CHAPTER IV

DISINTEGRATION AND REINCARNATION

“Like the Phoenix, we can observe in our own lives that disintegration brings with it transformation and rebirth.”

- Donna Labermeier

Quest for identity is basic to the human world. The loss of identity makes a man pathetic figure. With the decline of grandeur and dignity of human life in the post-world war era, identity crisis has intensified. A crisis in one’s identity arises when one is unstable and unbalanced in one’s self and in relation to his own surroundings. Man faces an unprecedented rootlessness, loneliness and alienation due to crisis. According to Erik Erikson’s psychoanalytic theory,

The term Identity Crisis refers to the necessity to resolve the transitory failure to form a stable identity, or a confusion of roles. Each successive state, in fact, is a potential crisis because of a radical change in perspective. The identity crisis, however may seen particularly dangerous because the whole future of the individual as well as the next generation appears to depend on it. (qtd. in Calvin, Lindzey and Campbell 202)

In order to find his identity, Man must intensely struggle “with the self, with tradition, with the wonders and horrors of a new culture, with growing aspirations, hopes and desires” (Bose 47). He puts his great effort to achieve a personal view of life and world, which makes the life significant, and a sense of belonging to him. The extreme condition of Identity crisis leads to disintegration of psyche of a man which in turn results in tragedy.
The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (8th Edition) defines Disintegration in general as “(i) to break into small parts or pieces and be destroyed.(ii) to become less strong or united and be gradually destroyed” (436). And the Psychic Disintegration has been defined as “a swift breakdown in character, cohesion and operating, generally due to specifically distressing life scenarios.” (Pam C.S.)

An immigrant suffers Identity Crisis and undergoes psychic disintegration more than others. Though identity crisis occurs within the same atmosphere, immigration adds an impetus for further disintegration. Immigration, which causes change, is, “a move from one country or city to another, the experience of meeting people, strange environments and all the paraphernalia that goes with the actual, physical movement from one place to another. In short a substantial change of both landscapes-mental and physical” (Ghanshyam and Nadig 149). This pathetic search for an identity is consciously and unconsciously experienced by an immigrant in every progressive stage of his/her life. Social acceptance is a factor which creates in a man a sense of identity. When the new milieu fails to recognize him as an individual, he becomes deindividualized. The discrimination that he experiences makes him dejected. Cultural uprooting, geographical displacement and failure to connect torment his psyche. The reason behind the immigration may vary from political or religious bullying to economic problems. Whatever maybe the reason, the effect of cultural displacement on the individual psyche remains complicated. As Viney Kirpal observes, immigration is not merely a physical journey from one land to another but it involves severing of “spiritual and symbiotic ties with his mother country.” (45)

A person imbibes his culture as the very air he breathes; it cannot be thrust upon him. To disentangle from the influence of one’s own culture which has become part of his consciousness is not easy for an immigrant. Culture is threatened only when the
immigrant confronts an alien country where he becomes aware of the disparity between his native culture and the host culture. Adaptation to alien culture is difficult for the immigrant because the value systems are often different. Anything that goes against the familiar way of life will create cultural conflict. This conflict creates a feeling of depression and frustration that overpowers the immigrant when he realizes the difference between the way of life he is familiar with and what he finds in a new environment. Thus, the most of the immigrants lead in-between condition of life. It is an undeniable fact that living in-between condition is very painful and marginalizing for the immigrants. Rootless and displaced, they nostalgically crave for their home and wish to go back to the lost origin. They also face dilemma when their cultural practices are mocked at and there is a threat to their cultural identity.

America, the multicultural country, is the crowning glory of the modern time and so it has become a sole dream of people around the world. The young ambitious people from the third world countries are making an unabated flow to America. The process of migration to America that started in the mid-nineteenth century has reached a new height in terms of immigrant population within a span of hundred years. The migrated people find it difficult to adjust with the new culture and undergo cultural transformation. In this process, they lose the roots of their native culture. This loss results in various psycho-sociological problems such as nostalgia, rootlessness, alienation and other indefinable feelings in them. Such a life in a multicultural country always makes them to be in perplexity whether to stay in the host country or return to the homeland persists. Hence the immigrants become disintegrated and make a frantic search for their roots and identity.

As delineated in Chapter II, Expatriate sensibility is one of the multicultural aspects. This expatriate sentiment leads to a kind of complete disintegration in the lives
of the immigrants. The contemporary literature which deals with the emotional problems clearly reflects the pathetic condition of the modern man. Getting uprooted from the native cultural traditions and values, the loss of indigenous language, man’s position as a mere outcast or an unaccommodated alien, together with multiple injuries and lacerations of the psyche, all account for the theme of ‘identity atrophy’ in the novels of the immigrant writers. Bharati Mukherjee, a proponent of expatriate sensitivity, instantiates the ambiguity caused by the sudden transportation from the familiar to the exotic. In the Introduction to the *Darkness*, Mukherjee says, “I had thought of myself in spite of a white husband and two assimilated sons as an expatriate” (1). Drawing a differentiation between expatriate and immigrant, Mukherjee opines that an expatriate struggles hard to hold on to his past while immigration is a process of transformation and acculturation. Mukherjee considers the South Asian migrants in Canada to exhibit the expatriate sensibility, and regards the narratives written while she has been in the US as the product of an “immigrant imagination” (*Darkness* xiii). Though both her immigrant and expatriate characters have the fear of failure, there is a vital difference in the cultural response of each as they struggle with the trauma of displacement in the New World. The protagonists of her first two novels Tara Banerjee Cartwright and Dimple, who are expatriates, fail to adjust the harsh realities of alien land and become disintegrated and other protagonists Jasmine and Hannah reincarnate and maintains fluid identity and enjoy the immigrant status whereas Tara Chaterjee desires to have both cultures and remains as an Indo-American. The adoptability of the protagonists and their different cultural responses are analyzed in this chapter.

When a person visits the alien land, he is an outsider in no man’s land and he has to struggle a lot for his survival conquering the feelings of nostalgia. As man is a
social animal, he needs home, love of family members and the acceptance of the 
society. But when he comes to an unknown land, he passes through altogether an 
极端 transformation. He loses the complete sense of belongingness and suffers from 
insecurity and identity crisis. Gradually, he adopts the new ways of life and forms a 
kind of affinity with the milieu of that adopted land. This makes him forget his own 
native culture for a time being. But when he returns to his native land he finds that his 
native land is altogether changed and once again he finds himself an alien in his own 
culture. This results, once again, into the identity crisis at home. Bharati Mukherjee’s 
novel *The Tiger’s Daughter* depicts this rising problem of the immigrants due to 
multiculturalism.

In *The Tiger’s Daughter*, Tara Banerjee Cartwright, returns to Calcutta after her 
seven years stay in abroad. When she arrives, her views are seen to be coloured by her 
stay in abroad. In her quest for identity, the self of Tara is seen to be an ambivalent self. 
She is not sure whether she is better off in the US as David’s wife, or whether she is 
more comfortable back here in India as Tara, the daughter of the Bengal Tiger. She had 
a privileged childhood and a westernized upbringing and education. She belongs to the 
richer sections of Indian society. She is against Indian tradition like an arranged mar-
riage, which is a traditional custom in India. So the very act of falling in love, and 
marrying a foreigner, is in defiance of convention. But her expectations, that her daring 
act of marriage to a foreigner would bring in its wake the admiration of her friends, 
prove futile. Rather, they view her act with condescension. Tara finds it difficult to 
achieve the state of mental equilibrium where there is a tension between her past Indian 
identity and the newly acquired immigrant identity. Thus, the ‘dilemma of dual 
identity’ pressurizes upon her mind and she tries to solve it by running away from 
reality, going away to the comparatively safer west, where she would no longer be
mentally troubled by contradictory selves. With reference to this novel, in an interview, Mukherjee says:

…rootlessness and nostalgia as an outsider in a no-man's land where she (Tara) is struggling for survival. There she carves her own new territory and develops a new personality with emotional ties with both homeland and adapted land. This new self makes her forget her native culture and the return to India results in feeling it as an alien country as she has lost her native taste and touch. In fact, her new self is responsible for the disruption of her pleasure, but along with it the deteriorating social change and her new perspective towards Indian poverty and dirtiness culminate in her discomfort, frustration and disgust. (Clark)

Mukherjee here shows that nostalgia and cultural memory are integral parts of an expatriate’s mental state but as one spends some years in the adopted country, the effectiveness of these things gradually wear out. One, then, finds it difficult to adjust to the ways of life and habits in the home country one has left years ago, particularly when the country goes through a serious socio-political crisis. Similarly, Tara is in an intermediate stage when she is unable to negotiate the cultural terrain of Calcutta she has left behind seven years ago and is looking forward to overcome the loneliness she feels in the alien space and to be part of the nation. Initially, she felt utter loneliness at Vassar. As Kumar says, “an immigrant away from home idealizes his home country and cherishes nostalgic memories of it and so does Tara in America” (31), she longed for her usual life in Calcutta.

The immigrants feel disintegrated when their attempts to adapt to the alien country fail. Tara’s attempts to communicate with her fellow students were vain. There was a wide gap between Tara and the American students. Initially, Tara survived the problems of cultural difference with the help of her privileged Bengali upper class
family brought up and an effective training by the nuns at St. Blaise School in Calcutta. Her fondness to the religious icons and old cultural habits comforted her in small ways. As Chowdhury says “The new immigrant has to deal with people essentially different from him; he has to learn and understand alien ways, language; he has to face unaccustomed problems; in short he has to survive in a grossly foreign environment” (94), Tara struggled hard to adapt to the alien land, despite her strong Indianness.

Later, Tara’s correspondence with her parents, relatives and friends and interacting with fellow Indians through gatherings in Indian Students’ Association help her to stave off her solitude to a certain extent, which helped her to overcome loneliness. The socially, emotionally and spatially disturbed Tara’s psyche which is caught between the pulls of different polarities harbours all hopes on marriage. But the deliberate attempt of appropriation of a new space does not totally annihilate the cultural difference. Essential difference emanating from their inner territory cannot be soothed by a fluidity of texture. Despite her love marriage, Tara fails to function as a bridge between the two worlds, for she is incapable of communicating the distinct qualities of her culture, family and life in Calcutta to David. Further, marriage does not mitigate her feeling of insecurity. The ideal relationship does not endure because what begins as great passion dwindles to disaffection and estrangement. As a result, her personality is broken into fragments.

Tara’s visit to Calcutta is designed to emphasize her expatriate sensibility and to reveal the level of psychological distance created as a result of physical separation from her home country and its culture. In India, Tara understands that America has transformed her completely. She is unable to view her own country with Indian outlook. Now, she finds only disease, despair, riot and poverty in India and it is the ugly aspect that borders her consciousness. In her mind there is always an ongoing
conflict between her old sense of perception for country and her changed outlook. As
the novel demonstrates, she no longer feels at ease with the Indian way of life, not even
when she is in the midst of friends and relatives. Tara’s relatives attribute her arrogance
to her American attitude to life and think that her seven years stay in America has
transformed her thoroughly into a strutting peacock. This sets the stage ready for her
eventual acceptance of the socio-cultural values of the new nation. As Rani says,
“Assimilation and acceptance in the new culture appear impossible if the past is not
forgotten” (83). Tara has no more an Indian identity and is always in clash with the
culture of her native soil. The clash is deeply felt in the psyche of Tara who finds it
difficult to adjust with her friends and relatives in India; and sometimes with the
traditions of her own family. It seemed to Tara that her rootlessness and aloofness in
the native soil is due to her marriage with a foreigner. She felt that by marrying David
she had committed all the seven deadly sins: “In India she felt she was not married to a
person but to a foreigner, and this foreignness was a burden. It was hard for her to talk
about marriage responsibilities in Camac Street; her friends were curious only about the
adjustments she made.” (TD 62)

Roshni Rustomji Kerns, however, describes her failure to her constant haunt
regarding her role as a Bengali wife of an American or an American wife of an
American: “Tara’s petulance and constant nervousness regarding her role as a Bengali
wife of an American, visiting her family in Calcutta; overshadows her well –
intentioned efforts to understand her worlds of diverse cultures.” (657)

It is the American culture that has covered Tara like an invisible spirit or
darkness. Her stay in America made the common rituals which she performed perfectly
earlier, alien to her. Even in the prayer room Tara becomes extremely nervous. When
she hears the prayer song, She too wants to sing. She thinks that the repetition of the
prayer “would stave off the madness that curled under the pungent sunlight” (*TD* 53).

However she realizes that

> the walls of her mind were caving in like black tenement buildings in Shambazar. The children near Tara were screaming now, making each *Raghupati* and *Raghava* crackle, eyeing the fruits offered to the icons on silver plates. Their bright animal-eyes darted from little table to table. A liveliness or greed settled on the children and quickened their song. Tara had not thought that holy names could seem so abrasive. (53)

She realizes that she has become rootless now. She has become an outsider looking at her own life, from outside. She sees everything with an American eye and comments on everything from the point of view of an Americanized Indian. She finds herself marginalized on the psychological level and suffers from a split self: “Tara was literally, neither here nor there. She was a misfit with her Calcutta milieu and she was always under stress in America— trying to be correct, trying not to be a gauche immigrant, trying to be American. Tara is intelligent, highly educated and capable of self-analysis. She is conscious of her instability, insecurity and unhappiness.” (Chowdhury 95)

*Tara* is swinging between the feeling of rootlessness and nostalgia, as a result of the tension created in the mind between the two socio-cultural environments. She feels both trapped and abandoned at the same time. Neither can she take shelter in her old Indian self nor in her newly discovered American self. Hence she remains “suspended between two worlds and rooted in neither” (Padma 142). This difficulty of choosing lies in her refusal to totally condemn any one world. It might have been easier for *Tara* to leave her past untouched if she could find her old home contemptible, but she does
not. She does not fit in any longer. The outcome of this confrontation is her psychological disintegration:

The heroine finds it difficult to relate, since her marriage to an American and her Western education brand her as an alienated woman. Since Tara is exposed to the West and has absorbed its values, she must be necessarily alienated and, therefore, even if she tries to voice her continued attachment for, and identity with India, the voice does not carry conviction because it is at variance with the usual stance of indifference and arrogance as these are associated with the Westernized Indian. (Tandon 32)

Tara’s idealization seems to be discriminated since the things and happenings in India pain her. She undergoes a series of adventures and misadventures to a final self-realization and reconciliation. The restive city forces weak men to fanatical defiance or dishonesty. She views Calcutta, a city that has lost the sweet memories registered in her mind. Certain events bring out the trauma of Tara’s visit to India. Tara’s visit to a funeral pyre at the river bank, her meeting with small beggar girl afflicted with leprosy, the vision of beggar children eating off the street, the superficialities in the lives of her friends, the riots and demonstrations and her claustrophobic rape by the politician Tuntunwala and visit to Darjeeling are examples that are marred by ugly and violent circumstances. The bitter experiences make her feel the dark heart of a Calcutta beyond all recognition.

Tara finds Calcutta disappointing and she suffers from a sense of immigration, shattered by the culture and social shock. The disintegrated Tara plans her departure from India. “Tara feels herself, as misfit everywhere she goes. She is forced to look at her inner world consisting of two cultures and the two different ideologies which are two worlds apart. Realizing that the reconciliation is impossible, Tara feels to go back
to David” (qtd. in Sharma, Ram 70). According to Jain, Tara is “rejecting India and her Indianness unable to grasp its meaning, and equally unable to understand the America she is going back to” (15). The worst humiliations and sufferings in Calcutta make her feel India to be disinherited motherland and America her adopted fatherland. She suffers from a psychological and cultural identity crisis. She becomes drifting, enervated shadow echoing vague dissatisfactions in hollow voice. The unsatisfied mental gaze traps her in a morbid position. Finally, her failure to respond to the cultural difference makes her a disintegrated self.

Throughout the novel, Tara outpours her antithetical and mutually contradictory emotions which symbolize the fragmentation of herself and her alienation from her surroundings. In this novel The Tiger’s Daughter, Bharati Mukherjee provides a very useful insight in the most intriguing traits of the expatriates that they are without any permanent identity of their own, they are rootless and unaccommodated everywhere. Tara, the protagonist in the novel is an anguished self, a lacerated being having no roots and estranged from her own native land. This is her fate that even in her own land with her western outlook and education, Tara feels as an alien, as she did in North America where she was racially an outsider. There is a loss of identity at two levels- the native and the foreign country. She finds herself rootless and her quest for her own identity results in her tragic end at the end of the novel.

Like Tara, Dimple in Wife too undergoes psychological disintegration due to the social and cultural dislocation. This dislocation turns both of them confused, alienated, nostalgic and caught between the two worlds. The double consciousness does not allow them to establish solidarity with the society of either their origin or adoption. Expatriate Tara and Dimple are in the process of ‘becoming’. Their past identity is fractured/ lost/ dead and the new one is not yet born. So they are caught into the dilemma of identity.
This confusion results in Dimple killing her husband and Tara getting raped by an Indian of dubious character. According to Roshni Rustomji-Kerns, in these novels, Mukherjee presents “some of the more violent and grotesque aspects of cultural collisions.” (659)

The vast difference between expectation and reality both in the limited domestic space and in the larger cultural space, lack of emotional support and loneliness coupled with a neurotic sensibility obstruct Dimple’s attempts at assimilation. Trapped by the worlds they have left behind, Tara becomes a nowhere woman and Dimple transgresses into the extremity of alienation ending up as a murderess. Without the strength to fight their own battles, Dimple and Tara fail. Incapable of interrogation and integration they become unrealistic and misfits at home and in the exciting new land.

Dimple, the protagonist in Wife, stands at the transit point of culture, confused between her Indianness and the transplantation; she is skeptical about traditional values and vapid social norms but she is unable to negotiate the need of the crude transnational norms which demand both exclusion and merger. Her inability to deal with the pangs of multiculture results in psychological disintegration and violence. In India, unhappy wives commit suicide; Dimple asserts herself by committing murder, not suicide.

C.L. Chua describes Wife as,

the story of a weak-minded Bengali woman who migrates to New York with her engineer husband in search of a better life; but her sensibilities become so confounded by her changing cultural roles, the insidious television factitiousness, and the tensions of feminism that, ironically, she goes mad and kills her husband (54-5).

According to Jasbir Jain, “Mukherjee’s novels are representative of the expatriate sensibility.” (12)
In Indian context, a woman is better suited for adapting herself to another culture, because she has to undergo a process of ‘othering’ in her own culture. She has experiences of marginalization and discrimination right from her birth. Moreover, she experiences the process of dislocation and relocation in her own culture as a woman. She is displaced at every stage of her life. Initially, she is housed in her parents’ place; after marriage, she is relocated in her in-laws’ place; in old age she is re-housed in her children’s place.

Despite such expected built-in adaptability in Dimple’s self, and exposure to dislocation in her life in India, she fumbles a lot in the United States and turns violent. The madness is both psychic and cultural, being put in a new location, new culture in the New World. She is trapped in a space where she needs to repress the traces of her Indianness if she hopes to fit in the location, and on the other hand, she has to negotiate the wrecked promises of a liberated world which however discards her. In Dimple, her madness, her inability to translate is coterminous with her expatriate status.

Dimple, who is always in the dream and fantasy, is desirous to be the idyllic Bengali wife, but out of cultural shock, foreboding fear and instability, she disintegrates and murders her husband. She begins her life with the role model of Sita. Like Sita, the good Hindu wife, Dimple has left Calcutta and gone with her husband to the “forest”, enduring not only physical discomfort but also psychological distress. Yet because of the prison inadvertently created by Dimple’s fear of New York City, her insensitive husband, and the expected immigrant wife’s role, she becomes vulnerable to “kidnapping” by Milt Glasser, who is Ravana in American guise. Unlike Sita, Dimple does not insist on chastity; nor does she reward the husband who tries, belatedly, to rescue her from despondency. The flames in which she is tested are those of reality, but
because she cannot truly be Sita, she does not survive, but implodes like a star.

(qtd. in Wong and Hasan 54)

Mukherjee, through Dimple, lends a divergent and an intricate perspective to the theme of immigration, subsequent alienation and personality disintegration. Dimple, the middle–class married woman wishes to migrate and finally migrates from Calcutta to New York. For her, migration and marriage are synonymous with each other. She presumes that her migration to New York with her husband after marriage would gratify, enchant and liberate her from the expected unhappiness and afflictions. Her failure to grasp the pleasures of existence in New York with its bigness which she had never seen before is symbolic of failure of her marriage to Amit. “She had never seen such bigness before; the bigness was thrilling and a little scary as well. She could not imagine the kind of people who had conceived it and who controlled it.” (Wife 52)

Dimple has a romantic disposition towards life, a result of reading novels and film magazines which make her negate the harsh and gruesome realities of life. She believes that marriage would bring her all the happiness. “Marriage, she was sure, would free her, fill her with passion. Discreet and virgin, she waited for real life to begin” (13). She has set her heart on marrying a neurosurgeon, but her father is looking for engineers in the matrimonial advertisements. The author has pin-pointed here the dilemma of the Indian woman whose social role, by tradition, is defined by a patriarchal culture. It is the feminine duty of a woman in a male dominated society to subjugate her feelings and desires to the will of her father. Finally, she got married to Amit Kumar Basu, who has applied immigration in Canada. Married to Amit, Dimple transplants herself from Rash Baheri Avenue to Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road. Issues of adjustment start with the imposition of a new name and identity ‘Nandini’ which demands a repudiation of the past. The imaginary world that she had so carefully and
lovingly created begins to shatter into little fragments in the new home, by the in-laws and even by her husband. Not only the inhabitants, but the apartment as a whole fails to satisfy her romantic dreams. To Dimple, her second home becomes only a transit where she sojourns with no sense of belonging. Due to her abnormality and a sense of isolation in her in-law’s home, her personality disintegration starts in India. She consoles her that her new life in America would make her dreams come true. She even induces a miscarriage, as she wants to start life afresh in America. An average Indian woman usually exults in her motherhood: “She turns towards motherhood with an overpowering zest, with the enthusiasm of a child discovering that it can walk…. As she lacks companionship, her husband having found no time for her, she turns towards her children for companionship and emotional fulfillment’ (qtd. in Dimri 170). Dimple, on the contrary, successfully manipulates the termination of her pregnancy for the simple reason that she doesn’t want to carry any remnants from India to U.S.

Dimple is always in a confused state in life and tried to run away from reality. However, her confusion is intensified by the West and its cultural conflicts that it turns her into a mental wreck. She goes through psychological isolation and hence a lot of mental stress. She is entrapped in the dilemma of tensions, between the American culture on one hand and the Indian tradition on the other. The life of New York seems destructive to her and provides little freedom to Indian house wives. She feels isolated from her new surrounding and finds that there is great disparity between her fantasy world and the real world. Instead of showing signs of improvement, she goes worse. “I’m terrible in crises” (Wife 204) she had told Meena and she is true to her words in the moments of crisis.

Displacement often leads to alienation and search for self identity. Instead of focusing on nostalgia, Mukherjee stresses on the changing identities and the need for
refashioning oneself. Dislodgement in the native and the alien environment leads to problems of adjustment. For an Indian woman, marriage marks her first cleavage from the familiar. She experiences the pain of separation and her future depends on the attitude of her husband, her in-laws and the congeniality of the environment. The alienated Dimple feels extremely frustrated with Amit who fails to provide her not only physical comfort but also emotional support. Her frustration increases and she begins having repulsion for Amit. “But Amit would always be there besides her in his shiny, ill-fitting suits, acting as her conscience and common sense. It was sad, she thought, how marriage cut off glittering alternatives. If fate had assigned her not Amit but some other engineer, she might have been a very different kind of person” (126). In this novel, Bharati Mukherjee deals with the subject of rootless identity. In fact, her women characters fight against the retention of identity and no longer wish to conform to traditional Indian pattern. They counter cultural alienation but the desire to eradicate the past and adapt to the present weighs heavily upon them. They are in a hurry to become Americanized, although the weight of their past, their homeland, its histories etc remains somewhere deep within themselves. Dimple, unable to adjust to the new host country, begins to suffer from an inferiority complex. This in turn leads to confusion, insomnia, tribulations and disillusionment. Her existence becomes something of a torture for her. Very often to escape from this torturing present, she retreats into a nostalgic phase; but again this is a momentary consolation. She does not want to lose her identity but feels isolated, trapped, alienated and marginalized. G.S. Sharat Chandra expresses this sense of alienation beautifully thus:

I leaped from one life to another, and in between lay nothing but vacuum ... we remain at large distant and clothed by our separate worlds. We know that the bonds we shared while growing up do not unite us anymore ... In these new
worlds, immigrants readjust and reinvent themselves, struggling to find their place in an alien landscape, netting some gains but also incurring deep emotional losses ... (7).

Finally, in a fit of frenzy, out of depression and disgust, she takes out the knife from the kitchen drawer, chooses a spot near her husband’s hairline and stabs him repeatedly at the same place seven times. Seven stabs are symbolic of liberation from the bondages imposed by matrimony.

*Wife* is the story of predicament of an Indian wife, finding herself out of depths in the alien milieu. Main thrust is given to psychological isolation and suppression of identity of the woman in an alien land. The conflict between the protagonist’s drive towards a recreation of self and her position as a wife and a member of the small Indian immigrant community is illustrated in the sudden physical isolation that marks the beginning of Dimple’s life in New York. Instead of the freedom she has associated with marriage and in America, her life is limited to the private space of the home much more than in Calcutta. Mukherjee invests her immigrant characters with a kind of self-excluding attitude, a desire to remain culturally and socially isolated from American society even when extracting a financially better future from it. For instance, in an almost stereotypical scene of immigrant experience, the combination of gender and ethnicity is presented as universally known among the immigrant group to signify a definite and particularly vulnerable cultural otherness in an Indian woman:

Meena put her feet upon the coffee table and gave Dimple household hints:

wash saris in the bathtub, throw them in the dryer, fold them in half and use spray starch. “But if the washing machine is in the basement of the building, let Amit do the laundry.”
Dimple laughed at the suggestion. “I’m sure he wouldn’t do the laundry! He hasn’t washed a hanky in his life. I wouldn’t let him.” “You want to get mugged? Women in this building – not me, touch wood – have been mugged in the basement. If you want to get killed and worse things, then go do the laundry yourself. Don’t listen to me. I tell you these people are goondas [thugs].”

“But why would anyone want to mug me?”

“It’s all the rare beef they eat. It makes them crazy.” (Wife 70)

Meena’s mundane anecdote, an archetypal caveat of the literal dangers of assimilation, presents physical isolation not only as a way of maintaining individual physical safety, but also as a collective norm to ensure cultural and religious purity.

Thus, among the intimidating, always potentially violent Americans, Dimple has been identified by her own peer group as a woman of brown colour whose speech marks her as a cultural foreigner. In other words, Mukherjee suggests that the experience of constant physical vulnerability is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, an automatic realization of the Indian’s collective prejudices even before any actual experiences of racially motivated aggression. This is illustrated, to tragic-comical effect, in the scene at a Jewish shop where Dimple, in her effort to be “American”, innocently tries to buy cheesecake and is terrified by the owner’s crabby response. Therefore, her attempts to enter the host society through two basic ways of cultural interaction, bartering and the consumption of food typical for the foreign culture, only corroborate her socially sanctioned confinement to her home, to a kind of geographic and cultural limbo between India and America. Although some of this image of America as impenetrable and hostile can be read as Mukherjee’s ironization of the 20-year-old protagonist’s naivety on arrival in a new culture, it also constitutes a strong criticism of the middle-class gender-bias within the Indian community as well as the
everyday racial discrimination in American society. Both are based on the desire to protect the perceived cultural unity of one’s group; the effects of both are most detrimental on immigrant women.

The marital relationship, supposed to be a defining constituent of Dimple’s new identity and the freedom provided by her status as a wife started losing its value in the alien land. It is lack of communication between the spouses that leads to failure in their matrimonial relationship. Seema Suneel points out as, “This migration or “cultural transplant” leads not only to a crisis of identity but greatly affects their personal relationship as husband-wife” (221). The impossibility of verbal communication with Amit causes Dimple to withdraw to a world of silence. Dimple who occasionally indulges in introspection lack the courage and maturity to achieve an honest appraisal of her. Various attempts to escape her cage make her mentally bruised and spiritually battered. Dimple’s world becomes destructive with her near neurotic urges, lonely strivings and desperation. This lack of understanding between both of them leads to Dimple’s alienation from Amit and her obsession with suicide and murder. The isolation and emotional condition initiates the process of her psychological disintegration which had been developing even when she was in Calcutta. Further, she is not good at establishing relationships with others due to uncongenial domestic environments characterized by emotional deprivation, lack of understanding, parental neglect or pampering and lack of peer group or sibling support. Dimple fails to communicate not only with others and but also with her own self. Dimple's maiden dream of freedom, love and luxury contradict with what she attains.

Though cosmopolitan in her thinking, Dimple seems to have a warped thinking that borders on the grotesque. She fails to reconcile Amit with the husband of her fantasy. She obsessively measures her husband against her ideal man and her life
against her dream. The shift to the land of freedom shocks her to realize that America with all its glamour allows Indian women little escape from the traditional routes chalked out for her. She cannot comprehend her experiences: “all impossible to talk about? Let alone describe in English or Bengali. There were no words she'd ever learned to describe her daily feeling. She would have to give up trying to write. She would give up trying to preserve old friendships. Because there was nothing to describe and nothing to preserve” (Wife 120). Love and death are the most important things to Dimple.

To add to her disintegration, Amit fails Dimple on physical, mental and emotional grounds. She tries to convey her fears and forebodings to Amit but neither does he try to understand her nor is he capable of rising above a mundane understanding. Amit says, “it was culture shock and that culture shock happened all the time to Indian wives; it wasn’t serious thing and it certainly wasn’t one of those famous “breakdowns” that American wives were fond of having” (180). Dimple's psychological imbalances, her immoderate daytime sleeping, her nightmares and her indecisiveness – everything remains unknown to him up to his dying day. The contrast between Amit’s freedom to explore American society and Dimple’s isolation from the outside world is emphasized in the description of Dimple’s latent aggression and growing mental imbalance. “Dimple’s mental distortions are unable to bridge the gaps between the dream world of imagination and the drab-world of reality” (Chandra & Prema 89-90). Without any social contacts outside the Indian immigrant community, it is almost impossible for an Indian immigrant woman to forge an identity based on her actions as an individual; she remains always defined by her status as someone’s wife, a part of her husband’s identity. In the mode of utter disappointment with Amit, she tells him: “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 have never listened to me. You hate me. Don’t deny it; I know you do. You hate me because I am not fat and fair.” (Wife 110)

Dimple is baffled and unnerved by the liberated attitude of Ina Mullick and her emulating the American culture. By introducing Ina, Mukherjee challenges the passive role of an Indian woman:

Mukherjee inserts Ina Mullick into Dimple’s life as a challenge to the restrictions of traditional wifehood. […] Ina’s engagement with western feminism is a form of resistance to the confines of traditional Bengali wifehood. Mukherjee however uses Ina’s character to demonstrate the misfit between western and Third World feminism. Neither Ina nor Dimple can find expression through a feminism that forces them to abandon their Indianness. (Stanley 41)

Dimple, being brought up in a sheltered, restricted traditional society like India is not prepared for a culture which requires self-articulation, initiative, and self-reliance. D. Lakshmana Rao points out: “She is caught in the quicksand of cultural uncertainties represented by the conduct of Ina Mullick, Marsha Mookherji and her brother Milt Glasser. Driven to do something in order to assert herself and her identity, she resorts to passive protest” (122). Dimple is estranged not just from the outer world, but is estranged from her own self. As Christine Gomez remarks, “Dimple also experiences an intense loneliness which is different, qualitatively, from the loneliness of the expatriate. There is a progressive and total estrangement from the environment, from herself and from existence itself” (74). Television becomes her world which brings her never-ending violence and murder. She loses her contact with reality, being caught in a world of liberation and violence. Her accumulated resentment, frustrations and loneliness finally leads to the murder of her husband. Brinda Bose claims that “What drives them (Mukherjee’s protagonists) to react with violence, then, is their frustration
at other people’s inability to understand their changing needs and desires, now that they are no longer confined to the social and cultural patterns of their past.” (57-8)

The novel, *Wife*, is a perfect version of peripheral confusions regarding American culture and habitat and internal commotion to choose between personal deliverance on the one hand and matrimonial bondage on the other that Dimple suffers from. Sandler has rightly pointed out, “In *Wife*, Mukherjee simplifies and sharpens her focus. She reverses the pilgrimage, journeying from East to West, she confronts personal and social violence head on, and she splits her complex self into sharp facets, creating characters who shatter like glass” (75). Dimple shows signs of dilemma of cultures which is a domino effect of her phobic condition in the end. Two incidents from the novel, one, her enforced self-abortion and the other, her atrocious assassination of her husband are emblematic expression of her turmoil flanked by the other and the self. Though Dimple’s attempt was not successful but throughout her stint in America she tried her best to come out of her so called Indianness. Amidst the violence prevalent in America like suicide, mugging, rape, murder etc., she is ready to explore the alien culture. She has arrived in the United States in pursuit of freedom and happiness: “she thought how lucky she was to be alone among Marsha’s appliances, to explore the wonder of modern American living, unencumbered by philosophical questions about happiness” (*Wife* 136). Going out with Ina and Leni, Wearing western clothes and purple tinted sunglasses which are perhaps the most typical index of American culture and seducing Milt are some of the futile attempts which show that she is also trying to move towards adopting and assimilating with the western culture. For Dimple, they are a disguise, borrowed from the West. Dimri states:

Dimple turns towards Ina, Leni and ultimately Milt Glasser in her moments of crises. Ina and Leni fail her as friends. Milt proves to be a temporary
transgression. The rebel in her is devising new means and ways to commit suicide. She is an alienated being undergoing the supposed after effects of alienation – psychosis, psychosomatic disorder, delinquency and contemplation of suicide. (172)

Dimple is hardly able to find her space within the confines of an alien culture. Mukherjee highlights the loss of sanity of Dimple as an attribute to her sense of alienation from her own and American culture. Her sense of loss is marked by her illicit affair with Milt, a moral lapse that is as inimical to her status and self-identity as it is insidious to her role as wife. The sense of her own subservience reiterates her marginality, which is further compounded by her continuing frustration in adjusting with her new environment and it is an indication of both an affirmation and denial of her identity as a victim of cultural and patriarchal discourse. Mukherjee deals with the complications that come from being thrown between two worlds and the strength and courage, it takes to survive. Towards the end of the novel, due to the racial and cultural discrimination and her attempts to be the ideal Bengali wife, Dimple becomes extremely frustrated and disintegrated and out of fear and dilemma she takes the tragic decision of killing Amit. In an interview with Geoff Hancock it has been asked that, “Is infidelity and murder only solution?” “Dimple thinks so”. Mukherjee explains fully as,

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 probably would not have asked herself questions such as, am I unhappy, do I deserve to be 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. *Wife* is novel that is very dear to me. (44)
Dimple doesn’t feel guilty for her violent act of killing Amit, because murdering is like an ordinary thing in America and it is one of the ways of becoming American. M. Sivaramakrishna says “this pervasive atmosphere of crime dulls the edge of her own guilt” (84). Though Dimple is at times shocked at her own intensity of feeling and her capacity to hate, eventually Dimple exorcizes her ungratified passion through violence alone. The cultural conflict accounts for her Dimple’s bizarre, blasphemous responses. As she cannot come to terms with either her own culture or America’s culture, she finds herself at cross-roads, and visualizes her life as “A Dying bonfire: that was her visual image of her life” (Wife 119). “Thus Bharati Mukherjee blends two themes – the upheavals of migration and the unresolved dilemmas of a modern woman in this carefully constructed novel that operates through a series of deft touches and well-observed details.” (Irshad 80)

Thus, both in *The Tiger’s Daughter* and in *Wife*, the protagonists Tara and Dimple, are expatriates, geographically as well as in mind and spirit. They share the expatriate characteristic of being ill at ease both in the native culture and in the alien one. They represent the dilemma faced by expatriates. They are ‘middle women’ between two cultures, and both are experiencing culture shock in diametrically opposed conditions. Their disillusionment with India and America and the disintegration of their personality are not sudden but gradual, over a period of time, and by stages. Out of utter confusion and chaos Tara meets with violence and her end is a mystery whereas Dimple takes drastic steps at the end to get away from the cultural maladjustment that enmeshes her. Sivaramakrishna says about these two protagonists, that the “retention of their identity as Indian is in constant tension with the need for its renunciation if they have to acquire a new identity as immigrants” (74). So in order to find her identity in the alien land the Indian woman has to take daring steps. Whether it is India or
America, whether she had traditional Indian education or studied at prestigious American institution, the Indian woman, when facing a strange cultural environment, confronts problems that take unexpected turns. Having nothing and nobody to fall back upon, she has to tackle her problems by herself. The Indian woman, caught up in a multicultural dilemma, has to be, ultimately, her own rescuer.

Tara’s and Dimple’s narrative is the negative portrayal of Americanization. Through Tara and Dimple, Mukherjee delineates the consequences of suspending between two worlds. Unlike these two timid protagonists, in 1989, Mukherjee created a more valiant female protagonist in her third novel *Jasmine*. This novel belongs to Mukherjee’s immigrant phase of writing in which Mukherjee is described as having accepted being “an immigrant, living in a continent of immigrants” (qtd. in Alam 9). Bharati Mukherjee’s vision about immigrants becomes clearer when Jasmine is presented as the best example of ‘fusion’ while Tara and Dimple remain isolated and rootless aliens because of their hatred towards their native culture as well as the culture of the adopted land. By her immigration to America, Bharati Mukherjee understood the fact that without being assimilated to the culture of the adopted land, survival of an immigrant is difficult. She says,

I am very different from other non-European writers in saying that, to me, the loss of old culture is exciting. Is exhilarating. Is a plus rather than a minus. Just describing the extraordinary wealth and comfort that was natural part of my childhood- and which would have inherited, in whatever damaged ways, if I had stayed on in India- made me realize that I was thrilled to have the opportunity to give it up, to assume a new identity. That kind of Third World hierarchy where your opportunities are closed by caste, gender, or family was horrendous to me. (qtd. in Dimri 170)
In *Jasmine* Mukherjee celebrates the drifts from one continent to the other, from one country to the other, from one identity to another, for it is a world without a fixed gravity. In other words, Mukherjee celebrates the shifting identities in dealing with this novel. While Tara and Dimple show expatriate’s sensibility, sense of exile and rootlessness being the victims of conflicting cultures, Jasmine, quite different from these two protagonists of Mukherjee’s novels, represents assimilation of the alien culture. Like Mukherjee’s transformation from expatriation to immigration, Jasmine too undergoes many transformations in the process of assimilation.

Mukherjee equates transformation with reincarnation. In Hindu philosophy, in Hindu Philosophy it is believed that a soul of a dead person is made to reborn as many as seven times. The soul’s new birth is determined by the Karma of its previous life. Karma is the collective deeds of the past. Deeds in the previous birth decide the nature of the soul’s next birth. Mukherjee says that, “I believe that our souls can be reborn in another body, so the perspective I have about a single character's life is different from that of an American writer who believes that he only has one life… As a Hindu… I believe in the existence of alternate realities, and this belief makes itself evident in my fiction” (Carb 651). Mukherjee uses this idea of rebirth to refer to the immigrant experience:

The cosmology that my characters and I inhabit derives very much from the Puranic tales. The puranas are cycles of tales (think of them as morality tales, religious fables, there are thousands of them) that every Hindu child is told the way that kids in U.S. are exposed to fairy tales and bedtime stories. As story, they really work, too! Conflict, heroes, villains, obstacles, action, surprise revelation! But the stories metaphorize the Hindu concepts of cosmology, time and space. Current discoveries in astronomy are certainly pointing up the
existence of universe other than ours. I believe in re-incarnation, which, too, may be a metaphor for some geo-biological phenomena, why not?. (Chen, Tina and Goudie)

An immigrant is one who is reborn several times in the adopted culture to create his own identity. ‘Death’ and ‘rebirth’ in the life of immigrants involve pain and violence. The protagonist of the novel *Jasmine* is a significant example of textual reincarnation. In *Jasmine* Mukherjee refers to the broken pitcher again and again to emphasize the reincarnation of Jyoti again and again. In this life she is born and dies many deaths but is reborn many times acquiring a new, forever evolving fluid identity. C. L. Chua rightly comments:

> Survival and reincarnation are indeed integral elements of this novel, for the protagonist is known by different names at different stages of the narrative, signifying her acquisition of different identities, different lives [...] it is also the account of an immigrant South Asian woman’s metamorphosis, self-invention, and self-empowerment. (57)

Mukherjee’s characters demonstrate the energy, vitalism and resilience necessary to undergo successfully what must be undergone in order to survive and transmute culture in a twentieth century global reality. As she has stated in an interview, Mukherjee sees the influx of immigrants as an invigorating and shaping influence on American life: “We have come not to passively accommodate ourselves to someone else’s dream of what we should be, we have come in a way, to take over, to help build a culture.” (Hogan)

Jasmine is such an immigrant who shows an extremely strong sense of life and quest for identity. Jyoti, a village girl from Punjab, faces disasters at various stages of her life and struggles restlessly to find an identity and to make a place for herself to
give a shape and meaning to her life: “Her struggle symbolizes the restless quest of a
rootless person piqued by a depressing sense of isolation all around” (Darkness 3).
Jyoti hails from a family and society where women lead a life of female foeticide,
suppression, torture, male chauvinism and neglect without having any say even for their
own life. A society where women’s liberty is a pipe dream, and as far as the fulfillment
of their wish regarding learning higher education is concerned the least talked the
better. Jyoti, at a very early age, is not ready to be governed and directed by the norms
of society which tried to condition her existence. She doesn’t want to be an ordinary
girl to lead a meaningless life without individuality. She protests strongly when her fate
was foretold by an astrologer. She asserts that she is not just nothing. Here begins her
never ending journey of transforming herself and leading a life of freewill. Her
transformations are very much like the reincarnations into new women more
determined and confident than the earlier, facing and fighting the hardships of the
society.

Though Mukherjee claims that no incident in the novel is autobiographical,
many of Jasmine’s experiences have their origins from Mukherjee’s life. Like Jasmine,
Mukherjee was also raised to obey traditions without question. Both discard these
restrictions in order to pursue their own dreams, reject the patriarchal authority of an
arranged marriage in order to search for fulfillment and create a uniquely American
existence. Mukherjee explains her intention to craft Jasmine’s struggle against the
traditional culture she was trained to accept:

This was a character I would have liked to have been. She became a deeper,
more complicated character in my head, over the months, so I had to give her a
society that was so repressive, traditional, so caste-bound, class-bound,
 genderist, that she could discard it in ways that a fluid American society could
not. I had to find the metaphors and symbolic location for her, and then the right series of events to dramatize the ideas. (Edwards 173-174)

The very American frontier mentality reflects a dynamic personality willing to court constant changes in life. “This necessitates a reshuffling of old worldview and repudiates the rooted and conservative life patterns of the old countries” (qtd.in Lahiri 49). Mukherjee thinks of America ‘as a place of constant change: “Change is the norm here. We expect change, Every other country I’ve lived in values fixity, and regrets change” (Edwards 173). Jasmine embodies and symbolizes this norm of change which is evidenced through her several ‘reincarnations’ and borne out by changes in her first names.

_Jasmine_ traces the different name patterns and growth of the female protagonist from her childhood in Hasnapur, India to her trip to Iowa in mid-western America. With the switching of names, Jasmine eventually crosses boundaries, thereby avoids becoming a fixed subject or identity: “In her struggle to remake herself, Jasmine does not resist several renamings by others, and moves fluidly among new identities thrust upon her” (qtd. in Tai 66). With each new move Jasmine reinvents herself with a new name – Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase, Jane –and with each new name she moves closer to her dream of being an American, of belonging to the New World. Jasmine’s ongoing journey emphasizes her ardent desire to acquire her true identity. Here, Mukherjee elaborates the idea that immigration to America offers scope for empowerment even to a marginalized and barely educated woman like Jasmine from a Third World Country. The way she negotiated the American space is indicative of the scope the new nation offers to its newly arrived immigrants.

_Jyoti_ begins her journey of self-realization by marrying Prakash against her traditional pattern of arranged marriage. Her marriage brings about a total change in her
mind. Her transformation is initiated by Prakash. With his generous efforts, Prakash transformed Jyoti into Jasmine – the sweet smelling flower, thus pulling her out from the rotten Hasnapur stench. Her new name is a mechanism of the transformation of her new identity. Jasmine experienced eternal bliss with Prakash. He is her care giver and the determining force for her future. Prakash recreates the village girl in his preferred image of a modern woman. “The first nodal point of change is Jullundhar, Punjab, where Prakash, Jyoti’s husband, turns her away from the feudalism of her village, Hasnapur, and sets her on the emancipating path to self-assertion and self-reliance, America’s self proclaimed virtues.” (Grewal 184)

Sati is a Sanskrit term meaning 'chaste wife' and it is also the name of a Hindu Goddess. Sati is an Indian custom of a widow burning herself either on the funeral pyre of her dead husband or soon after his death. The custom has possible links with the ancient belief that a man needs his companion in the afterlife as well as in this world. But Sati for Jasmine is more like discarding the past and beginning a new present. She represents her resistance to Indian restrictions, and her desire to new life. Jasmine explicitly recognizes her ability to adapt: “I wanted to become the person they thought they saw: humorous, intelligent, refined, affectionate. Not illegal, not murderer, not widowed, raped, destitute, fearful” (Jasmine 171). Her journey of transformation, displacement and a search for new life and identity begins when she sets off to America to fulfill Prakash’s mission. Jasmine’s illegal immigration begins with the thoughts:

We are outcasts and deportees, strange pilgrims visiting outlandish shrines, landing at the end of tarmacs, ferried in old army trucks where we are roughly handled and taken to roped-off corners of waiting rooms where surly barely wakened customs guards await their bribe. We are dressed in shreds of national
costumes, out of season, the wilted plumage of intercontinental vagabondage.

We ask only one thing, to be allowed to land: to pass through: to continue. (101)

In America, Jasmine’s brutal rape by Half face signals a crucial moment in her successive transformation and the formation of the spirit of survival. Instead of killing herself and passively accepting herself solely as a victim, she kills her attacker.

Jasmine’s full transformation, from the victim into a vengeful goddess, seems to be reinforced by imagining herself as the reincarnation of Kali: “The room looked like a slaughter house. Blood had congealed on my hands, my chin, my breasts.[...] For the second time in three months, I was in a room with a slain man, my body bloodied. I was walking death. Death incarnate” (119). Samir Dayal comments “she experiences an epistemic violence that is also a life affirming transformation” (Dayal 71). Mukherjee uses Indian mythic concepts to mediate the gap between continuity and change and to reinforce her transformative model. Jasmine slices her own tongue with a blade, and with her mouth full of blood she move towards Half-face. Just one stroke of the blade on his throat: “I wanted that moment when he saw me above him as he had last seen me, naked, but now with my mouth open, pouring blood, my red out” (Jas 118).

C.Sengupta delineates quite emphatically, “and as she does it she becomes Kali personified, the deity of avenging fury-death incarnate and the killing becomes so easy.” (157)

Jasmine's killing of Half-Face is a kind of self-assertion. Her decision to kill herself first is a decision of a dedicated Indian wife who lives for her deceased husband but the woman who kills half face is provoked by her will to survive and continue her life facing the challenges that come on her way. By murdering Half Face and her old self, Jasmine created a new self and understands that she must be something always, already different-a necessity, Gloria Anzaldua explains:
For centuries now… it has always been a world of the intellect, reasoning, the machine. Here women were stuck with having tremendous powers on intuition experiencing other levels of reality and other realities yet they had to sit on it because men would say, well, you’re crazy. All of a sudden there’s a reemergence of the intuitive energies- and they are very powerful. And if you apply them in your life on the personal and political plane then that gives you a tremendous amount of energy-it’s almost like a volcano erupting. (qtd.in Dayal 72)

She is reborn by the act of killing; to punish the monster in disguise and she begins her journey with a new hope. “With the first streaks of dawn, my first full American day, I walked out the front drive of the motel to the highway and began my journey, traveling light” (Jas 121). Burning Prakash’s suit behind in a motel in Florida symbolizes Jasmine’s wish to put her past away, “Around her there were rusty metal bins punched with holes for better ventilation. I laid the suitcase inside one and lit it from bottom. It sputtered and flared. The outside melted, and then the cotton and wool ignited” (120).

Here the novelist once again invokes the archetypal image of a broken pitcher and says that the pitcher is broken now and her body, which is merely the shell, is soon to be discarded to get reborn and her soul will find a new habitation:

I said my prayers for the dead clutching my Ganpati. I thought. The pitcher is broken. Lord Yama, who had wanted me, who had courted me, and whom I’d flirted with on the long trip over, had now deserted me…My body was merely the shell, soon to be discarded. Then I could be reborn, debts and sins all paid for. (120-21)

Jasmine is special and exotic for Americans and different from other racialised women. As Lillion Gordon tells her “Jazzy, you don’t strike me as a picker or a
domestic… You’re different from these others” (134). Jasmine is distinguished and destined to success with respect to other migrant workers. The change in name as ‘Jazzy’ by Lillion is another reincarnation, which adds new dimensions to Jasmine’s identity. The maternal care of Lillian gives a new strength and purpose in the life of Jasmine. Lillion’s loving and informal address encourage her to resume a new spring in her life. She speeds up the process of her transformation by passively accepting another two incarnations as ‘Jase’ by Taylor in Manhattan and as ‘Jane’ by Bud Ripplemayer in Iowa. Eventually she gives up thinking as Jane to transform into a new identity which she desires. “It is this Americanness in her that has made Jasmine accept Taylor’s offer to go to West towards an unknown future, yet another adventure leaving the security of Bud’s home.” (Indira 89)

Jasmine's comfort with English also provides her with a new perspective on America as well as a more familiar relationship with the culture as a whole. She says,

Every morning, the news sank into my brain, and stayed. Language on the street, on the forbidden television, at the Haynes’ dinners, where I sat like a guest and only helped with the serving (and, increasingly, controlled the menu), all became my language, which I learned like a child, from the first words up.

The squatting fields of Hasnapur receded fast (Jas 174).

Language becomes Jasmine's key to understanding American culture and claiming it as her own, thereby allowing her to produce “Jase,” which is a completely different reincarnation than the previous “Jyoti,” “Jasmine,” or even “Jazzy.” The new identity as “Jase” is apparently more western and confident, filled with a desire to imbibe as much of American culture as she possibly can, without fear or regret.

The ability to adjust to the requirements of a changing environment and to sever the past is Jasmine’s survival skills. Jasmine’s intense desire to build a home away
from her native land and to rebuild her identity helps her to exist. Her great enthusiasm to become an American forces her to dynamically proceed into an alien soil but without any reassuring future. The future into which she thrusts herself toward is not guaranteed to be victorious, but she has the potential for personal, material and spiritual success. Despite Jasmine uproots herself from her native culture and transforms herself in accordance to a new culture, she contradicts her own desires: on the one hand she seems to be in a state of constant change, “How many more shapes are in me, how many more selves, how many more husbands” (215), on the other hand, she feels herself started rooting in the alien soil. “Taylor, Wylie, and Duff were family. America may be fluid and built on flimsy, invisible lines of weak gravity, but I was a dense object, I had landed and was getting rooted. I had controlled my spending and now sat on an account that was rapidly growing.” (179)

Different environments assign Jasmine different roles – daughter, wife, murderer, refugee, caretaker, and beloved and competent professional but at every stage she is conscious to achieve an identity of her own, along with her consciousness of her being an Indian woman. The synthesis of cultural awareness, feminist sensibility and the assertion of individuality add a new dimension to the feminist consciousness scattered in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee. She is neither a ‘rebel’ as it has been criticized by Bharati Mukherjee herself, nor an oppressed subject but a woman with her independent vision, sharing the best both of native tradition and of hi-tech West. Each decision of Jasmine is her own which is far away from the Indian climate or culture. She cannot be rubble maker but her various changes in life as Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase and Jane indicate the fact that she acted boldly to fulfill her identity in an alien country. The Indian immigrant has no fixed identity in foreign countries. She has to move on, and on, because she is always passing through a period of transition.
“Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.” (Hall 235)

Throughout the text, Jasmine refers to the various identities she has possessed and admits, “I do believe that extraordinary events can jar the needle arm, jump tracks, rip across incarnations, and deposit life into a groove that was not prepared to receive it” (Jas 127). Although reincarnation belongs to her Indian culture, she integrates each new life into her American identity, effectively transforming both. Like the references to sati, Mukherjee uses reincarnation to show that Jasmine still preserves some aspects of Indian ethnicity and translates it into her new American context.

Jasmine achieves a new identity every time by not negating her cultural past but by merging it with her present. “She brings death to Half-Face as goddess Kali, she brings happiness to Duff and Taylor as a traditional, self sacrificing Indian lover and she is offering love to Du as a loving Indian mother who exults in her motherhood” (Dimri 175). As Jane at the present time of the novel, Jasmine, juxtaposes in her memory each of her identities – as Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase and Kali implying that she evokes and revises her past in articulating her identities. The author depicts this transformation and transition as a positive and an optimistic journey. Jasmine creates a new world consisting of new ideas and values, constantly unmasking her past. She tries to establish a new cultural identity by integrating new desires, skills and habits. This transition is defined not only in the changes in her attitude, but more significantly in her relationship with men.

She has the ability to transform- to shed off the present existence and to be reborn again with a resolute will. She makes genuine attempts and adjustments by way of adopting assimilationist tactics to ease her immigrant life and to cope with the actuality. Jasmine survives innumerable beginnings and ends, she has “hurtled through
time tunnels” (*Jas* 240) and cries “through all the lives [she has] given birth to, [cries] for all [her] dead” (241). She steps from the old world ethics of submission, helplessness and doom to the exciting new ethnics of adventure, risk and transformation. “They take risks they wouldn’t have taken in their old, comfortable worlds to solve their problems. As they change citizenship, they are reborn” (Carb 648). She accepts the fact that change is the norm of life and adjusts to the requirements of the environment. To Jasmine, critical situations act as a catalyst, pace up her transformation, and help her emerge as a self-assertive individual. Jasmine is the right kind of person to whom immigration is pleasure and progress.

Jasmine has achieved a proper identity and balance between and modernity in the concluding part of the novel. The transformation of the heroine from tradition to modernity satisfied her inner self rather than the society. This change in her is a proof to picturize courageous nature of the heroine who acts according to the self consciousness. In *Jasmine*, the life of Jyoti is glorified by herself and her inner consciousness which made her act according to her own wish. Mukherjee’s novel finally attains the theme of fulfilment within the inner self.

Thus, Bharati Mukherjee’s masterpiece *Jasmine* reveals that the protagonist, Jasmine is a survivor, fighter and a trend setter. The protagonist Jasmine is a willing participant in the dominant culture. The potential of fluidity which Bharati Mukherjee attributes to American culture is epitomized with the main character’s reincarnation from Jyoti to Jasmine, Jasmine to Jazzy, Jazzy to Jase and finally to Jane. Mukherjee’s following observations border on confessional note: “The kind of women I write about...are those who are adaptable. We’ve all been raised to please, been trained to be adaptable as wives, and that adaptability is working to the women’s advantage when we come over as immigrants” (Connell, Grearson and Grimes 17). In the process of
transformation she survives ugly times that involved rape, murder, terrifying challenges, and unimaginable crises. Further, in the transformation process, each time she emerges as a new self, destroying the old. As Mulk Raj Anand aptly points out, “For the flower to develop, the bud has to die, for the fruit the flower, for the seed the plant and for the plant the seed. Life is a process of eternal birth and death. All progress is sacrifice” (9). The word transformation suggests that Jasmine has achieved self-actualization in America—the only land on earth that gives one ample opportunity to work at making a dream reality. She does not suffer from nostalgia like the expatriates. Instead, she uses all her strength and determination to find a new identity in the adopted homeland. S. Indira comments: “The ‘fusion’ between the East and the West pleases her and she rejoices that her journey to America has unfolded her ‘affirming’ self” (182). Jasmine celebrates both the undaunted spirit and enthusiasm of a village girl who blossomed out of a bruised past into a challenging personality and a complete individual and the status of immigration in the U.S., which facilitates aliens not only to be acculturated but also to be assimilated into their adopted land.

The theme of reincarnation for true identity is once again effectively used in The Holder of the World by Bharati Mukherjee. It is a remarkable novel where the protagonist searches for her identity and achieved the same in the alien land. The Holder of the World is an ideal unification of the past and the present where the author traces the story of Hannah Easton, a New Englander, who was ultimately deemed as the mistress to an Indian Emperor. The novel exposes the change in geographical and cultural space - from America to India through England, and as a result of which the young protagonist experiences personal transformation. This is also a novel that moves inconspicuously through time and space. The title mainly concentrates with the theme of the story.
The Holder of the World is an important work in Bharati Mukherjee’s literary arena. Through this novel “Mukherjee has tried to convince the older Americans that their destinies are not distinct from that of the new immigrants because of their historical connection with South Asia” (qtd.in Stephen 88). Here, Mukherjee constantly mentioned the interconnection between cultures with which the modern world is made of. She “records the brutalities and the squalor of these dealings between peoples, as well as passions that yoke us together. What she offers as a model of cultural cross-pollination- alas, one cannot forever resist the temptations of allegory- is not a gentle melding but a more vigorous and a more bitter fusion.” (qtd. in Stephen 88)

This novel marks a significant shift in Mukherjee’s concept of immigrant identity. Until publication of this novel Mukherjee’s protagonists, especially in her novels, have been mostly women of Indian origin who have migrated to North America. In contrast, Hannah migrates eastward. Like Jasmine’s, Hannah’s journey is also a psychic progression. The psychic journey of Hannah not only leads to probing of the self but also makes her recognize the other side of her self. In this process of inward journey she encounters several hurdles and pitfalls. The journey of Hannah is not by chance or a forced one. It is more an escape from the rule bound, claustrophobic influence of puritan world.

The novel is basically the predicament of a white woman, Hannah Easton, who attempts to make an understanding of her life. She tries hard to put her past away, but at last the past gets repeated in her life. The novel illustrates the troubled consciousness of a young woman who is a victim of aloofness and restrictions of puritan world. Hannah’s strong spirit helps her to evolve as a winner in spite of the hardships. K. Appiah Anthony speaks of Hannah as a “… a woman whose triumph is one of courage, unyielding passion, of the obstinate will to survive” (7). Hannah Easton’s
courage shapes her discovery of identity. The physical, mental and emotional hardships
that Hannah undergoes transform her completely into a new and different personality.

Bharati Mukherjee writes down the complex web of stories that deals with
many lives, many places, many cultures and many ideas in this novel. It is an
imaginative re-narration of the centuries old encounter between India and England and
also an examination of America. It is an exciting and inspiring narrative full of greed
and ambition, lust and power, battles and betrayals, travel and history, interesting ideas
and difficult concepts woven around the life of an unusual seventeenth century
American woman, Hannah Easton and her travels through Moghul India and the way it
affects her personality. It shows Mukherjee’s experimentation with certain aspects of
scientific fiction, captivity narrative and historical romance. Further, it demonstrates
Mukherjee’s focus on the fate of immigrant women and their conflict and freedom from
repressive norms and relationships in order to assert their individuality and identity. In
the course of which Mukherjee also touches upon her other pet subjects like making of
America and new Americans and the important role of Asia that has always been in the
process. The same focus also allows her to deal with other important issues of
contemporary world like multiculturalism, identity crisis, rootlessness, individual and
collective identities, lives of immigrants, and the consequences of immigration on
individuals and societies. But most prominently it seems a novel that tells the story of
coming of age of its protagonist, Hannah Easton. It is the story of making of a woman
who emerges as a matured individual after several reincarnations with adventures and
misadventures, ups and downs, falling and learning from life experiences.

In Hannah, Mukherjee presents a definitive American character, which is a
result of immigration and transformation. In The Holder of the World, Hannah forms
her most striking relationships with other individuals while in India, and these bonds
created with non-Western people transform Hannah in what she retrospectively calls her transformation, a term connoting foreign rather than domestic. Her voyage to and residence in India force encounters with other characters that produce change: “She was alert to novelty, but her voyage was mental, interior. Getting there was important, but savoring the comparison with London or Salem, and watching her life being transformed, that was the pleasure” (THOW 104). Hannah also employs a comparative framework to make sense of the transformations spawned by her global experiences and relationships.

*The Holder of the World* makes frequent reference to Indian epics and allusions to archetypal characters like Rama, Sita, and Ravana. Indian literature has been shaped and moulded by the influence of Buddhism. The fiction of Bharathi Mukherjee has also been influenced by the archetypal presents of Buddhism in India. Sita’s story is part of an oral tradition she keeps alive, and this story represents an ideal of womanhood and marital relationships. She uses Sita’s story to integrate Hannah into Indian culture. The story of Sita by Bhagmati introduces Hannah to the Indian culture, but Hannah herself is unable to reconcile her experiences regarding sexuality and relocation with that of Sita because in her case, she is rescued not abducted by an alien man, Jadav Singh and unlike Sita she enters into an illegitimate relationship with Jadav Singh, instead of being faithful to her husband. Hannah crosses the racial boundaries like her mother by taking a lover from a different culture, and thus transgressing the colonial laws which forbid the mixing of white women with the native population. Sita, Bhagmati and Hannah carried different approaches towards sexual relationship. Sita maintains her chastity by guarding herself against the lust of Ravana, and becomes an embodiment of wifely virtues. The choices made by Hannah and Bhagmati bring to the surface the distinction between the two ladies. Bhagmati was raped and immediately disowned by
the family. She allows herself to be treated according to her culture and society that punishes the victim for the lost of chastity. Her circumstances forced her to become a Bibi. But in case of Hannah, it was she who chose to enter into the forbidden sexual relationship. Hannah breaks her Puritan laws and empowers herself to choose a path for herself. Both Hannah and Bhagmati refer to Sita’s story to reconcile and understand their individual experiences as women. But both interpret the story of Sita according to their cultural background.

Mukherjee links Bhagmati and Hannah as characters with names and identities in constant evolution. Henry Hedges, an English merchant and colonist, employed Bindu, renamed her Bhagmati, and adopted her as his mistress, his bibi. Hannah later renames her Hester, after her murdered friend in the New World, thereby equating Bhagmati and Hester for their individual qualities of loyalty and compassion, not their nationality. Bhagmati likewise renames Hannah, establishing reciprocal relationship. The reciprocity of the renaming removes the violence and suppression of immigrants associated with imperial naming processes, for it takes the nature of sharing rather than imposition. Both women also adopt the name bibi, as a reflection of their status as mistresses to a man of different cultural origins. Because Indian Bhagmati has an Anglo-Indian partner and white Hannah adopts an Indian lover in Jadav Singh, Mukherjee shows the two mirroring instead of replicating each other, reiterating the reciprocity of their relationship. Both Bhagmati and Hannah absorb a different culture name and transform one another through their association. Hannah’s affair with Raja Jadav Singh, a Hindu King in Muslim India, transforms her into the Salem Bibi, an amalgamated title that mixes her American and Indian selves.

Hannah’s self-realization would not have been possible, if she had not married to Gabriel Legge. She would have stayed in Salem till the end of her life without
realizing her self. Her marriage to Gabriel is truly an escape from her constrictive frontier society. The journey from London to Coromandel frees Hannah and allows her to widen her view. Gabriel’s desertion facilitates Hannah’s liberation. She frees herself from the restrictions of the White Town and separates from the limitations of a particular race, religion, colour and begins her search for true self. The eastern love brings Hannah happiness, emotional stability and above all security. The relationship with the king made her feel completely fulfilled. She becomes the bibi of the king putting at stake all the morality and the values of a conventional relationship. Hannah says “I was once a respectable married lady and look at me now – a bibi in a sari. We can all change” (256). She finds her identity when she is with the king. She is completely transformed. Rather, she justifies her every move. Beigh mentions:

What she felt for the Raja was in a different order from what she had felt for Gabriel, or not dared felt for Hubert. Gabriel and Hubert, for all their distinctive eccentricities, were men cast in one familiar mold, men who thrilled and disappointed with in a predictable range. The Raja was an agent of providence. He had saved her life, then saved her from the chilly, unfulfilled life of a governess. (229-30)

Hannah’s life turns into a true, eventful journey and she gets a new identity wherever she steps in. The journey that takes her, from, Salem in New England, America to Stepney in England, Stepney to Coromandel in India, Coromandel to Devgad, and from Devgad back to Salem. It is the journey that covers three continents, three oceans, and alien cultures. During the journey, she transforms gradually without losing all the connections with the past. “Hannah is a pure product of her time and place, her marriage and her training, exposed to a range of experience that would be extreme even in today’s world, but none of it, consciously, had sunk in or affected her
outer behavior[...] the forces of the universe were working within” (220). Hannah’s is the journey of self-discovery in which she is seen in different roles: Hannah Easton, a self-conscious child full of sense of humiliation, an insecure orphan, Hannah Fitch, an adopted child having secret fears, a sensuous, dreaming young woman brought up in puritan atmosphere, Hannah Legge, a devoted wife, a widow with uncertain future, a willing concubine, a warrior woman, Salem bibi, a passionate beloved who becomes a murderer for the sake of her love, a bold and persuasive orator, a prisoner, and finally Mukta who is no more a puritan woman. Hers is a life of courage, passion and will power. At the outset she is just a young girl who is ashamed of her past and heritage. By the end of her journey she emerges as a matured woman who accepts life as it is, develops a sense of identity and understands the meaning of existence. She realizes she is neither an American, nor Indian, but a New Engander who has led a unique and extraordinary life. Her journey proves the belief that with sufficient passion and intelligence, one can deconstruct the barriers of time and geography. With the strong obsession, Hannah faced all the oddities and difficulties, but finally struggles through them and finds out her true identity. Hers is a journey from immaturity to maturity, ignorance to knowledge, instability to stability, and agitation to sobriety. Hannah has proven herself to be a great adaptor and a survivor. She is an embodiment of courage, imagination and brazenness which reflects her rebellious spirit. She bears the ability to merge into different cultures as per need. She adapts so successfully and therefore, wherever she lives or whatever role she performs, she has proven herself to be the best.

Thus, *The Holder of the World* very closely explores the intimate and domestic life of a woman, Hannah Easton, who has been exposed to various adversities, but carried the will and the desire to come out as a winner. The story also unfolds that it is not the culture, but the psyche of a woman, which is responsible for the type of life she
leads. Here is Hannah Easton, who breaks every shell, she has been put into and emerges as an outlast. Mukherjee constantly creates characters who are the victims of various situations, but her characters instead of yielding, takes to fighting spirit and mostly are depicted as conquerors.

The theme of transformation is better woven by Mukherjee in another novel Desirable Daughters. Tara the protagonist, in this novel, may not have undergone any alteration of names, yet it is witnessed that multiple portraiture of her persona undergoing changes in succeeding phases of hybridization— from Tara Bhattacharjee to Tara Chatterjee and then simply Tara (a single mother, living in San Francisco with her adolescent son Rabi).

The Desirable Daughters describes the protagonist Tara’s attempt to explore her own individuality and acknowledge her difference from her two sisters, her family and her community. The main focus is on Tara's quest for her identity. Till the end Tara never finds a permanent identity and a place where she belongs to throughout the novel; Tara has to face the identity crisis common to every Indian immigrant in America. Tara is a symbol of an Indian who tries but fails to integrate herself totally with the American culture, yet fights her battles courageously in order to survive in an alien land. Tara’s position is aptly mentioned in the book back cover as “Desirable Daughters is set in America and India equally. It is both the portrait of a traditional Brahmin Indian family and a contemporary story of an American woman who has in many ways broken with the tradition but still remains tied to her native country.”

In Desirable Daughters, Mukherjee exposes the immigrant experiences of Tara Chatterjee and her elder sister Padma. Though, the story revolves round the three ‘desirable daughters’, Mukherjee mainly focuses on Tara, the youngest daughter of the three. Because Tara is the most disinterested in the Bengali family traditions and
legacies, until, circumstances force her to search for her roots. Tara Bhattacharjee belongs to traditional Bengali Brahmin family where the women like Tara and her elder sisters have no scope to establish their own individual identities. Tara’s migration from Ballygunge with her husband and re-creating new home in the USA never make her feel at home. Despite being a wife of affluent Bishwapriya Chatterjee, Tara’s Athertonian life creates a sense as if she belongs to an outside community. Bish’s excessive business in the cyber world and Tara's position to her husband like ‘a princess’ and ‘queen’ make Tara fail to reconstruct the home of intimacy, familiarity and emotional hearth in this alien environment. Tara’s longing to get rid of the constriction of the Bengali orthodox family in the USA and to lead an independent life get shattered by Bish’s traditional approach. The estrangement between them and Tara’s solitary life impel her to have nostalgic feelings for Calcutta life: “the narrow world of the house and city felt a secure to me as it must have to Taralata in Mishtigunj.” (DD 23)

As a diasporic writer, Mukherjee in this novel skillfully associates the element of nostalgia with the protagonist's quest for root. The significance of nostalgia in this novel is repetitively revealed. Being the part of the diasporic community, the authors always tend to elucidate on the heavenly past and tormenting present situation they are in. The meeting point of the past and the present too are intensified by the nostalgic representation of the characters endeavoured by the writers. In Desirable Daughters, through the nostalgic exploration, Tara has juxtaposed the past and the present situation. In order to unearth an unknown identity of a stranger, Tara’s yearning to come back to her original root is unraveled. The sudden nostalgic exploration acts as a catalyst to discover her inner self. Besides, Tara’s reconstruction of identity is rooted on her nostalgic recollection of the past. It is based on the flux of her thoughts about the
past coming to her mind in the present but in fragments, and not whole. It is a spatio-temporal reconstruction of identity. The importance of nostalgia is expressed here:

In discussing the significance of the past and in showing how much of Tara’s identity, however Americanized it is, is based on her memories of India, and her grandmother’s stories of the past, the novel reconstructs Tara as hybrid subject. Like her namesake Tara Lata of Mishtigunj, the Tree-Bride, she learns to resist colonization and the fixing of identities (qtd.in swain, S.P. 131).

Thus Nostalgia as a redemptive key plays a crucial role in the diasporic writing.

Though Tara wishes to lead a liberated American life, she could only partially assimilate into the alien soil of America. Her bond with the American culture is only shallow and superficial. Her relationship with the New World is ambiguous. Bharati Mukherjee rightly brings out Tara’s marginality and the aloofness as,

The moment I step outside the bookstore on to the crowded Haight Street, I lose the heady kinship with the world that I feel through my reading. Nobody pays attention to me other than to ask for spare change or press a handbill into my closed fist. I am not the only blue-jeaned woman with a Pashmina shawl around my shoulders and broken-down running shoes around my feet. I am not the only Indian on the block. All the same, I stand out, I’m convinced. I don’t belong here, despite my political leanings; worse, I don’t want to belong. (DD 79)

It is clear that Tara has an intense feeling of being cut off from her community and its life style. She lives as an outsider. She is in the milieu physically, but not with the milieu. Tara feels: “I'm feeling just a little alien and uncomfortable, a tinge of not-belonging, in the midst of such welcoming comfort...” (75)

Tara’s attempts to locate her own individual identity embroil her in crises in the U.S. As she has already shunned her traditions in the process of Americanization, she is
unable to choose what cultural apparatus she should provide for Rabi’s growth. Her crisis is intensified when Chris Dey, allegedly an illegitimate son of her eldest sister, Padma, enters in her life. Tara is confronted with a number of dilemmas leaving her groping for answers, inextricably linked to her own identity. In trying to solve the complicated tangle of her life, Tara gets a broad canvas of her consciousness. Tara suffers from the guilt of not keeping up with her traditions:

All the tender frustrations of dealing with unvarying ritual, the sweet sameness of daily life where anything new or unplanned can only bring disaster, and the guilty irritation of ancient bonds between the bhadra lok and chhoto lok, the master and servant, fills me both with pride and dread, because I have not fulfilled my duties, and I have not passed them on. As far as I have drifted from the path of piety, or even of family, their names sudden swell by dozens, the hundreds, filling my heart, brain, memory, soul and if were to speak at that moment, my words would have come out chocked…(246)

Tara belongs to both tradition and Modernity. Her identity is highly assimilative. She can adopt and accommodate herself both to her traditional Indian way of life and to her newly adopted American ethos. But she does not stick to the value systems of either of these ways of life. She moves on both the planes – the Indian and the American. She wavers between two lives: “may be I really was between two lives…” (251). Yet to strike roots, yet to belong to any of these lives, she illustrates the dilemma of diaspora and the problems of an immigrant who has a fluid identity associated with mobility and duality rather than stasis and singularity. Tara wants to redefine herself, to reconstruct her true self in time with her novel experiences in an alien soil. She wants to have a new identity but her efforts are futile. Inspite of her liberated and emancipated attitudes, her desire to construct her own identity, her
acceptance of her son’s gay sexuality and live-in relationships, she fails to go beyond
the tradition-bound life of an Indian woman. Tara’s position is clearly observed as,

Tara represents the dilemma of an average migrant. The demands of tradition
and their hold on one’s psyche are never ultimately rejected. […] She tries to
create a personal space for herself through compromise. Rejection of her
husband and associated security is a bold step for an Indian girl of Tara’s
background. […] Despite an obvious diffidence, she questions, at least for
sometime, traditional notions and shuns the clichéd answers provided by
conventions. She wants to redefine herself and create fresh gender relations.
(qtd. in Swain 132)

Through Tara, Mukherjee expresses her belief in the individual’s liberty and
freedom to mould him, to reconstruct and reshape his identity. She does not believe in a
reality that suppresses one’s self-expression and expectations: “Life was of all a matter
of shaping up and hitting one’s mark, satisfying expectation, achieving a quota.
Repudiations of reality were destined to die a dishonourable death.” (DD 153)

Though Tara has liberated and brave nature like Jasmine and Hannah, unlike
them, she finds her identity only in the native soil. Tara solves all her problems of
identity crisis by identifying herself with the legend of Tara Lata. Her visit to her
motherland represents final moments of liberation. It further indicates her
belongingness, and search for identity in her homeland which is lost by her migration to
USA, like Tara Banerjee of The Tiger’s Daughter. Tara feels a strange connection to
the Tree-Bride, whose history she had heard from her mother. Tara had been married,
has a son and travelled all over the world, yet she submits, she had never changed her
world. Whereas Taralata had accepted her marriage to a tree and then unburdened by
the demands of husband and family, she had assumed a redemptive role for herself. She
had opened her house to beggars, the poor, the sick and then the young soldiers fighting for the British Raj. She had transformed herself from the unfortunate Taralata to Tara-Ma, a rescuer, saint and freedom fighter.

Unlike Tara, Padma, the eldest sister, in spite of her immigration and dynamic attitude to life, devotes herself to the popularity of Bengali life and culture. Padma, after excavating her past, concludes that a true Bengali family cannot even be fully Westernized. She believes that their westernization will definitely be superficial, confined to convent school, metro cinema and movie magazines, which overlay a profound and orthodox Hinduism. Mukherjee here resolutely deals with the margins of national culture and also reflects on dislocations due to cultural cohesion between longing and disgust for Indian cultural tradition.

The middle sister Parvati had also rebelled in her youth. Her rebelliousness however, was not subversive, as she had chosen for her husband a Bengali Brahmin, Aurobino Banerji. Parvati and her husband had relocated to India and had established a typical upper class milieu to raise their two sons. In many ways Parvati was the most conventional of the sisters playing the role of the Bengali wife to completeness:

“Parvati makes her routine stops to her favorite Goan meat and poultry seller, Parsi baker, two or three fresh water fish vendors in the fish market, and half a dozen vegetable hawkers in the produce bazaar […] Parvati’s in-laws expect her to meet them when they arrive and to see them off when they leave” (55). Hence Tara’s two sisters traverse their own path of life quite happily.

Thus, the analysis reveals that Tara’s retrospective journey is in fact a return to the roots seeking Eastern solution to the weeds developed in the Western World. Tara exhibits the intricacies of the New World and seems to float rootless with time. She is the alienated self, suffering from the anguish and weariness of the diasporic experience,
yet to create a place for herself. She belongs to nowhere, oscillating between the nostalgia for the traditional past and the romantic present. The fluidity of her identity testifies not only her own but also the fluidity of the immigrants. She values her traditional upbringing but takes pride in moving forward in life. The image of her family values forms a wall of security around her that camouflage the fragile vulnerable self. Hence, like the other diasporic women protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee, Tara “stands in the shaky ground where East meets West and the sound of cultures clashing could shatter glass” (qtd. in Swain, S.P 133). Thus Tara maintains hybrid identity.

Identity construction is the passion of each and every individual. Every effort of him/her contributes to this age old passion. Diaspora individual encounters different cultures and it reshapes or reconstructs identity. But in this process he may lose his identity or reshape it. There is fluidity, shift in his identity. Adaptation, acculturation and assimilation in the host culture create new identity for them. Some may be successful in creating the new identity – hybrid identity. Likewise, Mukherjee’s protagonists confront different culture during immigration and some may have difficulty in adopting themselves in new cultural environment and some well adopt themselves and find their own identity. Through the analysis of the five characters in *The Tiger’s Daughter, Wife, Jasmine, The Holder of the World and Desirable Daughters*, it has been found out that Tara Banerjee Cartwright and Dimple are the victims of multiculture. Both of them are not able to balance the cultural difference between the home land and adopted land and remain rootless. They fail to create their own identity in the alien soil. Ultimately the identity crisis leads to their psychic disintegration and they meet with tragic end. So, till the end, they are the expatriates. On the other hand, Jasmine and Hannah Easton are able to assimilate themselves to their adopted land. They are brave enough to come across the oddities and they are
willing to reincarnate themselves as many times as possible to achieve their identity. Mukherjee states, “Jasmine or Hannah Easton aren’t passive women, by anyone's measure. They quite literally cross oceans, transform their worlds, and in the process leave behind a heap of bruised hearts and bleeding bodies!” (Chen, Tina and Goudie). Unlike Tara and Dimple, these two protagonists never thought of going back to their native land. Their flexibility and ability to adjust to the foreign environment are the main reasons for their coming out as successful persons. To Jasmine and Hannah, critical situations act as a catalyst, pace up their transformation, and help them emerge as self-assertive individuals. They are the right kind of persons to whom immigration is pleasure and progress. Tara in Desirable Daughters is courageous and has strong desire to establish her individuality in the adopted land but, at the same time she is attached to the traditions of her home land. She remains as Indo-American, thus maintains hybrid identity.