Chapter-II

The Tiger's Daughter

RE-INVENTING THE NOTIONS OF 'HOME' AND 'IDENTITY'

Over the last few decades there has been a mass exodus of women from India to the West for different reasons. It has resulted in a new expatriate sensibility because of multiple dislocations and expatriate writing has been able to transform the stereotype of the suffering woman to an aggressive or independent one. The migratory female subject gets involved in an act of sustained self removal from her native culture, balanced by a conscious resistance to total inclusion in the new host society. She is caught between cultures and this feeling of *in-betweenness* or being juxtaposed poses before her a challenge to maintain a balance between her affiliations. The trauma of displacement and dislocations result in a new narrative of identity and new discourse of female expatriation.

Bharati Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) emphasizes the need to reinvent and redefine the notion of 'home' and the notion of 'identity' from an immigrant's perspective. The term home has the immediate connotation of a natal territory or space that takes love, warmth and security for granted. Though home basically implies a specific geographical locale, in the context of immigrant experience, because of the need to belong in the immediate reality, its parameters are enlarged. Mukherjee says:

> My first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, embodies the loneliness I felt but could not acknowledge, even to myself, as I negotiated the no-man's land between the country of my past and the continent of my present shaped by memory, textured with nostalgia for a class and culture I had abandoned, this novel quite naturally became my expression of the expatriate consciousness.[1]

Her earlier works, such as the *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) and parts of *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977) and later *Desirable Daughters* (2002) are her attempts to search for *Indianness*. In *The Tiger's Daughter* the protagonist Tara makes an ambitious journey back to India after many years only to discover her home infested with a denuded tradition of poverty, squalor and turbulence. This corresponds with Mukherjee's

sabbatical journey to India with Clark Blaise in 1973, it was marked by similar experience of chaos and political upsurge. The collaborative memoir *Days and Nights in Calcutta* by Clark Blaise and Bharati Mukherjee reveals the process of adaptation and renegotiation of accepted stance of exile and immigration. They respond in distinctive ways to their shared but different experience of disjunction and dislocation. Holzer traces in these two works by Mukherjee some exclusiveness in her immigrant ethos- 'With *The Tiger's Daughter* and its arguably autobiographical parallel, *Days and Nights in Calcutta,* Mukherjee depicts the ethos of a voluntary exile who returns to her mother country only to realize the strength of the pull of the "new world" and return there a resolved immigrant.'[2]

In *The Tiger's Daughter* Mukherjee examines the reception of the Indian expatriate returned home and there is the same practical feeling of disjuncture and dislocation expressed in *Days and Nights in Calcutta.* On her return home, she laments at the low condition of the Bengali-Indian society: 'What is unforgivable is the lives that have been sacrificed to notions of propriety and obedience.'[3] Blaise, her husband, however becomes very much intrigued by the magic of the myth and culture that surround every part of Bengal. He realizes that in India family is all, and in the structure of an Indian joint family, nothing is a bigger issue than going against the family. He notes how in the West identity is shaped by maturity and self- independence, whereas in India 'identity (is) never to be sought, it's the lone certainty that determines everything.'[4] He has likened their stay in Bharati's father's house as 'a closet drama of resentment and dependence.'[5] He complains, 'If in the West we suffer from the nausea of disconnectedness, alienation, anomy, the Indian suffers from the oppression of kinship.'[6] Speaking from his privileged position of the enlightened Western sojourner he was trying to understand his wife's culture which naturally could not be a comprehensive account of Indian society as a whole.

Mukherjee's attempt to find her place in the family, to reconnect with the past and her frustration at being taken to be a foreigner marks her initial disappointment. She experienced subjugation and othering in Canada while in India she is looked upon as a sojourner from an alien shore. She sees herself through the eyes of others; she rues 'as if I had no history prior to going abroad.'[7] Her looks seem 'too progressive; too westernized, and therefore too rootless, to be a predictably middleclass Bengali woman born on as exceptionally middle class Ballygunj street.'[8] She is treated differently as an exceptional Indian woman married to a foreigner. As she meets Meena, the wife from the Marwari

household, who is discouraged to read in her home, Bharati is saddened by the plight of women in Indian society. It is inexplicable to the West 'that a young Bengali woman could rebel by simply reading a book or refusing to fast.'[9]The sabbatical years in Calcutta make her realize that she is more of a misfit in the old world and though she is unable to reconcile with her new world, still it is the world which she prefers- 'There was surely nothing ignoble in our desire to better our condition. In a city that threatens to overwhelm the individual who is passive, there was nothing immoral in self protection. But we had refused to merge with the city.'[10]

The visit to Calcutta made Bharati Mukherjee realize that India had changed a lot. The colonial attitude still existed among the elite Bengali social circles. The exploited and the downtrodden had reached the precipice of endurance and started agitations leading to chaos and disorder. The changed situation forced Bharati Mukherjee to realize the nuances of the two cultures. Mukherjee writes- 'Of course I had other reasons for going to India. I was going because I had discovered that while changing citizenship is easy, swapping culture is not.'[11] Mukherjee's self-imposed exile created confusion with her life in Canada and a feeling of uprootedness seeped in, after the realization that India of yesteryears had changed beyond recognition. She felt more comfortable in America where life was easy- 'It is, of course, America that I love where history occurs with dramatic swiftness and interest of half-hour television shows. America is a sheer luxury, being touched more by the presentation of tragedy than by tragedy itself.' [12]

The tour to India made her understand that she was more of an immigrant, than an exile, because she was more contented abroad than in India. Bharati Mukherjee at an early stage of life came to encounter the various facets of life of Indian society where a bride commits suicide due to noncompliance of dowry demands. Atrocities inflicted on women moulded her bent of mind: 'To be a woman, I had learned early enough, was to be powerless victim whose only escape was through self-inflicted wounds.'[13] The constant hunger-strikes, violent labour disputes made life pathetic. The helplessness led to irascibility, which she encountered all around her:

> My year in India had showed me that I did not need to discard Western education in order to retrieve the dim shape of my Indian one. It might have been less painful if I could have exchanged one locked trunk of ethics for another, but I had to admit that by the end of the year in India I no longer liked India in the unreal and exaggerated ways I had in Montreal.[14]

The illusion and mental construction of India began to wane bit by bit. The clumsy withdrawal of the mirage about Indianness made Mukherjee to resolve not to become a split personality. She doesn't have any native pool or prick of conscience in her assessment about her altered identity. India has thus become an 'other' and just one 'Asian country with too many agonies'[15] to remember. She has built along with Clark their homeland 'out of expectation, not memory.'[16] She says, 'As I prepare to leave Bombay for the slow flight westward, I realized that for me there would be no more easy consolation through India.'[17] In this context, however, Mukherjee's attitude whether escapist or defeatist is subject to debate and further analysis in terms her texts. She says- 'It was hard to give up my faintly Chekhovian image of India. But if that was about to disappear, could I not invent a more exciting perhaps a more psychologically accurate a more precisely metaphoric India: many more Indias?'[18]

In her works Mukherjee creates a vivid, complex world about the disruption and transformation that arises in the face of an intermingling and combination of cultures, the terrain which she has so brilliantly made her own in her acclaimed novels where the immigrants face multiple dislocations in the conflict between location and culture. She has her proposition to clarify her stand- 'It's possible with sharp ears and the right equipment to hear America singing even in the seams of dominant culture. In fact, it may be the best listening post for the next generation of Whitman. For me, it is a movement away from the aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration.'[19]

The Days and Nights in Calcutta demonstrates the process of embracing and renegotiation of previously accepted stances and position, as well as discourse on location, dislocation and relocation. It is not a mere memoir depicting the sabbatical journey to India but an inherently subjective view of the return to the roots, a route to the root through negotiations of perspectives and shifting power relations, achieved through the structure of a dialogue. In *The Tiger's Daughters*, the author creates a heroine who, like herself, returns to India after several years in the West to discover a country quite unlike the one she remembered. Memories of a genteel Brahmin lifestyle are usurped by impressions of poverty, hunger and political unrest.

In *The Tiger's Daughter* she uses the trope of the immigrant's homecoming to India in the hope of recovering her roots and the stability of her cultural characteristics as an Indian. The protagonist Tara Banerjee Cartwright makes a trip home to India after seven years to experience the native hue, but becomes painfully aware that her memories of a genteel Brahmin life style are no more there oriented as they are now by her

Westernization. Tara is to discover that the return to her longed for Camac Street where she had grown up, will fail to enkindle the sense of familiarity and belonging which she equates with 'home.' Her visit to India not only fails to correspond with the idyllic memories of childhood and adolescent vibrancies that had sustained her in her lonely room at Vassar; she also becomes aware that her homeland had turned malevolent enough to desecrate her shrine of nostalgia.

What she discovers is that she is more an outsider than a native having an objective anxiety with the complex and baffling web of politics, privilege and the hierarchies of power and class in India. Her traumatized and shattered dream of Calcutta makes her unconsciously perceive how life in America has changed her, but upon deeper reflections Tara reasons- 'How does the foreignness of the spirit begin? Tara wondered. Does it begin right in the centre of Calcutta, with forty ruddy Belgian Women, fat foreheads swelling under starched white headdress, long black habits intensifying the hostility of the Indian sun?'[20]

The Belgian nuns had taught her to inject the correct quantity of venom into words like 'common' and 'vulgar.' For Tara –the daughter of affluent, Bengali Brahmin parents, the 'foreignness' began to a great degree with her privileged Catholic education at St Blaise's, with Belgian nuns in 'long black habits' who taught from a point of racial and moral pre-eminence and with teaching resources from the West.

Thus Tara is trapped between the two socio cultural environments, between the feeling of rootlessness and nostalgia. She feels marginalized and abandoned at the same time. She can neither take refuge in her old home, nor can she take on a hostile attitude. The result of this confrontation is her split personality. Tara asserts: 'There were no definite points in time that one could turn to and accuse or feel ashamed of as the start of this dull strangeness.'[21] But her Western exposure too, does not unravel any definitive answers, leaving her no choice but to merge both the ways as best as she can and making her realize the pathos that lurks under such attempts at amalgamation.

In *The Tiger's Daughter*, Bharati Mukherjee finds the problematic areas in the life of the expatriate and conceptualizes Tara's split-self caught between her inner and outer worlds. The theme of acculturation and adjustment to an alien culture, the slippages, the trials, tribulations, the tremors and traumas that afflict and problematise the immigrants in a foreign soil have been very deftly delineated by Bharati Mukherjee. Here she deals with the in-between spaces of nation, identities, the interconnecting culture and shifting spaces. Mukherjee in this novel labours to reconfigure and restructure the concepts of such

shifting identity in the postmodern global context. In a critical and creative career that has spanned over thirty years, Mukherjee has been engaged in redefining the idea of diaspora as a process of gain, contrary to conventional perspectives that construe immigration and displacement as a condition of terminal loss and dispossession, involving the erasure of history and the dissolution of an original culture. In her ability as diasporic writer Mukherjee has produced a counternarrative to re-define the historical terrain in terms of challenged and contested space. She shows her resistance to the dominating and hegemonic colonial construct of ethnicity by venturing out to re-locate oneself through negotiation and reinvention.

The Tiger's Daughter is a fictionalized story drawing on Mukherjee's own first years of marriage and her return home for a visit to a world unlike the one that lives in her memory. At the historical conjuncture, the protagonist, Tara Banerjee, returns to India after marrying an American and faces a different India than the one she remembers as it was seven years before. The novel addresses Mukherjee's personal difficulties of being caught between two worlds, homes and cultures and is an examination of her identity in terms of society and nation.

Similarly, *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, co-authored with her husband, is a shared account of the first trip the couple took to India together after being married. Each offers a different India through their separate journals, and ultimately, the two tell the tale of a relationship that faces the daily difficulties of cultural barriers that have been drawn and separate pasts that linger. Mukherjee's works focus on the 'phenomenon of migration', the status of new immigrants, and the 'feeling of alienation' often experienced by expatriates as well as on Indian women and their struggle.[22] Her own struggle with identity first as an exile from India, then an Indian expatriate in Canada, and finally as an immigrant in the United States has lead to her current contentment of being an immigrant in a country of immigrants.[23]

Like her characters in diaspora, 'with sentimental attachments to a distant homeland but no real desire for permanent return,'[24] Mukherjee locates the trajectory of her identity and cultural politics in the course of crossing and re-crossing the multiple borders of language, history, race, time and culture. Disrupting the constraints and stringencies of nationalist boundaries, her poetics of Diaspora embodies her sense of what, as in her case, it means to be a writer who was born and raised in India, been a citizen of Canada and the United States, and shaped and transformed by the cultures of India and North America.

Mukherjee herself explains her aesthetic position on the identity reformulations made possible by diaspora and its contexts in terms that involve a trajectory from de-location to re-location, a practice that entails 'breaking away from the culture into which one was born, and in which one's place in society was assured' and 're-rooting oneself in a new culture.'[25] 'In this age of diasporas,' she argues, 'one's biological identity may not be one's only identity. Erosions and accretions come with the act of emigration.'[26]

Tara of *The Tiger's Daughter* has been educated in Western ways and differs from the traditional Indian thought pattern. In her position it is hardly possible to internalize the traditional role-playing of an Indian woman whose task is restricted within the four walls of the house. The prim nuns of St. Blaise's in Calcutta have taught her all about decency and feminity. She has been trained to be different from the traditional Indianness while maintaining the conscious adherence to Western ways. Despite her Westernization, she however, is not totally split and severed from the past. The cultural heredity still discloses itself in a critical moment. While facing the harsh conditions and unexpected turnaround, Tara, sitting in her lonely room at Vassar remembers the collection of little gods and goddesses her mother used to worship at home and prays to Kali, the Hindu goddess of power, to tide over her many awkward moments with the polite and inscrutable Americans.[27]

She marries an American, and when she visits India years after, she experiences a strange trepidation to accept her homeland in the same spirit. Her Westernization has done diasporic alteration of her already split self. She is attracted to the native hue painted in memory, but in reality she encounters a problem to belong to her motherland. She has been re-inscribed and translated and suffers dislocations, both psychic and geographical. Brinda Bose observes:

> Even as those symbols and icons that had struggled to sustain her from afar become real all over again, she realizes that the return is no idyll, and there are reasons for her to feel trapped and abandoned both at the same time. [....] The immigrant experience, Mukherjee firmly believes, may be analogized as a series of reincarnations, deaths of earlier existences followed by rebirths full of promise; this is borne out consistently by the tales of Tara, Dimple, and Jasmine.[28]

Mukherjee insists on the formulation of a survival strategy for the transplanted subjectivity amid splitting and dislocations that are to be 'reabsorbed into the base-superstructure division'[29] and gradually emerge into 'the third space of representation'[30] of their splintered self into the 'broken mirror of its new global unconscious.'[31] According to Jameson, as Bhabha insists, the extraordinary demographic displacements have resulted in the schizophrenic social imaginary of the postmodern subject[32] and this is how the newness enters in the world which is pluralistic altered and hybridized.

Mukherjee is suggestive of this 'newness' which can be the survival strategy that Tara adopted rejecting her alienated state in that educated Bengali society and returning to her adoptive country and American husband. Tara's traumatic experiences, her predicament as a marginalized self, pushed her to the rim of her native world, her old world of India. Her failure to adjust to the new world of her choice has been graphically portrayed by the novelist in a typical out-of-the-joints diasporic existence. Tara endeavors to reconcile these two diametrically opposite worlds in her mind and heart but fails. Like Bharati Mukherjee's other female protagonists, she is torn between her two socio-cultural identities, between her anchoring in an alien soil and her nostalgia for India her home country and homeland.

The central theme of *The Tiger's Daughter* is the woman protagonist's strange trepidation in the homeland. It is about the aggressive rediscovery of Tara Banerjee Cartwright, and her increasing knowledge about her 'foreignness of spirit.'[33] In the process of the fast changing identity shift she eventually realizes that her future lay not in it but in expatriation through mutation and translation. The psychological, social and cultural displacement that Tara suffers from, makes her nervous and excitable. Tara finds it difficult to relate herself to her family, city and culture. She observes the volatility of the city- '[C]ity Calcutta caught in the rhythm of a perforced change; belching with dirt and squalor and poise between disgusting bureaucracy on one side and the aimless, wantonly violent, strongly politicized youth and workers on the other.'[34]

Tara finds Calcutta in a precarious condition where near naked people sleep on pavements with rats and cockroaches all around. To her the city of joy seems simply inhabitable and suffocating. Mukherjee manages to present the decay of Calcutta and the decadent life of its upper class at the background of social and political chaos. The city seems to be falling apart at its seams because of a number of factors; endemic violence, chronic political unrest, economic stagnation and poverty, disease overpopulation and class conflicts.

The opening-page account of the street scene outside the Catelli-Continental, a luxury hotel that was once one of the glories of Calcutta is indicative of the degree of the city's decline: the entrance now seems 'small almost shabby' the walls 'are patterned with rust and mold' The sidewalks along the hotel are painted with 'obscenities and political slogans.'[35] On them are a colony of beggars and shriveled women, selling their wares. And yet — the hotel could once be described as the most important strategic point, for there was a time when Calcutta was the imperial hub of British India, the center of commercial and political powers.

Now the Calcutta elite still meet here and go through 'their daily ritual of espresso or tea.'[36] But they are people who speak without certainty and conviction and are increasingly under siege from people full of passionate intensity, ready to mob and brutalize them. And yet the Calcutta beau monde act as if 'the real Calcutta, the thick laughter of brutal men, open dustbin warm and dark where carcasses were sometimes discarded, did not exist.'[37] They are not ready to do anything to alter and correct the situation, having little appetite for heroic gestures. Their predisposition is to talk about moving out, or to slither into inaction or to strike indifference, burning within in hunt of self.

The 'self' in the female protagonists of feminine writers like Bharati Mukherjee, occupies a crucial position in their psyche. The trial and odyssey of the self in the novels of the writers is a reflection of their own transforming and trans-migratory self. Thus the delineation of the self for these writers serves as a symbol of self-realization and self-actualization. Bharati Mukherjee relies on her past experiences which serve as the raw material for her works. What she went though in her own life in the past seems reflected through the experiences of her protagonist, Tara Banerjee Cartwright. The self of the novelist is projected through the harrowing life of Tara, who serves as her alter ego. Fakrul Alam has rightly observed- 'A literary work is capable of providing role models, install a positive sense of feminine identity by portraying women who are self actualizing whose identities are not dependent on men.'[38]

Mukherjee's women do eventually find their distinctive voices after self-actualization, but not before they have undergone slippages and dislocations and struggled with the images of their own selves as representations of 'otherness' – exotic yet quiet, competent yet subdued. More often thus, women have grown up in Indian families which in the wake of the British Raj, amalgamated Western ideas with traditional beliefs; this often finds the young women emancipated but confused. Cultural roots retain

their hold in insidious ways: though in times of fear and indecision Mukherjee's Westernized Indian women return to seek comfort of traditional faiths, they increasingly discover it to be cold – and so the quest of a new identity continues.

Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* has a consciousness of her own identity in the process of the diasporic quest for self. She is wary of her feminine self and is unwavering to assert it in an ambience of disjunction and displacement. Tara grows up in the same environs as the novelist herself. Like her creator, she goes to the US for higher education but fails to adjust with the changed milieu. Her cultural shock in a foreign land is a manifestation of the novelist's own sense of estrangement and identity crisis. Tara's arrival in Bombay fills her with disappointment. The railway station to her 'was more like a hospital; there were so many sick and deformed men sitting listlessly on bundles and trunks'[39] such a frustrating milieu at Bombay reminds her of America, her second self. Tara is tossed between the two selves and when she comes to India, the second self is already rooted in her diasporic imaginary.

This divisive nature of Diaspora is seen at the outset of the novel. The novelist here portrays Calcutta, a city which bewitches, absorbs and devours all. It horrifies and mystifies the individual self. In the words of the novelist- 'There is, of course, no escape from Calcutta. Even an angel concedes that when pressed. Family after family moves from the provinces to its brutish center, and the center quivers a little, absorbs the bodies, digests them and waits.'[40] For Bharati Mukherjee, change is an expected trend in the sequence of survival strategies which differ from one location to another. The self encounters the pangs and inconveniences of this change. It stops to submit, to accomplish and acclimatize to the new socio-cultural milieu with the passage of time. The novelist observes: 'Changes in the anatomies of nations or continents are easy to perceive. However Changes wrought by gods or titans are too subtle for measurement. At first the human mind suffers premonitions, then it learns to submit.'[41]

Apparently, Mukherjee's increasing concern is that these new-born identities should not suffer from the premonition of secondariness or the terror of marginalization, a concern that is probably justifiable to immigrants everywhere – in two locations home and imagined home. As Jasbir Jain writes: 'Beginning with her arrival the novel ends with her proposed exit, rejecting India and her Indianness, unable to grasp its meaning and equally unable to understand the America she plans to go back to.' [42] Her Indianness is bracketed, questioned and challenged. She has to divide and re-ethicize the cultural and geo-social landscape. As an independent and autonomous individual, Tara thus comes

across a double cultural shock –first in the US and then in India. On her return journey to Calcutta 'The gestures, the tones of voice, the deportment and dismissals that she had forgotten in the States suddenly came back with dazzling assurance,'[43] because the experiences in that alien soil were gradually fading away from her memory. She had never thought that they could be easily blotted out. Bharati Mukherjee projects Tara's analytical and anguished self through emotional self-exposure:

> The darkness outside the window deepened, giving Tara time for unhappy self-analysis. For years she had dreamed of his return to India. She had believed that all hesitations, all shadowy fears of the time abroad would be erased quite magically if she could just return home to Calcutta. But so far the return had brought only wounds [...] she was an embittered woman, she now thought, old and cynical at twenty two and quick to take offense.[44]

The novelist probes the multiple wounds of the feminine mind of Tara, ones that are characterized by lacerated feelings cutting deep into her psyche and making her moody and depressed. She feels deeply the absence of her husband in Calcutta-'Tara put away her pen and aerogramme. She wished she had not come to India without her husband.'[45] With such abrasive feelings stemming from her affectionate longing for David, Tara gradually gets alienated from the metropolis of Calcutta which is 'too damned'[46] and confusing. She becomes a victim of its fast changing milieu and socio-political fatality:

> But except for Camac-street, Calcutta had changed greatly; and even Camac Street felt the first stirrings of death. With new dreams like Nayapur, Tara's Calcutta was disappearing. New dramas occurred with each new bulldozers incision in the green and romantic hills. Slow learners like Tara are merely victims.[47]

More than thoughts, Tara lives in a world of feelings of incisions, which regulates her anguish and alienation. George Lewis, speaking about the feminine psyche, maintains: 'Masculine mind is characterized by the predominance of the intellect and the feminine by the predominance of the emotions [....] women by her greater affectionateness, her

greater range and depth of emotional experience, is well fitted to give expression to the emotional facts of life.' [48] Bharati Mukherjee has expressed the emotional estrangement in Tara through her inability to visualize and locate David in India. In fact, it is her journey back to Calcutta (India) which has created a shadowy picture of David in her mind which in turn makes her uncomfortable and ill at ease in her native place. Tara could no longer picture his face in its eternity, only bits and pieces in precise details, and this terrified her. Each aerogramme caused her momentary panic, a sense of trust betrayed and of mistakes never admitted.

Thus, it is obvious that change of locale brings about a change of identity due to the loss of self. Exile and expatriation leads to the loss of identity. Tara experiences the externality of the inward, tossed between her American self and native identity. Hence David now appears to her as a strange and an unfamiliar creature, an alien. In India she felt she was not married to a person but to a foreigner, and this foreignness was a burden. Now she was more concerned about acclimatization and the adjustment she had to make as an expatriate in America. That was what she talked about in Camac Street. She hardly uttered anything about marital obligations and responsibilities. Sitting in 'on uncomfortable chain'[49] she tried hard to think that David was her husband. She still wallows within if she could honestly aerate her deep seated emotional attachment to him.

This is because both were alien to each other and a foreignness of spirit lay within them. This difference of binaries out of mutual foreignness impedes the emotional rapport between them. In fact, Tara still thinks David a foreigner, and she can hardly find emotionally satisfying words for him and New York was 'a gruesome nightmare.'[50] In both the West and the East, she is a misfit. In both the worlds, she finds the note of estrangement. Tara is a victim of changing social environment. Social happenings in the riot- torn Calcutta stifle and suppress her thoughts. She starts imagining David as an alien but ironically, she too becomes a stranger to her true and authentic self.

Fragmentation and dislocation subvert her identity. She loses her self and becomes depersonalized. In the moment of disjuncture and splitting she is utterly confused. Though she drifts from place to place in Calcutta yet in her imagination America is still alive. In Calcutta, she is just a wreckage of her real self. Alienation from her real self leads to her alienation from the society. Fragmentation of her 'self' is one of the manifestations of the same estrangement from the culture. She is internally split into two halves, which have become alien to each other, the Indian and the American. Bharati Mukherjee in an interview to Ameena Meer says: '[F]or me and perhaps for other

immigrant writers, there's a death and a series of rebirths. It is very painful and traumatic, letting go of the old self. *The Tiger's Daughter* was written while I was still an expatriate. Then comes the reconstruction of one self, which is very difficult.'[51]

In this novel, Mukherjee focuses on the same traumatic progression of cultural reconstruction and mutative translation. The translational space and the problem of slippages and dislocations in transnational communities is the major area of Mukherjee's diasporic narratives. Transnationalism in Bharati Mukherjee's fictions depicts an essential relationship that exists between herself as a migrant subject, and the nationality or the location of her native culture and destination countries- first Canada, and finally America. This intersection of culture creates in due course the new location of culture and identity. Problem of identity is due to the forces of globalization which include transnational exodus of the immigrants and exiles. The result is either cultural mosaic or melting pot and in such global village the sense of a homogenous self-contained character is something that is hardly possible. In such postcolonial condition a person on the alien shore is composed of all sorts of conflicting essentials.

However, in Rushdie's texts, such mongrelization of identity has an explicit historical perspective. It is related to the condition of postcoloniality, a condition where pure space and essential identities have ceased to exist, and where the diasporic subject is inevitably contaminated by diverse cultural practices. For example, the postcolonial 'immigrant other' is a potent figure of 'in-betweenness' contaminated by history. Likewise the (un)homed 'immigrant other' is fragmented by time, which challenges and disturbs the Western Enlightenment's belief in stable heroic and unified identities approaching relentlessly towards some identifiable Goal. The whole discursive process undergoes distinct phases of contamination and then mongrelization. Comparing the mongrel nature of post-mutation state he notes:

> We are Hindus who have crossed the black water; we are Muslims who eat pork and as a result [...] We are now partly of the West our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools [...] Having been borne across the world, we are translated men.[52]

It is these mongrel identities and 'painfully divided selves,'[53] operating within the matrix of an equally hybridized space and plural social practices that Mukherjee's novels

have been set. In her novels Mukherjee explores the fragmented plural and partial nature of post colonial identities, the inter-subjective and inter-cultural experiences, hybridity and hyphenation. She deals with the fluid diasporic identities and the conscious negotiation and contestation before the cultural translation. Mukherjee interrogates the myth of fixed and unchanging identities in expatriation and forced exile and the dilemma in immigrant experience while negotiating multiple challenges on one's identity and dislocation that one suffers. Tara likewise, unveils many aspects of the immigrant experience of the novelist in America. The experience of her characters in their homeland and abroad echoes her own concerns, her beliefs and faith. Simultaneously they also reflect her growing and transforming identity as an American.

In *The Tiger's Daughter*, Tara's alienation and the conscious feelings of dislocations are chiefly due to the hollow space between memory and desire. She had remembered Calcutta of the past but now, on her revisit to the metropolis after a seven years' sojourn in the States, she expects a lot of changes. In other words, She desires to see a new and better Calcutta but shockingly all her anticipation are frustrated when she sees Calcutta in a wretched plight — full of poverty and squalor. She had seen three children eat rice and yoghurt off the side walk. The moment Tara arrives at the railway station, She develops in her a nauseating feeling of isolation: 'Surrounded by this army of relatives who professed to love her, and by vendors ringing bells, beggars pulling at sleeves, Children on tracks, Tara felt completely alone.'[54] Her estrangement and isolations escalates when she feels ill at ease while moving away from the 'brutal atmosphere' of Howrah Station:

> For a moment she thought she was going mad. For she felt that the Bengal Tiger, set apart from the smell and noise of the platform, had in her moved out of the private world of filial affection. He seemed to have become a symbol for the outside world [...] a pillar supporting a balcony that had long outlived its beauty and its functions.[55]

Bharati Mukherjee interlinks the events in the novel like Tara's visit to a funeral pyre at the river bank, her meeting a small beggar girl afflicted with leprosy, the nerve-racking riots and demonstrations and the worst of all claustrophobic outrage by the politician Tuntunwala, to evince the terror and trauma of Tara's visit to India.

Thus, what Tara finds in Calcutta is simply disgusting and repelling. Everything has undergone a drastic transformation and simultaneously a total descent. Class and caste war has brought the city to the grip of violence and confrontations. Her dreams for a better Calcutta are thus shattered and she becomes estranged from the cold and humiliating milieu. Her alienation is aggravated when her relatives greet her as an *Americanized* Indian and her husband as an *outsider*. She has a feeling within her as if she has a horrible existence in Calcutta and that none loves her any more not even her own dear mother:

> Perhaps her mother, sitting serenely before God on a rug, no longer loved her either. After all Tara had willfully abandoned her caste by marrying a foreigner. Perhaps her mother was offended that she, no longer a real Brahmin was constantly in and out of this sacred room, dipping like a crow.[56]

In Camac Street, it was 'hard for Tara to talk about marriage responsibilities' and 'her friends were curious only about the adjustments she had made.'[57] Wavering between two poles of her existence, she had become oblivious of many of the Hindu rites and rituals, especially the practice of idol worship, widely prevalent among orthodox Hindus. She had herself witnessed her mother's worshipping icons since her childhood. But now she doesn't remember these rituals. There seems to be partial loss of her religious self, leading to the disintegration and fragmentation of her identity:

> When the sandalwood paste had been ground Tara scraped it off the slimy stone tablet with her fingers and poured it into a small silver bowl. But she could not remember the next step of the ritual. It was not simple loss, Tara feared this forgetting of prescribed actions; it was a little death, a hardening of the heart, a cracking of axis and center.[58]

In not being able to remember the rituals, Tara seems to have been alienated from her own experiences of childhood. This loss of self is not a simple one. It was a splitting of fringe and center. It had pushed her to the periphery of her existence and marginalized her, splintered the axis of her self. Thus Tara has become estranged from her society and the cultural values it carries within. Her estrangement as a result of the loss of her own

cultural heritage is revealed in her failure to sing 'bhajans' which she sang in her childhood days: 'As a Child, Tara remembered, she had sung 'bhajans' in that house. She had sat on a love seat beside a very holy man with a limp and had sung 'Raghupati Raghav Rajaram'. But that had been a very long time ago, before some invisible spirit of darkness had covered her like skin.'[59] .

The American culture had enveloped Tara like an 'invisible spirit of darkness'[60] thereby obliterating a part of her Indian self. It is the American culture that had made such common rituals like singing 'Bhajans' everyday alien to her. Her friend Reena justly remarked that she (Tara) has 'become too self centered and European.'[61] The 'Occident' had become an inalienable part of her self. Tara's hopes for a peaceful and unruffled stay in India are dashed to the ground. A victim of riot-torn Calcutta, everything to her appears frustrating and horrifying. There is a note of suspense at the end of the novel as to whether Tara survives in the violence or not. Locked in the car she thinks of David, thinks of her own predicament: 'And Tara still locked in a car across the street from the Catelli Continental, wondered whether she would ever get out of Calcutta, and if she didn't whether David would ever know that she loved him fiercely.' [62] She came to India in quest of peace, but ironically. She had to make peace, with the city, to compromise with its raucous and violent nature, its intolerably menacing reality: 'She felt she had made her peace with the city, nothing more was demanded. If she were to stay, she thought, there would be other concessions, other deals and compromises, all menacing and unbearably real, waiting to be made.'[63]

Tara fails to understand that self is an intangible center and that it is not possible on the part of one to harmonize one's moorings and one's roots with an 'other'. This is an illusion, and hardly could she be at peace with the chaotic milieu, to compromise with the turbulent metropolis and find love and security for her anguished and nostalgic self, she rants disgustingly: 'It was vague, so pointless, so diffuse, this trip home to India.'[64] Tara stands at the point of disjunction and feels dislocated. She belongs neither to the 'Occident' nor to the 'Orient'. Her roots are scattered and dispersed in both America and India. The Hotel Catelli–Continental serves as the symbol of her 'pointless' and 'rootless' existence. Existential alienation and self-estrangement dogs her both in America and India. Isolated and denied the right to be mentally free, her existence becomes restricted and circumscribed.

Such is the intensity and acuteness of her anguish and alienation that sitting in a car, she doubts if ever she would succeed in releasing herself from the monstrous grips of

Calcutta. Tara experiences this reality more in the mind than in heart. The novel portrays a darkness that pervades the presence, the location, and abandoned at the edge she has to imagine and locate another home beyond. In her letter to David she says: 'It's hard to explain what's happening to the city itself. I don't know where to begin. There's no plot to talk about [...] nothing really happened.'[65] She is wavering at the edge of historical and cultural re-visioning, in the process of re-location.

Throughout the novel, we find Tara in search of a location ventilating her antithetical and mutually differing emotions which symbolize the fragmentation and exasperation of her self. Seven years ago, 'the houses on Marine Drive'[66] were an object of admiration and beauty to her but now they become detestable, 'now their shabbiness appalled her.'[67] This change in her outlook is due to her stay at Vassar and her Americanization. To her estranged and rootless self, the splendor and magnificence of the outside world becomes merely 'alien and hostile.'[68]

Her contradictory feelings find an outlet in her relationship with her aunt. She says to Aunt Jharna, 'I don't hate you, I love you [...] love you all.'[69] Similar ambivalent feelings are found in the company of her friends like Pronob and Nilima with whom 'she had played, done her homework'[70] but now after seven years, she feels 'she feared their tone, their omissions, their aristocratic oneness.'[71] Nostalgia or indifference appears to be the only alternative available to Tara's friend in the city, even Tara begins to feel:

> [T]hat the misery of her city was too immense and blurred to be listed and assailed one by one. That it was fatal to fight for justice, that it was better to remain passive and absorb all shocks as they came.[72]

Tara herself begins to think that despite the few pleasant moments she has had in the city in this trip home 'Calcutta was the deadliest city in the world alarm and impatience were equally useless.'[73] No wonder, then that Tara's husband David Cartwright, reading her reports about the city as well as the New Yorker's Ved Mehta's journals on India, concludes that Calcutta was the collective future in which garbage, disease and stagnation are man's estate.

The actual starting point of the story dates back however, to a rainy night in the year 1879. It was the day of the grand wedding ceremony of the daughters of Hari Lal Banerjee, the Zamindar of village Panchapara. Standing under a wedding canopy on the roof of his house Hari Lal Banerjee could have hardly imagined what future holds in store

for his coming generations. He did not hear the straining and imprisoned ghost of change: 'Because the shadows of suicide or exile, of Bengali soil sectioned and ceded with, of workers rising against their bosses could not have been divined by even a wise man in those days.'[74]

After the marriage of Hari Lal Banerjee's daughters, life continued to be pleasant and in the village Panchapara many more marriages took place and many deaths too. After two summers Hari Lal Banerjee fell a prey to an assassin while mediating a feud. All the reputation and influence of Banjeree family died with him. Nobody knew at that time that 'years later a young woman who had never been to Panchapara would grieve for the Banerjee family and try to analyse the reasons for its change. She would sit by a window in America to dream of Hari Lal, her great grandfather and she would wonder at the gulf that separated him from herself.'[75] This young woman is Tara Banerjee, the great grand daughter of Hari Lal Banerjee and the daughter of Bengal Tiger, the owner of famous Banerjee and Thomas (Tobacco) Co. Ltd. Tara is packed off by her father at an early age of fifteen for America for higher study. When this young Indian girl comes to terms with the American life her reactions are one of fear and anger:

> For Tara, Vassar had been an almost unsalvageable mistake. If she had not been a Banerjee, a Bengali Brahmin, the great grand daughter of Hari Lal Banerejee, or perhaps, if she had not been trained by the good nuns at St Blaise's to remain composed and lady like in all emergencies, she would have rushed home to India at the end of her first week. [76]

According to Brinda Bose the identities that Mukherjee's women eventually emerge will exemplify the characteristics of a whole new breed in this country, the 'ethnic' who is also an 'American'. The process of finding their identities must be a matter of intense struggle with the self. With tradition, with the wonders and horror of a new culture, with growing aspirations, hopes and desires, where gender, race and the American experience meet in Bharati Mukherjee, the intersection is fraught with the tension of combat.[77]

In Poughkeepsie she feels homesick. She senses discrimination even as her roommate refuses to share her bottle of 'chutney.' As it is typical of Indians who are proud of their family and genealogy, she defends her family and her country instinctively.

When at the end of May, that first year abroad, girls around her prepare to go home she is seized by a vision of terror:

> She saw herself — sleeping in a large cartoon on a side walk while hatted men made impious remarks to her. Headless monsters winked at her from eyes embedded in paddy shoulders. She complained of home sickness in letters to her mother, who promptly prayed to kali to save Tara's conscience, chastity and complexion.[78]

Tara's husband David Cartwright is wholly Western and she is always anxious and apprehensive of this fact. She cannot communicate to him the finer nuances of her family background and life in Calcutta. Her failure to do so is rooted in their cultural differences. David is hostile to genealogies and often mistakes her love for family for overdependence. He asks naive question about Indian customs and traditions and she feels completely insecure in an alien atmosphere because Madison Square was unbearable and her husband was after all a foreigner.

The new Americanized Tara fails to bring back her old perception and views of India with the keenness of a foreigner and she finds that her entire outlook has changed. Shobha Shinde refers to this expatriate weakness: 'An immigrant away from home idealized his home country and cherishes nostalgic memories of it.[79] And so does Tara in America, but when she comes to comfort the changed and hostile circumstances of her home country, all her romantic dreams and ideals crumble down. She realizes that she has drowned her childhood memories in the crowd of America.

On landing at Bombay airport, she is hailed warmly by her relatives but her response is very cold and unruffled. When her relatives address her as 'Tultul,' a nick name which they always used for her, it sounds weird to her Americanized ears. Seven years ago while on her way to Vassar 'She had admired the house on Marine Drive, had thought them fashionable, but now their shabbiness appalled her.'[80] In the train she happens to share her compartments with a Marwari and a Nepali person. She thinks that both will 'ruin her journey to Calcutta.'[81] The tiny Marwari is very unsightly, and appears impudent while the level nosed Nepali is also equally horrible. Here reaction is voiced in the following extract: 'I have returned to dry holes by the sides of railway tracks, she thought, to brown fields like excavations for thousand homes. I have returned to India.'[82]

On her coming back to India, American now appears to be a dream land to her. At the station, though surrounded by the army of relatives and by vendors ringing bells, beggars pulling at sleeves, children coughing on tracks, Tara feels herself to be completely alone. Everything seems to be unreal except Bengal Tiger, her father. For a moment she thinks she might go mad. Even her father 'seemed to have become a pillar supporting a balcony that had long outlived its beauty and its function.'[83] When she reaches home she gets some peace of mind. Staying in her paternal house she also records her impressions of New York:

> After seven years abroad, after extraordinary turns of destiny that had swept her from Calcutta to Poughkeepsie, and Madison, and finally to a two room apartment within walking distance of Columbia, strange turns that had taught her to worry over a dissertation on Katherine Mansfield, the plight of women and racial minorities[...] New York, she thought now had been exotic. Not because it had Laundromats and subways. But because there where policemen with dogs prowling the underground tunnels. Because girls like her, at least almost like her were being knifed in elevators in their own apartment buildings. Because students were rioting about campus recruiters and far away wars rather than the price of rice or the stiffness of final exams. Because people were agitated over pollution [...] New York was certainly extraordinary, and it had driven her to despair.[84]

She recollects how she had shaken out all her silk scarves, ironed them and hung them to make her apartment more Indian on days when she thought she could possibly not survive. In America Tara was always under stress and anxieties and she was always conscious of her foreignness. She felt herself rootless but things do not appear better in India either.

What Tara had not known before coming to Calcutta but must discover it is what is obvious to her friend Reena. As Reena puts it in her Indian-English Idiom, 'You've changed too much, Tara.'[85] She begins to let 'little things [...] upset her'[86] and comes to realize that 'of late she had been outraged by Calcutta.'[87] Even the language she had used so spontaneously once upon a time now appears strange: 'she had forgotten so many Indian English words she had once used with her friends.'[88] Again and again, she finds

herself reacting to an event very differently from them. What surprises or shocks her in Calcutta appears to be quite routine to someone like Reena. Similarly, what she considers sensible and decorous seems silly and outrageous to others. For instance, her suggestion that women participating in a beauty contest should put on swimsuits lead to this rebuke from an Indian physician: 'I think your years abroad have robbed you of feminine propriety or you are joking with us.'[89] Tara herself wonders at the foreignness of her spirit which does not permit her to establish an emotional kinship with her old relatives and friends. She wonders, if it is in the 'drift inward with the winter chill at Vassar, as she watched the New York snow settle over new architecture, blonde girls [...]'[90] deep into the glitter and opulence of America.

In this connection Brinda Bose observes that the immigrant women in America suffer from double marginalization, they are the category of borderline community and are forced to negotiate displacements at multiple levels. To quote Bose:

> Ethnic Women in America are already twice-marginalized : by virtues of their ethnicity and their gender. The central figures in Mukherjee novels *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife*, and *Jasmine* Tara, Dimple, Jasmine — fight two simultaneous battles against marginalization during their early expatriate experiences in America 'coming as they are from (an) other world, their very identities are in question in America, calling out for a re-visioning and a re-defining at the start. The moments of change / transformation/ reincarnation are crucial because though the exercise is assertive / powerful / celebratory in its mainstream movement, the echoes at the margins valorize the anxieties of expatriation. [91]

Tara feels extremely put down by her inner trauma of such dislocations. She cannot match the past and the present. Her enthusiasm for the lost home that was much longed for, suffers jolt. She meets her friends but even in their company antithetical feelings beset her: 'Seven years ago she had played with these friends, done her home work with these friends, done her home work with Nilima, briefly fancied herself in love with Pronob debated with Reena at the British council. But now she feared their tone, their omissions, their aristocratic oneness.'[92] Tara forgets the next step of the rituals while preparing for worship with her mother and at once realizes: 'It was not a simple loss [...] this forgetting of prescribed actions; it was a little death, a hardening of the heart, a

cracking of axis and centre.'[93] Religion plays a central role in any culture. When she forgets the rituals it upsets her because at once she realizes what America has done to her. Now she has become 'foreign' to her native values also and it fills her with a sense of dislocation. She starts questioning the validity of her own identity.

The Catelli-Continental Hotel on Chowringhee Avenue, becomes her favourite place and she spends much of her time in that hotel along with her friends. There were many parties in honour of Tara's return, many tea parties, many dinners hosted by friends. At first Tara looks forward to these parties. She rushes to Pronob's or Reena's so that she can share reminiscences with people who understand her attitudes and mistakes- 'her friends had seemed to her a peaceful island in the midst of Calcutta's commotion. She had leaned heavily on their self-confidence.'[94] But gradually the beliefs and the omissions of her friends begin to unsettle her: 'Her friends let slip their disapproval of her, they suggested her marriage had been imprudent, that the seven years abroad had eroded all that was fine and sensitive in her Bengali nature.'[95] Tara feels restless and agitated at the lack of gravity and compactness in the group of her friends. They want to listen to stories about America, about television and automobiles, frozen foods and record players but when she mentions ghettos or student demonstrations, they protest.

Tara notices a lot of change in her friends during these seven years. She cannot think of Pronob being a big industrialist. For Tara it is difficult to stand Pronob's flabbiness and his ill-humored nature whom she once saw as an insightful and poetic young man. Very often her friends and relatives make her feel guilty for marrying an American. 'In India she felt she was not burden.'[96]Though she writes to David regularly, she fails to communicate her feelings to him. Because 'It was hard to tell a foreigner that she loved him very much when she was surrounded by the Bengal Tiger's chairs, tables, flowers, and portraits.'[97]

How can she 'describe in an aerogramme the endless conversations at the Catelli-Continental, or the strange old man (Joyonto Roy Choudhury) in a blazer, who tried to catch her eye in the café, or the hatred of Aunt Jharna or the bitterness of slogans scrawled on walls of stores and hotels.'[98] Tara is totally confused. She cannot share her feelings with her friends and relatives and she fails to share things with her foreign husband. For David she is a foreigner and for her Indian friends and relatives she is a sinner who has polluted herself by marrying a 'mleccha' (outcaste). M. Sivaram Krishna blames her American husband and Western education for her feelings of rootlessness and lack of identity:

> Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* finds it difficult to relate herself to her family, city, culture in general since her marriage to an American, her western education are enough signs to brand her as an 'alienated' westernized woman. The implicit logic is that since she is exposed to the West and has absorbed its values she must be necessarily alienated. Therefore, even when she tries to 'voice' her continuing attachment for an identity with India, the voice does not carry conviction for it is at variance with the usual stance — of indifference and arrogance — one generally associates with the 'westernized' (exiled) Indian. [99]

Tara understands that America has not just transformed her completely, but she has been translated in to a new entity. Tara's westernization has opened her eyes to the gulf between the two worlds and the two locations of culture. In India she sees disease, despair, riot, poverty and the children eating helplessly off the sidewalk. Now she has started looking at the hideous and ugly aspects of India. She persistently feels a continuing conflict between her old sense of perception and attitude on Calcutta and her changed outlook. She shows symptoms of 'obsessional modernity'[100] under Western influence of culture. Jasbir Jain comments: 'Tara's consciousness of the present is rooted in her life in the States and when she looks at India anew it is not through her childhood associations or her past memories but through the eyes of her foreign husband David. Her reactions are those of a tourist, of a foreigner.'[101]

Tara visits a funeral pyre at the river bank with Joyonto Roy Chowdhury, the owner of tea estates in Assam and runs at the sight of the 'tantric' who stretches his hands for her palms. She fails to read his intentions and thinks that the man needs 'bakshees' (alms). It seems she does not want to show her palms to the 'tantric' because she is conscious of her sin of marrying an American without matching her horoscopes. Again her visit with Joyonto Roy to his Tollygunge compound turns out to be painful. When Joyonto Roy proposes to show her the place and says that it's a 'bustee' (slum). Tara is all ecstatic like the Western tourists: 'Is it a 'bustee'? asked Tara. She recalled frustrating moments at Vassar, when idealistic dormitory neighbours had asked her to describe the slums of India.'[102] The winding and irregular road to Tollygunge troubles her a lot. She cannot bear the dust and foul smell of filth and squalor:

> Had Tara visualized at the start of the journey this exposure to ugliness and danger, to viruses that stalked the street, to dogs and cows scrapping in garbage dumps, she would have refused Joyonto's invitation.[103]

Joyonto shows her his vast compound which is now occupied by refugees and quite sentimentally tells her how he proposed his garden, etc. But Tara is hardly interested in these details:

> Tara was bewildered by her first view of the large and dusty compound. She thought if she had been David she would have taken out notebook and pen and entered important little observations. All she saw was the obvious. Goats and cows grazing in the dust, dogs chasing the friskier children, men sleeping on string beds under a banyan tree. Children playing with mud beside a cracked tube well. Rows of hovels and huts.[104]

Tara loses her balance of mind when she sees a little girl suffering from leprosy. She screams and becomes almost hysteric. Actually 'Tara has never been a part of the crowd. She has always been sheltered, as child, young adult, and women; Each excursion traumatizes her by bringing her closer to the touch of the masses.'[105] In fact, disease, suffering, and poverty are part of existence and a common Indian ignores it or rather accepts it as an integral part of life. Tara herself once ignored all these things but her stay in the States has opened her eyes to the gulf between the lives of the poor of the West. Now she has started looking at India as a land of poor people living in hostile, unhygienic conditions and suffering from starvation, decay and disease.

Along with the families of her friends Tara's family once moves to Darjeeling for a holiday trip. Darjeeling is as stunning as ever. Tara tries to enjoy the beauties of Blue Mountains and natural greenness. But her trip is marred by ugly and violent incidents. One afternoon she accompanies Pronob and an American lady Antonia on horseback around the Observatory Hill but on the way she is stopped and teased by some young hooligans. This incident leaves Tara troubled and ill-humoured.

She is also insulted by one of the members while she suggests something about the beauty contest organized by the hotel manager. The heart specialist who is one of the judges sarcastically remarks, 'I think your years abroad have robbed you of feminine propriety.'[106] But it doesn't mean that in Darjeeling everything is downbeat. Once at the special request of her religious mother, she visits Mata Kananbala Devi. She forgets all

the malice and hatred for the time being and feels her soul uplifted by the 'darshan' (holy viewing) of Mata. It is a typically Indian experience to undergo a sort of trance in a temple:

> Tara found herself shouting "Ma, Ma, Mata" with the rest. She found it easy suddenly to love everyone, even Antonia Whitehead, who was the person standing in the entire room. It was not Kananbala Mata who moved her so much as the worshipers themselves.[107]

Here the reaction of Antonia Whitehead, who is a representative of American culture, is worth noting:

> What India needed [...] was less religious excitement and more birth-control devices. She hated confusion of issues, she said. Indians should be more discerning. They should demand economic reforms and social upheavals and throw out the Chief 'Chela' as pledge of future success.[108]

Tara plans a trip to Nayapur along with her whole group of friends thereafter. Nayapur is a new township in a complex of coal mines, steel foundries and plants for hydroelectricity. It spreads across scarred little hills and forests. Tara meets the politician Tuntunwala, the same 'ugly Marwari fellow' with whom she had shared her railway compartment while traveling from Bombay to Calcutta. Mr. Tuntunwala, the national personage, has come to plan his strategy for the elections in Nayapur. Earlier Tara has come across Mr. Tuntunwala several times. She has always felt a kind of strange attraction towards this man and so when Mr. Tuntunwala proposes to show her Nayapur she does not decline his proposal.

At last this meeting ends with her claustrophobic rape by this wretched politician. Tara's failure to stop Tuntunwala from seducing her suggests that more or less she too is a party in that amorous game or she might be only a victim. Tara does not tell anyone of her friends about her seduction just for fear of disgrace. She realizes: 'She could not share her knowledge of Tuntunwala with any of her friends. In a land where a friendly smile, an accidental brush of the fingers, can ignite rumors — even lawsuits — how is one to speak of Mr. Tuntunwala's violence?' [109] Bharati Mukherjee brings the novel to a close on a sensational note. The whole of Calcutta is burning with the violent demonstrations and riots. The memories of a bonfire of effigies, buses and trams: Tragedy, of course, was not

uncommon in Calcutta. The newspapers were full of epidemics, collisions, fatal quarrels and starvation. Even murders, beheadings of landlords in front of their families.[110]

In such a situation Tara can hardly cope with the 'longed for (the) Bengal of Satyajit Ray, children running through cool green spaces, aristocrats despairing in music rooms of empty palaces.' [111] Out of bewilderment, she plans to go back to David and calls her friends at Catelli Continental to let them know about her decision. In the meantime, the troop of marchers heads towards Catelli and she with her company gets surrounded by the mob. In an attempt to escape Joyonto Roy Chowdhury she is caught in the messy crowd. Pronob tries to save him but is unfortunately killed by the mob. The novel ends with:

> Tara, still locked in a car across the street from the Catelli-Continental, wondered whether she would ever get out of Calcutta, and if she did not, whether David would ever know that she loved him fiercely.[112]

The closer of the novel leaves the reader in a riddle and a confusion as to what ultimately happens to Tara, whether she succeeds in returning to her husband and starts living happily with him keeping all her nostalgia aside or she falls a victim to the rioting mob.

Tara Banerjee, who is identified by a majority of critics as the writer herself, finds herself sandwiched between two cultures. Her America, far from being a land of promise, is a land of violence and atrocity. It's a land of strangers and all her attempts at assimilation are destined to fail due to her 'otherness.' She breaks her family tradition and marries American David. It is also an attempt to get security in an alien land. Since she has not thoroughly understood David and his society, she always remains nervous and apprehensive. In an attempt to Americanize herself she loses her Indian identity miserably.

Tara Banerjee is not only an immigrant but she is an immigrant woman as well. This makes all the difference in the Indian context. In India woman's fate is decided very early in her life because the parents start discriminating between their male and female children from the very beginning. It is incessantly hammered on the girl's consciousness that she has to move somewhere else-and must be submissive and assimilative, come what may. Thus she starts a life of duality and conflict since her childhood. After marriage she undergoes a traumatic dilemma negotiating to belong to an entirely new set-

up. This itself is a kind of migration — a migration from one's own former self to an imposed one. And this conflict gets multiplied with migration to another country. Tara's situation should be looked at from this angle and Brinda Bose thinks along such lines:

> Duality and conflict are not merely a feature of immigrant life in America. Mukherjee's women are brought up in a culture that presents them with such ambiguities from childhood. The breaking of identities and the discarding of languages actually begin early, their lives being shaped by the confluence of rich cultural and religious traditions, on the one, hand, and the 'new learning' imposed by British colonialism in India, on the other. These different influences involved them in tortured processes of self-recognition and self-assimilation right from the start; the confusion is doubled upon coming to America.[113]

In fact, Tara's confusion results from this unstable self. After marrying an American she should have held fast to her decision of which she is incapable. Instead of wrestling with her predicament, she visits her native place armed with a changed perspective. 'Her sense of alienation in Calcutta is symbolized by her regular visits to Catelli-Continental Hotel, from where she views the turmoil of Calcutta from the safe heights of a tourist, cut-off from the 'real' India which seethes below her.'[114]

In *The Tiger's Daughter,* Mukherjee sets about exposing how it feels for a fifteen-year-old Indian to leave a sheltered home hedged by class privilege and wealth, to come back home as a young woman after breaking all the social taboos by marrying a foreigner — and see whether she can find her place at home again. All the paralyzing movements she witnessed in India are marooned in a car in the middle of an angry mob. For her, home can hardly be a normative point now, the source of unproblematic identity:

> When Tara/Bharati goes to West, she undergoes a new birth in the womb of Vassar and growth in graduate school. The new-birth consciousness — birth in dormitories and classrooms by a Western curriculum and consciousness — seeks to hold its history at its center where the knowledge is visionless. [...]At the end of the novel, as she sits shivering in the Fiat, surrounded by a mob, wondering whether she will ever see her husband again, she sees the vision twinkling, pinching, pulling, slapping

through the crowd that surrounds that hotel. Bharati Mukherjee is refusing to state what it is, invites a reader response in decoding the vision.[115]

Tara, caught in the midst of the rioting mob marking the invisible presence of her husband David, leaves the reader stunned and wondering as the novel ends there. In a sense the turmoil outside is but an external manifestation of Tara's inner state of mind and by leaving her amidst that turmoil, perhaps, Mukherjee hints at the irreconcilability of such conflicts.

The seven years she spent in the West has inevitably altered Tara's angle of vision. As she drives past Bombay's Marine Drive on her way back to Calcutta, she finds the street to be 'run-down and crowded,' and yet seven years earlier she had 'admired' the place and found it 'fashionable.'[116] When she was in North America she could not stop thinking of home, but now in this trip to Calcutta she misses David and fears losing him continually. She remembers even now the sense of alienation she had in New York but cannot cease ruminating in Calcutta on 'the foreignness of spirit'[117] she was experiencing in the city of her birth.[118]

She spends a lot of time in Calcutta with her upper-class Bengali friends and yet cannot help fearing 'their tone, their omissions, their aristocratic oneness.'[119] She may react 'guiltily' to her friend Pronob's comment that he would 'hate to be a nobody in America'[120] but has the distinct feeling that she is now, quite literally, an outcast because of her marriage to a white North American. On other occasions, however, she herself feels 'quite cut off' from the people she grew up with.[121] It does not take her very long to feel that depression is overcoming her, and she begins to think that it is best to return to New York.

The Tiger's Daughter, then, is designed to capture the predicament of someone returning to her homeland after a period of self-imposed exile. To such a person, home will never be home again, and life in exile, bitter though it often is, will be preferable to what home has become. She, in one sense, falls into the web of a re-constituted social contradiction, between nativity and translation, responding to the unstable 'signs of history.'[122] The discovery that Tara makes at the end of the novel is that the greenery and the forests she had associated with the India of her childhood — her version of pastoral — were no longer there. Something or the other had 'killed' them.[123] Those are merely green chaos, emblematic and somehow embedded. So, although the novel ends with Tara trapped in a car that is surrounded by rioters, she wonders 'whether she would ever get

out of Calcutta, and if she didn't, whether David would ever know that she loved him fiercely.'[124] However, Tara's mental progress in the novel leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that if she did get out of the car, it would be to the next plane back to the United States.

Although David does not take part in any of the events described in the novel, Mukherjee uses him with skill to comment on the problems inherent in a cross-cultural relationship. He is also the implied reader of the novel, a liberal North American who reads about Tara's experience of Calcutta with some interest but also with a measure of incomprehension. Tara often wonders about the difficulties of communicating her feeling about her city and its people to David. Tara feels that she cannot confide in David something about her vacation in Calcutta, for he 'expected everything to have some meaning or point.'[125] She knows that David would read the misery of her city with outrage and a plan for quick and decisive action, but she doubts whether he would understand that the problems of Calcutta were 'too immense and blurred to be listed and assailed one by one.'[126]

Mukherjee's first novel is an impressive achievement. It announces a new immigrant voice in literature to represent the predicament of the Indian who has opted to settle in the West and must now redefine her ties to her homeland. *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife*, her next work, are the books Mukherjee had to write before she could sever her ties with the country of her birth and cast her lot with countless expatriates in North America to come to the point from where she could ultimately celebrate immigrant lives and immigration to the Unites States. To quote Maya Manju Sharma:

> Bharati Mukherjee's early novels, *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) and *Wife* (1975), explore the conditions of being an Indian expatriate and being an American immigrant. In conceiving the Character of Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* Mukherjee had already begun to distance herself from the former role; in writing of the aborted Americanization of Dimple in wife, she was already feeling her way into the latter. By the time she wrote *Darkness* (1985), she had identified herself completely with it.[127]

Certainly, more and more is left out as Mukherjee's women evolve from the homesick Tara who returns home to find herself peculiarly alienated. What gets covered

over in the flurry of change and action is the conflict and the confusion of the whole cross-cultural confusion.

Salman Rushdie, in *Imaginary Homelands*, talks of being reminded by an old photograph that 'It's my present that is foreign, and that the past is now, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time.'[128] Obviously this is the nostalgia that Mukherjee is working against. Tara feels herself to be an expatriate and an alien, as long as she conceives of India as the only country she can really belong to. In Mukherjee's projection of her Diasporic discourse, the only way the movement toward becoming an exuberant immigrant can be launched, is by burying the relics of the past. Though *The Tiger's Daughter* is not autobiographical as Mukherjee has stated, some of Tara's experiences on her return to India are reflections of the author's reactions upon returning home: 'There were just so many aspects of India that, disliked by them. So a lot of my stories since are really about transformation psychological transformation – especially among women.'[129]

The concept of transformation itself changes to reincarnation as one moves from Tara to Dimple and Jasmine. It seems as if Mukherjee concludes that a gradual and gentle transformation is not spirited enough for the sweeping adaptations that are required of the immigrant who wishes to belong to the world she has chosen to be in. In *The Tiger's Daughter* there is a paradoxical situation, Tara faces alienation and dislocation in her American environment and then is traumatized when she faces the native culture or the culture of her origin. Her pain of alienation is evident not only in Canada and America but even in the native locus of Bengal and wonders "how does the foreignness of spirit begin?"[130]The foreignness begins through the internalization of native culture out of a displacement and assimilative zeal in a multi-racial global climate. It leads to a new discourse of spatial distance and new ambivalent cultural code.

Mukherjee's novels represent the issues of her own cultural location in West Bengal in India, her displacement and alienation from her land of origin to Canada where she was simultaneously invisible as a writer and overexposed as a racial 'other' and her final re-location and assimilation to USA as a naturalized citizen. For the writer in *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife*, the problem of belonging in these two novels is a matter of fluctuation and postcolonial stress, which explores the problem of nationality, location, identity and culture. In *The Tiger's Daughter*, Mukherjee deals with construction of a new language of expatriation and immigration. The novel is also an analysis of the role of violence that causes dislocations and postcolonial dread. The novelist also centers on the

gravity of her dialectics on the native subjectivity that is suppressed, and results in another cross-cultural meaning in the narrative uncertainty of culture's inevitable *Inbetweenness,* where *home* is lost instead there are new *locations* of culture. In the language of Bhabha: 'The paranoid threat from the hybrid is finally uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside. In the productivity of power, the boundaries of authority-its reality effects-are always besieged by 'the other scene' of fixations and phantoms.'[131]

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