Chapter-I

INTRODUCTION

Literature of Diaspora occupies a significant position between cultures and countries. It generates theory and defines positions as it constructs new identities which negotiate boundaries and confines, and relate to different temporal and spatial metaphors. In a diasporic condition, cultures go across boundaries, transgress lines and take root after multiple dislocations, and the transplanted subjects feel nostalgia, or experience amnesia amid contestation and ethnic disavowal under specific conditions. Such migration has resulted in most cases politically and socially mobilizing category of nationalism in a diasporic space. The word 'Diaspora' is literally a 'scattering', carrying within it the ambiguous status of being both an ambassador and a refugee. The requirements of the two roles are different. While one requires the projection of one's culture and the ability to enhance its understanding, the other seeks refuge and protection and relates more positively to the host culture. Further categories emerge through the use of such words as immigrant, exile and refugee.

The varied migratory movements attempt to give some indication of the ideologies, choices, reasons and compulsions which may have governed the act of immigration. While 'immigrant' defines a location, a physical movement and a frontward attitude, 'exile' indicates an unavoidable isolation and a nostalgic anchoring in the past. The word exile evokes multiple meanings covering a variety of relationships with the mother-country such as alienation, forced exile, self- imposed exile, political exile and so on. In the Indian context the migratory movements are governed by the movement of indentured labour and of the trading communities; the same is also governed by the pursuit of higher standard of living, opportunities for work, education and corporate service assignments among others. In the trans-cultural global context a migrant is an important postcolonial subject. Rushdie remarks:

> [M]igrant is perhaps, the central or defining figure of the twentieth century [....] A full migrant suffers, traditionally, a triple disruption: he loses his place, he enters in an alien language, and he finds himself surrounded by beings whose social behavior and codes are very unlike, and sometimes even offensive to, his own. And this is what makes migrants such

> important figures: because roots, language and social norms have been three of the most important parts of the definition of what it is to be a human being. The migrant, denied all three, is obliged to find new ways of describing himself, new ways of being human.[1]

The whole process of trans-migration results in multiple homes and diasporic spaces and a migrant, in the process of new ways of being human, suffers dislocations and acquire a non-exclusionary hybridized global identity. Yet, this multiplicity of 'homes' does not bridge the gap between 'home' – the culture of origin; and the 'world' – the culture of adoption. In such precincts of history, the boundaries have an uncanny pattern of persisting in thousand different ways, and are very often conflictual. Homi Bhabha shifts this conflict to a theoretical gain; he transforms the diasporic 'scattering' to 'gathering,'[2] and thus shifts the focus from nationhood to culture and from historicity to temporality. Such hybridity cannot be contained either in hierarchical or binary structures. Others, like Rushdie turns to India, to mythologize the history. Naipaul transforms his sensibility to a perpetual homelessness, while Bissoondath rejecting the homogenization of ethnicity, projects immigration as essentially about renewal and about change. It is unjust, he points out, to expect – that the communities from which the immigrants emerge be required to stand still in time. To do so is 'to legitimize marginalization: it is to turn ethnic communities into museums of exoticism.'[3]

Abdul Jan Mohammed describes the expatriate's position as being one of either 'the specular border intellectual'[4] or the 'syncretic border intellectual.'[5] He seems to say that one finds oneself unable or unwilling to be 'at home in these societies.'[6] Such intellectuals are engaged in defining other possibilities and in their position and functioning as exiles they are likely to be critical of the new culture. Citing the example of Edward Said, Jan Mohammed comments, 'Quite often his position, which allows a kind of distance from Western literature and discursive practices, permits Said a secular role — that is he is able to provide in his writing a set of mirrors allowing Western cultures to see their own structures and functions.'[7]

Globalisation has produced a new structure and outline of migration and provoked conflicting structures and responses worldwide. The seemingly homogenizing effect of globalization cannot hide the different responses it has prompted in the different regions within its reach. As Avtar Brah observes, '*Home* is a mythic space of desire in the

diasporic imagination[...]It is a place of no-return even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of '*origin.*' [8]

Questions of origin and Diaspora come up with particular surface-tensions between internationalism and nationalism; the relationship between place and identity; and the ways cultures and literatures interact. In the process of diasporic cross-over new patterns of mobility are being drawn on the familiar landscape of migration and exilic exclusions. In the context of diaspora there is a process of structuring the shared identities in the making of a new subjectivity. Instead of being seen as fixed, becomes a dynamic and polyphonic construction that adjusts continually to the changes experienced within and surrounding the self. This is the same kind of assertiveness that is present in Brah's use of the term 'homing desire,'[9] simultaneously expressing a desire to construct a home in the new diasporic location and leaving the whole concept of 'home' open to analysis and criticism. This process of a 'homing diaspora' does not imply a nostalgic desire for 'roots,' nor 'is it the same as the desire for a 'homeland'; it is realized instead as a construction of '*multi-locationality* within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries.'[10]

The literature of Diaspora deals with such challenged ethnicity and provides sufficient evidence of the fact that diasporic space is pressing on the space of the home country. It is not that the centre has shifted alone; the margins have also been expanded to push the home cultures further to outer space. This inevitably demands the need to realize the significance of the cultural encounter which takes place in diasporic writing, the bicultural mechanics as well as the construction of a new culture born out of the transparent translation in a diasporic space. The process results in '[u]ndoing, dissolution, decomposition [which] are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns.'[11]

This thesis is to examine how the diasporic experience of dislocations can serve as a form of trans-cultural critique, offering the possibility of locating one culture's space in the multicultural environment and the postcolonial syntax of difference and deferral. This is also to find out the strategic value of *doubleness* in terms of *identity constructions*[12] and self- (re)inventions and also the perception of *splitting*[13] and translation as a strategy for cultural resistance in the popular fiction of Bharati Mukherjee.

Diasporic writing is a powerful counter-narrative and is perhaps necessary to create another centre and subjectivity as against the all absorbing design of colonial

authority. In the era of globalisation diaspora is a general component of contemporary world. This diasporic identity is often constructed through a negotiation with the politics of the country of settlement as well as a recasting of their relationship to the past. As the exemplary condition of late modernity, Diasporas do not tend to substantiate domination or territoriality as a prerequisite of nationhood. They inhabit and occupy the liminal spaces of the nation where the most creative interaction take place and where essentialist notions of ethnicity and belonging are distanced as against inherent specificities. Diasporic consciousness locates itself squarely in the realm of the hybrid where one can see 'Bones splitting breaking beneath the awful pressure of the crowd.'[14] It creates a new space and a new location of culture 'that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.'[15] According to Victor J. Ramraj:

> The attachment to the ancestral homeland varies considerably among the diasporans and is inversely proportional to the degree individuals and the communities are induced to or are willing to assimilate or integrate with their new environment, or remain wedded to ancestral customs, traditions, languages and religions. Those tending towards assimilation are less concerned with sustaining ancestral ties than with coming to terms with their new environment and acquiring a new identity. Writers like Bharati Mukherjee expect the assimilation to be mutual.[16]

The term *diaspora,* first used for the Jewish migration from its homeland, is now applied as a metaphoric designation for expatriates, refugees, exiles and immigrants. It refers to the work of exiles and expatriates and all those who have experienced unsettlement and dislocation at the political, existential and psychological levels. From the original particular reference to the scattering of Greek, Jewish, and Armenian people, diaspora has become a narrative to signify more metaphorical journeys of people from their initial homes to other places of dwelling and working, resulting in a divisible nature of identity. Said reflects on such cultural map of imperialism:

> [I]t is one of the unhappiest characteristics of the age to have produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than ever before in history, most of them as an accompaniment to and, ironically enough, as

> afterthoughts of great post-colonial and imperial conflicts. As the struggle for independence produced new states and new boundaries, it also produced homeless wanderers, nomads, vagrants, unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power, rejected by the established order[...]their condition articulates the tensions, irresolution, and contradictions in the overlapping territories shown on the cultural map of imperialism.[17]

In the field of literature, diasporic writing emerges from the margins, contested boundaries and the contradictions in the overlapping territories. The post-nation migrants negotiate to occupy a new meaning while illustrating the identity construction in the new global context. The liminal and marginal status of diasporic writers comes through, for example, in the terms that are used to describe this extremely heterogeneous group such as expatriate, exile, diasporic, immigrant, migrant, hyphenated, dislocated and the NRI. The Indian diaspora as mentioned earlier, has been formed by a scattering of population and not, in the Jewish sense, an exodus of population at a particular point of time. This sporadic migration traces a steady pattern if a larger view is taken over a period of time from the indentured labourers of the past to the IT technocrats of the present day.

In the above context, Diaspora is also a popular term in current research as it captures various phenomena that are prevalent in the numerous discourses devoted to current transnational globalization, borders, migration, 'illegal' immigration, repatriation, exile, refugees, assimilation, multiculturalism and hybridity. However, Brah claims that in such negotiation 'the notion of diaspora is the image of journey [...] not every journey can be understood as diaspora.' [18] What distinguishes Diaspora from some other types of travel is its centripetal dimension. It does not only mean that people are dispersed and dissolved in different places it also leads to the possibilities of congregation in other places, forming new communities. Scattering, as Homi K. Bhabha notes, becomes a gathering:

> I have lived that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. Gathering of exiles and émigrés and refugees [...] Also the gathering of the people in the diaspora: indentured, migrant, interned; the gathering of

> incriminatory statistics, educational performance, legal statutes, immigration status—the genealogy of that lonely figure that John Berger named the seventh man.[19]

In such gatherings, new allegiances are forged that displace and supplant former obligations of cultural necessities. The newly emerged imagined communities not just simply replace the old ones but form space in-between different identifications, a hybrid space, accommodating often the problematic components of culture. Diaspora, according to Bhabha produces incompatible systems of signification. Meaning is produced in the interstice that introduces creative invention into existence.[20] Bhabha insists that all cultural systems are constructed in the 'Third space of enunciation.'[21] He further says:

> The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living.[22]

The cultural identity that emerges out of necessity and nostalgia in this ambivalent space, makes any claim to a pure culture untenable; dislocations are inevitable and even necessary and the resettlement of the 'borderline community of migration'[23] ultimately turns out to be a search for new location of culture. Mukherjee depicts this diasporic truth in her analysis of the textual politics resulting from the colonial encounter. Mukherjee's position as a writer of Diaspora has aptly been described by Kellie Holzer:

> Mukherjee has explored the multiple self-reinventions possible as a result of continual displacement. Her major themes include immigration to the West, psychological transformation and the violence that accompanies it, women's perspective and search for autonomy, and a hybrid worldview that relies on her Hindu roots, Americanization, and, increasingly, on transnationalism.[24]

Postcolonial transnational counter-textuality began by affirming the contestation between estrangement and search for identity. The counter-textual mood of anti-colonial or nationalist writing finds its resources in the transcultural restlessness of writers such as Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri, Michael Ondaatje and Bharati Mukherjee. However, Mukherjee's position is different from that of other writers of Diaspora. In the language of Jasbir Jain, 'Diasporic writers have worked variously with their material. Ondaatje moved from culture to culture, several others have accepted the Janus-faced hyphenated self, choosing to locate themselves in hyphen, yet others like Bharati Mukherjee have shed their pasts, if not as material, at least as professions about it.'[25]

Thus, the textual mapping of the colonial encounter concludes with the new 'migrant' novel, a form which is explicit in its commitment to hybridity. Such trans-cultural narrative possesses a serious challenge to the cultural stability of the metropolitan centers. In its transformational quality, Diaspora is typically a site of hybridity which questions fixed identities based on mono-centric essentialisms. Specifically in the context of Caribbean Diaspora, Stuart Hall talks about 'imaginative rediscovery' of 'Caribbeanness.'[26] Furthermore, Hall explicitly connects this imaginative effort with the concept of hybridity:

> The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of "identity" which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.[27]

Different responses to migration, whether as an essential and inevitable phenomenon of globalization or a transformative consequence of political persecution, ethnic cleansing or natural disasters are articulated in literature produced in places where diasporic communities exist. The interaction between the 'host' and 'immigrant' cultures, complicated by translation, asks new questions of identity politics and the issues involved. It also problematises conventional notions of location and ethnicities, bringing to the fore an urgent need to re-explore the ways in which aesthetics, politics and ethics

interconnect, and out of this intersection cultural differences delineate patterns of such intercutting subjectivities. Being an amalgamation of diverse cultural materials, backgrounds, and identities, it nevertheless differs from other types of heterogeneity, implying at the same time a markedly asymmetrical relationship between the different elements of a given fusion. It also asks new questions of how culture and literature interact, more particularly, how the overlapping of old and new patterns of voluntary and forced migration is re-mapping cultural and identity politics.

Identity politics driven by migration, Diaspora and exile have in turn mapped literary imagination and produced literary writings of distinct characteristics. Rushdie in his *Imaginary Homelands* states: 'Migrants must, of necessity, make a new imaginative relationship with the world, because of the loss of familiar habitats.'[28]This change of habitat often results in translational representation of Diaspora and displacement, both spatial and psychological. However, their diasporic condition, their sense of exile and alienation, their metaphoric existence and their efforts to seek replenishment by making symbolic returns to their origins bind all this writing into a unity. Rushdie comments that migration 'offers us one of the richest metaphors of our age.'[29] He adds, 'Migrants-borne-across humans-are metaphorical beings in their very essence; and migration, seen as a metaphor, is everywhere around us. We all cross frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant peoples.'[30] In her novels, Bharati Mukherjee has dealt with such moving metaphors of culture- their displacement, dislocation, mutation and translation.

Bharati Mukherjee traces her descent from the early immigrants arriving at Ellis Island to those who arrive legally and succeed in living the American Dream. The status of Bharati Mukherjee as an immigrant writer in the United States has been confirmed by the publication of a critical anthology on her writing. In his Introduction, the editor Emmanuel S. Nelson asserts that the publication:

> [I]s also an unequivocal acknowledgement of Mukherjee's emergence as a major American writer with an international audience. Her works, collectively, provide us with a poignant chronicle of her own search for home, wholeness, and stability. Her greatness however, derives from her discovery in our immigrant lives of an occasion for art of epic dimensions.[31]

Mukherjee has declared that she is for mutual assimilation an acculturation of the dominant and immigrant communities, seeing the process as 'a two-way metamorphosis'[32] and advocating what she calls 'mongrelization' of people and cultures.[33] Diasporan Indian critic R.Radhakrishnan analyses the notions of being Indian and belonging to India of such exotic and uprooted immigrant subjectivity. He considers the significant disconnection between first generation immigrants and their successors, and the anguish experienced by them in not belonging either to India or the United States. He problematises the concept of 'authenticity and the role it occupies in the diasporan imaginary.'[34] He warns against the capacity of capitalism to produce a phenomenology of the present that reduces the diasporic individual to forget the past and bracket the future. Radhakrishnan considers the options open to first generation immigrants in their quest towards an 'authentic' identity. He emphasizes the need to make 'a distinction between information about the knowledge of India and an emotional investment in India.'[35]

In anthropological context the term Diaspora has ethnographic implications. Here it functions as a critical discourse and as a site of difference and becoming. Diaspora involves the conflicted space of centre-periphery, home-location, self-other, nation and post-nation, citizen-outsider, original-hybrid, sameness-difference, rooted-uprooted and so on. All these conflictual combinations collide before intersection; these are multi-referential and multi-dimensional. What emerges from such construction of the complexity is that the diasporic components have homogenous, collective identities bound together by shared feelings of alienation and dislocations and nostalgic affiliation with the past.

But the imperatives of such affiliation are different for the emergent new space for enunciation. The need to form affiliations within the mainstream ethnic range in the United States is the other essentials substantiated by Radhakrishnan. In such global climate 'therefore the politics of proximity has to negotiate dialectically and critically with the politics of distance.'[36] People who have lived away from their originary culture 'return through critical negotiation to aspects of their culture that they had not really studied before and [...] develop criticisms of their chosen world.'[37]

Before discussing Bharati Mukherjee's critical obsession on the problems of expatriation immigration and dislocations it is of foremost importance to linger awhile on certain terms closely associated with expatriate sensibility. While the main thrust of expatriation is on the native country and traditions left behind, immigration lays all

emphasis on the cultural life of the host country. The expatriate dwells on the reminiscent nostalgia of the past, while the immigrant celebrates his present in the new country. Migration itself has ambiguities, based on what Van der Veer would call the 'dialectics of *belonging* and *longing*.' He notes, 'The theme of belonging opposes rootedness to uprootedness, establishment to marginality. The theme of longing harps on the desire for change and movement, but relates this to the enigma of arrival, which brings a similar desire to return to what one has left.'[38]

Expatriation is quite a widespread phenomenon in this century and George Steiner describes the expatriate writer as 'the contemporary everyman.'[39] Uma Parameswaran considers the phrase 'the expatriate sensibility' as a legitimate literary term in the context of today's Commonwealth Literature.[40] Christine Gomez gives a still more perceptive definition of the term 'expatriation':

> Expatriation is actually a complex state of mind and emotion which includes a wistful longing for the past, often symbolized by the ancestral home, the pain of exile and homelessness, the struggle to maintain the difference between oneself and the new, unfriendly surroundings, an assumption of moral and cultural superiority over the host country and a refusal to accept the identity forced on one by the environment. The expatriate builds a cocoon around herself/ himself as a refuse from cultural dilemmas and from the experience hostility or unfriendliness in the new country.[41]

Expatriate writing in its theory and practice, is the work of the exile who has experienced unsettlement and dislocations at the existential, political and metaphysical levels in a hostile condition. With this experience, the travelling identities unsettle the philosophical and aesthetic systems. The phenomenon of exile has emerged in modern times due to uneven development within capitalism and due to the movement forced by colonial powers. The uneven development has led to unprecedented migration of the Asians and Africans to the West. The imposed and indirectly hegemonizing shift from territories has occurred within Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and also from these continents to the West.

This territorial shift has produced a new (un)-homed person whose mind works in a fluid paradigm for definition of national and cultural identity. In her phenomenal fictions Mukherjee visualizes how the immigrant subjectivity has lost the culture that used to unify the unanticipated and startling events of history leaving a negotiated space for recasting the comforting and stable perspectives, generating a new hybrid (sub)-culture. In this process the dislocations have led to some ambivalent and intersecting visions. The hybridity experienced is not just philosophical; it is also local and existential. The migrant existential subject position, that is determinant of this specific aesthetics, is faced with two centers; the external colonial or modernist, and the internal or national, filtering into a personal and essential identity. The chief feature of the poetics of exile is the trial during which it deals with these centers, between essence and metaphysics in the changed global condition.

Edward Said's writings are a very interesting example of this trial. As a Palestinian, born in Jerusalem and self-exiled to the U.S.A., he has always aligned himself with the Palestinian movement for liberation and a sovereign state. The experience of movement that is partly, self-chosen and partly imposed on him by history has become very important to him. His way of looking at culture and creativity has been altered. In an interview with Salman Rushdie he says: 'The whole notion of crossing over or moving from one identity to another is extremely important to me, being as I am- as we all are- a sort of hybrid.'[42] It is the disjunctive hybrid moment which is important to Said, and which upsets the conventional relationship between the centre and periphery.

The significant expression here is 'as we all are' in which he generalizes hybridity. The intermixing that he believes shapes all the shifting subjects. From his personal existential situation he universalizes. The fusionism and displacement of exile that he theorizes is in resistance to the colonial centre that marginalizes. It prevents counternarratives from emerging. Elaborating the relationship of the imposing centre and its effective narratives he comments on the American context:

> The executive presence is central in American culture today, the President the television, commentators, the corporate officials, celebrity. Centrality is identity, what is powerful, important and ours [...] And centrality gives rise to semi-official narratives that authorize and provoke contain sequence

of cause and effect, which at the same time prevent counternarrative from emerging.[43]

Said's 'counter- narration' are those of repressed cultures that are either subsumed by the meta-centre or threatened to be subsumed. The colonial, imperial, totalizing or homogenizing centre is what Said's exile aims at dismantling. In conversation with Rushdie on the Palestinian Identity Said emphatically stated 'Whether in the Arab world or elsewhere, twentieth- century mass society has destroyed identity in so powerful a way that it is worth a great deal to keep the specificity alive.'[44] Only a year earlier than this concentration, Said has talked about the dangers of 'difference' around identity even if it was small.[45]

What he means is that an exile in his battle against the meta-centre can assert his identity but distinctly grounded cultural and historical centre are the points from where he strikes. Here using small identity to 'privilege' oneself or one's community over others is not creative. It is for this reason that this identity is refused. John McLeod has identified a 'roots-to-routes' preoccupation as significant in writing by postcolonial novelists and critics.[46]

An example of this is the writing of Salman Rushdie, especially his influential essay *Imaginary Homelands* (1991). Rushdie's description of the displaced sense or *loss* of home, and the doubleness of his sense of self, is very significant, '[O]ur physical displacement from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.'[47] Rushdie also finds the fruitfulness of his 'double' position, seeing in 'broken mirrors'[48] the myriad possibilities for representation and a sense of self. As John McLeod notes, 'the space of the *in-between* becomes re-thought as a place of immense creativity and possibility.'[49] This view offers an interesting foundation from which to investigate the developments in Mukherjee's fictional writing and her almost exuberant vision of the possibilities of multi-ethnic harmony.

In his Reith lectures delivered in 1993, Said emphasizes the 'exile's "dyspepsia" or in his own words 'a kind of curmudgeonly disagreeableness' that makes him 'dislike' the trappings of accommodation and national well being.[50] In the last paragraph of *Culture and Imperialism* Said says, 'There seems no reason except fear and prejudice to

keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness as if that was all human life was about the connection between things.'[51] Said ends up at a kind of *heteroglossal*[52] dialogue of different identities, in which they connect with each other and become hybrids. If he rejects the meta-identity of the centre, he also belittles the small national identity of a battling community. In his view, the small identity tends to separate and privilege itself and thereby alienates from the community mosaic. Said's exile appears to be moving from hybridity to *heterogelossia* of the world through 'reinscription and negotiation.'[53]

Bhabha projects culture as hybrid from the side of migrant and subaltern. Bhabha's disjunctive temporality is analogical to Salman Rushdie's notion of 'broken mirror'[54] about the migrant. Rushdie even generalizes the excitement of the 'homeless' when he says: 'But human beings do not perceive things whole. We are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable of fractured perceptions.' [55] The migrant's or expatriate's cracked and fractured self have been indicated by Bhabha, using Lacan's notion as 'the twilight existence of the aesthetic images.'[56]

One of the major concepts of Diaspora is the celebrative expression of a sense of this twilight zone of *in-betweenness*, which includes connotations of hybridity, *heteroglossia,* mimicry,[57] acculturation, cultural shock, and loss of identity as nationals. In the essay "Mimicry and Man" Bhabha quotes Lacan while unfolding mimicry as 'an ironic compromise'[58] and a 'desire for a reformed, recognizable Other'[59]: 'The effect of mimicry is camouflage.... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled-exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare.'[60] This dappled and 'mottled' background of the polyphonic transnational identity is accompanied by lingering trauma of dislocations and slippages. Thus, trauma is another key concept of Diaspora. The metaphor of trauma draws attention to the ways that extremes of violence break bodies and minds, leaving indelible marks even after healing and recovery. But the notion of trauma has been extended to cover a vast array of situations of extremity and equally varied individual and collective responses. Trauma can be seen at once as a sociopolitical event, a psychological process, a physical and emotional experience and a narrative theme in explanations of individual trauma and social suffering.

Diaspora and hybridity have certain commonalities in their relationship to notions of migration, disjuncture and trauma. The narratives of Diaspora invariably show how these have come to be articulated in terms of the subversion of naturalized forms of

identity centered on the notions of migration and dislocations. This is neither to dismiss the power of nationalism, nor to valorize the identity building activities that are signified by hybridity or diasporic process. Rather it is to define the space of belonging at the point of rupture and dislocation. The notion of belonging and the imposition of a single idea of belonging in the trans-cultural environment are potentially brought under question by Diaspora, and the concepts of multi-status and dislocation come into focus. Each of these notions attempts to unsettle the problems associated with having multiple belongings or no sense of belonging at all. Combined with hyphenated hybrid identification, it can be argued that Diaspora allows us to move beyond the static, fixed notion of immigrant, and that the otherness inflects the lives of diasporic communities a cross-cultural and contested subject position. Under this light the cross-cultural negotiations are subversive, also very often creative and also a site for the agitation of hybrid construct, and invariably it offers a great potential for resistance to the politics of homogeneity.

Diasporic understanding by focusing on transnational links and emphasizing a multiplicity of belonging and identities, can challenge the fixity of identity and homogeneity invoked by ethnicity. Diaspora includes a sense of dislocations, which implies staking identity outside originary claims to a land. Diasporic consciousness is a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue. Diasporic subjects also carry a consciousness of difference. Such diasporic consciousness calls for identity production and reproduction through transformation and difference. Diaspora also questions the notion that territorial association or cultural affiliations are natural sources of identification.

The poetics of diasporic consciousness has thus become an informing principle for exploring works from a variety of social and geo-political locations. Reading texts in relation to a diasporic context is useful since it points to interrelatedness across geographic boundaries while simultaneously foregrounding the discreteness of linguistic, cultural and geo-political contexts, traditions and experiences. Rather than focusing on the familiar crises of alienation and globalisation, the focus here will be on exploring the dusky region of in-between spaces opened up as a result of the diasporic experience. The diasporic writers and their texts tackle with problems such as violence, adaptation and racism, and they are in constant dialogue—even if they do not want to be—with the culture(s) of both their origin and subsequent adoption. It follows, thus, that contextual aspects are central formative elements in the narratives of identity. What is more, as Brah

observes, there has been a notable feminization of diaspora.[61] This calls for an analysis of diasporic literature in order to enable us to take into account the changes in diasporic identity which includes the sharp line of demarcation between expatriation and immigration: 'Diasporic writings are invariably concerned with the individual's or community's attachment to the centrifugal homeland. But this attachment is countered by a yearning for a sense of belonging to the current place of abode.'[62]

Expatriation and immigration are not synonymous although the terms do not embrace contradictory concepts. However, it is important to draw a line of differentiation between the two though that is a thin one. As the term implies, expatriation focuses on the home land that has been left behind, while immigration denotes the country into which one has ventured as an immigrant. Today, in postcolonial literatures the expatriate sensibility has been a contested term. The impulse to take the literary journey home, towards 'history', towards 'memory' towards 'past' is the result of the expatriate's long journey from home. Faced with rejection, the expatriate clings to his ethnic identity.

Caught between two worlds, the expatriate negotiates a new space, a new location. Likewise, the expatriate writer negotiates new literary spaces. Therefore, an anxious sense of dislocation is characteristic of expatriate writings. The shifting designation of 'home' and the attendant anxieties about homelessness and the impossibility of going back are perennial themes in Bharati Mukherjee's fictions.

Bharati Mukherjee is a postmodern English diaspora novelist and nonfiction writer. She was born on 27 July 1940, in a Bengali Brahmin family of Calcutta. She spent her first eight years as a member of a large extended family. After Independence, she lived with her parents and two sisters in London for about three years. In 1951 the family returned to Calcutta. Bharati Mukherjee did her B.A (Honours) in English at the University of Calcutta in 1959 and got her M.A. degree in English from the University of Baroda in 1961. Her father encouraged her to join the Creative Writing Programme in the United States. She went to the University of Iowa where she obtained an MFA in creative writing in 1963 and a Ph.D in 1969.

At the University of Iowa Mukherjee met Clark Blaise, the Canadian writer and married him in September 1963. In 1966 the couple moved to Canada and lived there as Canadian citizen till 1980. Her fourteen years in Canada were some of the hardest of her life, as she found herself discriminated as a member of visible minority. Although those years were challenging, she was able to write her first two novels-*The Tiger's Daughter*

(1971) and *Wife* (1975). Finally fed up with Canada, she and her family moved to the United States in 1980, where she was sworn in as a permanent US resident. From 1966 to 1980 her position was that of an expatriate. She was writing in the manner of V.S.Naipaul, but then her literary models came to be like Bernard Malamud, Henry Roth and Isaac Babel. Because her displacement was not forced, it was her own choice for career that she had rejected her hyphenated identity. She questions, 'why it is that hyphenation is imposed only on non white Americans? Rejecting hyphenation is my refusal to categorize the cultural landscape in to a centre and its peripheries; it is to demand that the American nation delivered the promises of its dream.'[63]

She is the voice of the immigrants from all over the world, writing about them in tradition of immigrant experience rather than expatriation and nostalgia. To avoid 'otherness' she strongly opposes hyphenation in her national identity as Indo-American or Asian-American writer. Hence it is necessary to interrogate the nature of her work. It is also to examine the strategies she adopts in order to negotiate the boundaries. Kellie Holzer remarks- 'Mukherjee considers herself a pioneer, an immigrant writer; she adamantly does not identify as "hyphenated" American or a diasporic, or postcolonial writer. To be a "post-colonial" is to identify India as home, a move analogous to passport classifications and a proposition entirely too limiting for Mukherjee.'[64]

Instead of hyphenation, exilic or mere immigrant status, she focuses on the immigrants' true search for empowerment, dignity, their identity and a successful survival in the settled country. Her staying on in America and cherishing the 'melting pot' metaphor of America made her a writer of immigrant literature and a writer of Indian diaspora literature. Fakrul Alam justifiably comments 'She doesn't discard her Indianness, though she rejects hyphenated identity as Indo-American. She focuses on Indian women and their struggle.' [65]

In her first phase of literary career, being an expatriate writer, Bharati Mukherjee tries to find her identity in her Indian heritage. It is due to her nostalgia for home. The very first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971), is the exposure of her own married life and her return from America with her husband. The heroine's return to India exposes Mukherjee's personal difficulties as she feels alienated in Calcutta and doesn't seem to be a part of her Bengali family. Her second novel *Wife* (1975) is also a novel of expatriation. But it deals with the psychological problem of an immigrant woman. Here Dimple migrates from India to the USA with her husband, Amit Basu, who doesn't satisfy her

dreamy desires. She has drawn her husband's image from TV ads and magazines, which does not exist in him. It turns her neurotic and she murders her own husband.

Jasmine, Bharati Mukherjee's *magnum opus* came out in 1989. The protagonist Jasmine in contrast to Dimple, is a widow who gets uprooted and re-rooted severally in the New World and establishes a new identity in a new location of culture. It is the story of Jyoti who becomes Jasmine, then Jase and finally Jane. There is transformation of an individual, her displacement, dislocation and finally, quest for identity. In fact, it is the phase of Mukherjee's transformation from expatriation to immigration. Jasmine is an illegal immigrant in the USA, where she is raped by captain Half Face who has brought her. So to avenge, she murders him, changes her name and identities. As a caretaker of Mr. Taylor's baby she is Jase, with Bud in Iowa, she is Jane. She has tried new identities to survive in the new country.

Bharati Mukherjee's other fictional works are *The Holder of the World* (1993), *Leave it to Me* (1997), *Desirable Daughters* (2002), *The Tree Bride* (2004) and *The New Miss India* (2011). Her *Darkness* (1985), and *The Middleman and other stories* (1988) are her collection of short stories. In these works also she shows the search for her roots and resultant transnational identities in the process of globalization. All her narratives have an inherent urge to reveal the trans-cultural space and locations of identity wherein definition merge and collapse. Further, she has chosen fictions as medium of expression as a writer at the intersections of cultures in the tradition of East and West. Identity forms a significant axis of self-definition for Bharati Mukherjee in a trans-national cultural context. The ongoing histories of displacement and complexities of home and nation, form the crux and axis of a fiction.

The female protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee's earlier novels are characterized by their rootlessness and their incapacity to belong; while even their attempts to find roots are marked by violence and collision. Mukherjee as an expatriate writer says that she is 'writing about the here and now of America.'[66] Her protagonists are either Indians living abroad or Indians who have come back home after a period of staying abroad. The novelist's experience first in Canada and then in the U.S. have coloured the perceptions of her characters. The protagonists are characterized by certain qualities which are responsible for these characters being able to face and overcome or succumb to the traumatic experience of dislocations and chaotic transitions. Bharati Mukherjee has admitted that an issue very important to her is, '[T]he finding of a new identity[...]the

painful or exhilarating process of pulling yourself out of the culture that you were born into, and then replanting yourself in another culture.'[67]

Many writers who have moved away from one culture to another are caught between two cultures and are very often engaged either in a process of self discovery or recovery through resorting to history and memory or in a process of self preservation through an act of transformation. As contrasted with these, Bharati Mukherjee's thrust has been on a transformation and metamorphosis as in *Jasmine* and the creation of a third location. Expatriate writers like her have also been engaged in a permanent act of *uprootedness* and dislocation through travel and travelogues like Naipaul, who is a virtual embodiment of a permanent nomad whose identity now appears to be vested in a condition of homelessness. Moving outside the nostalgia protest syndrome, Naipaul has created a turbulent location, away both from the culture of their adoption and the culture of their origin.

The geographical dislocation raises several questions with respect to the poetics of exile, the nature of expatriate writing, the writer's relationship to his culture and his work. It's at one level, a moving out of the expatriate's dilemma of avoiding a schizophrenic split, of being pulled in two contradictory directions. The creations of this third location, does also at another level, destroy the concept of 'purity' of cultures and brings into being a self-reflexive self and a self-reflexive text. As Homi Bhabha has pointed out in the *Location of Culture*, the creation of a Third space[68] disrupts 'The logic of synchronicity and evolution which traditionally authorize the subject of cultural knowledge.'[69] It makes 'The structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process and destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated open, expanding code.'[70]

In Mukherjee's novels female identity is constructed through such multiple codes, components, language, myth, history, psychology, gender and race. It is directly connected with the subject's self- image and the unconsciously inherited positioning. The creation of this *third space* and its *cultural locationality*[71] reflects these complexities. Space provides in itself a dynamics for history. Space is an important determinant of the kind of relationships which are produced in the intersection of power in the diasporic combination of exclusion and inclusion in global ethnicities. In an out-of-joint situation of space and culture the transplanted must encounter splitting and dislocations. To quote Bhabha- 'We are now almost face to face with culture's double bind-a certain slippage or

splitting between human artifice and culture's discursive agency. To be true to a self one must learn to be a little untrue, out-of-joint with the signification of cultural generalizability.'[72]

Bharati Mukherjee with her peculiar sensibility for the cross-cultural crisis in the era of globalization endeavored to dive deep into such 'slippage' and 'splitting' and the distorted psyche of those immigrants who had been surviving in the conflict of traditional Indian values, inherent in their personality. The uprooted immigrants and their fascination for Western mode of living that they had chosen out of their professional compulsions or for their urge to achieve a greater freedom in liberal and dynamic society of America is also an area of Mukherjee's interest. In her fiction she has sincerely dealt with multiplicities of home and the recurrence of splitting and slippages in the process of identity construction in an alien country under a specific situation of social transformation.

Home in a diasporic condition is either disintegrating or being radically redefined. In her personal life Bharati Mukherjee witnessed the anguish of Indians both as expatriates and immigrants and in that given situation, Indian life, Indian values, rituals, fidelity to traditions and the grace of human relationship in social and religious modes of existence constantly stirred her imagination and moulded her creative sensibility. The preservation of Indian cultural ethos is neither a sole sentimental quest in her life nor a photographic representation made by an 'outsider.' It is endowed with deep emotional and psychological significance. It endows her vision with a rare humanitarian quality and universal appeal. In one of the interviews to Alison B. Carb, she categorically points out:

> I was born into a Hindu Bengali Brahmin family which means, I have a different sense of self existence and of immortality than do writer like Malamud. 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 has only one life.[73]

The affinity to Indian soil and culture is rooted in the mental map of Bharati Mukherjee. And hence her approach to life and its complicated pattern of struggle is designed and shaped in a peculiar narrative structure. To quote Maya Manju Sharma- 'In her fiction Mukherjee handles Western themes and settings as well as Characters who are

Westernized or bicultural. Yet she is forced to admit that the very structure of her imagination is essentially Hindu and essentially moral.' [74]

However, the critics like Mala Shree Lal still express their aversion to the Indian sensibility, scattered in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee and considers her only as an 'outsider' over- reacting to her native Indian tradition of typical Bengali origin. Mala Shree Lal's argument is:

> Mukherjee has deliberately problematised her identity perhaps overreacting to the likelihood of being enclosed in a coterie culturally, geographically and ideologically separate from her chosen home and citizenship. One must allege here that her sense of Indianness is narrow, restrictive somewhat bigoted for no writer is characterized by his or her passport details. What matters is the literary material to which imagination is superimposed.[75]

Bharati Mukherjee through her female protagonists expresses her concern for the problem of dislocation and assimilation, the assimilation of traditional Indian mode of living with new materialistic values encouraged by American society. Fear, constant anxiety, the obsession of not belonging, the panic of the New World, consciousness of Indian spiritualism and assimilative fusionism are the recurrent motives in the novels like *Jasmine*, *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife, Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*. Her *The Holder of the World* and *Leave It to Me* deal with the issues of reverse diaspora not included in detail in this study. Commenting on this aspect in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee, Pushpa N. Parekh remarks- 'Fear, anger, pain, bitterness, confusion, silence, irony humour as well as pathos underline her observations as she discovers for herself the undefined medium between the preservation of old world and the assimilation into the new.'[76].

Mukherjee also commonly engages in what might be termed as contested subalternity. An analysis of Mukherjee's novels –especially her earlier ones– confirms this view, although in so doing she also sometimes reveals (as in *Wife*) a far more ambivalent, and at times even negative, portrait of immigrant life, one which is sometimes strikingly at odds with her multicultural vision. Mukherjee says- 'Others who write stories of migration often talk of arrival at a new place as a loss, the loss of

communal memory and the erosion of an original culture. I want to talk of arrival as gain.'[77]

A notable recurrent feature of Mukherjee's novels is that they tend to depict fundamentally problematised new immigrant women who as immigrant subaltern are forced to undergo a series of transformations before they can become fully-fledged, self-confident and self- aware members of American society in negotiating the fixed and static borders. In these five novels, each woman is metamorphosed from one ethnic identity into another. In the earlier two novels, *Wife* and *Jasmine*, this metamorphosis occurs alongside and in the wake of a physical move from India to America. In *The Holder of the World*, this physical move occurs in reverse, as the novel's heroine, Hannah Easton, travels to South India, where she becomes an Indian concubine. In *Leave It to Me*, the central female character undergoes a voluntary transformation that tracks a physical and psychological search for her Indian roots. In each case, this transformation is captured by a name change, as the female protagonist adopts multiple identities, each representative of a different stage in the process of adopting a new identity. Each woman – Wife/Sita/Dimple, Jyoti/Jasmine/Jane; Hannah Easton Fitch Legge/Salem Bibi/ 'Precious as Pearl' and Debby/Devi – undergoes radical changes that are sometimes voluntary, but more often are the unjust requirements of a society prejudiced of distinction and intrinsically unstable, contingent and relational.

Mukherjee's characters do not simply *claim* America, they *transform* it, but in a different way in each novel. Uma Parameswaran has noted that a characteristic feature of much Indian expatriate writing is the inability to either 'wholly repatriate' or 'wholly impatriate.'[78] *Wife* demonstrates this inability since Mukherjee leaves her central character stranded midpoint at the end of the novel. In contrast, in *Jasmine*, according to Gurleen Grewal, the eponymous character Jasmine is a 'born again American.'[79] Bharati Mukherjee seems to assert that in the process of assimilations, one seems to experience reinscription and grafting before being located after dislocations. In the process of mutative change and translation, the immigrants can neither adopt alien culture nor can leave their culture of 'home' and finally a new hybrid culture comes to flourish in a new location after disjuncture. This 'race difference doubling and splitting'[80] results in 'cultural enunciations in the act of hybridity, in the process of translating and transvaluing cultural differences.'[81]

Thus 'Location' has become to a great extent an absorbing preoccupation with the postcolonial writers, especially the postcolonial immigrant writers. Exiled by choice or circumstance, the immigrant woman finds displaced from her roots, her antecedents, and her centre. She sheds her monolithic national and regional identity and becomes a repository of dualities and multiplicities. Her position as an outsider in the country of her adoption leaves her to create a distinct geographical and textual space that is contrary to the colonial discourse. In her novels Bharati Mukherjee has consciously created a cultural myth that is rooted in a multi-dimensional projection of the history and culture of the countries to which such women belong. About geographical boundaries and margins Said's point of view is important:

> The geographic boundaries accompany the social ethnic, and cultural ones in expected ways. Yet often the sense in which someone feels himself to be not-foreign is based on a very unrigorous idea of what is "out there," beyond one's own territory. All kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions appear to crowd the unfamiliar space outside one's own. [....] Yet there is no use in pretending that all we know about time and space, or rather history and geography, is more than anything else imaginative. There are such things as positive history and positive geography which in Europe and the United States have impressive achievements to point to.[82]

Mukherjee's thinking is chained to the paradigms of Western thinking. Caught within a system of binary oppositions that label her as an outsider, and the 'other', she tends to highlight differences and unstable configuration and assumes an exclusivity that negates the dominant principles within hegemonic Western discourse. Yet this projection of contrariness and difference basically arises out of a social content in which fixation is translated into a new location in contrast to racial and cultural stereotypes. Thus the cultural space that is created is crisscrossed by a series of dislocations, dissensions, and the location becomes a transcription and translation of the originary into a new ambivalent identity.

Mukherjee's critical discourse on Diaspora is a highly vibrant and is marked by violent expression of this ambivalence of the split self. It is not a mere transference of textual spaces. The writer creates a counter-discourse that is at once geographical, spatial

and differential. The subjective centre is contested in a critical juncture when the immigrant, rooted in a nostalgic and remembered experience, stands at the moment of interrogating the mirror image, in *global* and *reconstructive* [83] perspectives. Diasporic subjects are physically caught between two worlds and as such they are 'transitional-being[s] or 'liminal *persona[e].*[84] They are all moving subjectivities and respond ambivalently to their antithetical culture after dislocations and re-location.

Mukherjee's postmodern concern for diasporic parenthesis of location, dislocation and re-location is largely propelled by postcolonial environment of mass migration and disjuncture. In a condition of global anthropological necessity no human society has been able to avoid either immigration or dislocation and consequently none has been able to avoid multiculturalism. Since the late 19th century and most of the 20th century, voluntary migrants to the metropolitan cities along with the second and third generations of the early migrants have formed a part of the existing diaspora. This global movement has led to the emergence of a new narration of travel, dislocation, displacement and uprooting. The loss of the original homeland has inspired visions of 'imaginary homelands,'[85] which in themselves constitute a longed-for utopia.

In her narratives, new themes, new anxieties and searches have been expressed that reflect the traumas and fusions of the displaced as they strive to recover a sense of self or construct a new selfhood. In her fiction Mukherjee shows how the individual responds to multiculturalism in various ways through withdrawal or involvement, submission or assimilation or through short circuiting memory or by hardening of identity constructs. Mukherjee's expatriates are largely the creatures of loss, living a life of cultural depletion and estrangement, dwindling in the polyphony of global identity. Mukherjee precisely details the insurgencies and manipulations of these borderline subjectivities between 'melting pot' and 'cultural mosaic.'

Assimilative 'melting pot' unlike the 'cultural mosaic' may have the capacity both to dismantle the traditional concepts of a static, excluvist identity as is evident in Mukherjee's trajectory of thought. The fluidity of the chaotic condition transforms the alienation and displacement into productive ambivalence. Mukherjee is not in favour of the Western hegemonic aesthetics. She instead legitimizes the aesthetics of dislocation redefining the so called absolute and exclusive state of being. She probably insists on assimilation as a discursive strategy that compensates the alienation and dislocation by the adoption of a hybrid space that leaves problematised the meaning of 'home' itself.

Time, space, history and identity are sites which are visited through the concerns of the past that has undergone suppression, atrocities and multiple injuries and has transformed all perceptions of their mutating world.

Bharati Mukherjee admits of being subjected to racial discrimination in Canada. While her husband's creative acumen was recognized, her potentialities went ignored and unmarked. Canada's hostility to Indians and the non-recognition of her writing in Canada are the twin recurring themes which appear with almost obsessive regularity in Mukherjee's early works. She experienced herself as a psychological expatriate in Canada and clung to her ethnic identity — 'I remember how bracing it was to cloak myself in my own Brahminical elegance.'[86] She became a Civil Rights activist in Canada and wrote about the crippling effect of racism on the individuals. Both in the personal and political writings and her Canadian fiction, her experience of expatriation is poignantly manifested. Her fourteen-year-stay in Canada has stressed her spirit to the breaking point. Her essay *Invisible Woman* is a blistering reflection on those years. She writes: 'Many including myself left (Canada) unable to keep our twin halves together.'[87]

Viewing herself as a writer with two novels to her credit, Bharati Mukherjee identified V.S. Naipaul as her model in 1977. In *Days and Nights in Calcutta,* she says- 'In myself I detect a pale and immature reflection of Naipaul; it is he who has written most movingly about the pain and absurdity of art and exile, of 'third world art' and exile among the former colonizers; the tolerant incomprehension of hosts, the absolute impossibility of ever having a home, a 'desh.'[88]

Identification with Naipaul at this stage evidences that Mukherjee treated herself as an expatriate writer on the basis of her first two novels. The process of change from expatriation to immigration got off during Mukherjee's stay in India in 1973-74. She recalls, 'The year in India had forced me to view myself more as an immigrant than an exile.'[89] The realization of fluid identities and alternate realities too could be traced to this sojourn in India as she further observes- '[I]n India, different perceptions of reality converge without embarrassing anyone. My year in India had shown me that I did not need to discard my Western education in order to retrieve the dim shape of my Indian one.'[90]

The years between *The Tiger's Daughter,* and *Darkness* mark a change in the inner world of Bharati Mukherjee. In 1985, distancing herself from the earlier stance of an expatriate, she emphatically voices the futility of such a stance. In the Introduction to

Darkness, she says that until the spring of 1984, 'I had thought of myself, in spite of a white husband and two assimilated sons as an expatriate.'[91] She defines expatriates as conscious knower of their fates and immigrants — in particular to Canada — as lost souls subdued and pathetic. In respect of the stylistic devices of an expatriate writer, she referred to irony, so tellingly employed by Naipaul:

> Like V.S. Naipaul, in whom I imagined a model, I tried to explore state-of-the-art expatriation. Like Naipaul, I used a mordant and self-protective irony in describing my character's pain. Irony promised both detachment from, and superiority over, those well-bred post-colonials much like myself, adrift in the new world, wondering if they would ever belong.[92]

She thus reveals that she is freed of the impediments of expatriate nostalgia by the stringencies of life in the New World. The stories collected in *Darkness* mark a distinct departure in that Mukherjee is no longer an aloof expatriate writer. Now onwards, she regards expatriation in diasporic experience as a restrictive and self-defeating attitude in a writer.

Anne Brewster has termed Bharati Mukherjee's discourses on diaspora as *neo-nationalism.*[93] He is critical of Mukherjee's assimilation theory and fusionism and related issues. According to Brewster, 'Bharati Mukherjee's discourse on migrants in the U.S. positions them not on the margin of contemporary American culture but, rather, as exemplars of a hegemonic nationalism.'[94]She characterizes her writing about migrants not as oppositional to mainstream America but as representing the voice of the New America. Brewster argues that Mukherjee enunciates 'a neo-nationalism' and 'Her own literary success places her firmly within the American literary canon and this success reflects the receptivity of certain constituencies to a reinvention and revitalization of American nationalism.'[95]

The Tiger's Daughter depicts nostalgia and disillusionment both, she also has created here the myth of the nomad adrift in favour of an affirmation of belonging and the theme of the successful conquest of the New World. Mukherjee, however, rejects the nostalgia of this early book. The immigrant of the Middleman, she describes as a pioneer; and the eponymous character of Jasmine, 'a conqueror, a minor hero.'[96] In rejecting the experience of expatriation figured in *The Tiger's Daughter* she takes on the myth of the

immigrant in its place. In reaction to the literature and myth of expatriation Mukherjee endorses the literature of immigration, representing the neo-national sprit of America.

She figures this transformation in geographic terms. In Canada she was a psychological expatriate, in the United States an immigrant and citizen. Not undergoing this conversion from expatriation to immigration is in Mukherjee's eyes, evidence of nostalgia and a refusal to participate in the New World and embrace its citizenship and nationalism.[97] She claims and treats Rushdie among a number of writers who choose 'exile' and dispossession rather than psychological citizenship.[98] Brewster remarks that 'Mukherjee's conversion narrative invests India with the status of the 'old world' which is repressive and where opportunities are closed by caste, gender, or family. The process of abandoning the old order is explored most fully in the novel, *The Tiger's Daughter* and her first non-fiction co-authored with Clark Blaise, *Days and Nights in Calcutta.*

In the U.S.A. Bharati Mukherjee sees herself as an immigrant writer. In her works which were either completed or fully written, she explores the immigrant sensibility, and dislocation recognizing its duality and flexible identity besides taking into cognizance alternate realities. In the Introduction to *Darkness* she lays bare her position and creative priorities-'The transformation as writer and as resident of the new world, occurred with the act of immigration to the U.S.A [....] For me it is movement away from the aloofness of expatriation, to the exuberance of immigration.'[99]

The movement from expatriation to immigrating is also reflected in the choice of the writers who shaped Mukherjee's creative sensibility. After outgrowing and discarding the posture of an expatriate she rejected Naipaul as a model and chose Bernard Malamud whose central concern was life of minorities and its agonies. Though partially influenced by Isaac Babel, Conrad and Chekhov, she followed Malamud-- as his writings instilled unusual confidence in her:

> Like Malamud, I write about a minority community which escapes the ghetto, adapts itself to the patterns of the dominant American culture. Like Malamud's my work seems to find quite naturally a moral centre. Isaac Babel is another author who is a literary ancestor for me. I also feel a kinship with Joseph Conrad and Anton Chekhov. But Malamud most of all speaks to me as a writer and I admire his work a great deal. Immersing

myself in his work gave me the self-confidence to write about my own community.[100]

Malamud taught Mukherjee how to overcome being viewed as the 'Other' in a diagonally different cultural milieu. While Malamud's characters are from poor classes, humble shoe-makers, tailors and bakers, Mukherjee's immigrants are doctors, university professors, businessmen and women married to upwardly mobile professionals. Both address themselves to the diasporic experience of cultural alienation. Entering Malamud's literary space enabled Mukherjee to move her fiction from the constantly shifting margin to the unstable and shifting centre which has no fixed place. Thus, Mukherjee's approach to life and its problems is deeply moored in her Indian upbringing. Maya Manju Sharma refers to this aspect of her creative personality- 'In her fiction Mukherjee handles Western themes and settings as well as characters who are westernized or bicultural. Yet she is forced to admit that the very structure of her imagination is essentially Hindu, and essentially moral.'[101] Despite being grouped with other Indian writers albeit those who largely foreground their diasporic status, Bharati Mukherjee has asserted Americanness- 'I left India by choice to settle in the U.S.I have adopted this country as my home. I view myself as an American author in the tradition of other American authors whose ancestors arrived at Ellis Island.'[102]

'Exile,' Salman Rushdie writes, 'is the dream of glorious return.'[103] Perhaps in the context of diasporic Indian identity, it is useful to view exile as a self-imposed departure from one's homeland. In this case, it is also perhaps important to see exile as different from immigrant. As Bharati Mukherjee has written, 'the price that the immigrant willingly pays, and that the exile avoids, is the trauma of self-transformation.'[104] These 'exiles' are preoccupied by a sense of loss, an urge to look back at what they've left, to look forward to a potential return, and to resist any change that would inhibit that chance. Inherent in this desire is the tendency to construct an India to which one can return, modeled after the nostalgic diffusion of culture within the diaspora. However, behind this diffused mentality is the profound truth that physical separation from India invariably results in splitting and dislocations. In such slippage and splitting, the lost intangible is very seldom reclaimed.

Salman Rushdie unlike Bharati has chosen not to become an American citizen. Rushdie's novels instead are written to celebrate '[H]ybridity, impurity, intermingling,

the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings.'[105] Mukherjee however insists on that, dislocation is a necessary precondition of exilic status and argues in favour of fusion and assimilation to become an American citizen as a means to claim that most elusive of identities. Mukherjee sees a very clear distinction between the status of an *expatriate* – like her sister – and an *immigrant*, whose identity has been transformed by citizenship. Of her sister, for instance, she notes: '(M)y sister is an expatriate, professionally generous and creative, socially courteous and gracious, and that's as far as her Americanization can go.'[106]

"American Dreamer" is a more developed personal meditation upon Mukherjee's life, and tracks her move from India to Iowa City to study writing in 1961, her marriage to Clark Blaise, her move to Canada and the unhappy years she spent there, and finally her return to the US, where she gained citizenship and established an illustrious career as a writer and academic. The pivotal moment in Mukherjee's life was the moment she made 'the transition from expatriate to immigrant.'[107] This transition occurred through Mukherjee's decision to gain citizenship, which was the subject of "Give Us Your Maximalists!" Mukherjee's insistence here that she is something of a hard core American', by virtue of her decision to become an American by choice, is striking:

> I am a naturalized U.S. citizen, which means that, unlike native-born citizens, I had to prove to the U.S. government that I merited citizenship.... I take my American citizenship very seriously. I am not an economic refugee, nor am I a seeker of political asylum. I am a voluntary immigrant. I became a citizen by choice, not by simple accident of birth.[108]

Like her strong assertions regarding her own status, Mukherjee is equally assured in her view of what America faces in its multicultural agenda:

> [Q]uestions such as who is an American and what is American culture are being posed with belligerence and answered with violence. [. . .] But in this decade of continual, large-scale diasporas, it is imperative that we come to some agreement about who 'we' are, and what our goals are for the nation, now that our community includes people of many races, ethnicities, languages, and religions. The debate about American culture

> and American identity has to date been monopolized largely by Eurocentrists and ethnocentrists whose rhetoric has been flamboyantly divisive, pitting a phantom 'us' against a demonized 'them'.[109]

Like many other writers on ethnicity, Mukherjee rejects the analogies of both 'melting pot' and 'cultural mosaic', as well as the oft-cited theoretical notion of an ethnic centre-versus-periphery model. Instead, Mukherjee favours a model that discards the 'us' versus 'them' mentality, one that will 'think of American culture and nationhood as a constantly re-forming, transmogrifying 'we.'[110] Similarly, though perhaps more controversially, Mukherjee also rejects the label 'Asian American' as applying to her own sense of identity, precisely because, as she sees it, such a label simply replicates a hierarchical model of ethnic relations. 'Why is it that she asks- '[H]yphenation is imposed only on nonwhite Americans? Rejecting hyphenation is my refusal to categorize the cultural landscape into a center and its peripheries; it is to demand that the American nation deliver the promises of its dream and its Constitution to all its citizens equally.'[111]

Although this view may have been widely interpreted as vitriolic, by fellow Indian-born writers and academics, the doubleness of immigrant subjectivity as Mukherjee describes, is not as simple as that. In Mukherjee's view, it provides the very means by which she is able to roam imaginatively across myriad subject positions and circumstances in her writing. If 'history forced us to see ourselves as both the "we" and the "other", she notes, then 'that training [. . .] now heaps on me a fluid set of identities denied to most of my mainstream American counterparts . . (and) allows me without difficulty to "enter" lives, fictionally, that are manifestly not my own'[112] Together with "American Dreamer" and "Two Ways to Belong in America", "Give Us Your Maximalists!" constitutes both a personal and literary manifesto and can be usefully read as a rejoinder in postcolonial debates about migrancy, diaspora, mutation and belonging.

There are mutative stages in the continuing evolution of Bharati Mukherjee as a writer. The changes which occurred were due to vital inputs from the fast changing global climate. No doubt, that we encounter an entirely changed writer in *Darkness* but this dynamics of growth is present in *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife* also. In both these novels the author's voice is omniscient. However, they are not written to imply, as Jasbir Jain says, 'total rejection or a ruthless questioning of tradition or a love-hate relationship with the native heritage.'[113] Rather, these early novels depict the psychic journey of the

migratory self shared by many other Indians studying, living and working for long periods abroad in Europe or the United States.

Given Mukherjee's moral and metaphysical inclinations, it is all the more surprising that she should see herself as an immigrant American rather than an expatriate Indian. 'Language gives me my identity,' tells Mukherjee, 'I am the writer, I am because I write in North American English about immigrant in the new World.'[114] Bhabha leaves a question to ponder over very seriously:

> To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the 'unhomely' be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres. The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow [...] The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting.[115]

Mukherjee deals with the "unhomely" as a 'paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition.'[116] This is a necessity and has a "resonance"[117] far and wide. In her fictions the novelist seeks to negotiate the forces of 'cultural difference in a range of transhistorical'[118] locations where the displaced have their own discourse and counter-narrative of survival. According to Mukehrjee, there are two kinds of writers — those who confirm what the public wants to know, and the other kind who disturbs, interrogates the existing patterns. She clearly sees herself as belonging to the second variety. She tells Vrinda Nabar:

> Such writers are often misread. I sometimes think I've been too smart for my own good. I see a writer as always being in a minority of one, stating what is unsettling and disturbing. Knowledge and empathy have nothing to do with inherited race. A writer's identity is not exclusively biological: it is about the imagination claiming its territory and finding its own niche there.[119]

Indian critics have invariably viewed Mukherjee's non-native concerns unfavorably. She explained her position to Jerry Pinto:

> I think my position has been misunderstood largely in India. I insist on being considered an American writer because I want America to realize that in the late 20th Century there can be no American centre and periphery [...] I am fighting the American establishment to be regarded as central. I want to destroy the whole notion that Asians, or people of a different colour are 'sojourners' whereas those who arrived in America from Germany or Sweden are 'settlers.' It's also a way of resisting exoticisation.[120]

Bharati Mukherjee with her Indian heritage and her adoption of new identities as citizen of both Canada and the United States is in an important transit point of gender, race and culture in the post-colonial situation. In the dialectical translation of the cultural splitting and knitting Mukherjee sets out to write a discourse on dislocation through the prism of gender race and culture. With her predilection of conflictual assimilation and fusionism she subordinates the fixed notions of identity and psychic ambivalence.

Bharati Mukherjee has been considered by a few critics like Brewster, earlier mentioned, as an escapist and has been accused of becoming Americanized by the Western neo-colonial machine. But Mukherjee's devotion to America is not that of one who has given up an old nation to embrace a new one. For Mukherjee, America is the global mosaic, a transit point of assimilation and re-location of culture and identity. What Mukherjee could realize, as is expressed in the interviews, in her memoir, or as she seems to suggest in her novels, is that America as a nation is culturally constructed by the immigrants since inception and here *in-betweenness* and hyphenation is less effective as compared to assimilation.

Her characters behave erratically in the confusion of hyphenation and assimilation. But Mukherjee seems to gesture at an exclusive fluidity in immigrant's imagination which should be tilted to embrace fusionism and not mere hybridity, and this process of post-nation formation, dislocations are necessary pre-condition. She is not interested in a new American nationalism, instead creates a new discourse of diasporic condition as a mode of decentering. In Mukherjee's narratives, instability of "home" is a

diasporic signifier. It cannot be a static point of unproblematic culture and identity one leaves and returns to at ease. She focuses on the complicated dialectics of dislocation and on the dispersed and dispossessed fate of the cultural, geographic and psychic nomads heading towards productive ambivalence in a contrapuntal negotiation of identity. Said's comments on such shifting ground of "otherness" is significant. 'No one today is purely one thing' he says '(l)abels like Indian [...] or American are no more than starting points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind.'[121]

REFERENCES

[1]Salman Rushdie. *Imaginary Homelands.* London: Vintage, 2010.pp. 277-278.

[2]Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. NY: Routledge, 1994. pp.199-200.

[3]Neil Bissoondath. "The Uses of Ethnicity," *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada.*Toronto:Penguin, 1994.p.111.

[4]Abdul R. Jan Mohammed. "Worldliness- without-World, Homelessness-as Home: Towards a Definition of the Specular Border Intellectual," *Edward Said: A Critical Reader.*Oxford:Blackwell.1992.p.97.

[5]*Ibid.*

[6]*Ibid.*

[7]*Ibid.*,p. 105.

[8]Avtar Brah. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. New York and London: Routledge, 1996. p.192.

[9]*Ibid.*, p.193.

[10]*Ibid.*, p.197.

[11] Victor Turner, 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites *de Passage*', in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967, p.99.in Victor J Ramraj. " Diaspora and Multiculturalism." *New National and Post-colonial Literatures* .Ed. Bruce King, New York: OUP, 2000. p.228.

[12]Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture. op.cit.*, p.72.

[13] *Ibid.*, p.130.

[14]Salman Rushdie. *Midnight's Children.* (London: Picador, 1982), p.533.qtd. in *The Location of Culture, op.cit.*, p.xxiv.

[15]Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture. op.cit.*, p.5.

[16] Victor J Ramraj. "Diaspora and Multiculturalism." *New National and Post-colonial Literatures* .Ed. Bruce King, New York: OUP, 2000. p.217.

[17] Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism.* London: Vintage, 1994.p.402.

[18]Avtar Brah. *Cartographies of Diaspora. op.cit.*, p.182.

[19]Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture. op.cit.*, pp.199-200.

[20]*Ibid.*, p.12.

[21]*Ibid.*, p.54.

[22]*Ibid.*, p.10.

[23]*Ibid.*, p.12.

[24] Kellie Holzer. "Bharati Mukherjee." *South Asian Novelists in English*, Ed. Jaina C. Sanga.Greenwood: London, 2005.p.170.

[25]Jasbir Jain. "Identity, Home and Culture Through Dislocations." *Dislocations and Multiculturalism.* Ed. Jasbir Jain. New Delhi: Rawat, 2004.p.238.

[26]Stuart Hall. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora."*Identity, Community Culture, and Difference*. Ed.Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishert, 1990.p.393.

[27]*Ibid.*,p. 401-2.

[28]Salman Rushdie. *Imaginary Homelands.* London: Vintage, 2010.p. 125.

[29]*Ibid.*, pp.278.

[30] *Ibid.*, pp.278-279.

[31]Emmanuel S. Nelson. "Introduction." *Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspective.*Ed. Emmanuel Nelson. New York: Garland, 1993.p. xvii.

[32] Patricia Holt, 'Mukherjee's vision of America', San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle, 17 Feb. 1991, p.2 in Victor J Ramraj. "Diaspora and Multiculturalism." *op.cit.*, p. 228.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34]R. Radhakrishnan. "Ethnicity in an Age of Diaspora" in Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur eds.*Theorising Diaspora.*Malden N.A: Blackwell, 2003: p.124.

[35]*Ibid.*, 125.

[36]*Ibid.*, 126.

[37]*Ibid.*

[38]Peter Van der Veer. "Introduction" in *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora.* Ed. Peter Van der Veer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994.p. 4.

[39]George Steiner. "Extra-territorial: Paper on Language and Literature." London: Faber, pp. 10-11.

[40]Uma Parameswaran. "What Price Expatriation?" *The Commonwealth Writer Overseas: Themes of Exile and Expatriation.* Ed. Alastair Niven, Brussels: Libraire Marcel Didier, 1976. p.41.

[41]Christine Gomez. "The On-Going Quest of Bharati Mukherjee from Expatriation to Immigration." *Indian Women Novelists,* Vol. 3. Ed. R.K. Dhawan, Delhi: Prestige, 1995. p.165.

[42]Edward Said. *The Politics of Dispossession.*London:Vintage.1995.p.122.

[43]Edward Said. "Representations of the Intellectual." The 1993 Reith Lectures. London: Vintage.1994.p.393.

[44]Edward Said. *The Politics of Dispossession. op.cit.*, p.122.

[45]*Ibid.*,p.100

[46]John McLeod. *Beginning Postcolonialism.* Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2000. p.215.

[47]Salman Rushdie. *Imaginary Homelands. op.cit.*, p.10.

[48]*Ibid.*,p.11.

[49]John McLeod. *Beginning Postcolonialism. op.cit.*, p.215.

[50]Edward Said. "Representations of the Intellectual." The 1993 Reith Lectures. London: Vintage.1994.p. 39.

[51]Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism.* London: Vintage, 1994.p.408.

[52] Ian Buchanan. Oxford Dictionary of Critical Theory.NY: Oxford University Press, 2010.p.228.

[53] Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture. op.cit.*, p.274.

[54]Salman Rushdie. *Imaginary Homelands. op.cit.*,p.11

[55]*Ibid.*, p.12.

[56]Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture. op.cit.*, p.15.

[57] *Ibid.*, p.121.

[58] *Ibid.*, p.122.

[59] *Ibid.*

[60]*Ibid.*, p.121.

[61]Avtar Brah. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities. op.cit.*, p.179.

[62] Victor J Ramraj. "Diaspora and Multiculturalism." *op.cit.*, p.216.

[63]Bharati Mukherjee. "AmericanDreamer," Mother Jones Magazine (Jan/Feb.1997):1-2, http://www.mojones.com/mother_jones/JF97/mukherjee.html\

[64] Kellie Holzer. "Bharati Mukherjee."*op.cit.*, p.170.

[65]Fakrul Alam. *Bharati Mukherjee: Criticism and Interpretation.* New York: Twayne's United States Author's series. 1996. p.7.

[66]Bharati Mukherjee and Clark Blaise. "India is in touch with us" by N.P.Krishna Kumar, Indian Express 13 Sept.1992:16

[67]*Ibid.*

[68]Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture. op.cit.*, p.53.

[69] *Ibid.*

[70]*Ibid.*, p.37.

[71] *Ibid.*, p.53.

[72]*Ibid.*, p.196.

[73]Alison B. Carb. 'An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee,' *The Massachusetts Review,* Winter 1988, p. 650.

[74]Maya Manju Sharma. "The Inner World of Bharati Mukherjee: From Expatriate to Immigrant." *Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives.* Ed.Emmanuel S. Nelson, New York: Garland, 1993. p.18.

[75] Malashri Lal. "Bharati Mukherjee: The 'Maximalist' Credo." *Contemporary Indian English Fiction: An Anthology of Essays.*Ed. K.N. Awasthi, New Delhi: ABS Publications, 1993.pp.57-58.

[76]Pushpa N.Parekh. "Telling her Tale: Narrative Voice and Gender Roles in Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine." *Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives.* Ed. Emmanuel S.Nelson, New York: Garland, 1993.p.113.

[77]Bharati Mukherjee. (1997)"American Dreamer", *op.cit.* 1–2.

[78]Uma Parameswaran. "What Price Expatriation?" *The Commonwealth Writer Overseas: Themes of Exile and Expatriation.* Ed. A. Niven, Brussels: M. Didier, 1976 p.41.

[79]G. Grewal. "Born Again American: Immigrant Consciousness in *Jasmine.*" Bharati *Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives.* Ed. Emmanuel S.Nelson, New York: Garland, 1993.p. 181.

[80] Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture. op.cit.*, p.360.

[81]*Ibid.,* p.361.

[82]Edward W. Said. *Orentalism.* New Delhi: Penguin, 2001.pp.54-55.

[83]*Ibid.,* p.114.

[84] Victor Turner, 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites *de Passage*', p.9.in Victor J Ramraj. "Diaspora and Multiculturalism." *op.cit.*, p.216.

[85]Salman Rushdie. *Imaginary Homelands. op.cit.*, p.10.

[86]Bharati Mukherjee. "Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalists!" *New York Times Book Review,* 28 August 1988, p. 28.

[87]Bharati Mukherjee. "An Invisible Woman," *Saturday Night.* 96 (March 1981), p.37.

[88]Clark Blaise and Bharati Mukherjee. *Days and Nights in Calcutta.* Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1977.p.287.

[89]*Ibid.,* p.284.

[90] *Ibid.*

[91]Bharati Mukherjee. *Darkness.* New Delhi: Penguin, 1975. p. 1.

[92]*Ibid.,* p.2.

[93] Anne Brewster. A Critique of Bharati Mukherjee's Neo-nationalism, SPAN, no.34-35(1993).p.1http://wwwtds.murdoch.edu.au:80/~continuum/litserv/SPAN/34/Brewster.html

[94]*Ibid.*

[95]*Ibid.*

[96]*Ibid.*

[97]*Ibid.*, p.4.

[98]*Ibid.*

[99]Bharati Mukherjee. *Darkness. op.cit.* p.2-3.

[100]Alison B. Carb. 'An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee,' *op.cit.* p.650.

[101]Maya Manju Sharma. "The Inner World of Bharati Mukherjee: From Expatriate to Immigrant." *op.cit.*, p.18.

[102]Alison B. Carb. 'An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee.' *op.cit.* p.654.

[103]Salman Rushdie. "A Dream of Glorious Return" in *Step Across This Line*: Collected Non-Fiction, 1992-2002. London: Vintage, 2002.p. 197.

[104]Bharati Mukherjee. "Two Ways to Belong in America." New.York Times 22 Sep. 1996. 1-2. Sawnet 15 Aug. 2000 <http://www.umiacs.umd.edu/user/sawweb/sawnet/bharati_m.htm>.

[105]Salman Rushdie. *Imaginary Homelands. op.cit.*,p. 394.

[106]Bharati Mukherjee. "Two Ways to Belong in America," *op.cit.* p.1–2.

[107]Bharati Mukherjee. (1997) "American Dreamer", *op.cit.* p. 1–2.

[108]*Ibid.*

[109]*Ibid.*

[110]*Ibid.*

[111]*Ibid.*

[112]Bharati Mukherjee. "Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalists!"*op.cit.*, p. 28–9.

[113]Jasbir Jain. "Foreignness of Spirit: The World of Bharati Mukherjee Novels," *Journal of Indian Writing in English,* 13, 2 (July 1985), p. 13.

[114]Geoff Hancock. "An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee," *Canadian Fiction Magazine,* 59 (1987), 35

[115]Homi K. Bhabha. The *Location of Culture. op.cit.*, p.13.

[116]*Ibid.*

[117]*Ibid.*

[118]*Ibid.*

[119]Vrinda Nabar. "The Way I Write Has Changed Dramatically," *The Sunday Times,* 31 December 1995.

[120]Jerry Pinto. "Bharati but American," *The Sunday Times,* 5 January 1997, p. II.

[121] Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism. op.cit.*, p.407.