 up through Independence. He returned to and died in England. His legal colonial wife Iris and daughter Irene deserted him and went to NZ. Iris married 2\textsuperscript{nd} time and Irene is murdered by her lover–husband. His son from landlady’s daughter, illegitimate lived in Alberta and British Columbia, Northern Canada. His sister was sent to South Africa, to an aunt in her childhood days. The whole Treadwell family is moving, traveling around the world. Vertie’s last wife Thelma traced the World War record for his son who is in northern Canada, and mailed the Treadwell papers in a bag. These papers are dumped on Victoria by her father due to her curiosity of history. Vertie even transformed in the final days of Raj, he was Edwardian in his mind.

Transnational Tara, Bish, Yash and even Victoria have maintained the connection in the countries from which they emigrated. Tara’s visits though for short period display that Americanized Tara does believe in the Indian values. So she thinks “A ceremonial cremation … is necessary for its liberation …. the Tree Bride would not permit burial outside India. We’re trying to bury a phase of history” (282-83). She is now aware of the cause of Victoria’s killing, she thinks “… the pasts of Vertie Treadwell, Rafeek Hai, and Tara Lata Gangooly conspired to connect us, their ignorant descendants” (283). Such transnational identity is configured in her relationship to more than one nation-state. Victoria accepts her Indian identity as her ancestors are from England and India. The father is in Canada, and her husband is from India and she lives and dies in USA.
To which country does she belong? Who is she? What is her identity? She declares “I am Indian” (242).

The descendants of Treadwell, Tara Lata, and Hai are transnational. They are connected to their country of origin and residence. They connect whenever they like and want with the help of the technologies of communication, information and transportation. It is the position of our time that migrants live in an increasingly borderless world where cultural and economic frontiers are constantly eroding. The pregnant Tara is checked by Dr. Victoria Khanna and the doctor is able to know “what was inside and building” because of X-ray, an MRI, a scan etc. These are used to diagnose her position.

CHATTY systems have changed the way and speed with which America communicates. Bish works on voice activated laptop. Yash Khanna has invented Information Design. Bish and Yash are engaged in designing communications for the 21st c., working on all embracing mathematics of communication. So commonly there is the use of internet, cell phones, laptops by the transnational characters. Tara communicates with Jack Sidhu on his caller ID. But the same technology is used for violence. Tara thinks “….Cell phones are the most dangerous technology on the planet. Digital communication made Bish and Chet Yee famous but from a block away it also triggered the bomb hidden inside a boom box that nearly destroyed our lives” (240). Abbas Sattar Hai has used ‘cell phone’ to attack Tara. Just he left it and the police turned it on to investigate. The explosion kills Victoria.

Tara/Mukherjee is proud of her Indian origin so, she says “Indian science in the Vedic period had already invented airplanes, telephones, radios, and chariots faster than the newer cars. Hindu science had solved
every known question of the universe while Europeans still lived in caves” (253-54).

Today Transnationals use mobiles, videocam, internet, aeroplanes as a common thing. They live in a Global village. They are ‘Glocal’. So expatriates/ immigrants are turned into transnationals. The technologies have played very important role to change the attitude of diasporas. They don’t feel alienated, homeless, nostalgic and homesick, because they are connected to ‘Home’ and ‘away’. Hence the number of South Asians in America has increased since 1990s. Tara Says “There are Indians in every town, every hospital, every high school and college, in banks, motel, 7-Elevens and taxis, and a startling number have begun appearing in everyday American families. I see Indian faces at family picnics in Garden Gate Park” (19). Tara is aware that “Twenty first century technology (speed) shrinks space and time” (13).

During the colonial period the print media was used at its top level. So Tara gets the sources like Mistnama, monographs, memoirs, pamphlets, letters, books to know about 19th c. colonials and her ancestors. Colonials travelled by ship which took more time, money and energy. Today it is very cheap and easy to travel by plane. Trade relationship between India and England was carried on through ships. “Malabar Queen” in The Tree Bride is one such ship headed by captain Partridge and assisted by Tom Crabbe and Jack Snow.

The East India Company plays very vital role in the foundation of British Raj in India. The riches of India attracted foreigners to the glorious land which was full of milk and honey. British East India Company received from Queen Elizabeth I a charter to do business in India in 1600. But in 17c. they acquired the control over India and in 2nd half of 18th c. they became absolute political power in India. The
misgovernment by British culminated in 1857 revolt. So British East India Company ended and the Government of India was taken by the crown. Queen Victoria’s proclamation in 1858 sent the ICS officers to handle its administration. The British attitude toward India underwent significant changes along the passing years. In pre-mutiny times the British were romantically motivated towards India. But later they turned as dominant rulers in India. After the first World War their illusion of permanence was shattered. India’s freedom movement flourished under Mahatma Gandhi, S.C. Bose, Pandit Nehru. In the final years of British Raj they were full of melancholy for losing their control.

Mukherjee has drawn these historical events in 19th c. and the first half of 20th c. through the English Characters like John Mist, Owens Treadwell, Coughlin and Indian Rafeek Hai, Jaikrishna Gangooly and his daughter Tara Lata, the Tree Bride. “What I was doing with Mishtigunj and with John Mist was reflecting on the early paradise-like fusion of cultures that was possible in 18th century India. As Britain embarked on its colonial adventure and appropriated India as the most sparking jewel in its imperial crown, relationships between whites and locals changed. The three white guys, John Mist, Vertie Treadwell, Nigel Coughlin … are guardians of, or emblems of, different periods in Anglo-Indian relationships” (Edwards 177). These are the fictional characters but she directly refers to the historical names like Nixon, Churchill, Edward, Nehru, Subhas Bose, and Mahatma Gandhi.

Bharati’s intention is to paint the British imperial diasporas in India, how they assimilated and formed their identity as expatriates or immigrants. Calcutta was the headquarter of the East India company and the seat of Empire. Bengal had the exposure. Tara tells “It was the wealth of India that underwrote the industrial and commercial prosperity of
England. Britain started its India trade by purchasing Indian textiles… The invisible hand of the market became the supreme adjunct of imperial authority… It all began in 1833” (45), the year in which “Macaulay set out to define a range British attitude toward India ….” (46). Mukherjee pays more attention to Macaulay to reveal the transformation of Indians (Negative/positive). She herself writes in English. It is her colonial legacy.

John Mist’s entry in per-colonial India marks the one historical phase of British India. He is an English foundling who runs away from the inequities of his orphanage life in England. He is mistreated by the white East India company community in Calcutta. So he escapes deep into rural Bengal and founds a Utopian village, named after him – Mishtigunj, after his death. In Mishtigunj Hindus, Muslims and John Mist, a Christian, can live peacefully together. He is called Napoleon Bonaparte of the Bengal forests.

Another Colonial phase is indicated through Vertie Treadwell. He is a colonial administrator, ICS officer, opposite of John Mist. He doesn’t respect India and Indians. But Bharati states that “I wanted Vertie to come off as not an entirely unsympathetic character” (Edward 177). Vertie’s life is spoiled by events in his family life in England before he sails to India. He is marginalized by the British Colonials in India, shunted off by his superiors to a remote colonial outpost. He is free there to rule the locals. His tiger hunting is an outlet for his anger.

**Dilemma of Identity:**

Nearly all the powerful nation–states, especially in Europe established their own diasporas abroad to further their imperial plans. British colonists panned out to most parts of the world and established imperial, quasi-imperial diaspora. Emigration from Britain from 17th c.
onward was one of the highest volume and one of the longest in duration in the world. Their emigration took many forms. Some moved as exiles for religious or political reasons. Yet bulk of the British emigrants left because new opportunities - land and work were available in greater measure than in the British Isles. It was considered ‘gain’, “a double commodity, in the avoidance of people here, and in making use of them there” (Cohen, *Global Diaspora*, 69). India was one of their colonies where they arrived and assimilated into the culture of natives. Some of them settled and accepted the Indian citizenship after 1947.

It shows that the contemporary immigrants and the immigrants in colonial period, during 19th and early 20th c. in India, can not be called the ‘uprooted’. They were firmly rooted in their new country. British imperial diasporas in India were immigrants, because “instead of arising from a traumatic dispersal, diasporas could be generated by emigration in search of work, to further colonial ambition or in pursuit of trade” (Cohen, *Global Diaspora*, 61). Imperial or Trade Diaspora in which whoever migrated in search of work, may not develop the diaspora consciousness. The British imperial diasporas during the Company and Raj days were assimilated into the Indian culture. Their life style was Indian – their clothes, language, even religion, food, everything was Indian. John Mist and Coughlin are the best examples of it. But the persons like Treadwell do not change their values / culture and are affected slightly by Indian tradition. Mukherjee has drawn the colonial history of India to present that in those days the diasporas were transformed and formed their identity as an immigrant or expatriate like Treadwell. John Mist, Owens, Coughlin have translated the Indian life. They are the translated men, the immigrants.
“‘Immigrant’ indicates moving from one country to another in order to settle and accept a different” ‘national’ identity” (Iyer 31). Mukherjee’s John Mist, Owens, Coughlin Nigel in *The Tree Bride* are immigrants who are not uprooted but rooted in India. All her characters share the condition of migrancy as they explore new ways of belonging and becoming Indian. John Mist and his Mishtigunj display Bharati’s aim to show the fusion of cultures that was possible in late 18th c. India. Mist is assimilated not only on individual level but tries to establish the model of unity among Hindus and Muslims by creating the Utopian village, Mishtigunj, where there is “education, justice, health, food, a spirit of cooperation, and uninhibited worship of one’s god” (150). The Christians were barred from Mishtigunj.

Mist speaks Bengali, wears Indian clothes. He is a “British Hindu”, a perfectly transformed Indian. He has murdered the white fellows (Todd-Nugent, Donny). Nigel Coughlin, Irish by origins, born and brought up in India at Darjeeling, is Hindu at heart, “White Hindu” (267). Bengali language is one of his passions like his passion for Bengal terra-cotta sculptures. He wears traditional ‘dhoti’ and woolen scarf. “a better pan-Indian than she (Tara Lata) could ever be” (268). Nigel declares “I’m of the church of England in India … devotee of goddess Durga … In religion … Indian … political commitment: Russian … personal aspects of my life, I follow Greek ideal” (268). He is a transnational and a mystic. “He thinks of himself as sympathetic to freedom movements but in a moment of crisis, when he discovers that the Tree Bride has been providing sanctuary to local freedom-fighters and that she has been trying to get news of colonial brutalities to a journalist in England, he champions the cause of the British Empire instead of the cause of national sovereignty” (Edwards 177) says Bharati.
David Llewellyn Owens, “British Hindu” dresses in the Indian clothes, has Hindu wives. Tara observes “many Britishers came to India and became more Indian than the natives …” (119). They are real immigrants who assimilated and turned Indians themselves.

The modern diaspora, Tara is “far too American” (58). Her transformation from a Bengali Brahmin into American immigrant reflects in the language she speaks and writes (English) and her American values of life. But Tara is caught between the ideas she has inherited as to how time and destiny operate and her gradual Americanization and her exercising the free will. She is also looking backward (roots search). Tara narrates Desirable Daughters by beginning the tale of Tara Lata’s marriage and in The Tree Bride she continues the life of Tara Lata, not as a normal married Indian lady but one who is bold enough to transform her life as a freedom fighter. Her present ‘made identity’ is the part of colonial legacy. So she traces the roots in British colonialism. Her past is coloured with colonialism. There is a double relocation of her family. The transformation of Tara Lata is the past of Tara who also boldly transforms herself into an American immigrant, Tara says “I suddenly knew the future and the past” (117).

Tara is caught between two worlds, values of India and America because of her transformation as an American and a backward look as an expatriate. ‘Divorce’ according to Bharati, is misadventure of Tara like Dimple’s murder of her husband, Amit Basu in Wife. These are the Indian attitudes of the American Mukherjee. Tara and Bish are American and Indian, the transnationals. They don’t face the dilemma to choose identity. Yet her looking back / search for roots / her involvement in past is more concentrated by Mukherjee. She follows the Indian values like “Dharma”, duty, “duty above all” (291). Might be due to it Tara has taken care of her
crippled husband to cure him. It is her duty to serve / worship the husband. Even though heavy with pregnancy she thinks of the liberation of Tara Lata’s soul. It is her duty to perform the rituals of cremation. She believes that Tara Lata’s soul is restless, turned as a ghost, it visits her in San Francisco, and she feels the presence of her soul. A ceremonial cremation is necessary for its liberation. Tara believes in ghost/ ‘preta’ and ‘pitr’. She desires to visit ‘Kashi’ for cremation of Tara Lata. Tara’s reassessment of her past in *The Tree Bride* is an indication of her expatriate identity. Tara’s attempt to reconcile the part of her tied to her Indian heritage with her life as an assimilated American is at the center of the novel.

Victoria notes the life of Anglo-Indian women. They were the victims of the empire. They were really expatriates. Vertie Treadwell’s wife went back to England with her daughter – the legitimate one. Mostly ‘memsahibs’ return to England for their children’s education and ‘Sahibs’ visit every few years, even after “their daughters… got married …” (162). Victoria feels the bitterness of her father, the bastard’s rage. Vertie Treadwell never saw his children again. He was careless of them. The Anglo-Indian men didn’t have the family life. After retirement they returned to England – ‘home’ but “that was foreign to them” (162). They were the expatriates in India. Treadwell has felt thwarted in his Indian career. His parents and grandparents were born and buried in India, served in India, but Vertie is unhoused by India, has no right to have a plot of the Indian soil. His children have abandoned him. Even his granddaughter Victoria hates him. This is the life of an expatriate, though an imperial diaspora. He is a ‘nowhere’ man.

The expatriates and immigrants of the British diaspora share similarities with that of the Third World migrants in the New World –
America, which is now a salad bowl. Mukherjee has pointed out the negative and positive results of colonialism/ the British presence in India. In this novel Tara refers the Treadwell papers, Nigel’s monograph, memoir, history of Mist Mahal, and John Mist’s *Mistnama* to know the past and its impact on her American identity. The colonial legacy is the base of Tara’s mixed identity. In piecing together Tara Lata’s transformation Tara discovers and claims her Indo-American identity. She is identified with the hyphenated identity.

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