CHAPTER TWO
EXPATRIATE IDENTITY

*The Tiger’s Daughter* (1971):

When she wrote her first two novels *The Tiger’s Daughter* (1971) and *Wife* (1975), Bharati Mukherjee was living in Canada where she was ‘invisible’ being a writer, ‘a brown in white society’, an ‘expatriate’ and ‘a visible minority’. She states – “In Canada I am both too visible and too invisible. I am brown” (Blaise and Mukherjee, *Days and Nights*, 169) and “I had thought of myself…as an expatriate” (Mukherjee, Introduction to *Darkness* 1). Her experience of racism in Canada is primarily responsible for her cultivation of an “expatriate’s aloofness” in her work of early phase. Her “writings largely reflect her personal experiences as a woman caught between two cultures” (Tandon 27). When she was asked, “Was *The Tiger’s Daughter* … more autobiographical than the others”, Mukherjee responded in an interview by Meer Ameena, “when I wrote it, I certainly did not think of it as autobiographical. But my father felt, he recognised himself in the portrait … I was writing about my class at a certain period in Calcutta’s history … Calcutta soon after changed … a class aware of enormous changes about to come and hoping those changes would not come …” (Ameena).

Expatriation is largely a matter of an individual’s attitude and values. Bharati Mukherjee suffers from expatriate sensibility in her emotional self distancing from India and assimilation in North America. The theme of identity in her novels, in her Indo-American duality and personal dilemma, in the words of Bhagabat Nayak, is “neurotic, schizophrenic, ambivalent and suspended between the two worlds and rooted in neither” (M. Ray, *Studies in Women Writers in English*, 4: 251).
Though unlike Naipaul Bharati Mukherjee left India by choice, like him she is the author of the Third World who experienced racial discrimination in Canada. She had gone there with her husband as his family lived there. In one of the interviews Bharati Mukherjee told Alison in a low and strained voice, “I had very bad time … 1970s … horrendous years for Indians in Canada … bigotry … discrimination … refused services in stores. I would have to board a bus last when I had been the first person on line … followed by detective … assumed I was shoplifter or treated like a prostitute in a hotel … physically roughed … Toronto made me … civil rights activist …” (Edwards 29). Racial discrimination is the theme of expatriate work of the Third World writer. In her phase of expatriation she wrote *The Tiger’s Daughter*, published in 1971. She asserted “Like Naipaul, in whom I imagined a model, I tried to explore state of the art expatriation” (Mukherjee, ‘Introduction’ to *Darkness*, 2). In a non-fictional work she says “In myself I detect a pale and immature reflection of Naipaul, it is he who has written most movingly about the pain and absurdity of art and exile, of “Third World art” and exile among the former colonizer … impossibility of ever having a home, a ‘desh’ ” (Blaise and Mukherjee, *Days and Nights*, 299). Even her economical condition was very bad. She painfully recalls and tells Steinberg “…I was brought up spectacularly rich … and I have been spectacularly poor almost all my adult life … at one time, I had to calculate whether I had enough money to buy …. for breakfast” (Edwards 33), it is all due to her diaspora position.

Yet the in-between position is productive for Bharati. *The Tiger’s Daughter* suggests that she was conscious of “being a brown woman in white society” (Edwards 33). The novel was written in Canada in late sixties and published in early seventies when Canada was experiencing
the ‘visible effects of racism’ (Edwards 40) and India was still feeling the immediate after effects of Naxalite revolt. *The Tiger’s Daughter* says she “is the wisest of my novels in the sense that I was between both (the) worlds. I was detached enough from India so that I could look back with affection and irony but I did not know America enough to feel any conflict. I was like a bridge poised between two worlds” (Edwards 33).

Bharati Mukherjee was a psychological expatriate, an Indian expatriate in Canada. There was ‘double consciousness’ being an Indian and Canadian, also in her caste, religion, race, colour and culture. Her marriage to Clark Blaise, a Canadian novelist, made her see herself as an expatriate. An expatriate caught between two countries and cultures, feels stranger in homeland and a foreigner in the adopted country and confronts the question who am I? It is represented through her spokesperson Tara Banerjee Cartwright, the protagonist of *The Tiger’s Daughter*.

The plot of the novel, episodic in four parts, revolves around luminous Tara Banerjee who is raised in Calcutta, a Bengali Brahmin, St. Blaise’s student and educated at Vassar College, New York. “For Tara Vassar had been an almost unsalvageable mistake”(10). She is married to an American – David Cartwright. There is a culture shock when, after 7 years, Tara Banerjee-Cartwright travels back to India intertwined with the political situation in Calcutta and West Bengal. Mukherjee recalls this situation in an interview with Connell, “… just growing up in my Calcutta, the daughter of a very rich factory owner, in a time when west Bengal, especially, Calcutta was becoming communist, I had to personally experience a great deal of labour violence and unrest…Military policemen in Vans …” (Edwards 37). Tara Banerjee-Cartwright is a postcolonial, elite, convent-educated, expatriate on a visit
to India. An expatriate with dual affiliation, Tara’s return to native land proves distressful and tragic. From her arrival, upon seeing the Bombay railway station, right through her unhappiness with friends and relatives, together with her seduction by Mr. Tuntunwalla, culminates in her locking herself inside a car while a violent mob of Naxalites on Camac Street, in front of Hotel Catelli Continental, seized them and attacked Joyonto and killed Pronob, Tara’s friend.

Tara is an Indian diaspora for self-intellectual enhancement in USA. She is an expatriate who has lost her national and ethnic identity. She is alienated and isolated at Vassar, New York, USA and equally in Calcutta, India, the homeland. She faces the confusion of an expatriate’s identity, because she doesn’t establish social solidarity either in Indian or American society. Tara Banerjee-Cartwright, the name itself reveals her in-between position as an expatriate. Tara is caught in a situation where old values and her choices are being reexamined because of her several identities acquired and lost. Tara is an Indian Bengali Brahmin, a daughter of rich and westernized, industrialist Bengal Tiger, Dr. Banerjee. These are ‘given’ identities of Tara. Her ‘made’ identities are – an American, Brown/White, Christian, a foreigner in India, western, in the process of ‘becoming’ an expatriate. She has obtained her ‘made identities by migrating to USA for higher studies and her marriage to an American, a Whiteman, which makes her unable to adjust.

Narrative configuration begins with an evocation of Tara’s ancestral home of Pachapara, pre-partition Bengal of Tara’s great grandfather Hari Lal Banerjee, who was murdered by somebody after two summers of his daughters’ marriage. It is a looking back of an expatriate, search for roots and nostalgia of Tara. The marriage ceremony of Bengal Brahmin daughters of Hari Lal Banerjee, the talks of the stability of
Hindu marriage, astrologer’s assurance, and details like ‘Shahnai’, wedding canopy, rows of diners on banana leaves, sacrificial fire, and little girls in adult bridal ornaments establish the Indian Bengali Brahmin identity of Tara Banerjee.

Tara is sent to Vassar College, New York, USA. Vassar College is a private co-educational liberal Art’s College situated in the town of Poughkeepsie, New York. It was founded as Women’s college but then turned as co-educational. Mukherjee shows how Bengal Tiger is particular and protective of his only daughter-Tara. She wouldn’t return home, Calcutta for seven years. It is the ‘transplantation’ of the migrant in an alien soil. (Handlin *Uprooted*, 6). She desires for Camac Street, where she was born and brought up. “Tara saw herself being pushed to the periphery of her old world …” (10) the postcolonial elite is the ‘other’ in the country of origin as expatriate is the ‘other’ in the adopted country. “Fragmentation of her “self” is one of the manifestations of her alienation from society” (Swain 233). Tara cannot share her Camac street thoughts with her roommates. She explains her homesickness in her letters to mother. Even the letters from home bring the tears to Tara’s eyes. It is the pain of exile. If her roommates do not share her bottle of mango chutney, she senses racial discrimination. She prays Goddess Kali, for strength. Mukherjee shows it to present “revival of ethnicity (which) makes bearable, to some extent the marginal, shadowy existence of these migrants in the new land” (Kirpal 165). At the initial stage in her migration, Tara is homesick, exotic, nostalgic, keeps her Indianness but then she has started to think of herself. She is introduced to the girls who discuss birth control, sex, the loop etc. At Vassar she has read existentialism, post-existentialism of Sartre, Camus, Rilke and Mann.
Expatriate’s loneliness is reflected when her roommates have vacated for summer. Tara suffers from headaches and nightmares. Her academic advisor suggests her to join summer school at Madison. On her way to summer school at Greyhound Station she is knocked down by a young man, to whom finally she marries. He is David Cartwright. Tara recalls how she was anxious to fall in love. In Madison, in an elevator; Tara finds herself thinking “how easy, I’m in love”. She loves David who knows nothing of her Calcutta. Actually the setting of the novel is in India, the land of Tara’s birth. Though the country of her adoption is never out of her sight, she remembers it.

Nostalgia for the homeland persists and finally after 7 years stay in America, 22 years old, homesick and nostalgic Tara Banerjee-Cartwright returns to her homeland, Calcutta, India “to work out” and “get it over quickly” and in the words of Maya Manju Sharma “to recover her roots” (Nelson 15). “Returning to the mother country after several years only accentuates the feeling of rootlessness in the expatriate as (s)he realizes how different and distant (s)he has become from his native people and tradition” (Kirpal 49). Nostalgic and homesick Bengali Brahmin Tara returns to India, the homeland, to relieve her intensified feelings and memories of it, to reunion with her family, to ward off ‘despair’ and ‘homesickness’ (13) of her expatriation in America. But Tara Banerjee-Cartwright is now outcaste in her Bengali Brahmin society because of her “Mleccha” husband. She becomes stranger and alien to her friends, relatives and even to her own parents as they are stranger and alien to Tara. Sanjay Basu, her friend and assistant editor of Calcutta Observer, calls Tara ‘Strange Girl’ (67). She is struck by the strangeness and her feelings of estrangement from it. The expatriate, Tara, is homeless despite having lived in two countries and cultures. She discovers that she is no
more “at home” in the home of her birth than she was in the racist New York. She finds that the return to her ‘longed for Camac Street, where she had grown up’ fails to engender the desired sense of belonging. She has become the marginal. Instead of idealizing her country Mukherjee has seen her Calcutta, India with detachment and irony like Naipaul “to portray volatile juncture of Indian history” (Gabriel 95).

Tara, “sensitive … especially to places” (12), returns to India for reunion with her family and to relieve from ‘despair’ and ‘homesickness’ of her expatriation and alienation in America. She is greeted at Bombay airport by her relatives with “garlands and sweetmeats to put her at ease” (17). They introduce her as “the America auntie” (17). But for Tara “it was difficult to listen to these strangers” (17). When they call her with nickname ‘Tultul’ it sounds very strange to her. Really she is struck by the strangeness. The houses at Marine Drive seem to Tara “run-down and crowded”. Seven years earlier she had admired the same houses on Marine Drive, thought them fashionable, but “now their shabbiness appalled her” (18). Similarly she considers Bombay station “more like a hospital … sick and deformed” (19). It is a token of her dislike of her homeland and its people.

Her father doesn’t receive her at Bombay airport because of the general strike in Calcutta. She travels from Bombay to Calcutta alone with non-Bengalis by train; she has changed due to her staying on in USA. Being Bengali Brahmin she hates the fellow-travellers in train compartment: Marwari – ugly and insolent, a circus animal, a spider and a national personage, who changes the lives of the others, Mr. P. K. Tuntunwala and a Nepali, a disgusting fellow. Tara considers that “both will ruin her journey to Calcutta ” (20). She stares out of window and thinks that she has returned to dry holes, to India. Actually she felt that
she should be thrilled to travel in an Indian train, but it has depressed her. She is now different and distant from her own people. She has lost her Indianness. She has dreamt for years of this return. “For years she had dreamed of this return to India, she had believed that all hesitations, all shadowy fears of the time abroad would be erased quite magically if she could just return home to Calcutta. But so far the return had brought only wounds” (25). But returning home she finds herself with “the foreignness of spirit” (Jain, JIWE,12). Has she returned for wounds? Her return fails to relate the childhood memories and adolescent wholeness that was sustained in USA. Returning home is unsuccessful to inculcate sense of ‘belonging’. She thinks “perhaps I was stupid to come without him, David …” (21). David is a metaphor of her American self. She had not thought that “seven years in another country, a husband, a new blue passport could be easily blotted out” (25). To her David seems far less real than the flat-faced Nepali with extrasensory perception. She feels that David’s healthy face disappears into the fleshy folds of Nepali’s neck and the spider’s body.

As she reaches Howrah Railway Station, Calcutta, she is surprised and outraged by its squalor, confusion, crowd, filth and noise. She is surrounded by the “army of relatives”, vendors ringing bells, beggars pulling at sleeves, children coughing on tracks, she feels alone in the crowd. Home violates ‘her shrine of nostalgia’ (26). Tara had expected to find life at its most constant, as the fixed form of identity as an Indian. Calcutta is the place in which she can secure her identity. But she fails in it. She has seen Calcutta through David’s eyes, a foreigner. She finds herself a foreigner in her homeland. Only her father appears real but disappointed in her. She is isolated here being a foreigner in her homeland. She finds she is no more at home than she was in New York.
Who am I? American or Indian? Or both? Tara has realized the “vacation would not be an easy one” (29). It seems to her that “all Calcutta had been touched by rages and ideals” (29). But as she reaches home she feels peaceful and she does have the real home, “my home”. Her parents’ house on Camac Street is designed to be restful. “Tara was grateful to call this restful house home” (33). Seven years feeling of ‘homelessness’ of an expatriate fills the gap, psychological vacuum when she returns home. The home has hypnotized Tara. Home is the place of return. Now New York has been exotic for her. She dwells between two worlds-

“New York, … exotic. Not because it had Laundromats and subways. But because there were policemen with dogs prowling the underground tunnels. Because girls like her … were being knifed in elevators in their own apartment buildings. Because students were rioting about campus recruiters … wars … pollution … New York was certainly extraordinary, and it had driven her to despair…” (34). It seems that Bharati Mukherjee wants to show that Tara, an expatriate is alienated, not secure, can never fit in adopted country. Tara is not fascinated by America. She was more Indian in USA than in India. Tara remembers how she “had shaken out all her silk scarves … hung them to make the apartment more ‘Indian’ … burned incense sent from India” (34). It shows that she is rootless, so tries to keep her Indianess. It is an attempt, initial, of expatriate who does not like to assimilate in alien culture. Ethnic and national identity is carried and continued in adopted country. Tara swings between the two identities, does not remain stable either at the one or the other, it is her split personality, double consciousness. She does not decide herself whether she is Bengali-Brahmin-Indian or American-Christian-White/Brown.
In India, at Calcutta, her visits to her relatives, especially aunt Jharna, make her wonder at her own foreignness of spirit. Her foreignness is affirmed during the visit to the aunt. Along with her mother Tara visits Aunt Jharna whose child is crippled by polio. She asks “have you tried plaster casts and special shoes, aunt Jharna?” (36). Tara is insulted by the aunt. She asks Tara, “You think you are too educated … have you come back to make fun of us … what gives you the right? Your American money? Your ‘mleccha’ husband?” (36). It is a typical reaction of an Indian. It hurts her and she is disillusioned. What is the status of an expatriate in her homeland?

Sindi in Aurn Joshi’s *The Foreigner* says, “My foreignness lay within me and I could not leave myself behind wherever I went” (61). Similarly Tara is caught between her ‘Indian self ’ and ‘American self ’.

Tara’s St. Blaise school education, convent education in India, her migration for higher studies, her marriage to an American, and her elite background are the factors responsible for her foreignness of spirit. She is aware now of her foreign spirit. Among her friends and parents, she discovers herself to be “quite cut off”, unable to connect with those around her.

Her friends call her “Americawali”. She traces her alienation in the heartland –India and America. She senses her alienation in the company of her friends. She remembers her husband and her own intuition persuades her to be away from her friends, “…for they were shavings of her personality” (43) and who do not enquire of her husband. She remembers “seven years ago she had played with these friends, done homework with Nilima, briefly fancied herself in love with Pronob, debated with Reena at the British council” (43). Here is the difficulty for Tara—how to respond to the changes in her friends, city, her school. She
is treated as an expatriate, being the guest for some days at her home. Might be it is the psychological change in Tara because of her migration and marriage with David, an American. It is a tradition of India – the married girl is treated as the guest at her parents, her home of birth. She turns as an outsider for the maternal relatives. After marriage whether it is with ‘native’ or a ‘foreigner’ but daughter is a diaspora at least at family level, she is an outsider, marginal. Out of this tradition might be, there is change in her own people and she herself. She perceives her image (self) through the friends and relatives. She perceives herself as an ‘other’, a ‘guest’, ‘marginal’, ‘outsider’. Tara has experienced this change. Bharati Mukherjee wants to present this position, hence she has drawn Tara as an expatriate in her mother country, who is alienated and isolated. Tara is unable to keep the solidarity in this society.

Tara feels alienated even in the company of friends, close circle of “Camac Street friends” (10). Tara is unable to communicate with her friends, parents and even her husband, David. She recalls how it was impossible to share her past life with David, a foreigner. Her mother’s attitude to insurance policies, ‘those things embarrassing’, and the notion of sacrifice etc. she could not explain.

She can’t portray India as David wants to know. He has bought two books on India. It angers her because she thinks that he has not understood India through her. So she feels, “he had not understood her”(50) and “It was hard to tell a foreigner that she loved him very much …”(63). Lack of communication is the cause of alienation. Here Tara is incapable of communicating with both the countries. That shows that she is alienated equally in her mother country and adopted homeland. She is neither a ‘native’ nor a ‘foreigner’ but the ‘nowhere woman’. She is nobody. This is the identity crisis of an expatriate.
Tara has noticed the change in her mother. She is suspicious of her mother’s love for daughter. She thinks “perhaps her mother … no longer loved her either” (50). Because Tara has abandoned her caste by marrying a foreigner, she is no longer a real Brahmin. When she joins her mother in a morning prayer, she comes to know that she has forgotten the steps of the ritual. “It was not simple loss, Tara feared, this forgetting of prescribed actions, it was a little death, a hardening of the heart, a cracking of axis and centre” (51). It indicates the conflict between her Indian and American selves which is her identity crisis.

Identity is associated with race, religion, caste and ethnicity. Religion plays an important role in the formation of an individual’s personality or identity. Rituals have their importance in building specific cultural identity. These are the makers of religion and culture. Tara is caught between two religions – ‘Hindu’ by origin and ‘Christian’ by marriage and migration. Her old self has to die to follow the Christian religion and form her new identity. It is not possible for anybody. So instead of the death of old self, there is necessity of integrating the two into one new form. It will create the new identity. Tara is an expatriate, so does not respond in this way.

The novel opens and ends at the hotel Catelli Continental on Chowringhee Avenue, Calcutta, a token of the British India, Colonial India, ‘the navel of the Universe’(3). In the words of Gomez “Hotel Catelli …a symbol of Tara’s expatriate sensibility” (Ramamurti 134). Tara visits and spends much of the time with her friends at the hotel. “There were many parties in the honour of Tara’s return. Many teas, many dinners, hosted by friends …” (55). Now it horrifies Tara, though at first she has looked forward to these parties. Her friends are like a peaceful island in the midst of Calcutta’s commotion. After first round of
parties, friends’ beliefs and attitudes begin to unsettle her. “…disapproval of her … they suggested her marriage had been imprudent, that the seven years abroad had eroded all that was fine and sensitive in her Bengali nature” (55). They are not serious but eager to listen to the stories about America, its television, automobiles, frozen food and record players. They protest if she tells about the ghettos or student demonstrations. Tara noticed the great change in her friends. Pronob is now a businessman, sensitive, almost a poet. He is fat and has turned ill-tempered during the last seven years. Tara is afraid of his moods. He hates the immigrants. He says, “I would not mind giving up the factory, but I would hate to be a nobody in America” (59). There is a loss of class, power, heritage in the state of an immigrant. It is the image of an individual being ‘nobody’ in her diaspora position. He/she has to lose his identity. Her return to India is painful and distressful to her expatriate sensibility. Her interactions with friends and relatives in India fail to fill the gap she perceives between her American and Indian selves. Her friends show their disapproval of Tara, her Americanness, her marriage, which appears “imprudent” to them. She feels lonely / alienated in both the countries - India and America.

In such a situation she remembers her husband “David of aerogrammes” to whom she calls ‘a foreigner’ and ‘unfamiliar’. She cannot visualize his face entirely, only bits and pieces like through Rushdie’s ‘perforated sheet.’ The foreignness of her husband is a burden for her. She is incapable to communicate her marriage responsibilities with friends and her relatives. She feels “she was not married to a person but a foreigner” (62). She cannot communicate with David, even through the mails. He has misunderstood Tara’s feelings of home, homeland, parents and friends. Yet she thinks, “She had not come to India without
her husband” (64). According to Maya Manju Sharma “Tara clings to the thought of him (David) in an attempt to maintain her identity in Calcutta ….” (Nelson, Bharati Mukherjee, 10). For her, “New York was a gruesome nightmare” (69).

Tara encounters Joyonto Roy Choudhari in the Catelli Continental. He is an old world order, the antique of colonial India, who lost in the memories of family, wants and likes to protect Tara and make her aware of dangerous changes in Calcutta. Her funeral ‘ghat’ visit with him is frightful and one cause of her depression. Her friends diagnose her melancholy as “love-sickness”. She begins to think of her returning to New York. Her homesick eyes only see the ugly India: the children eat rice and yoghurt off the sidewalk, diseased people, naked children, slum-dwellers, and beggars.

Her second visit to Banerjee and Thomas (Tobacco) Co. Ltd., her father’s factory at Barrackpore, shocks and frightens her due to a water snake at the swimming tank. Life does not remain secure for her. She is more likely to self-actualize: to discover an inner self which is not artificially imposed by tradition, culture or religion. She embarks upon quests for greater individuality. Tara desires to consider her marriage as an emancipated gesture. But her friends do not approve of foreign marriage partners. She is admired neither by her friends nor her husband in New York. The feelings of depression are mounted. She turns more nostalgic everywhere. There is a rejection of Indianness to adjust and accept her American identity. F. A. Inamdar comments, “In The Tiger’s Daughter Tara’s efforts to adopt to American society are measured by her rejection and revulsion of Indian modes of life” (Dhwan, Indian Women Novelists, 188).
Tara is outraged by Calcutta. “Tragedy of course, was not uncommon in Calcutta. The newspapers were full of epidemics, collisions, fatal quarrels, and starvation. Even murders …tragedy…” (97). Tara is aware of Calcutta’s forthcoming dangers. “… even a phone call meant bad connection in Calcutta” (114). Tara desires for the Bengal of Satyajit Ray - “Children running through cool green spaces, aristocrats despairing in music rooms of empty places” (105). But her friend Reena thinks Tara has become too self-centered and European. She insults Tara, calls her husband “American Mleccha”. “Tara’s westernization has opened her eyes to the gulf between the two worlds that still make India the despair of those who govern it” (qtd. in Nagendra Kumar 35).

There is a conflict between her old and new images of Calcutta because of the political changes and her outlook, foreign outlook. She wonders “what David would do if ever came to India” (108). Would he enclose the pictures of poor India, beggars in Shambazar, squatters in Tollygunge, prostitutes in Free School Street, the pain of Calcutta? David is painfully western. He likes to know the real India.

Tara’s third visit to Tollygunge Squatters is through the lenses of a foreigner with Chowdhury. It is ‘Bustee’ - slum area visited by a western visitor. Once she was frustrated at Vassar to describe slum area of India. Tollygunge was splendid and smarter than Bollygunge. Now the industry, partition, squatters and riots have changed its face. ‘Kutcha’ (115) road, the dust and smell of Banstee turn her visit painful. “Had Tara visualized … exposure to ugliness and danger, to viruses … dogs and cows scrapping in garbage dumps, she would have refused Joyonto’s invitation” (115).

India is the country of the heat and dust - it is the image of India for Western people. Tara, a post-colonial, elite, the ‘other’, a neo-colonial
doesn’t like to look into the heart of the Banstee. It is Naipaul’s Miguel Street. “Tara was bewildered by her first view of the large and dusty compound … if she had been David she would have taken out notebook and pen and entered important little observation … Goats and cows … in dust, dogs chasing the friskier children, men sleeping on string beds … Rows of hovels and huts” (116).

The strangers, Banstee people dare to tell “…we want to spit on…capitalism (which) enslaves” (118). These visitors appear to them as tax-collector and reporter. But Tara loses her balance when she looks at a little girl with leprosy. Tara screams, “Don’t touch me, don’t touch me,” like a maniac. The world of Bastee is unknown to Tara. She does know only Camac Street, Bengal Tiger’s Victorian House, the pompous and spacious. Tara is a westernized elite. She sees India through these lenses. Tara bemoans as ‘outsider’ being the postcolonial elite Brahmin and American. She does not adjust with the present Calcutta, India. Is she an Indian? Tara’s national identity is in interrogation and needs investigation.

David obtains knowledge of India from Segal’s book instead of Tara. He compares Calcutta with Czarist Russia. He has accused Tara for her ‘stupid inanities’ and ‘callousness’ and wants Tara to take a stand against injustice, unemployment, hunger and bribery in India. She can’t tell him about the misery of her city. It is fatal to fight for justice. It is better to remain passive and face the situation as it comes. Here is the confrontation of Tara’s illusion and reality of Calcutta.

Tara doesn’t like to bear the reference of Sussie, a divorcee, in David’s letters. She suffers a lot, is she American or Indian in her attitude and outlook? She is both, cannot choose one of them. So at least once in the novel she feels “Life can be very pleasant here (Calcutta)…” (132). It is because the good nuns at St. Blaise’s have taught her “to remain posed and ladylike in all emergencies …” (10).
Tara’s second encounter with a spider in train travel, Mr. P. K. Tuntunwala, in which she is impressed due to his stance of rescue force. She cannot justify Mr. Tuntunwala. She is in the darkness of India due to her Americanness. But this Americanness is not granted by the Americans like Mr. McDowell, Reena’s guest, and Antonia Whitehead. They consider her as another Indian. Indians consider her as an American. What’s her real identity? “She was just another Indian and the fact of an apartment on the fringes of Harlem, an American husband and passport, simply did not register, …” (144). She has been asked to be a bridge between McDowell and Camac Street, when he visited India especially Calcutta. Tara doesn’t bridge the gap between two worlds and cultures. Tara has considered him more of an American than David. McDowell is sympathetic with the riots in Calcutta and “shook hands with everyone” (142). Being an African he has encountered the racial discriminations, and certain types of class war. Reena’s mother calls him a traitor out of her misunderstanding of Reena-McDowell affair. Tara thinks that in America, a girl like Reena and a boy like McDowell would have never meet. Frequently she compares India and America.

The final part (iv) of the novel gives details of Tara’s trip to Darjeeling, the Queen of Hill Stations, a favourite holidaying place for the people like Bengal Tiger. The upper-class fellows of Calcutta enjoy their summer at Darj (Darjeeling) like British. Tara is happy with this trip. Actually she is unnerved by the violence at Dhakuria club, Mr. Tuntunwala and failure with McDowell. Tara meets another American woman Antonia Whitehead who accompanies Pronob. She has chosen India for her home. She feels that it is necessary to help India. India needs help. And Tara who is Indian by origin desires to be American. It is irony and farce.
Tara, impressed by a visit of Mata Kananbala, forgets all the malice and hatred and feels her soul uplifted in a sort of trance. She found herself shouting, “Ma, Ma, Mata” and loves everyone. Tara experiences the miracle: “… she felt close to her mother … other worshippers … Chela … some new reckless emotions made tiny incisions in her body and forced her inhibitions to evaporate through the window … religious experiences” (174). It is Tara’s Indianness. Her involvement in the religious activity tells that her roots are only in India. But she feels rootless due to her diaspora position. On the other hand, Antonia is not impressed by Mata Kananbala like Tara. She thinks that India needs “… less religious excitement and more birth-control devices” (174). Indians should demand reforms and social upheavals. India needs artesian wells, improved farming techniques, doctors and nurses.

Tara is ruined by the reactions of holidayers who blocked the path, made rude comments, blew noisy kisses and took snapshots. Tara screams only like a stranger, and doesn’t oppose them. Finally, she kicks one of them but can not secure herself properly. “Nasty things always happened to nice people, that was trouble in Calcutta” (179). Mr. Patel, the hotel manager, organizer of the Beauty Contest at the Hotel- ‘Kinchen Janga,’ compensated for the afternoon by selecting Tara as a judge for the Beauty Contest. Tara attends it. Over the controversy of bathing suit, one of the judges, a heart specialist, insults Tara by remarking, “Really, Mrs. Cartwright, I think your years abroad have robbed you of feminine propriety or you are joking with us ” (187). It offends Tara. The Bengal Tiger asks Mr. Patel to disqualify all the contestants and withdraw the contest. It is the power of the upper class – Brahmins, the tigers.

Passivity of Tara is drawn in her fourth trip to Nayapur, a new township in a complex of coal mines, steel foundries and plants of
hydroelectricity. Pronob and his group along with Tara visit Nayapur, where Mr. P. K. Tuntunwala welcomes and invites Tara to see township where he states, “You are for heart’s matters, dear lady. … no good in my cabinet” (195). It indicates his purpose but Tara is unable to understand him, that is India. Diaspora’s away from home position makes her ignorant of homeland. They return and Tara joins him at the dining thinking that she is a chaperon while her friends have gone to movie. The hot and spicy food’s nausea, the long bumpy ride’s headache make her to depart but her manners don’t allow her to offend the lunch partner. It is her elite Bengali Brahmin and Americanized way of life.

Tuntunwala helps her being sick. The other diners anticipated the scandal of Tuntunwala. But Tara tired, sick, curious, and impatient couldn’t understand his intention, takes it as his sympathy. When he asks her to come to his suit for homeopathic medicine and Vicks Veporub, she goes and is given mixed homeopathic drink and is seduced by him. Tara thought she should protest but couldn’t. She is neither forceful nor impulsive. She thinks, “It is not possible in Bengal. We are sensitive, we are sentimental, it cannot happen to Bengalis” (197), Tara doesn’t stop Tuntunwalla’s attempt. She is the victim of changed Calcutta, India.

“In another Calcutta (emphasis) such a scene would not have happened, Tara would not have walked into the suit of a gentleman for medicine, and a gentleman would not have dared to make such improper suggestions to her. But … Calcutta had changed greatly … first stirring of death … Tara’s Calcutta was disappearing … slow learners like Tara were merely victims” (199).

The seduction of Tara has been tastefully executed by Tuntunwalla. No apologies, no recriminations. Innocently he invites her for tea and involves immediately in his serious business of election campaign. Tara
doesn’t share her seduction and the knowledge of Tuntunwala with any of her friends. Because she knows - “In a land where a friendly smile, an accidental brush of the fingers can ignite rumors, … even lawsuits –how is one to speak of Mr. Tuntunwala’s violence? (199). Is it Tara’s American-Indianness? Is she equally responsible for seduction? Or is she incapable to react violently to it? Or is it easy to rape the diaspora? Or does she expect it? Sneja Gunew in her ‘A Critique of Bharati Mukherjee’s Neo-nationalism’ considers seduction a metaphor. It is a metaphor of exploitation of the land and its people by the political leaders. They are in the process of “raping the peasants and the land in the name of industrial progress”.

It is Tara’s Indianness that makes her, being the modest girl, the victim of sexual harassment. So the narrator states, “If she were a more aggressive young woman, better able to protect herself like Antonia Whitened …” (197). She is submissive as she is trained. It is her Indianness that she doesn’t share this seduction with her friends or parents. It is the Indian way of life to keep the secrets of seduction. Seduction is shameful and immoral. Extra-marital relations, by choice or force, are not accepted in Indian culture. If it happens, its blame goes to the woman.

Is it Mukherjee’s stance to portray Tara as meek and humble at the seduction which makes her return to David i.e. America? What makes Tara to leave India? is it seduction or violence in Calcutta? By portraying seduction scene Bharati possibly likes to show how diasporas are helpless and insecure in their homeland. Host country is the only source and alterity for them.

Lonely Tara’s bitterness of this trip makes her to talk of only returning to David who is reading Ved Mehta’s journals on India and whose letters intensified her depression. He has seen the future Calcutta
as “garbage, disease and stagnation (which) are man’s estate.” She books a flight to New York to leave at the weekend. She likes to tell it to her friends – Pronob, Sanjay, Reena and Nilima. She calls them at Catelli Continental. Tara’s parents’ love doesn’t delay her departure. But Tara “felt she had made peace with city nothing … demanded” (202).

At the Catelli Continental, the symbol of ‘old’ Calcutta’s decline, Tara, Sanjay, all her friends are caught in the violent mob, a procession, a political rally and marchers. Tara is plunged into terrified chatter about airplane ticket and reservations and David and Katherine Manesfield (Ph.D.), and is locked in Sanjay’s car while a bomb exploded somewhere. Yet Tara asks Pronob about Apu and greenery of Calcutta, “What happened to those forests, Pronob? What killed them?” (207). It is incomprehensible to Pronob. Tara is turned voiceless. ‘Voicelessness’ is the quality of an expatriate. An expatriate is imprisoned amidst violent mob, and left voiceless. Tara is incapable to transform being an American.

The whole of Calcutta is burning with riots, marchers attacking Joyonto whom Pronob tries to rescue but is seized and killed in this violence. He is the victim of this class war. In the final pages of the novel, Tara is locked in the car and “wondered whether she would ever get out of Calcutta … whether David would ever know that she loved him fiercely” (210).

The end of the novel is open-ended and mysterious. But it suggests that the people in Calcutta are insecure due to the politicians like P. K. Tuntunwala who manage everything as they like. There is a war against the upper class, the landlords and industrialists. Tara, a diaspora, is the victim of it. She is caught between the two worlds. She defends her family, community and country. But she is an ‘outsider’, the ‘other’ in her own homeland and identified as an expatriate. Tara’s adventures and misadventures in India lead her to identify herself.
Tara is passive and inactive. She simply accepts the matters as they come. She is a subaltern, cannot speak and do nothing. Just she enjoys the parties and her visits and trips to relatives and other places like Darjeeling, Nayapur, Barrackpur, Banstee, and funeral ghat. It is the only role of an expatriate on her return to homeland. It alienates and isolates her. She is under the pressure of duality, double consciousness. This problematic position is unresolved by Bharati. It is the dilemma of identity of an expatriate like Tara.

Bharati says- “Tara had to be porous and passive, in order to record the slightest tremors in her culture. She had to react rather than to act” (Edwards 22). Mukherjee thought that the novel demanded the passivity of Tara. Tara develops the negative identity. Bengal Tiger has advised in a letter- “… caste, class and province are more valuable in marriage…” (13). Tara asserts later, “but the advice was never put to practical application ” (13). Similarly, she is expected by her husband to take a stand against “injustice, … unemployment, hunger and bribery” (131). But Tara prefers to be passive and accepts the shocks as they come in her life. Bengal Tiger and David are disappointed in Tara. By rejecting what others expect Tara has developed her negative identity. There is a transformation of identity. She considers herself a ‘marginal’ with ambiguous social status. Being adolescent and diaspora (at 15 she migrates USA) she is emotionally unstable and sensitive. She is shy to express what she desires and what happens in her life. She lives under tension. She is caught in identity crisis. Her sense of self is interlocked with psychological and sociological aspects of Indian and American culture. She does not identify her social role. She has lost her ‘sameness’ (Indianness) of ‘self’.
Tara’s pendulum swings between two extremes - Indian and American. She cannot choose one of them. She is on the margins of these two. There is a negotiation of her old identity being Hindu Brahmin woman – submissive, protected, dependent (on men), a subaltern, shy, gentle, obedient and being American white, Christian, an expatriate. She feels superior to Indians, tries to be American, a bridge between the two.

Her ethnic, cultural and national identity by origin is Bengali Brahmin Indian which is a ‘given’ identity. It is continued in her diaspora – migration to USA. But as the years pass, there is a gap and she forgets some of the religious and cultural activities of Indian life. “She could not remember the next step of the ritual (which was) … little death” (51). She has willfully abandoned her caste by marrying a foreigner – David Cartwright in America. She is in the process of ‘becoming’ – an American. Her reading of Camus, Sartre, Rilke, existentialism, her marriage and rejection of the Indian way of life are because of her Americanness. But she does not forget her origins. Tara returns to India after seven years gap to find her place and position i.e. the identity in her Indian heritage. But the labels, names given to her by her relatives, friends and other Indians – such as “Americawali’, “American”, “Mrs. Cartwright” make her find out her ‘foreignness’. The Americans like McDowell and Antonia do not consider her an American. Who is she - Indian? American? or Both? She is both Indian and American and neither Indian nor American perfectly. She is hybrid, hyphenated. She is not comfortable in both countries and cultures. The two halves of ‘self’ of Tara being Indian and American lead her to a split personality. It is the identity crisis. Because of her Indian self and American self, its strange fusion in her personality, confronts each other. On her visit to Calcutta, she remembers David frequently (American self) and while she was in the USA she had
nourished her Indian life and culture (Indian self). Two distinct personalities reside in Tara’s single body and there is lack of unity. In the words of Barat A. P. “On his (immigrant/expatriate) return to native land he finds that his native taste and touch have turned alien to him. His mind is again torn apart between the cultural clash of two environments and he is forced to fight with his split personality” (Dhawan, The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee, 53). This is an appropriate description of Tara’s dilemma.

The negative change of Calcutta is indicated by expressions such as: ‘small riots’, ‘buses burn’, ‘and workers surround warehouses’ (4), ‘time of disorder’…Calcutta’ (9), which is ‘losing its memories in bonfire of effigies, buses and trams’(9), ‘caste pollution’ (35), ‘…Calcutta’s changed unbelievably’(42), ‘Calcutta is going to the left of leftists … Communists (44), ‘Gherao’ (44), ‘goondas’ (44), ‘Blood bath! Blood bath!…’ (60), ‘rioters were not after ‘Durban’ only after the upper classes’(64), ‘Calcutta was in danger’ (67), ‘fresh air … was impossible in Calcutta’(80), ‘nothing was amusing in Calcutta’ (96), ‘tragedy … was not uncommon in Calcutta’ (97), ‘she had been outraged by Calcutta …’ (105), ‘Tara knew, Calcutta had become more dangerous …’ (113), ‘bombs in the club!’ (136), ‘our Calcutta has gone to hell’ (179), ‘Calcutta had changed greatly’ (199).

The omniscient narrator of the novel mourns on Calcutta’s decline in the face of communists. There is no place for the persons like Tara. Calcutta has been plagued by power outrages, labour unrest, disappearing industry, and violence from Naxalite movement. Once Calcutta, West Bengal was the ‘home’ to luminaries such as Rabindranath Tagore, Subhashchandra Bose, Mother Teresa, Satyajit Ray, Jagdish Chandra Bose et.al. Now (1960s) it has turned ‘Naxalite’. In The Tiger’s Daughter Tara longs for the Bengal of Satyajit Ray.
Once Calcutta was the capital of British India, the city of Joy, cultural capital of India, now changed and turned into the city of beggars, pollution, and diseases. Parimal Bhattacharya observes that, “... The Tiger’s Daughter ... depicted the change in Calcutta city where the traditional values and morals of Brahmin family have been shattered forever... it is a kind of social revolution. All old values, beliefs, customs, class differences are just washed away. Traditionally the Brahmins were considered the tigers of Bengal ... this daughter of a Brahmin finds that her family is on the path of decadence ... not free from the pain of suffering’ (Edwards 3). Expatriate’s position is focused with the negative portrait of Calcutta.

Tara’s journey in her life for career turns her exile, an expatriate, a foreigner, a stranger to the world around her which creates the dilemma of belongingness. The Tiger’s Daughter explores the problems of nationality, location, identity, alienation, assimilation. Tara tries to adapt to the American society and it results in her rootlessness. She wanders between two worlds, one of them is dead and another is powerless to be born. She finds Calcutta disappointing and suffers from a sense of exile.

Wife (1975):

If Mukherjee’s The Tiger’s Daughter ends with protagonist - Tara’s locking herself into the car amidst political riot symbolizing Tara’s imprisonment in an expatriate’s identity dilemma, Wife (1975) depicts Dimple caught in the same but extreme situation. Very much an immigrant book Mukherjee’s Wife is shaped out of a question heard by Bharati herself in Calcutta during her sabbatical year (1973-74) spent in India. She states, “I heard the question ... what do Bengali girls do, between ages of eighteen and twenty-one? (Blaise and Mukherjee, Days and Nights, 220). The question was casually asked by a visiting Columbia
professor of history, Leonard Gorden, to whom the novel is dedicated alongwith her sons. Bharati responded to this question in the form of the novel – *Wife*. It is the tradition of India that the grown up daughters (14 to 20) have to be married (un)willingly, its result is not considered seriously by the elders. “A daughter had to be married off before …” (Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, 39) and “… girls are like cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go” (46). Bharati Mukherjee was troubled by the thought that an average Indian woman has her life moulded not on modern examples (the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi), but on Sita and Savitri of ancient Hindu literature. The moral of these stories is “the wife’s role is one of self-abnegation” (Mukherjee, *Days and Nights*, 232). A wife’s duty is to follow her husband. Sita or Savitri never hesitates or questions. Mukherjee might not be ready to accept all these traditional teachings. Bharati had observed that the anger, the young wives around Bharati in 1973-74 were trying to hide, had become her own anger and that anger washed over the manuscript of *Wife*. Hence her Dimple, the protagonist of *Wife*, questions and murders her husband for self-assertion. It is the transformation of Dimple, an ideal Indian wife into an Indian expatriate woman in USA. Bharati states “I wrote what I hoped would be a wounding novel” (Mukherjee, *Days and Nights*, 268). Actually displaced from the homeland, becoming rootless, alienated, aloof, bitter, irritated, and nostalgic, Mukherjee was facing discrimination in Canada.

In the dark mood of bitterness against the plight of Indian women and Canada’s racial discrimination, expatriate Bharati Mukherjee composed *Wife*. Mukherjee explains in her essay ‘An Invisible Woman’(1981), “ the nominal setting is Calcutta and New York city. But in the mind of the heroine (author?) it is always Toronto” (qtd in Alam 35). Sneja Gunew
argues that “The early work (with the exception of *The Tiger’s Daughter*) is set in Canada and generally articulates a pessimism, anger and sense of homelessness”. *The Tiger’s Daughter* and *Wife* are written during the period of alienation in Canada. *Wife* reflects Bharati’s outrage against Canada. She had lived as a privileged member of the dominant community in a caste and class conscious society, and she had lived, was still living, as a despised and discriminated one against minority in a race–and colour-conscious society. She said “The victimizer turned victim makes a relentless, fearless champion of freedom” (Mukherjee, ‘Epilogue’ of *Days and Nights*, 302). Bharati does not forget the resentments of her Canadian years.

Tripartite and “gender role related title” (Nityanandan 76) *Wife* is dedicated to Bart and Bernard and Leonard Gordon, who wondered about Bengali wives. Dimple Dasgupta-Basu is the Bengali heroine of this novel. The Oxford English Dictionary meaning of the name – Dimple is “any slight surface depression” (Mukherjee, *Wife*, 1). But the nursery rhyme represents it as a sign of beauty. Mukherjee provides the meaning at the outset, indicates the purpose. It matches with the features of the protagonist “a Bengali wife who was sensitive enough to feel the pain, but not intelligent enough to make sense out of her situation and break out” (Mukherjee, *Days and Nights*, 286).

Mukherjee’s *Wife* is a story of Dimple Dasgupta ‘with sentimental attachments to a distant homeland but no real desire for permanent return’ (Mukherjee, Introduction to *Darkness*,3), a daughter of Bengali Brahmin from Calcutta. Submissive, docile, college girl - Dimple is waiting for marriage, which will bring her love, freedom and happiness. After a long waiting of months together her father found Amit Basu, an engineer, who was going to emigrate, from the same city – Calcutta. She desired a neurosurgeon but had to marry an engineer.
Her unBengali and frivolous name Dimple, is changed into Nandini by her mother-in-law. She doesn’t like it. Their home is not attractive for her. She doesn’t feel at home at Basus and complains to her mother. Amit is not the man she desired as her husband. Now she is waiting for migration which will bring her freedom, for this she aborts her baby.

At last Dimple migrates to USA with Amit, her husband. She follows her husband as a dutiful wife like Sita, Lord Rama’s wife. They stay with Amit’s friend Jyoti and his wife Meena initially. She doesn’t feel free and at home here. She encounters Americans and their culture through Ina and her friend Milt. Amit joins his job and they begin to live in Mookerji’s flat who are on sabbatical leave. She would join the job but Amit doesn’t allow her. She is alone at home, watches television programmes, turns an addict of TV to connect with outer world and American life. She befriends Ina and Milt. She tries American food, clothes in Amit’s absence. She follows Milt, goes out with him, allows him to love her. He is America for her with whom she feels secure. Amit notices the change in her attitude but takes it for – a culture shock. Both attend parties arranged by Indians, Indian festivals celebrated by the Bengalis and they also arrange a party for Indians. She invites Milt, the only American. But inwardly she is falling apart in the clash of her two selves - Indian and American. She appears strange, whimsical, a maniac who can not distinguish between real and the unreal. She is involved with Milt, his free love, and seduction. She thinks of different ways of suicide. She doesn’t bother her husband. Even a very casual act of spilling sugar irritates her. And Dimple murders Amit. Why?

Dimple turns neurotic / psychotic; she is a case for a psychiatrist. It is the by- product of expatriation. She loses her old identity. She is in
search of a new one. She fails to have it. “In India … the identity never has to be sought, it is the lone certainty …” (Blaise and Mukherjee *Days & Nights* 93). But in America she has to achieve it with her own qualities or abilities. She doesn’t have unique features of herself; no degree certificate; is not gifted with intuition, even beauty is far away from her, no job, and no wealth. She is very common. But she is a wife, a woman, and it is her asset like Eve to make the world upside down (topsy –turvy). Bharati says in an interview with M. Connell, “My women are using tools at hand” (Edwards 49). Dimple is caught between the two cultures, languages and communities. She is confused, takes refuge in the world of fantasy – TV, the serials, ads, programmes. She does not live in the real world and cannot master the world of fantasy. It is the conflict in her mind that leads her to neurosis. *Wife* gives a pessimistic vision of an expatriate woman’s failure to assimilate in alien culture.

In the words of Fakrul Alam the theme of Mukherjee’s second novel, *Wife* is “…. her predicament as an Indian immigrant’s wife in North America (can) … neither connect with the people around her nor give expression to her feeling of rage at her old life … violence building up inside and all around her in North American landscape until she is driven to murder her husband” (Alam 37-38).

Dimple, the Indian expatriate’s wife, is doubly oppressed. She feels pains of this double oppression, but is not intelligent enough to make sense out of the situation and break out. Her desires are suppressed and restored in her unconscious and break out in her psychosis. She develops it. She had lost her identity as the Bengali wife from India, as she marries and migrates to USA with her husband - Amit Basu. She travels to America but doesn’t achieve her American dream due to the hold of Indian tradition on her. She is crazy of America, this is the dual affiliation.
The Indian identity and sensibility of Dimple is drawn in her desire of marriage, - “Dimple Dasgupta had set her heart on marrying a neurosurgeon but her father was looking for engineers in the matrimonial ads” (Mukherjee, *Wife*, 3). She is 20 years old, young college-student, sensitive and dreamy. She thinks marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties and love. Dimple desires to marry a neurosurgeon for a different kind of life and good fortune like - “… an apartment on Chowringhee, her hair done by Chinese girls, trips to New Market for nylon saris …” (3). “Her notions of marriage are rather vague … and derived from … Indian films, movie magazines, ladies periodicals” (Krishnan). She is impatient and worried of it as the days, months passed in waiting for marriage. She is anguished of her ‘flat chest’ and ‘sitar shaped body’ (4). Sick Dimple dreams “Sita, the ideal wife … had walked through fire at her husband’s request. Such pain such loyalty, seemed reserved for married women” (6). Unmarried Dimple typically expects to be a good wife. It is a cultural effect of India. Mother understands “… illness as a sign … Nature’s way of indicating a young woman’s readiness for marriage” (6). Her friend Paramita Ray (Pixie) doesn’t. She feels marriage can save her, free her, fill her with passion. But erotic fantasies began to sneak into her mind. At night she “hallucinated … the toilet seat twitched like a coiled snake …” (12 ). Dimple is not serious about her university exams. It is the Indian common way; daughters are taught and sent to the school for the ‘suitable boy’, to find out spouse, perfect spouse as the parents think. Education for girls or daughters is not for empowerment or intellectual enhancement or career but for marriage. Because marriage gives the new identity to the girls like Dimple who “was sure love would become magically lucid on her wedding day” (9). In the words of Pramila Venkateswaran “… a woman had to be well educated so she could be worthy of her husband …
to fulfil her husband’s needs … a means of liberation existed side by side … a means of controlling them morally” (Nelson, Bharati Mukherjee 38). While studying and reading the Doctrine of Passive Resistance for examinations Dimple thinks of becoming “at some future date, a good wife, a docile wife conquering the husband enemy by withholding affection and other tactics of domestic passive resistance” (9). Dimple has given up the idea of taking university examinations. After six months waiting, her engineer father has found a suitable boy for Dimple and he is Amit Kumar Basu, 29, consultant engineer, 7 years experience, who has applied for immigration to USA. Dimple “thought he was the young executive in clothing ads …” (14). Young Dimple thinks and imagines about her marriage. She marries Amit Basu.

Love is far away to reach in her proposal, traditional, horoscope checked, Indian marriage, in which husband and wife are unknown and indifferent to each other. It is the Indian culture in which parents select spouses for their children. Marriage itself for an Indian daughter is loss of the old identity. There is a change in the name.

Change in name is the loss of old identity and an attempt to achieve new one. Her unBengali and frivolous name, Dimple, is changed into Nandini. Dimple has thought of herself as someone going into exile. She is now Mrs. Nandini Basu. It is her new identity, as a daughter is turned into a wife. Her role has changed. Her position has changed. She complains about her new name and in-laws’ apartment. Unreal seems real to her and real unreal. Very casual things at the in-laws’ like the broken tap, darkness at staircase, carrying up water, Pintu (her bother-in-law) coughing, spiders behind the kitchen door irritate her. As Sushma Tandon puts it, “Life with Amit in the stifling atmosphere of cramped flat – a ‘fortress’ of genteel politeness – unnerves Dimple …” (Tandon 46). It
has resulted in talking to herself: “Dimple Basu is a happy woman” (21). She neglects it initially by thinking that all these things are temporary. She is going to migrate with Amit Basu, tells herself, “… it should be easy to love Amit ” (23). She has drawn Amit, her husband, from the men of magazines. But Amit is not the man Dimple has desired and imagined. In the absence of Amit any face in the magazine is a fair game for her-

“… she borrowed a forehead from an aspirin ad., the lips, eyes and chin from a body builder and shoulder’s ad, and put the ideal man and herself in a restaurant on Park Street or by the side of a pool at a five-star hotel” (23).

She tries to please her husband - “all her life she had been trained to please ” (28). Bharati states- “We’ve all been trained to please, been trained to be adaptable as wives, ….” (Edwards 47). Dimple has tried to improve her English by reading Basic Conversational English and English Magazines for Amit. The daughter in Indian culture is not allowed love-marriage. But after the marriage she is forced to love her husband, whether she likes or not. It is ideal if she is loyal, true, and grateful and loves him. Her life at Basus is a kind of diasporic displacement, alienation, nostalgia and rootlessness. Bapsi Sidhwa thinks that “Migrant situation is a state of mind rather than a physical experience” ( Editorial of Thiem, JCL, 2). The bride is very similar to an expatriate at in-laws where she has to find out her own identity with her abilities of adjustment, communication, love, and assimilation. It is the dislocation of her sensibility where mind and body lack harmony. Kalpna Wandrekar, in her unpublished thesis, thinks that Dimple “awaits for experience but never takes it”. Dimple likes to carry legendary Sita’s docility and understands wife’s obligations to the husband. “Marriage
alone teaches the virtues of sacrifice, responsibility and patience …” (27). She knows infertility would be the cause of divorce. Amit expects Dimple to be like Sita and his disapproval is a torture for her.

As the months pass, the excitement of marriage diminishes. She finds that she is pregnant, at first ‘the vomiting fascinated her” (30), later grew arrogant, possessive, (turns) abnormal and “she thought of ways to get rid of … whatever it was that blocked her tubes and pipes” (31). She is angry at the thought “no one had consulted her before depositing it in her body” (31). She feels helpless and is enraged. She is filled with hatred for all the Basus including Amit. Dimple asks Amit complainingly, “Why didn’t you tell me to get the loop? Why did not you arrange it?…Why didn’t you get me some pills? ” (31-32). She turns stranger, cries loudly, sits up in bed, “ picked quarrels, made fun of his dress, spilled curry on his shirtfront, laughed at his ‘hopeless taste’ ” (34).

Motherhood comes along with the responsibilities under which burden she collapses. Indira Nityanandan says “Child bearing and child rearing restrict the freedom of women and an abortion is often seen as a protest against gender-related roles by modern feminist characters” (Nityanandan 75). Dimple is a very different woman. She satisfies herself in imagination, imaginary games played with the strangers, “She threw bits of newspaper, hair balls, nail clippings, down on the heads below to make them jerk upward in anger….” ( 34). Her killing of a mouse exhibits her resentment of her own pregnancy. She seems to be a confident, transformed woman. She is a killer, she can kill for self-assertion and expression. She begins to act in a manner that indicates she is not docile and likes to break all the restrictions laid on the middle class educated Bengali wife. Killing a mouse is an essence of forthcoming brutal actions and violence of Dimple. “Her repulsion with her own
pregnancy is born out of her hatred for Amit who fails to feed her fantasy world” (Kumar 45).

Dimple desires a perfect life like Pixie’s but is jealous of Pixie’s position. She is waiting for immigration, swinging between normal and abnormal, schizophrenic. She scares cockroaches out of the dark corners and hits them with a broom. When asked “Do you see immigration as expression of reincarnation?” Mukherjee replied Connell “Absolutely! I have been murdered and reborn at least three times” (Edwards 46). Dimple’s ‘self’ is similarly “murdered and reborn many times until she murders her husband” (Nelson, Bharati Mukherjee, 55). She says “I want everything to be nice and new,…” (41). Now she thinks “the baby as unfinished business. It cluttered up…going abroad she did not want to carry any relics from her old life” (42).

She aborts her baby by skipping for migration - “She had skipped the rope until her legs grew numb and her stomach burned, then she had poured water from the heavy bucket over her head … stomach … until the last of the blood washed off her legs …” (42). Bharati might have seen the vision of the 21st century, the modern Indian westernized woman, who dares to go against the tradition for self-assertion. It is very common today: the family planning. Brinda Bose observes “She aborts her child in the privacy of her bathroom, ... [this engenders in her the notion that it is possible to rid herself of what she does not want]” (Nelson 54). Maya Manju Sharma comments on it. “Tara Cartwright returns to India to recover her roots; Dimple Basu does everything she can do to obliterate hers. She even induces a miscarriage so that she does not have to bring a child conceived in India into the new world …. For Dimple as for some western feminists, abortion is a sacrament of liberation from the traditional roles and constraints of womanhood”
(Nelson 15). It is a moral and cultural suicide, the destruction of marriage bond in adultery (Sharma).

Amit informs Dimple of their migration. It is the second transformation for Dimple. Mrs. Dimple/Nandini Basu, an Indian Bengali wife is going to turn into an Indian expatriate woman. While preparing to go abroad “She felt sudden panic that, just as she was being introduced to happy people, she was being taken away again to become a resident alien” (47).

At the party at Pixie’s she is introduced to Ratna Das who tells her “What you are is a resident alien”(46). For Dimple real happiness is in the movies or in the West. Dimple’s individual identity is coloured with depression, hallucinations and dreams and fantasizing, even before marriage and after migration to USA.

Indianness of Amit and other immigrants is notable in USA. Amit expects Dimple to keep quiet and be away from fooling herself. He is afraid whether Dimple would react in such a way that it would turn shameful. All Indian women wear sari to keep the ethnic identity. Indian immigrants dine on the floor and eat with fingers. Meena does not like Indian’s interracial marriages. They marry Americans for acquiring citizenship e.g. Miss Singh marries an American Dancer. Americanized Ina thinks unmarried girls can do anything, they are entitled to stay on any way. These are the reactions being an expatriate or immigrant. Dimple’s care of pregnant Meena is an addition of her Indian expatriate’s attitude towards another Indian woman. Indians who are in the process of assimilation are reproduced in the form of Ina. There is a moral and cultural change in the diasporas. But the influence of westernization is not happy one to the expatriates though possible in the Melting Pot of America.
Dimple and Amit: expatriate Indians in USA -

Sen’s apartment is another little India for Dimple. It can be realized here that the Sens don’t welcome and entertain Americans, the beef eaters, as they are vegetarians and feel insecure with the English language. The Sens relate to Indians only to keep their ethnicity. It is an expatriate’s wish. Sens are Indian expatriates for economic enhancements. Jyoti says, “If it were not for the money, I’d go back tomorrow. This is too much the rat race for a man like me” (55). They do not think of assimilation, preserve their ethnic identity, Indian Bengali by keeping the Indian cultural way of life.

But Dimple is eager to adopt and assimilate in American culture since her arrival. She is in search of herself and wants to be an American woman. “Dimple was happier than she had been for a long time” (56). American Dream is a belief that through hard work, courage and self-determination, regardless of social class, a person can gain a better life. Jyoti’s experience tells “Here, you couldn’t afford to sound like a troublemaker, especially if you were Indian. Work twice as hard, keep your mouth shut, and you’ll be a millionaire in fifteen years” (56).

But on her third morning in America Dimple feels, “She’d come very close to getting killed …” (60). It is the position of an expatriate who is not fluent in English and unknown to the laws of Dream land, gets confused. Dimple does like to buy cheesecake, when she is out with Meena for shopping, she has asked for a cheesecake in a beef shop. The shopkeeper points her ignorance of the laws and begins searching something in the drawer. Dimple feels insulted and thinks that the shopkeeper is searching for a gun to shoot her with. This first bitter experience of shopping has left a deep impression on her forever and she feels inferior, alienated. She feels that she is caught in the cross-fire of American communalism. She compares her Calcutta shopping:
In Calcutta she’d buy from Muslims, Biharis, Christians, Nepalis. She was used to many races; she’d never been a communalist. And so long as she had money to spend no one would ask her what community she belonged to. She was caught in the cross fire to an American communalism. She couldn’t understand. She felt she’d come very close to getting on her third morning in America (60).

Dimple, though wishing for acculturation in America, swings between the old and the new life. The very first social experience makes her unable to establish the social solidarity in US. Social solidarity is the unity resulting from the common aims or interests of people. She lacks it. She fails in her first attempt, which doesn’t allow daring for next time. She is alienated and caught in self and cultural estrangement. This event makes her aware of her dislocation from stable position in its culture and tradition.

The Basus share Sens’ apartment, whenever Amit is jobless. This is the economical condition which has made her feel uprooted. They are dependent for their basic needs. What she had expected from migration to New York, would liberate her from unhappiness, would bring her love and freedom. She has no chance to come out of Indian immigrants’ghetto. She has to adjust everywhere, it adds to her alienation. It is clearly noticed at Vinod Khanna’s party in Manhattan.

The Immigrants in the US relate and connect with each other on their Pan-Indian identity. They keep encircled and united among themselves. They have adjusted to the American life but get nostalgic, and try to be related with homeland and culture. The ties and bonds of the mother country do not allow them away from homeland. Though geographically impossible Indian immigrants show solidarity psychologically by gathering somewhere for parties or religious ceremonies.
Khannas’ Party, Mullicks’ party, Sens’ and Dimple’s own party, where all the Indian immigrants - Mehras, Bhattacharyyas, Miss Chakravarty, Mrs. Chakladar, Sens, gather. Indian women immigrants are in saris with gold and all of them are communicating in either English or Bengali and Hindi. It is their get-together to remain connected and be Indian. It is necessary to release the pressure of homesickness, nostalgia, alienation and to preserve their ethnicity, culture in the alien, adopted land.

Khanna offers Dimple a job, but Amit rejects it by asserting “One breadwinner in the family is quite enough” (61). He shares the traditional, patriarchal mindset of an Indian husband who thinks it a shame to allow his wife to be an earner. Hence he won’t allow her to take a job. Dimple desires freedom but it is the limited freedom he can allow her.

In the party, Dimple feels an outsider, “… spoke only when people came upto her…” (62). She feels nervous alienated in the crowd of Indian immigrants who hate and are disgusted at the Americans. “They are so dirty” (62). Jyoti Sen has pointed out that “Indians abroad were so outgoing and open-minded. They did not give a damn about communalism and petty feeling”. He informs Dimple “not to restrict herself to Bengalis…” (67). Ina Mullick, who was nostalgic initially but now assimilated, is “… more American than the Americans” (68). Jyoti informs Amit that Ina will misguide Dimple and it is time “to save your wife” (76). Even he tells Amit, “… when a woman starts going wrong, it is usually because her husband did not look after her enough …” (68).

Unemployment makes Amit angry and bitter to himself and Dimple and he remains out of home. But Dimple does only watch the TV programmes all the day and even does not enquire him out of fear that he won’t like to be asked. Her timepass is the kitchenwork, Meena Sen and
TV all the day. She gets sentimental over Amit in his absence and also glad that “he was out so much (9.30 to 6.15)” (72). TV is the guide for her to understand the complicated life of American women.

The party at Mullicks gives Dimple an opportunity to interact and face to face communicate with Ina Mullick, a smoker, a drinker, more American, modern, a post graduate (M.Sc. in physics) from Calcutta University, who wears pant and shirt that ended in a large knot, and uses English fluently. Dimple speaks in Bengali, her “English had grown less confident since she’s arrived in America” (74). Ina has a particular theory of Indian immigrants: - “It takes them a year to get India out of their system. In the second year they have bought all the things they’ve hungered for. So then they go back, or they stay here and vegetate or else they’ve got to live here like anyone else” (76).

Ina asks Dimple for a soft drink: Seven UP. But Amit forbids by saying, “She does not like alcoholic beverages … doesn’t even like coke” (77). Always he decides in public what Dimple can do and say. He restricts her gently and Dimple cannot react. It is Indianess of a good Hindu Bengali wife. She fears that “If she took a drink … Amit would write it to his mother and his mother would call the Dasguptas and accuse them of raising an immoral, drunken daughter” (78). She is afraid of the losing her identity as Dasgupta’s daughter, moral, disciplined and Basu’s ideal wife. Alcohol is not to be relished by women in India. So she does not like to lose her identity. Dimple would echo her husband – “I do not need stimulant to feel happy in my husband’s presence … my obligation is to my husband …” (78).

In this party Dimple and Amit meet Milt Glasser and Marsha, the Americans. Dimple measures them with her Indian norms. She is puzzled by Ina-Milt relationship. Her Indian idea of a woman has to change looking at Marsha, tall, slim, and intelligent. Marsha is a love-match of
the Indian immigrant Prodosh. Very free and frank Milt’s behavior is a wonder for Dimple.

Dimple is not homesick even after reading the letters from homeland. Instead she thinks “how nice it would be to have her own apartment when Amit found a job” (84). It is the process of enhancement of an Indian diaspora, a part of assimilation. Like an American she likes to listen to the discussions on violence, guns and licenses. Jyoti’s talk of violence: muggings, rape, murder is ugly but on TV it is exciting for Dimple. She begins to imagine different persons in the role of her husband. “… it could easily have been Jyoti instead of Amit … both were … same caste … engineers” (85).

For Americans snoring can be the cause of a divorce. Dimple knows it and whimsically at 3 a.m. Dimple says to Amit “You snore too”, demands “…. a large queen-size bed” and complains “… you hate me … always … I know … wanted to marry someone fat and fair like Meena” (86). She likes to go to movies, and is interested in reading the ads instead of doing housework. This is the change that has come over her. Yet Dimple is disappointed in her expectations of marriage.

“Dimple realized suddenly that she hated the Sens’ apartment …. bed … wall-to-wall rug” (88). Amit is the cause of her irritation as she expects him to be tidy. But Amit “… in New York … (had) grown frail and shabby” (88) and she compares him with Jyoti and the men “pushing toothpaste and deodorant on television” (88). She does not trust him now, his tone, his dress, but wants him “to be infallible, intractable, godlike, but with boyish charm, (and)…. find a job …. could take his savings and retire with her to a three stoery house in Ballygunge Park” (88-89). Dimple now begins to hate Amit. Her Pendulum swings between two extremes – India and America, which is not stable at one end and she has
underestimated her husband saying, “it would not be too hard … to persuade him to settle in Ballygunje rather…” (89). She is confident of her estimation of her husband. It is the result of her migration.

Marriage and migration are synonyms for Dimple to fulfill her desires. But she is betrayed by both these turning points of her life. Amit is responsible for her depression. “She was bitter that marriage had betrayed her, had not provided all the glittery things she had imagined, had not brought her cocktails under canopied skies … restaurants … sold divine ‘kababs’ rolled in ‘roti’ ” (101-102). His unemployment is the cause of her troubles. On the surface level she supports him being his wife (a part of duty) but inwardly turning violent: “Insomnia was what she feared most … in bed … afraid … eyes … ceiling and sheet … thought of sleeping bodies as corpses … coffin of her bed … looked at Amit … three thirty … seemed unreal … could make Amit die in his sleep…” (97-98).

Being an Indian wife Dimple does not accept that “a man’s job(is) to make coffee in the middle of the night” (98). She is confused with American names and the American experience. Confusion grows steadily within herself. “Talking about murders in America was like talking about weather…” (99).

Dimple’s infidelity is diplayed in her reminding how “Milt Glasser had set her on a counter, fixed a drink and said she was pretty, and that Jyoti had said she was smarter than Ina Mullick, and Ina had said she used to look a lot like Dimple. So many compliments in her life in so short a time; she’d never been complimented in her life before coming to New York ….” (102). Her marriage to Amit, migration with him and his unemployment make her think “of seven ways to commit suicide in Queens” (102).
She is in the process of Americanization but it has widened the space between husband and wife. Dimple looks at herself through “Ina’s eyes or rather imagined … felt ashamed of her sari … swarthed skinny body: it seemed so inappropriate a body for having fun on an American beach … new dream … on beach … washed up. … at her feet lay Ina Mullick, in Dimple’s sari…” (103). Ina is the model for Dimple. She is fascinated by her smoking, her drinks, the night-school and her hatred of arranged marriages. It makes her unhappy of her own physical stature.

It is well and good Amit gets the job: boiler maintenance engineer, in the moth of August. But Dimple turns stern. “She had become hard to please”(104). She is busy looking at ads in newspapers for home. “The search for a place to live(in) gave her a new kind of certainty” (104). It is her rootedness and the process of enhousement. Now Sens’ apartment is hideous and shabby, bare and she hates their furniture, wants to break and smash it. In the pretence of cleaning, she has twisted the petals of plastic flowers. She hates the flowers even “… when she was about to throw out the torn petals, she felt guilty … throws out parts of her own body … stored in the purse … she thought of the incident as “a narrow escape” though she couldn’t be sure from where she had escaped, or how” (105). It is her confused state. She is not clear to herself - who she is?

The second part tells about Basu’s life at Sen’s apartment in Queens and their parties at Khannas and Mullicks.

The final, third, part tells of Basus’ life at the Mookerji’s, N.Y.U. apartment at Greenwich where Dimple “felt like a star, collapsing inwardly” (109), she “lost her temper, started to cry” and says irrelevantly “I feel sort of dead inside and all you can do is read the paper and talk to me about food. You never listen … You hate me … I’m not fat and fair” (110) and strangely “flung open the door of the oven and lunged
forward” (110). Amit saves her and asserts his love for her. Nagendra Kumar has remarked that it is “her accumulated frustrations. She is suffering from inferiority complex” (52).

Amit consoles her, suggests her go out, make friends, do something constructive, not stay at home and not think about Calcutta. To come out of the nostalgia, homesickness, it is the remedy of the expatriates. Dimple boldly confesses, “I’m not brooding about Calcutta. The trouble is, I’ve stopped brooding about Calcutta” (111). Dimple has ventured into America but does not conquer. She is afraid to go out alone, encounters the problem of her English, she can’t communicate properly, is afraid of that society, feels insecure. True Americanness is not yet achieved by Dimple. In the words of Brinda Bose it is “…the spirit of America, a spirit that defies homesickness and nostalgia in order that one may savor the ‘exuberance of immigration’” (Nelson, Bharati Mukherjee, 48). It is a movement away from expatriation to immigration. It is a transitional phase. Dimple is the person who does not fit anywhere. “How could she live in a country where she could not predict these basic patterns, where every other woman was a stranger … felt different, ignorant, exposed to ridicule in the elevator” (112).

Amit considers it as her transformation, becoming American and warns her “not (to be) too American … like Mrs. Mullick”. They celebrate Amit’s job and her Americanness with a beer. Once he had restrained her from drink but now offers her drink himself. Both are neither perfect Indians nor Americans. It is the ‘duality’ of their personality, the ‘double consciousnesses’.

She expects the changes and does not accept them; this is the problem with Dimple. She waits eagerly for the new home, but what happens when she gets it. She is falling apart, sleeps all day alone, gives
up food. If so hungry, “took leftover rice and curry from the fridge and ate it, without warming it … given up bathing during the middle of the day … showered at night … feel different and very modern” (113). What she feels is not what she acts. Amit frees her for going out, try sauna, make friends with other women in the building, invite them for coffee or go shopping, “Why don’t you be outgoing like them?” (113). Dimple lives only in her fantasy, the unreal world; “she wanted to dream of Amit but knew she would not. Amit didn’t feed her fantasy life; he was merely the provider of small material comforts. In bitter moments she ranked husband, blender, color TV, cassette tape recorder, stereo in their order of convenience” (113). Amit is now an electric machine – robot, not the human being for Dimple.

Her life in US is confined only to four walls either of Sens’ apartment or Mookerji’s, she did nothing except sleep and cook. Even now it is difficult to her to operate the self-service elevators. “She could not live with people who did not understand about Durga Puja” (114). Religion and its practice are the relief for expatriates to save themselves from nostalgia, homesickness, and get peace of mind but there is nobody to share her Durga Puja. There are unspeakable failings in her life. There is absurdity. The interaction between Dimple and American society is absurd. She finds life meaningless, rootless, and alien to her ‘self’. The result is - “she had started to talk to herself, actually talk as if there were another person in the room with her” (118). It is because of her loneliness at Mookerji’s flat. There were no servants like Calcutta. Amit is busy whole day in his office. At Queens Meena Sen was there to share something. She is hence engaged in watching TV all the day. She feels “trapped, isolated in a high rise full of Americans …” (119), in the land of honey, money and opportunity. It is also the land of violence. On
the contrary, Amit is thinking that she is lucky and he is jealous of Dimple who does not need to go out for work but sit at home and do nothing.

She turns inward, does not speak to Amit, is distracted by the TV Commercial, tries to read Femina or KCS information Bulletin of Vinod Khanna in which ads attract her. One of them is – tickets to homeland and a free gift. Amit cannot afford it. He is not the man who can fulfill her desires. His economical position after only the four months won’t be sound. She insists but no way.

Meanwhile Dimple receives a letter from her mother and knows, “Pixie has married a fifty-three year old actor. Dimple is proud of her friend’s marriage with a film star, and “made it into stardust” (163). Dimple has measured life and marriage by wealth, parties, and richness of the spouse. She doesn’t look at the ‘age’ of bridegroom. Surface glittering things attract her like Lalitha in Markandaya’s Two Virgins.

The party at Sens is certain kind of relief for Dimple. Frequent Visits of Ina and Milt make easy to Dimple attract Milt. Milt’s reactions are desired by her. She feels inferior herself to them. It is an expatriate’s attitude in adopted land. But she is engaged in differentiating Amit and Milt. Milt alone at her home cooks for her chocolate mousse and even he takes her out in Marasha’s clothes (Sweater and blue jean). “He was to her America” (174). In her borrowed clothes, she feels, she can risk anything and get away with it and thinks “… it was a small price to pay for all the things she had done since moving into Manhattan” (176). Amit is doubtful of change and wants to know the cause. She is changed, looks different, TV voice becomes the voice of madness for her. She directly interrogates Amit now. Yet she is reminding the nine ways to die. She feels that Amit “is …waiting for me to die” (177). Dimple is waiting for
Amit on the public bench in heavy snowfall in the month of January. On the cold Park bench she is almost freezing to death. Now “her life was slow and full of miscalculations” (178). It is actually her attempt of death. She is very upset, tired and depressed. Amit literally has dragged her, does not like to discuss private matters in the public and has brought her home. But violently she shouted at Amit. “Leave me alone.”

Dimple tries to list the reasons of her unhappiness – “1. The plants were dying….” (180). She fails in finding the reasons of her unhappiness. She fails. She does not want to be like Ina Mullick and like Meena Sen or Mrs. Roy and live in a little Bollygunge ghetto. But Dimple has become a prisoner of ghetto in Queens. So she descends into madness. Amit considers Dimple is shocked by the American culture. He thinks “… culture shock happened all the time to Indian wives, … wasn’t … “Breakdowns” that American wives were fond of having” (180). He has promised her Calcutta trip, though expensive. It is the myth of return of diasporas especially expatriates. It is cultural identity of an Indian – to look after his wife, her desires only after the case is out of hand. Till this moment Amit is not serious, since the marriage, about his relationship with Dimple and the changes in her. Dimple is cautious, has tried “would not let them catch her out” (180).

To keep ethnic identity immigrants arrange the religious ceremonies like Durga Puja, Saraswati Puja, Ganapati festival etc. in adopted land. One of such ceremonies the Saraswati Puja is attended by Dimple and Amit only after two days of Dimple’s farce of waiting on public bench for Amit. She is in Benarasee silk sari to look the best at Bengalis’ gathering and to forget her ‘public bench waiting’ incident. She has put on gold choker. She is happier than earlier. Women discuss about returning homeland. But Dimple thinks “… dying would be just as senseless and unfair in Calcutta …. to have Amit bend over her corpse?” (184)
Dimple suffers from insomnia and cannot differ real-unreal, sleeps late at night to dream of death, feels always dead, Amit would recoil her, works slowly. She is really pitiful immigrant. The fourth visit of Milt and Ina is a temporary relief for her. She concludes “Happy people … were capricious, mysterious … gravitate; she was not a happy person…imitate them in her dreams … Amit was not like a Milt and Ina …” (189). She cares of their entertainment and “told herself, she liked Milt Glasser … Milt as an urban nomad … a consultant …” (191). It is in the month of February, they share a nice little Pizza. Dimple is confused again by thinking how to tell it Amit. At one moment, feels not necessary to tell him. She has started to think of his murder, “she would kill Amit and hide his body in the freezer- scheme delighted her … made her feel very American somehow, like a character in TV series …” (195). Amit is not extravagant, not muscular as Milt. It is her tendency that she always compares Amit with the other men like Jyoti, Milt and the men from the ads in newspapers, magazines and from TV serials. Amit is ignorant of her psychological transformation, her flirtation, her seduction. He is provider only.

Milt is care-taker, looks after Dimple, who trusts him and likes to know his job. Milt is thinking that “… I will kidnap you to protect you from all the crazies-I’m even thinking you want me to stick around…And there is not love like that kind of love…” (200). Actually Dimple wants to know him better but would not express in correct words what does she want to know She dwells between love and death even at this moment she thinks of death while he is talking about love. Dimple feels, “… more cut off from Amit, from the Indians, left only with borrowed disguises … whatever she did … would be wrong” (200). It is the result of her loneliness, alienation, lack of communication and love out of
expatriation. In a letter to Miss Problem-Wala she confessed her love for Milt who has not expressed his love for her. But Problem-Wala only handles beauty problems.

Still suffering from insomnia and headaches she tells herself “clumsy people should not lead complicated lives” (202). She has not expected her life to be bed of cherries.” She is caught into acute sense of alienation and confusion, wonders whether to tell about her relation with Milt, seduction of Milt like wives on soap opera or not. It is her pre-infidelity stage of life. “Her life had been devoted only to pleasing others, not herself” (211). Mukherjee observes that the women hold one common value: serving the husband as the primary duty of the good Indian wife…women are controlled by their tradition” (Nelson, Bharati Mukherjee, 29). They are either accepted or alienated. Dimple is alienated geographically and psychologically. Amit is the man, a husband incapable to know and ignorant of her betrayal.

After Jony Carson’s show, Amit is in the kitchen, has spilled sugar on the counter which irritates her. It is very casual reason but Dimple thinks “… how horrible to have to spend a whole lifetime watching him spill sugar” (212). He does not think of it, of Dimple, her problem, her falling apart, “She was falling apart like a very old toy that had been played with … by children who claimed to love her” (202). Like Ibsen’s Nora in A Doll’s House she is a toy played whenever and wherever liked by the man and didn’t care. It is the place of a woman, ‘secondary sex’. This is the gender identity of Dimple. She is tired of it, resulted in her act of murder of Amit.

With kitchen knife Dimple murders her husband: Amit Basu. She has used a ‘tool’ (Mukherjee) at her hand – a knife.
“She sneaked up on him and chose a spot, just under the hairline, where the mole was getting larger and browner, and she drew imaginary line of kisses because she did not want him to think that she was the impulsive, foolish sort of who acted like a maniac just because the husband was suffering from insomnia. She touched very lightly and let her fingers draw a circle around the delectable spot, then she brought her right hand up and with the knife stabbed the magical circle once, twice, seven times, each time a little harder, until the milk in the bowl of cereal was a pretty pink and flakes were mushy and would have embarrassed any advertiser, and then she saw the head fall off—but of course it was her imagination because she was not sure anymore what she had seen on TV and what she had seen in the private scene of three A.M. – and it stayed upright on the counter top, still with its eyes averted from her face, and she said very loudly to the knife that was redder now than it had ever been when she had chopped chicken and mutton with it in the same kitchen and on the same counter, “I wonder if Leni can make a base for it; she’s supposed to be very clever with her fingers.

Women on television got away with murder” (212-13).

Clark Blaise in Days and Nights explains “A girl …may end up … for she cannot refuse to marry … with a lout who will not tolerate the slightest deviation from self-expression … Wife about such a girl, a Ballygunge girl from Rash Behari Avenue … whose only available outlet, suicide, is transformed in the madness of emigration to New York into murder ” (141). It seems him that a Bengali girl had very few options except to get married.

Dimple has murdered Amit because of her frustration at his inability to understand her desires, needs and fulfill them. She wants to be
an American woman, to acquire the new identity she has murdered Amit. In an interview Bharti Mukherjee explains— “I hope the ending comes as a surprise. How Dimple settles her problem should shock or at least surprise the reader.” When Bharati is asked by Hancock, “Is infidelity and murder the only solution?” She responded – “Dimple thinks so. The ending I guess is discomfiting; Dimple’s decision to murder her husband is her misguided act of self-assertion. If she had remained a housewife living with her extended family in India, she would probably not have asked herself question such as, am I unhappy? And if by chance she had asked herself these questions she might have settled her problems by committing suicide. So turning to violence outward rather than inward is part of her slow and misguided Americanization” (Edwards 24). In another interview Bharati asserted that violence is necessary to a transformation of character. She says, “I can see that in my own life it has been psychic violence. In my character…physical violence …” (Edwards 37).

Historian Oscar Handlin, in his pioneering study of immigrants in US, entitled *Uprooted*, describes the emotional and psychological conditions which the uprooted are subjected to, in alien cultural milieu. According to him the pressures of realizing their identity, in such a diverse cultural environments together with financial problems besetting the newcomer, can lead to mental sickness ranging from mild depression, hallucination, fantasizing to severe insanity, schizophrenia, or other maladaptative behaviour.

Dimple’s murder of her husband is because of her uncertainty of identity before and after migration. What is her profile? She is Dimple Dasgupta, an Indian Bengali Brahmin, a daughter of an engineer. All these are ‘given’ identities by her origin or birth. After her marriage she is
Mrs. Nandini Basu, a Bengali wife. This identity is given her by marriage. That is ‘father’ and ‘husband’ are the providers to woman, an individual, providing the identities. Her name is changed by her mother-in-law i.e. her identity is changed, a daughter becomes a ‘wife’ – identified with such relations in society. She migrates with Amit and loses her identity, because she does not cope with that society. She does not establish social solidarity. She is in search of her new identity. This process is the progress of transformation. She wants to assimilate with Milt, Leni, Ina - the Americans and immigrant Americans. But she fails in her attempts. 

*Wife* tells a tale of an Indian immigrant’s failure in obtaining new identity. It tells intensively what it means to become an American. Dimple’s inability to separate from her Bengali culture, the past, in which she feels trapped, as she moves to New York and her lack of self-awareness are the basic things of her traumatic life. She is against the invisible cage of her past, though does not break away from it. It is an expatriate’s attitude who wants to assimilate in American culture. The ‘traumatic changes (cultural, psychological) are told by Mukherjee. Isolated Dimple dwells, swings between two extremes – expatriate’s and immigrant’s identity. It is the double consciousness.

Her past, being Indian Bengali Brahmin wife, does establish her national, class and gender identity but it is fragile and restrictive. In India a daughter and a wife’s life is planned and determined by others i.e. male, father/husband. Hence the ‘self’ of a woman is suppressed and faces psychosis. Dimple “feels pain of (her) situation but … cannot envision an escape” (Edwards xiii). Dimple is caught between the ‘given’ traditional identity and the new modern American ‘made’ identity. She is in the process of ‘made/constructed’ identity : of an American woman. She does not achieve it. In an interview Bharati asserts “… immigrants must
‘violently murder’ their old selves up on coming to USA” (Interview with Bill Moyer).

Identity gives an individual a location in the world and presents the link between an individual and society in which he/she lives. Dimple has lost her fragile Indian identity by migrating to USA. She is unable to remain cohesive in the present American society which is highly ‘individualized.’ ‘Bengali woman’ is a collective identity, meaningless and useless in America. She is in quest of new identity. But her qualities are insufficient to acquire or obtain it. She does not kill her old ‘self’ though boldly wishes for the ‘new self’. She has double consciousness and double standards of life. She is uprooted or dislocated but not relocated in alien culture. She feels homeless, insecure, due to her position.

She declares that she does not brood over Calcutta, yet she does not break away from it - the legendary figures like Lord Ram and his good ideal wife Sita. In India before and after marriage she likes and wants to live like Sita - a docile, devoted, obedient, passive wife. America has changed her. Dimple looks passive or is passive. The final scene does not prove it. America tempts her, yet there is ‘pull’ of Indianness and she is fragmented in this Trishanku position. Her identity is fractured. She tries to negotiate her old identity in memory and the concreteness of Americanness. There is failure in this dealing, which results in a split personality. She is the mixture of two identities - Bengali wife and expatriate Indian in America. She is in the process of ‘becoming’ American. Her ‘self’ is engaged in furnishing the new identity. The American society, in which she is located or placed, influences her. She blindly imitates the way of Ina Mullick, ‘more American’ and Marsha,
an American and lives in ‘borrowed disguises’. Her ways are limited and wrong to assert identity. She just uses the clothes of Marsha but not her language. Society expects the proper union of husband and wife, insists on peaceful social and family life. Dimple lacks it. So Bharati states that it is her misguided act of self-assertion and Americanization.

Both marriage and migration fail to make her a new modern woman. She expects only, free, liberated, rich, pompous married life in America being American. The agents of socialization are TV, newspaper, magazines, movies, family, schools, peers etc.. Among them TV, newspaper, magazines are used by Dimple with large scale. Hence she is incapable to identify whether the scene is on TV screen or in reality. The final paragraph of Wife tells that she is unsure about “what she had seen on TV and what she had seen in the private screen of three A.M…” (213). The concluding sentence of the novel – “women on television got away with murder” suggests her encounter with TV and her being its addict by which she has measured her own life.

Dimple is the victim of gender, class and race. Mukherjee tells Tina, “In Wife, Dimple experiences racist discrimination in a Queens shop, genderist… at home and classist discrimination at meeting with white feminists” (Edwards 94). Dimple is a ‘wife’, she has to be passive, blind follower of husband, obedient, devoted, grateful, care-taker, everything positive for the male. The tradition of India, the language in its patriarchal society insist Dimple be categorized as a woman. This gender-identity is conveyed by her family and mass media. Indian society has some rules about activities, jobs, dress, jewelry appearances for each gender. Dimple being a woman and wife she has to wear a sari though she does like Jeans and shirts in USA. Amit also expects it, once he reads loudly, expected to be heard by Dimple, “Never wear anything but cotton
saris while cooking” (116). Amit does not like Dimple to do the job with Mr. Khanna. It is his traditional thinking “one breadwinner in the family is quite enough” (61). She is a housewife though desires office job being a teacher or librarian or the job like Pixie’s – an announcer. “She thought how perfect life would be if she could have a job like Pixie’s” (38) and “… could be more exciting person, take evening classes perhaps, become a librarian” (42). Amit expects Dimple to be like the legendry Sita. Dimple knows that Amit desires her ‘to uphold Bengali womanhood” (78).

Indeed the titles of her first two novels indicate gender (given) identity. In the words of Ralph J. Crane “The titles…The Tiger’s Daughter and Wife…emphasize the colonized condition of her female protagonists who are defined by their position within a patriarchal system. Tara…a daughter. Dimple Basu is a wife … Mukherjee makes visible the restrictions imposed on her invisible protagonists. Tara is representative of Bharati but Dimple is representative of all women from India, ‘the Indian womanhood’ ” (Crane).

Dimple travels in search of true self and freedom from the restrictions of Indian womanhood laid by traditional patriarchal culture. Bharati says in an interview with Connell, et.al., “They are no longer having to do what mother-in-laws tyrannically forced them to do” (Edwards 47). Woman is treated as ‘other’, secondary and substitute. She is alienated in male dominated society from the power and rights to self-expression and determination. She grows down instead of up. Dimple is placed in an alien environment and she struggles but is ‘muted’. She is a middle class woman. Elaine Showalter notes in A Literature of Their Own that “… the middle class ideology of a proper sphere of womanhood … prescribed a woman would be a perfect lady, an Angel in the House, contentedly submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and
religiosity, a queen in her own realm of the Home” (Cited by Krishnan). Dimple’s “horoscope-matched, arranged marriage … signifies the subordinated, passive role of a daughter brought up to obey male authority” (Krishnan). Mukherjee indicates male authority through arranged marriage (by father) and migration with Amit, her husband. He assumes authority over his wife. She is dependent on the ‘male’ (father/husband/American lover- Milt). Her ‘self’ is confirmed by the male ideology. Dimple is marginalized by her patriarchal Indian culture (being female) and by American culture (being immigrant). Brinda Bose opines ‘Ethnic women in America are clearly twice marginalized: by virtues of their ethnicity and their gender” (Nelson 47). Being an immigrant, ‘other’ her identity is in question in America. Dimple is the mixture of western ideas and traditional Indian beliefs. So she is emancipated but confused. Her confusion turns her violent. Her sense of this identity makes her to react and to respond to her new environment being only ‘marginal’ and outsider. She feels inadequate and incapable to have the rapport between her experiences and the language to its expression. But her final act of stabbing Amit as he eats a bowl of Wheaties cereal is really her strenuous effort to voice her feelings, her own identity – “you just aren’t supportive … Revenge. Revenge!” (208). She has differentiated her gendered role and affirmed her understanding of American life by the act of murder. She has betrayed Amit. She has murdered her husband. Might be Mukherjee has warned through Dimple to the male dominated society. For self-esteem, identity, self exposure a man can do anything as he likes, is it possible for a woman?

Amit, Dimple’s husband has taken her case as ‘culture shock’. It is the dilemma of her identity. Sushma Tandon considers her ‘an escapist and ‘psychic’. She says, “She (Dimple) is basically a psychic study of an
almost abnormal person driven to extreme by her immigrant problem” (45). The basic reasons for her condition is “loss of self” in her own and alien culture. This loss of self is due to her position – being a subaltern in India (a female) and in the USA being an expatriate woman. When the loss of self/identity is felt by modern woman she is in danger of becoming insane, if she does not save herself by acquiring a secondary sense of ‘self’ or the new identity which fits into current patterns of society. Dimple’s dread of ‘nothingness’ and the pains of it lead her to insanity and murder. *Wife* is fascinating from a point of view of the dilemma of identity of an expatriate who would like to be an immigrant.

**Darkness (1985):**

Bharati’s Canadian years (1966-1980) are full of anxieties, ‘very bad time’, ‘horrendous years’ due to bigotry against Indian exiles/expatriates/immigrants, pattern of discrimination, crippled assumptions against Bharati Mukherjee which made her ‘civil rights activist’ and to immigrate to USA in 1980, though she was a full professor at McGill University. It is her migration for preservation of her own ‘self’ from persistent hurt. She had rolled the tears of Windsor, cried as she was crossing the border for Canada in 1960s. It was “Clark’s imperialism totally” (Edwards 39). Mukherjee tells Connell –“Moving to Canada was like going to England, a step backward to an old world, a hierarchal society” (40). But for Clark it was solution of his identity crisis. By the name Clark Blaise is French Canadian and Bharati Mukherjee is a Bengali Brahmin, an Indian. It is their ‘given’ identity by origin. But in Canada, her name doesn’t show her identity, it is unknown to them. She lost her identity. But Canada has given Blaise a sense of identity and it empowered him.
Might be it is the reason of the ten years gap between the publication of *Wife*, her second novel and *Darkness* (1985), the first book of short fiction. As soon as she had freed herself from the feelings of anger and powerlessness brought on by the racism in Canada she wrote it. The collection of 12 short stories: *Darkness* marks the ideological division between the two phases – Expatriation and Immigration. Most of the stories express the expatriates’ identity painted with dark colours of plight, despair, displacement, racialism, and pain. Few of the stories show immigrants’ striving to root themselves in North America. The four stories - ‘The World According to Hsu’, ‘Isolated Incidents’, ‘Courty Vision’ and ‘Hindus’ were written in Montreal and Toronto, Canada and belong to Bharati’s early phase of expatriation. The remaining eight stories were written in “a … three-month burst of energy in the spring of 1984, in Atlanta, Georgia” (Mukherjee, ‘Introduction’ to *Darkness*, 1) while she was a writer in residence at Emory University. These are mixed tales of expatriation and immigration. Like Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Naipaul’s *Area of Darkness*, these stories are related to the displacement. The title, *Darkness*, typifies Mukherjee’s sense of obliteration in Canada. She still harbours anger against the Canadian’s maltreatment to the Indian expatriates. She was both “too visible and too invisible” (Mukherjee, *Days and Nights*, 169) in Canada. In the words of C. L. Chua, “Many of Mukherjee’s later works expatiate upon this Asian immigrant experience in North America, much of which is painful. Especially painful is the topic of racism; indeed, one possible reading of the title of her anthology *Darkness* is as a reference to racial prejudice, which is, after all, a darkness of the mind toward the darkness of another person’s skin” (Nelson, *Reworlding*, 55). She bitterly reports, ‘I was frequently taken for a prostitute or shoplifter, frequently assumed to be a domestic … I did not have a “sing-song” accent …’ (Mukherjee,
‘Introduction’ to *Darkness*, 2). Fakrul Alam concludes that “Her growing frustration at Canada’s policy of multiculturalism, her first hand experience of racism in Toronto and Montreal and her indignation at being passed over by Canada’s literary establishment …constricted Mukherjee” (Alam 49). In the ‘Introduction’ to *Darkness*, Bhartati stresses Canada’s hostility to Asian settlers. She explains “In the years I spent in Canada, 1966 to 1980 - I discovered that the country is hostile to its citizens who had been born in hot, moist continents like Asia; that the country proudly boasts of its opposition to the whole concept of cultural assimilation” (Mukherjee, ‘Introduction’ 2). So she says, until the spring of 1984, until Atlanta “I had thought of myself, in spite of a white husband and two assimilated sons, as an expatriate” (1). For Bharati immigrants were “lost souls and pathetic” and expatriates were of “foul fate”. Like Naipaul, her earlier model, she has tried to explore the ‘state of -the - art - of expatriation’ with the use of self protective irony which gave her detachment and superiority over elite postcolonials. Anita Desai opines that “Everywhere in (these stories) are echoes of V. S. Naipaul” (*London Magazine* 146 ). Yet it is Bharati’s opinion that if an individual, a diaspora, remains attached with the past permanently he will never belong anywhere. An expatriate does like to live in past, psychologically relates to his homeland, its culture, his ancestry, ethnicity, ethical codes of life - this attitude does not allow him to assimilate in adopted culture. Geographically he is away from his homeland and psychologically does not relate with adopted land. He turns ‘nowhere’ and belongs to ‘nowhere’. He is a marginal, an outsider and a ‘Trishanku.’ He is identified only as an expatriate.

Bharati’s Canadian years of expatriation, racial discrimination, aloofness and alienation are placed in *Darkness* and are responsible for her attitude of an expatriate’s aloofness in her fiction of the first phase. So
she says, “The purely Canadian stories in this collection were difficult to write and even more painful to live through. They are uneasy stories of expatriation” (Mukherjee,’Introduction’ to Darkness 2). She has seen most of these stories “as stories of broken identities and discarded languages, and the will to bond oneself to a new community, against the ever-present fear of failure and betrayal” (Ibid, 3). She talks of “the absolute impossibility of ever having a home” (Mukherjee, Days and Nights, 287) due to Canada’s racial policy of marginalizing the Asian migrants. The ‘Introduction’ to Darkness angered and offended a lot of Canadians. In “The Melting Pot Lady”, Books in Canada (1990) Yanofsky states that it was a direct attack on “our comfortable notion that the Canadian Mosaic despite its shortcomings was superior and far more tolerant than the American model of Melting Pot” (qtd in Tandon 61). No doubt, Darkness is “A book about old wounds” (61). But she is bitterly criticized by the reviewers who accuse that her “characters bring false ideas of what to expect in the new world and in defence, create false memories of what they leave behind. As a result both old and new don’t exist and creators of these worlds become more and more unreal to themselves” (Edwards 24). Bharati insists on seeing her characters as inventing their own Americas and Canadas. Their relocation is a positive act.

The Tiger’s Daughter (1971), Wife (1975) and Darkness (1985) represent the expatriate identity as an outsider, an alienated man, displaced and caught in the duality of their national and cultural identity. Her migration to USA has made her see herself as an immigrant. It is, she tells Alison, “a tremendous relief after Canada … felt freed … melting pot theory … healthier attitude toward Indian immigrants than Canada…” (Edwards 29). This experience of immigration and Canada’s expatriation is blended and reflected in the stories of Darkness.
Darkness is dedicated to Bernard Malamud, guide and family friend of Bharati Mukherjee. She has asserted in an interview “I see a strong likeness between my writing and Bernard Malamud’s … Like Malamud I write about a minority community which escapes the ghetto and adapts itself to the pattern of dominant American culture … I admire his work …. (it) gave me self-confidence to write about my own community” (Edwards 27-28).

She is the voice of woman immigrants while Malamud voices male immigrants. But alienation of diapora is common for them. Her female characters are elite. The characters of both of them are in search of the new ‘self’ as an American.

The characters in Darkness stories are the ‘Other’, different from the mainstream. Because they are diasporas, whether expatriate or immigrant, from different South Asian countries, especially India. They belong to different religions, races, cultures, and different languages. These characters suffer from alienation or aloofness of expatriation. They would like to assimilate into new culture but fail. It is a common feature among them.

Darkness displays a variety of responses to migration which labels the characters as expatriate or immigrant. The stories can be divided into five groups on the basis of the identity of migrant characters:

(1) Stories of Racial Discrimination:

‘The World According to HSU’ alludes to the title of an article by Kenneth J. Hsu –‘When the Black Sea was Drained’, Scientific American. The article is a metaphor of racial conflict in the present world and its oneness in ancient time. By using this allusion Mukherjee paints the ‘Darkness’ of racial conflict. A. V. Krishna Rao says that it is “Mukherjee’s technique in which she deftly dovetails …. plot about racial harmony and
disharmony in Canada, the primordial elements of ancient geology and geography, modern history and politics, illustrated and symbolized by the scientific account of Hsu about the formation of the earth…at one level and political volatility and violence in the former French Colony, at another…” (Dhawan, *The Fiction of Mukherjee*, 109). The story projects racial discrimination in Canada, from an expatriate’s point of view.

Mr. Graeme and Mrs. Ratna Clayton want to enjoy their vacation on the shores of the ocean. They have come to “this island off the coast of Africa” (Mukherjee, *Darkness*, 37), Mr. Graeme hopes that the vacation would be the right setting for persuading Ratna to move to Toronto, where he has been offered - the Chair in Personality Development. At the closing of the story he informs her “I wrote to Toronto before we left. I’ve accepted the Chair” (55) and he has given her assurance that if anything happens to her in Toronto, they will leave it immediately. Ratna has come to take stock of a life that had until recently seemed to her manageable. “Island should have been a paradise” (38). Now the island is sensitive to revolutionary activities: coups and curfews.

What is the identity of Mr. and Mrs. Clayton? Actually Graeme Clayton, 35 years old, the youngest full professor of Psychology at McGill, is a white Canadian husband of Ratna. A Canadian tourist on coast of Africa, Ratna, is a Calcutta born freelance Canadian journalist, 33 years old Eurasian of Indian-Czech origins, and a pale scrawny blonde, shunned by her father’s Bengali family as a ‘white rat’. Her Europeanness is submerged. She knows that “she could not escape the consequences of being half - the dominant half-Indian” (43). In Montreal she is merely English. “In Toronto, she was not Canadian, not even Indian. She was something called, after the imported idiom of London, a Paki. And for Pakis, Toronto was hell” (41). In the words of Fakrul Alam “She is destined to be abused as a Paki” (54). Ratna doesn’t want to move
her home from French dominated Montreal to Toronto ruled by the Anglos.

She is worrying about Toronto and not the violence on the island, because of the incidents of violence against Indians in Canada. She knows - “A week before their flight a Bengali woman was beaten and nearly blinded on the street. And the week before that an eight - year - old Punjabi boy was struck by a car announcing on its bumper: KEEP CANADA GREEN, PAINT A PAKI” (47). The deadness of her voice signifies her fears of violence against Indians in Canada. She accuses Graeme of selfishness and bigotry. But he consoles her by telling - “Look – violence is everywhere. Toronto is the safest city on the continent” (47). But she retorts - it is safest ‘for you’ only, the white Canadian. Their guide cum driver Justin has guessed that she was an Indian and suggests that they may live at Hilton, because “all the Indians, … stay at the Hilton” (43). It is the safest place for them. But Ratna emphatically tells him, “I am a Canadian”. She knows that the truth of her origin can turn dangerous on the island. Justine drives them to Indian shops where Ratna feels “safer than she had in the subway stations of Toronto” (49).

Ratna, in the besieged dining hall of Hotel Papillon, feels – “.... with effort she might become an expert on the plate tectonics of emotions” (54) due to the inner conflict and violence outside. Her husband is unaware of her inner conflicts. According to C. L. Chua – “Ratna is shunned as a “white rat” in India … and scorned as a “Paki” in Canada … she is alien on the island surrounded by tourists who are without homes there …” (Nelson, Reworlding , 56). The final statement of the story – “No matter where she lived, she would never feel so at home again” (56) points to her rootlessness and homelessness. Expatriates are subject to the racial discrimination, it is very painful for them. It creates alienation. The story
metaphorically suggests the conflict of the people on the basis of race, colour, and country. It suggests the darkness of white people’s mind toward the Black or Brown people. Colour is the marker of identity which makes them hate others. Thus the story marks Ratna’s expatriate identity by giving a moving picture of racial discrimination suffered by people like her.

‘Isolated Incidents’ shows the Third World migrants, who destined to be expatriates, are unable to root themselves in the cultural soil of the Mosaic Canada. Professional women - Ann Vane and Peppi Paluka are friends and can handle any social situation. Celebrity Peppi lives in Los Angeles. She is nostalgic, says, “I miss Canada … everything … good manners….uncrowdedness…” (78) and “I am sick of sex, frankly” (86). Ann presently looks at her life of apparent immorality and turns nervous.

Ann’s profile reveals that she has inherited some money from her aunt and has moved to Toronto. At twenty-six, Ann, in the imperfect world, and with her limits, is working at Human Rights Office in Toronto. Once she wanted to be a poet, had gone to McGill, won prizes, and graduated while Peppi was in New York, a successful singer. Ann wouldn’t mind her position. She has seen men and women who had sold their savings in villages to make new beginning in icy Canada, suffering from discrimination, subway assaults, visa problems etc. Their tenacity is worthy of appreciation.

The routine work of Ann in the Human Rights Office is documenting and filing the complaints of immigrants. On this day Ann has been handling the Supariwala case. It is the case of racial discrimination. Dr. Miss Supariwala, 43, with doctorates from Ontario and Bombay, claims to have been passed over at job interviews in favor of lesser candidates. She is a Canadian citizen of Indian origin, has published numerous articles, won few research grants, is prompt,
disciplined, well prepared. Yet Dr. Supariwala is rejected on certain “half articulated, coded objections” (79) - “Students would not relate easily to her … belongs to the world of research and not of the classrooms…sing-song accent…” (79). Her origin is the basic objection for rejection. Supariwala wants to stay on. “That was what amazed Ann” (79). She has nominally filed the case and gathered the data. The attitude of the Canadians to the expatriates is obviously racist.

Another case handled by Ann is that of Mr. Hernandez’. His sister has come to Canada to join her new husband, but he runs off with another girl to P.E.I. So her visa runs out. She has no husband to sponsor. Mr. Hernandez is ready to sponsor her. But their immigration law doesn’t allow him to sponsor his sister’s stay on in Canada after the expiry of visitor’s visa issued under her estranged husband’s name.

Ann goes through yet another case of John Mohan Persawd, an immigrant from Guyana, who is attacked by the subway assailants. Again it is the case of racial discrimination. “The victims are made to feel guilty” (82). Ann muses that “assaults on John Mohan Persawd and dozens like him would always be considered isolated incidents, and who’s to say they were racial in nature. Police treated it as simple assault …drew no … interferences regarding race. No witness, no case … ended” (82-83). It is as if Canadians are ignoring racial discrimination innocently, though they are aware of it.

As Christine Gomez observes “Ann Vane’s detached view of the cases is tinged with irony. She knows the futility of her work …The title is ironic. Cases of discrimination or hostility towards visible minority will not be related to racism but will always be ignored as ‘Isolated incidents’” (Ramamurti 136). Similarly it is ironic that painful complaints are being listened by Ann but she is thinking at the same time, about lunch time,
meeting with her friend and her own life. That is, she is not serious, is neutral and uncaring.

The story ‘Tamurlane’ draws attention to racism and illegal immigrant’s problems in Canada. An illegal migrant’s point of view is explained “why Gupta values his Canadian citizenship regardless of dangers he faces in staying on in a country hostile to South-Asian immigrants” (Alam 57).

The first person narrator talks of the pathetic and painful condition of illegal or legal migrants from India. The very first sentence of the story “We sleep in shifts in my apartment” (117) suggests the kind of life they have to live in Toronto. It is their “collective misery”. The narrator reports “three illegals … three bedded down on mats on the floor…broke his leg jumping out the window…whistling…mistaken it for our warning tune. The walls are flimsy” (127). Canadians do not want South Asian immigrants in Toronto. Mukherjee directly refers here to the notorious tyrant Idi Amin who had expelled the South Asians from Uganda. They were the victims of racial discrimination. “It is like Uganda all over again, says Mr. A …This man has called himself Muslim, a Ugandan, a victim of Idi Amin” (118).

The anonymous illegal migrant narrator from Ludhiana, India, is a waiter in a Toronto restaurant—Mumtaz Bar B-Q of Mr. Aziz, inside which the migrants have “CLOSED”. He narrates that illegal migrants live in Canada under threats and fear of being caught by the Mounties. There is no justice for Canadians of Indian origins. There is indignity, poverty; mistreatment for the expatriate in the adopted land. Migrants don’t dare to complain. The narrator asks himself for what he has left his homeland, is it to listen and face the miseries? He appreciates the
capacity of Sikh immigrants to look after themselves in British Columbia. Illegal migrants are recruited and helped to get in Canada by agents.

The new Tandoor chef-crippled Gupta works in Mumtaz Bar B-Q. He is a good chef, an improviser, but unfriendly and odd. The recruiting agent warns Gupta “…trouble is coming. If you stay in Toronto, it’s coming to your door” (119). He makes him aware of racial attacks, offers opportunity, and says “Get out while one can” (120). But he prefers to stay in Canada. In the absence of transnational Mr. Aziz, Gupta looks after the business. One day Mounties and immigrant officer raid the restaurant to find out illegal migrants who are the workers of the hotel. Gupta is unconcerned and can’t move away due to, according to narrator -“He must have his papers” (123) while others go into hiding. Gupta does have British passport and is not harassed by anybody. He seems just troubled. The Mountie points at Gupta to indicate that he is a pawn as others are. Now the Mountie wants Gupta to come to the station. Gupta refuses to go and says, “Get out…Get out immediately”. The raid ends in violence - killing of Gupta, though his papers are in order. It is the painful experience of Indian expatriates in Canada.

Mukherjee has displayed the fragile Indian identity of Gupta who is a legal migrant in Canada. The biased rage against these migrants turns the normal situation violent and somebody has to lose ‘life’. The story shows the mockery of roles played by Canadian officers.

(2) The second group of stories dramatizes an expatriate’s response to the material prosperity of the New World and clash between the values of the permissive society and his own Indian presupposition about moral behaviour.

The story ‘A Father’ projects the violence of a father against his own daughter. He is caught between his parents’ ethnic beliefs and values
and that of the mainstream society. For culturally different expatriates the complications of identity formation may arise as a product of mixed cultural values and norms, behavioural patterns, parents’ misconceptions and fears, language problem, skin colour etc.

Mr. Bhowmick is a middle aged middle class Bengali from Ranchi, Bihar, chief engineer in USA, a dutiful, cautious, modern and intelligent but superstitious. He does not want to return to Ranchi, his native place because “He hated Ranchi. Ranchi was no place for dreamers … Mr. Bhowmick had dreamt of success abroad … success had meant to him escape from the constant plotting and bitterness that wore out India’s middle class” (65). He is unaware of the form of his American success, otherwise he would not venture into America.

He has a daughter, Babli - 26 years old, an electric engineer, bright, headstrong and independent, born in Bombay but brought up in Detroit i.e. ‘native’ and ‘alien’. She is pregnant without marriage. Mr. Bhowmick blames his wife for this. He evokes his past – he does not love his wife. His fate had made him marry a Barrister’s daughter “plain girl with wide, flat plank of body and myopic eyes” (68). The Barrister has given “all the expenses …. Two years study at Carnegie Tech” (68). Two years in Pittsburgh on Mr. Bhowmick’s student visa they have lived there. It has transformed Mrs. Bhowmick from a pliant girl to an ambitious woman. They return to Ranchi, he has a good job in Ranchi, Government engineer, and then worked in Bombay. On Mrs. Bhowmick’s insistence Mr. Bhowmick is forced to apply for permanent resident status in US. As the green card has come through, he has left Bombay for America with his wife and daughter. It is “one more start” (70). He has found a better job with General Motors in Detroit as Metallurgist. But he feels lonely and uprooted there. Loneliness is the by-product of expatriation’s alienation and nostalgia. He is nostalgic.
In Detroit, he worships the patron goddess of his family: Kali Mata, “the goddess of wrath and vengeance” (60). He is scornful of his family women –his wife and daughter. Babli cannot comfort him, “she wasn’t womanly or tender the way that unmarried girls had been in the wistful days of his adolescence” (63). She can sing in the voice of Lata Mangeshkar, can dance, but “these accomplishments did not add up to real femininity” (63).

Superstitious Mr. Bhowmick believes in ill-omens like sneezing at the start of journey bringing bad luck. Al Stazniak, their neighbour, once sneezed when he is out for office. It makes Mr. Bhowmick to return home and encounter the truth of his daughter, “a woman vomiting in the privacy of the bathroom could mean many things” (66). Babli is vomiting, “his daughter … untender, unloving daughter whom he couldn’t love and hadn’t tried to love … was not, in the larger world of Detroit, unloved” (66). He knows the truth that his “… brisk, bright engineer daughter was pregnant” (66). She represents the second generation diaspora. It is the way to survive in the USA, ‘native’ and ‘alien’ at a time, for whom compromise, adaptability a dozen times a day “between new world of reasonableness and old–world beliefs” (64). It is the article of faith.

Mr. Bhowmick is afraid of the shame that has been brought by Babli’s pregnancy. He thinks of abortion yet foresees “a chubby baby boy on the rug crawling to his granddaddy” (67). He has praised and cursed her for her illegitimate conception. He is waiting till July, since May, that Babli will expose the truth. He is watching her, keeps silence, prays and expects that the son-in-law would be a ‘white’. Babli keeps her decision to herself. Once in July he has found daughter and mother screaming at each other. The mother has a rolling pin. At this moment, controlling
himself, he blames Mrs. Bhowmick who has made them come to USA. It is partially wrong because he did have a dream. It is his Indianness that makes him blame others for faults, without shouldering the responsibility.

He thinks “Girls like Babli were caught between rules - they were too smart, too impulsive for a backward place like Ranchi, but not tough, not smart enough for sex-crazy places like Detroit” (72). Mrs. Bhowmick asks him to enquire about the father of the unborn child. Babli informs the parents, “The father of my baby is a bottle and syringe. Men louse up your lives. I just want a baby…” (72). She grins at the father, and like a madwoman says - “Just like animals, you should be happy – that’s what marriage is all about, isn’t it? Matching bloodlines, matching horoscopes, matching castes, matching, matching, matching …” (73). It means feminist Babli out of hatred of men, has acquired artificial, inseminated pregnancy. She hates patriarchy, the male domination, though does like motherhood. Mr. Bhowmick turns violent, strikes her stomach hard with the rolling pin. “Mr. Bhowmick lifted the rolling pin …. hard on the dome of Babli’s stomach” (73). He has killed his daughter.

He is caught between the two countries’ cultural values. He does not separate himself from his old values, cultural traditional ethics i.e. past. Hence he doesn’t accept unnatural pregnancy of his daughter. There is a conflict between his ethnic identity and new American identity. There is a conflict between cultural codes of East and West, India and America, the old and the new, and it shows the helplessness of an expatriate. The reconciliation of these values is problematic to an expatriate. Because he doesn’t like to lose his ethnic identity, national and cultural identity. He wants and likes the material progress but can’t cope with American cultural values.
The strong ethical Indian values are reflected in the lifestyle of Mr. Bhowmick. He worships Goddess Kalimata, recites Sanskrit prayers, believes that “some abiding truth lies bunkered within each wanton Hindu superstition” (64), his food, use of Indian words like ‘chula’ and above all his violence against his own daughter for disregarding the Indian value of motherhood – all these are the features of his expatriate psyche, looking backward, though overtly he is American in his dress, language and lifestyle.

Unmarried daughter’s motherhood is a shame for an Indian family whether it is by natural or artificial way. Hence it leads to violence. Christine Gomez observes “The eruption of violence in him is due to his inability to reconcile the wistful expatriate in himself with the immigrant in his militantly feminist daughter” (Ramamurti 75). He is predominantly an expatriate, but his wife is half-expatriate, half immigrant and daughter, Babli is an immigrant.

In ‘Nostalgia’ we see Dr. Manny Patel, the protagonist, a non-vegetarian Gujarati, and psychiatrist resident at a state hospital in Queens, New York. For the last 13 years he has been in USA, is married to an American nurse Camille. He resents being called a ‘Paki’ and “had chosen to settle in the US … Not one for nostalgia, not an expatriate but a patriot … enjoyed his house … car … loved his family … acquisitiveness … with love: … (his) son was at Andover costing…twelve thousand dollar a year” (98-99). It means he has done well in the New World, and made enough money to retire to India as a millionaire. He is the owner of condominium in Delhi.

America is very good for him because of the things he has given up: boyhood emotions. After marriage, he has burnt his India society membership card. He is professionally cordial with Indian doctors at the hospital because he knows, “he would forever shuttle between the old
world and the new one … had been reborn when he became an American citizen in Manhattan Courthouse” (101). It says that he has killed his Indian self to be reborn as American self. It seems he is assimilated. It seems only.

He is stranded between the two worlds, has missed his parents, especially his father, and can’t explain this loss to his American wife. He is crazy for New York but lives with fear that his father would die before he could be free from New York. He is the only child of his parents. He feels it is his duty to go back, look after the parents, who allowed him to join medical training in US. “They loved him with the same intense, unexamined way he loved his own boy” (100). A Gujarati farmer’s son is now an entrepreneur, ambitious and acquisitive.

Dr. Manny Patel is lost in his memory. In the mood of regret he parks his Porsche outside Sari Palace where he has spied a salesgirl, his dreamgirl, “goddess” Padma. She is named after the flower – Lotus associated with Hindu goddess. He invites her for dinner as he is suffering from anxiety and impatience for the Goddess, an immigrant from a decent Hindu family.

He wants to be in the Indian restaurant, Shahajahan on park Avenue, to dine and then expensive hotel above restaurant, 7th floor room - “The Indian food, an Indian woman in bed,” the very idea made him “nostalgic … he wished he had married an Indian woman, one that his father had selected” (111). He feels nostalgic and regretful, but before he has time to dress up, Manny Patel is duped and blackmailed by an Indian uncle and niece, Pimp and hooker, a prostitute. The uncle is the waiter who served them dinner. Now the same man threatens him, accuses him of rape, calls him immoral, “The air here was polluted with criminality” (112). He has asked his help for immigration problem. Dr. Patel has to pay him along with a physician’s note to assist in immigration problem.
He is a scapegoat of nostalgia. Revengefully he enters the hotel-bathroom, squats on the sink, defecates, and with a handful of ‘hot, light porous’ shit he has written “WHORE on the mirror and floor” (113). It is an act of “renunciation of his Indian romantic fantasies” (Alam 61), might be an act of his hatred for Americanness. She is a real whore, a prostitute, employed by the blackmailer. Patel’s illusions of romance are shattered; it is a parody of his romance. He tried to be an American without changing his India mindset.

(3) The third group of stories portrays the psychological problems of the second generation diaspora youth who are pulled between the values of their father land posing as an opposite to the New World ways.

The story ‘Saints’- is a portrait of Shawn Patel, the only son of Dr. Manny Patel of ‘Nostalgia’. Shawn lives with his divorsee mother, in a college town Upstate, New York. His mother, a working woman, now loves Wyne Latta. Shawn feels now “At fifteen I’m too old to be a pawn between them and too young to get caught in problems of my own. I’m in state of grace” (146). Shawn was sent to boarding school for two years to improve Mr. and Mrs. Patel’s relations but they could not compromise. Shawn is the victim of their divorce, as they were of the two cultures, countries, values and different natures.

Shawn himself tries to understand the mother’s feelings. She loves and admires Wyne, a writer and janitor in the college, a clumsy man. He once has seen him with a Yugoslav woman in Upper Broadway. He feels “mom should have had a daughter. The two women could have consoled each other” (153). Shawn is cut off from his Indian father, alienated and tries to join the multicultural friends like Tran, who has a step father. Like Tran Shawn “…learned to discount homey scenes” (150). Tran miserably tells Shawn that he wants to go to Houston because of the parents, “Things always go bad between parents” (152).
Shawn receives his Dad’s Christmas gift - the two book-reproductions of Moghul paintings that his Dad loves, and the other is about Hindu saints. The second book is about the vision with the inscription “May this book bring you as much happiness as it did me when I was your age” (153). Shawn imitates the detachment, the ‘still point’ of the saint who had seen Divine Mother in all earthly things. The saint often lives in a trance.

Dr. Patel is a mystery for Shawn as saints are mysterious. Under the impact of saints’ book his own experience makes him console Tran like a preacher. In the month of November, when Tran accompanies him to his home, at midnight Shawn becomes somebody else’s son. “In a state of perfect grace”, Shawn is disguised in his mother’s clothes, face painted with her cosmetics, ‘like the Hindu saint’, he walks in a trance, goes at Batliwalla’s home to reach out to a fellow saint. When he returns, he sees his mother and her lover Wyne quarrelling and fighting. He feels “like a god, overseeing lives” (157). Then the mother asks Wyne to get out of the house and he leaves her, suddenly the mother stares at Shawn and is surprised, “My god, what have you done to your face, poor baby” (158). She scrapes the muck of cheekblush, lipstick, eye shadow etc.. Shawn in a trance like a saint feels strong and says, “How wondrous to be visionary. If I were to touch someone now, I’d be touching god” (158).

His search is to find the perfection, wholeness, in this quest, he is assisted by the book, the Indian book presented by his father. He has the model of Indian saints to carve out his identity, the saintly behavior of himself. It is a reply to the broken homes, divorce of parents, false love and violence. He is sensitive; alienated near to hysteria, hence the solution he finds in the multicultural friends and the secret life. The failure to assimilate on the part of the first generation of diaspora (Dr. Manny Patel) can be a concern for the next generation.
Mukherjee’s characters of second generation of diaspora have different problems. Shawn is the second generation diaspora. He is born in America of mixed races. (non-white and white, Indian and American, Guajarati-Christian). He is American – it is his given identity. But his spirit is Indian, in his sainthood. His attachment with the father is a metaphor for his connection with India and the impact of Indian culture. Double consciousness, duality, and double standards of lives make him complex. His identity is a dilemma for him.

The story ‘Imaginary Assassin’ shows Gurucharan Singh, a nine year old second generation diaspora boy reporting his old Grandfather’s account of his escape from India in the stormy days after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. The Grandfather boasts of having killed Gandhi on October 2, 1948, which is a wrong date and makes the Grandfather’s claim dubious. The boy, however, thinks his Grandfather to be a saint. He wants to be an activist. Grandson and Grandfather both are Indian in their spirit, victim of political situation like Jews, the diasporas with expatriate identity.

After all it is an imaginary assassin. Bharati Mukherjee, through this story, indicates the factors which convert Indians into exiles or expatriates. During the partition days like Hindus and Muslims, Sikhs also migrated to various countries. They were the victims of their national political event, though they were brave and victorious. They all hold Gandhi responsible for their dislocations, displacements, homeless situation, the imposed ‘otherness’. Possibly all of them wanted to assassinate the Mahatma. Their monologue is decoded in this story through grandfather’s imaginary assassin.

(4) The fourth group of stories shows the plight of Indian women migrants, eager for assimilation with the American culture. They emulate
the sexual permissiveness of the host culture by resorting to extra-marital relationships but meet with a failure. The clash between their former (Indian) identity and the new one (American) produces frustration and disenchantment. Mentally they are lingering between the two poles of expatriation and immigration.

‘Visitors’ is a tale of Vinita, an expatriate in the USA. Like Dimple in Wife, Vinita is caught between two worlds, two identities. She is a diaspora due to her marriage to a man who works in USA. She is confused in the new world, due to the past cultural ethics of her homeland. She is “on the verge of hysteria” (176) at the end of the story and is bothered by insomnia. Unlike Dimple she doesn’t think of suicide or murder of her husband - Sailen Kumar who “has never, not once, by gesture or word, made her feel that she is anything but the queen of his heart” (176). America makes her to “run off into the alien American night where only shame and disaster can await her?” (176)

Vinita, a Bengali from Calcutta, after graduation from Loreto College with French literature becomes a receptionist in Chowringhee office of a Multinational Corporation. A convivial, a temptress, charming, stylish, she is aware of her future “… after marriage she would have to leave Calcutta” (162). Her parents finally select Sailen Kumar, a 35 years old accountant, “well mannered and amiable–looking man, a St. Stephens graduate who had gone on to London University and Harvard, who worked for a respectable investment house in Manhattan and lived in a two bedroom condominium with access to gym pool and sauna …” (162). He is rich and successful though not either doctor or engineer. Her identity is changed, she is now Mrs. Vinita Sailen Kumar and “thoughts of change did not frighten her ” (163). Marriage suits her.
Sailen Kumar has specified to his parents that “(he) … wanted a youngish bride (who could) … speak fluent English and … bear him two three children” (170). The typical Indian mindset makes him consider the wife as a child-providing machine.

Only after six days of their marriage she migrates for the “citizenship in the new world” (162), lives at Guttenberg, New Jersey, is pleased by her life of ‘grace and ease’. There is a conflict between her old self and the new self. She understands America as the world of merits, hard work and rewards. She is not meritorious, has not made choices, even her husband is a choice of her parents. She is taken aback by the idea of desserts. But she is trained to be flexible.

Her visitors, Mrs. Mehra and Mrs. Thapar, Sailen’s intimate family friends tell her, “We may have minted a bit of money in this country, but that doesn’t mean we’ve let ourselves become Americans. You can see we’ve remained one hundred percent simple and ‘desi’ in customs” (167-68). Vinita wants to remain ‘desi’ too. She is in a new world without rules. Her third visitor, Rajiv Khanna, a graduate student in history at Columbia University, an Indian immigrant, born-Indian, surprises her by his visit without invitation. He is at her house to ask for a dance performance. She is shocked and doesn’t welcome him being a conventional Indian wife. “In India, she would feel uncomfortable … if she found herself in an apartment alone with a man not related to her …” (167). She knows that she is in America, so doesn’t slam the door looking at the unfriendly fellow and thinks “…make up one’s rules …one has to seize the situation?” (167). She is ready to change, transform herself because “she is cut off from her moorings” (166) and ready to pave her own path in the new world, but knows Sailen doesn’t like “to be Pakka American” (170).
Vinita, though meek by her name, advances, asks Rajiv for tea. He leads her in her apartment to seduce her, praises her by calling “goddess of my dreams” (171). She is not shocked at this. Like Dimple “… she has put herself on the television screen in the roles of wives taken in passion …” (171). The new world has awakened her to know her desires and needs. So she has understood his “unmoored passions” and thinks “This is America….we are both a new breed, testing new feelings in new battleground ” ( 172). But she has “nipped passion before it can come to full fury.” She hates him for considering her lascivious and hates herself being unguarded. Yet he tries to grab her as it is a planned seduction. She screams, resists and feels overcome with shame. Yet she wonders that “she too would have suffered if she had the courage to fall in love” (174). She is a thoroughly aroused woman. Here is the clash between two cultural ways of life and love. Her double consciousness, the two selves - Indian and American make her suffer. She manipulates Sailen’s friends with her youth, beauty and charm. But she has no idea that “she is on the verge of hysteria” (174). Patricia Bradbury, in her review of Darkness, says that Mukherjee is showing in such stories “identities slowly breaking into pieces, cracked open by raw and totally alien dreams,” but there is always “the unstated promise” in them that “identities in new and unimaginable modes will soon be rebuilt again” (qut.in Alam 67).

“The traveller feels at home everywhere, because she is never at home anywhere” (25). It is the position of the lady from Lucknow - Nafeesa. Nafeesa Hafeez, the narrator-protagonist of ‘The Lady from Lucknow’ tells her diasporic experience of life. A soft and voluptuous daughter of an army doctor, Nafeesa, born Indian (Lucknow), brought up in Pakistan (Rawalpindi) after 1947, is married at 17 to a good man – Iqbal from Islamabad. It is an arranged marriage. He works for IBM and due to his work he has travelled and made homes in Lebanon, Brazil,
Zambia, and France and eventually in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. They have two children, for whom Lucknow, Rawalpindi, Islamabad are “dingy cities”. It is the response of the second generation of Diasporas to their homeland.

Nafeesa’s life in Atlanta is different somehow. “…. Live in a wide, new house with deck and backyard that turns into a golf course … Everything in Atlanta is so new!” (24). She does feel - “It is not trouble that I want, though I do have a lover. He’s an older man, an immunologist with the center for Disease Control…” (25). She knows that “wives who want to be found out will be found out. Indiscretions are deliberate. The woman caught in midshame is a woman who wants to get out” (25).

Her husband, Iqbal, is jealous, a typical orthodox provider, who warns her “Americans are crazy for sex….” (24). He is an immigrant so he “avoids these international receptions because he thinks of them as excuses for looking back when we should be looking forward” (25).

James Beamish, 65 year old father of 5 daughters and grandfather of two grandsons, white lover of Nafeesa, a flatterer makes her feel “beautiful, exotic, responsive” (25). The world appears “happy enough place” with James for Nafeesa. They meet first time at “a reception for foreign students on the Emory University Campus” (25). Nafeesa has volunteered as host, receives an Indian Muslim: Amina from Lucknow. Amina a large, bold woman, whose husband works at CDC, claims Nafeesa as a country woman. She is an expatriate, who responds, “it is very odd that the pumpkin vegetable should be used for dessert no? We are using it as vegetable only. Chhi ! pumpkin as a sweet. The very idea is horrid” (27). The words used in her response – ‘no’ at the end of a statement, and , ‘chhi’ to express disgust and the whole response and its meaning establish Amina’s identity as an Indian expatriate. Since James’ first meeting Nafeesa can’t get him out of her mind. He calls her, meets
her, invites her for lunch, which makes Nafeesa think – “I have seen the world but I haven’t gone through the American teenage rites of making out …” (29). His advanced openness in love has surprised Nafeesa. She acknowledges “Love and freedom drop into our lives” (30). Adultery in her house is probably not different, no quieter than the Americans. She doesn’t feel guilty of adultery, instead “… bought myself silky new underwear, James Beamish had worn an old T-shirt and lemon pale boxes short…” (30). Being a South-Asian Nafeesa feels strange at the thought-what his daughters will say “if they knew their father, at sixty-five, was in bed with a married woman from Lucknow? I feared and envied their jealousy more than any violence in my husband’s heart” (31).

The rootlessness and homelessness make her feel “at home everywhere, because she is never at home anywhere” (31). She is a traveller of the world, who has to feel at home without home.

Nafeesa’s romance crumbles by the early return of Kate Beamish, James’ wife, who discovers them in bed. It doesn’t make James go into pieces, simply says to Nafeesa “get dressed” (32). Kate’s response at Nafeesa’s adultery is very cool “she didn’t scream. She didn’t leap for James’ throat or mine. I’d wanted passion but Kate didn’t come through …” (32). Being a woman Kate is a jealous type but asks her “let’s just get over this quietly and quickly … ?” (32) Nafeesa’s adventure has become shabby and complex. She thinks “I was just another involvement of a white man in poky little outpost, something that ‘men do’ and then come to their senses while ‘memsahibs’ drink gin and tonic and fan their faces. I didn’t merit a stab wound through the heart” (33). According to Pati Nafeesa sees herself as “White man’s colored mistress…colonial era. Her self-realization of her own exploitation as a sexual object is ironic because she has only exchanged the polygamous code of Islamic tradition for white male patriarchy in America” (Nelson, Bharati Mukherjee, 207).
Nafeesa has ventured in America by adultery. America has given her the “emotions to break though …” (24). But Nafeesa is unsuccessful. In the process of Americanization she is neither what she was in her homeland nor quite (American) she will be in new adopted land due to her Islamic upbringing and “her own craving for romantic and sexual fulfillment”(Nelson 206). Nafeesa has identified herself with the American lady and believed that like Americans she has known true romance. Nafeesa is a romantic adulteress who loves a man much older than herself, finds it at the loss of her own self-respect. Tandon says: “This is not only an attempt to express her independence and individuality, but it also gives her the illusion that by carrying an illicit affair she is somehow identifying with America and living its standards” (72).

(5) The stories of the assimilated migrant Indian women –

The two colourful word portraits of Leela Lahiri, the first person narrator of ‘Hindus’ and H. R. H. Maharajah Patwant Singh of Gotlah, the Himalayan Princely state, now the Purveyor and exporter in New York, represent two identities—expatriate’s and immigrant’s identity. Both are diasporas from India, who migrated to North America and presently live in USA. Leela Lahiri is an immigrant. She knows diaspora does require cultural adaptation for survival and development. Leela is adapted to American culture “… accent, western clothes” (137), “… I had married a white man and was now separated” (136-137), “… going crosstown at night by herself” (134), communicates in American English, doing a job being Administrative Assistant, “disclaimed all kinship to H. R. H., … I am American citizen” (133) - all these expressions indicate her American immigrant identity. Her name ‘Leelah’ is shortened to ‘Leela’ due to the American accent of phonemes and allophones. By
marrying Derek, a white Canadian filmmaker, who is interested in India and is bothered by her ignorance of her own heritage, Leela has broken caste etiquette. She says “In the two years I have tried to treat the city not as an island of dark immigrants but as a vast sea in which Americans like myself could disappear and resurface at will” (136). Transformation of ‘self’ is possible in America. Hence she feels “I was a curiosity, a novel and daring element in community; everyone knew my name” (137). Name is a metaphor of identity. She is aware of Indian woman’s role in that society - “Indian woman is brought up to please” (139). It is because of her Americanness, she enjoys the American freedom. She is not passive and is transformed.

But there is a basic dilemma that Leela doesn’t separate from the past. She is proud of her origin. She tells a Lebanese - “I was a Bengali Brahmin; Maharajas … were frankly beneath me, by at least one caste … initial eruption from Vishnu’s knee … I haven’t been home in ages ….” (133). She tells that her birthplace is in the present Bangladesh. In New York she visits with Derek the Fraser Collection of Islamic miniatures at York Avenue galleries. She is aware now of inevitability of grief. Being an Indian wife she once rejected Pat’s invitation. She is really a heir of her family beauty -‘like heirloom’. She attends the parties of Indians like Mohan Patel who is citizen of adopted country after 17 years there. She does remember her bodyguard Gulseng for school. “Daddy would not let you walk two blocks from school to the house without that armed Nepali …” (134).

Like Pat she is not a victim of any atrocity of her homeland. She doesn’t blame and charge her homeland, instead she is aware of ‘different comfort’ of India. She says,“I didn’t feel any country owed me anything. Comfort … different comfort … India teaches her children: you have
seen the worst. Now go out and don’t be afraid” (135). She is proud of the teachings of her homeland, its culture. She doesn’t avoid Indians in USA though they scorn at her marriage and divorce. She knows that “All Indians in America…constitute a village” (137). It is the Pan Indian identity of all diasporas. She is in touch with her family, so she knows that her father is in Ranikhet, bedridden, a patient of Arthritis. Though assimilated she never escapes from her past. She says—“No matter how passionately we link bodies with our new countries, we never escape the early days” (139). She is Indian in her spirit and blood. Pat communicates with her in Hindi - it is the gravitation of the mothertongue, the mothercoutnry, belongingness and linguistic hybridity. She does respond in Hindi. Her brown friend Lisa from Rhode Island is surprised at Leela’s Hindi, mistakenly she called, ‘Hindu’. It’s an ignorant confusion between “Hindi and Hindu”. Leela thinks - “May be she is right … I speak Hindu. No matter what language I speak … There is a whole world of us now, speaking Hindu” (140). Being Hindu they communicate with each other in Hindi.

H. R. H. Maharajah Patwant Singh of Gotlah, purveyor and exporter, establishes his identity as an expatriate. His card represents his esteem being ex-Maharajah. But his name is shortened as – ‘Pat’ in USA. It is the American method to use shortened first names. He is the family friend of Leela Lahiri but she disclaims all kinship with him in USA. He is the victim of political changes in India, “The indignities … The atrocities … The nights in jail… never forget … death … The new powers-that-be are peasants … they cannot know … suffer … the country is in the hands of tyrannical peasants” (138). He tells Leela their country is changed totally. “… The ‘dhotiwallahs’… they would wrap themselves in lion- clothes if it got them more votes. No integrity, no finesse … The
country has gone to the dogs” (135). The communists put him in jail like a common criminal for his smuggling – he has sold the family heirlooms to Americans. He thinks Indians do not know the value of it. “Americans understand our things better than we do ourselves” (135). But Leela doesn’t believe that modern India should have such treatment. He bitterly tells her how he spent three nights in the jail like a dacoit. He blames his country and says “It has driven us abroad with whatever assets we could salvage” (135). Pat was a juggler at one time. He parades his pain and grievance.

Pat as an author, writing *Memoirs of a Modern Maharajah*, feels “writing is what keeps me from going through death’s gate … atrocities … jail …” (138). Writing is ‘nirvan’ for him. The act of writing memoir is his looking back, at the past, homeland, which indicates his nostalgia. Leela cheers him stating that his book sounds dynamite.

This story takes “a complex view of the double vision of expatriates—both a looking forward and a yearning backward” (Jain 51). In the words of P. A. Abraham “In ‘Hindus’ … Mukherjee juxtaposes an expatriate against an immigrant and brings out the contrast quite vividly … Leela Lahiri represents ‘fluid identity’ (Ibid 59).

On the contrary Angela though reminded of her past, lives in the present with her new identity. Angela, a titular character, narrator-protagonist of the story, at the age of six, is forced to leave her traditional ethnic homeland – Bangladesh. She has lived in orphanage and then with adopted family in Iowa, USA. She is the victim of the war of independence of Bangladesh in 1971. She is an exile, the ‘Other’, a displaced individual, dislocated from Bangladesh, from geographical location of her origin and relocated in USA. The post World War II era is
a witness of exile groups, Nazi Germany deported Jews, some of them fled America. Similarly Angela is dislocated due to war, in which she is wounded physically and emotionally. It is the physical and mental trauma of victims of war. She has permanent scars of it. As a child, she was left for dead, her nipples cut off by bayonet-wielding soldiers during the Bangladesh war of Independence. Not a nostalgic who keeps the myth of return to homeland, she is accepted as a part of adopted family, by Brandons. There is no rejection that she has to face in the host country.

Her name ‘Angela’ does not establish her ‘given’, true identity. The name represents ‘Christianity’ of her origin, the Catholic white American. By birth, she is not a Christian. Angela is Sister Stella’s name for a girl from Bangladesh. Angela says - “The name I was born with is lost to me, the past is lost to me. I must have seen wickedness when I was six, but can’t remember any of it. The rapes, the dogs chewing on dead bodies, the soldiers. Nothing” (13). She has lost her name i.e. the identity. She has lost the past and is rootless. In the words of Rushdie, “Past is home…a lost home”. She is haunted by a sense of loss, looks back and comes to the certainty of her physical alienation from the homeland-Bangladesh. She does not reclaim it. Angela has lost her ‘given’ identity of origin. But she has another new identity- ethnic, national, and cultural identity - she is an American Christian, who can join the Sunday church rituals, can have Pork roast. She says- “… pigs aren’t filthy creatures here as they are back home…” (14). She loves the Sunday dinners, the get-together of the family of sons and daughters of the parents who have adopted her. She likes their company. But she is assimilated by force. She tells - “Kim and I are forced to assimilate” (17). Here is the gap between meaning of ‘expatriation’ and ‘immigration’. Though horrible and terrible her past is, she doesn’t blame and curse anybody. She
remembers it, and muses - “When I was six, soldiers with bayonets cut of my nipples” (10). She cannot deny her past, it is always present to create the problems of identity.

She believes in miracles and not chivalry. Because “Grace makes my life spin. How else does a girl, left for dead in Dhaka, get to the Brandons’ farmhouse in Van Buren County?” (10). Sister Stella tells her- “They left you for dead, but Lord saved you. Now it’s your turn to do Him credit ” (10). Sister Stella is a Muslim by origin, a daughter of Jute mill owner. Her love for a tourist turns her into Sister Stella, a Christian.

According to Carol Stone, Mukherjee has placed Angela in a deplorable condition - ‘Holocaust’. “She is a survivor and achieves new identity, tries to come over from colonized identity” (Nelson, Bharati Mukherjee 222). Less than two years she has been living with a Midwest farm family of Brandons in Van Buren County, Iowa, USA. Brandon family consists of Mr and Mrs. Brandon, and their children Edith (married), Delia and Bill (married). Mrs. Brandon is illiterate. “She doesn’t read …” (17). They have adopted Angela like Korean Kim. Angela is a teenager who is going to finish school education and wants to study physical therapy in Iowa like Delia her adopted sister.

The story opens in the hospital room; Delia has met with an accident when she is driving while Angela was in the backseat, hit an icy patch and lost control of wheel. She is badly injured, is in coma, admitted in the hospital where Vinny Menezies treats her at his best. Angela is saved. She thinks - “I have been saved for purpose”(19), and “… we are girls with special missions” (10). Because “I am wanted” (17). Orrin, Delia’s lover considers her accident “It’s like ‘Dynasty’, only more weird” (8). He wants to marry her but she doesn’t although she loves him.
Dr. Vinny Menezies, an Indian immigrant from Goa, heavy, gloomy, hard working old fashioned suitor, unmarried, near 40, wants to marry an affectionate, younger but needy woman. He loves Angela and asks her for marriage. He tells her “we come from the same subcontinent of hunger and misery …” (8). It is the sensibility of diasporas to keep belonging by choosing a spouse from homeland. Before 1947, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India were one nation—Hindustan. Hence the belongingness of those who have the same poverty, misery and the same past.

Angela has “bony, scarred body and plain face” though Dr. Vinny loves her. Only a doctor can love such a body. His private and public selves are different from each other- “In the hospital he seems a man of circumspect feelings, but on Sunday afternoons when we drive around and around in his Scirocco, his manner changes. He seems raw, aimless, lost” (13). When she plays piano on Sunday, he likes to watch her and cheers her “… ‘Bravo!’ the doctor shouts in the middle of America” (17). He has come to America as a professional, too old to pick some things, approaches new world with his stethoscope drawn, and listens to scary gurgles. He is the acquisitor. He whimpers to Angela from the fullness of love. He suggests her “In America grown-up children are expected to fly the coop … make your own life … no depending on other people” (18). If she will be in search of a husband, he says, “I’m a candidate …” (19).

Angela resists herself from Dr. Vinny Menezies, who offers her “intimacy, fellowship. He tempts with domesticity. Phantom duplexes, babies tucked tight into cribs….” (19). She is confused. She doesn’t understand what to do yet she knows.- “Only doctor could love this body” (19). Suddenly, she is flooded with war memories- “Delinquents and destitutes rush at me. Legless kids try to squirm out of ditches. Packs of pariah dogs, gorge on dying infant flesh, soldiers with slivery
bayonets, they keep coming at me, plunging their knives through my arms and shoulders… Leeches, I can feel leeches gorging on the blood of my breast” (19-20). She is compelled to reject him so far as he is a reminder of her origin in ‘the same subcontinent of hunger and misery’(8).

Angela does not divorce herself from her past, does not forget war-memories, war of independence of her homeland. Though she has new ‘self’ might be it is a mask or cover of old ‘self’, real ‘self’. Her nationality by origin is repeated in her memories- “A parents grieving would be spectacle in Bangladesh “(16), and “I never owned shoes in Bangladesh ” (17). She is called - “a sister from Bangladesh” (12). Even her fate now attached with two countries’ margins is stated - “How else does a girl left for dead in Dhaka get to … in Van Buren County?” (10). Though she is assimilated (?) by force, she remembers her past. Nobody can live in the present without past which contaminates the future.

She is a survivor (from war and accident). She is survived for some purpose “to retain her independence” (Alam 68). It is true that she is born in Bangladesh to love in America. Hence the duality, the double consciousness, though she has chosen one of them, an American, a Christian identity to live in present. Yet she can’t eradicate her past.

Bharati Mukherjee’s vision of expatriates and immigrants in North America is a courtly vision. ‘Courtly vision’, Mukherjee asserts, - “‘The story, … was inspired by a number of Akbari paintings, …Emperor in battle dress, leading his massive, battle-ready army out of his fortressed capital. The painting anticipates victory, and evokes celebratory mood … Akbar … won his wars …. capital city … to abandon it …. curious about ‘the other’, … Europe’s devaluation of art” (Edwards 77-78).
This Moghul painting is a metaphor. Being an artist, a writer, Bharati has painted on a grain of rice (short-story) the ‘infinite vistas’ – the pains, sorrows and nostalgia, the various feelings and attitudes of expatriates and the attempts of immigrants’ adjustment into the new world. She asks to view the total vision of Darkness. Being a prized court artist she has drawn the portraits of expatriates and immigrants caught into the two cultures, languages and having the double consciousness, which turn them the marginal. Hope Cooke, the book Reviewer, New York Times Book Review, comments “Courtly Vision” provide through the study of Moghul painting insights into the intricacies of the author’s own miniaturists writing” (qut. in Alam 70).

The stories - ‘The World According to HSU’, ‘Isolated Incidents’ and ‘Tamurlane’ represent the expatriates’ identity of Indians or South-Asian diasporas in North America, especially in Canada. Ratna Clayton, Dr. Mrs. Supariwalla, chef Gupta are the victims of racial prejudice, they are aloof due to their expatriate identity in Canadian society. These are the bitter tales of rootlessness. Craig Tapping concludes that “In Mukherjee’s Canadian stories ‘The World According to HSU’, ‘Isolated Incidents’, and ‘Tamuelane’ from Darkness …. racist violence is not fictionlised. The attacks on Indians are not digested narratively, but emerge as factual news headlines, eruptions in the text not to be achieved or constructed as fiction but rather to confront the reader” (Nelson, Reworlding, 43).

Mr. Bhowmick and Dr. Manny Patel from ‘A Father’ and ‘Nostalgia’ are diasporas for material progress, economic enhancement but haunted by past culture, the values of homeland. Though Dr. Patel marries a white woman, desires an Indian woman. Mr. Bhowmick agrees with Indian values of family life. Marriage is the foundation of family
structure, it begins the committed relationship of the two (man and woman) being husband and wife. The function of such marriage and family is the reproduction of new members of the society; it evokes the love, care and nurture. Their children are the legitimate members of family and society. But Babli, Mr. Bhowmick’s daughter, has acquired artificial, inseminated pregnancy out of her hate for male domination. Expatriate Bhowmick kills her; it is tragic end due to his position being expatriate caught into double consciousness.

The second generation of diasporas who are American by birth, Shawn Patel and Gurucharan from the stories ‘Saints’ and ‘Imaginary Assassin’ are Indian in their spirit and tempted by Indian saints. Nafessa from ‘The Lady From Lucknow’ and Vinita from ‘Visitors’ are the two ‘mail-order brides’, Indian by birth, migrate to USA with their husband. They are eager to come out of the restrictions of the past culture and try free sex, the extra-marital relations in USA but are frustrated in their attempt. They try to assimilate but have no fulfillment and hence face reversion of an expatriate.

Angela and Leela Lahiri from ‘Angela’ and ‘Hindus’ are liberated and assimilated but do not separate from their past, the homeland. These portraits of expatriates and half assimilated immigrants in *Darkness* show the artistic vision of Bharati Mukherjee. The dark side of expatriates and immigrants’ life is drawn by Mukherjee in *Darkness*. They have left the homeland and they try but haven’t acquired the new. They are not cultural citizens of adopted country except Leela Lahiri, Angela and Nafeesa, though they are legal citizens of Canada or USA like Ratna and Dr. Patel. Their identity is expatriate Indian in Canada/America. Some of them are very close to their immigrant American identity with double consciousness. Mukherjee presents here the issues facing South Asian
community of naturalized citizens, which were perceived as irrelevant to white Americans, even to African Americans. She says in an interview by Hogan “I’m showing white Americans their world in a different way …” (Edwards120).