

**WOMEN IN THE DIASPORA: A STUDY OF THE
SELECT NOVELS OF BHARATI MUKHERJEE,
CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI AND ANITA RAU BADAMI**

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By

Mr . V. RADHAKRISHNAN

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Under the Guidance of

Dr. K. SIVAKUMAR, M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil., Ph.D.,
Associate Professor



PG AND RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
A.V.V.M. SRI PUSHPAM COLLEGE (Autonomous)
(Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli)
POONDI – 613 503, THANJAVUR DISTRICT, TAMILNADU, INDIA

JUNE 2022

Dr. K. SIVAKUMAR, M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil., Ph.D.,

Associate Professor,
P.G. and Research Department of English,
A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College (Autonomous),
Poondi – 613 503, Thanjavur.

Date:

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Women in the Diaspora: A Study of the Select Novels of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Anita Rau Badami” submitted to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH**, embodies the results of the bonafide record of research work carried out by **Mr. V. RADHAKRISHNAN (Ref. No. 13762/ Ph.D2/English/Part -Time/July 2015/Date:20.07.2015)**, under my guidance and supervision during the period of his study (2015- 2022), at the PG and Research Department of English, A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College (Autonomous), Poondi, Thanjavur, Tamilnadu, India.

I further certify that no part of this thesis has been submitted anywhere else for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title to any candidate.

Head of the Department

(Dr. K. SIVAKUMAR)

Research Advisor

Principal

Mr. V. RADHAKRISHNAN

Ph.D. Research Scholar (Part -Time),
P.G. and Research Department of English,
A.V.V.M Sri Pushpam College (Autonomous),
Poondi – 613 503, Thanjavur Dist.

DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this thesis entitled **WOMEN IN THE DIASPORA: A STUDY OF THE SELECT NOVELS OF BHARATI MUKHERJEE, CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI AND ANITA RAU BADAMI** is a bonafide record of research work originally carried out by me under the supervision of **Dr. K. SIVAKUMAR, Associate Professor of English**, A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College (Autonomous), Poondi (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli) Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu, India and this work has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any other degree or diploma.

Place : Poondi

Date :

(V.RADHAKRISHNAN)
Research Scholar



**PG & RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
A.V.V.M SRI PUSHPAM COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)
POONDI – 613 503, THANJAVUR DISTRICT,
TAMILNADU, INDIA**

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Women in the Diaspora: A Study of the Select Novels of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Anita Rau Badami

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The writers of the Indian Diaspora had been at the centre stage in the last decade chiefly because of the theoretical formulation being generated by their works. Language and cultures get transformed when they come into contact with the other agents of change. These writers are largely affected by the elements of nostalgia, as they seek to locate themselves in new cultures. They write in relation to the culture of their homeland and at the same time they adopt and negotiate with the cultural space of the host land. If one looks at the diasporic literature in a broader perspective, it is obvious to notice that such literature helps in understanding the various cultures, breaking the barriers between different countries, working for the global and even spreading universal peace. Diasporic or expatriate writing occupies a place of great significance between countries and cultures. Theories are generated and positions defined in order to construct new identities which further negotiate the boundaries and confines that involve new features. Diasporic writers live on the margins of two countries and create cultural theories.

Interestingly, the terms 'diaspora', 'exile' alienation', 'expatriation', are synonymous and possess an ambiguous sense of being both a refugee and an ambassador. The two roles being different, the diasporic writers attempt at doing justice to both. As a refugee, he seeks security and protection and as an ambassador he projects his own culture and helps enhance its comprehensibility. The term 'diaspora' (from Greek diaspeiro) literally means a scattering or dispersion of a group of people to an alien land, away from their own native land. In the past it was used to signify the worldwide scattering of the Jews outside Palestine. In the present day terminology it has come to mean a number of ethnic and racial groups.

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ABSTRACT

Diaspora stands for the scattering of the seed in the wind the fruits of which turn into a new creation and the start of the fight to survive. It is a journey towards self-realization, self-reorganization, self-knowledge, and self-definition. In diasporic literature, there is an element of creating a preserver and this creation serves as compensation for the many losses suffered. Indian women writers have come up with in full strength by spreading their unique aroma in the vast field of literature. They raise their voices against a range of serious problems faced by women on foreign soil. The treatment of women characters in the novels of many of these women writers, particularly in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and Anita Rau Badami, transcends boundaries and attains universality. Their works reveal the actual position of women in the Indian Society and the treatment they are subjected to with all diversities in the guise of solidarity in the family.

The first chapter introduces the topic of the research and traces the background to the Indian Diaspora literature and its salient features. While defining the term 'diaspora' it explains the changing times in which women come to take part increasingly in all fields of human activity. In this context, the dissertation takes up two novels of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and Anita Rau Badami. All the three women writers are from the United States of America and Canada respectively. The chapter gives a short resume of them and gives a briefing on the novels written by them.

The second chapter discusses the nostalgic moments of the protagonists. They remember their homeland and at the same time, adopt and negotiate with the cultural space of the host land. In the new land, they begin to experience difficulties in the fields of personal relations, religion, culture, traditional ways of life, etc and attempt to assimilate themselves. In that process, the characters undergo numerous hardships and psychological pressure and encounter a dilly-dallying situation, whether to continue or to return to their native lands.

The third chapter highlights the resistance on the part of the women characters in question. They come across a few noble and right-thinking persons in that new land and get their help in trying to lead a peaceful life there. The disappointments, loneliness, rejection, separation – all these factors drive them to desperation. To vent their desires and wishes, they go against the traditional norms and expectations and satisfy themselves by quenching their thirst. This resistance mentality gives them a new vigor and determination to go individualistic and not be dictated by anyone barring their libertine views.

The fourth chapter unveils the adaptation trends attempted by the women characters. It features how Indian diasporic women become a composite of feminism, womanhood, and motherhood of the immigrant Indian women. It illustrates how they face and overcome the ideological pressures, gender discrimination, power relations, sexism, and stereotyping.

The final chapter concludes the dissertation with an overall view of the diaspora image of women who immigrants. The concept 'home' gets problematic, since it exceeds the limited geographical and physical association and also connotes political, social, cultural, and emotional territories that are often transgressed and

reconstituted by the diaspora. The select novels focus on various issues of the diaspora in the global-local nexus and provoke the readers to think about the global and national forms of belonging in diasporic terms in coping with the modern technological age. The study reveals how migration brings with it the pain of rootlessness, alienation, identity crisis, homelessness, and subsequent disillusionment. It ends with the hope that the women in the diaspora can survive because of their resiliency and fighting spirit. They can achieve a proper identity and strike a balance between modernity on the one hand and tradition on the other. To this effect, all the six novels have put forward this resolution in the larger interests of humanity at the global level.

TEXTUAL NOTE

The dissertation has been formulated by rigidly following the guidelines given in the ninth edition of *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

The passages from the Primary sources are taken from the select works of Bharathi Mukharjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Anita Rau Badami. The following abbreviations are applied for specifying the title of the primary sources promptly after the passages:

1	Wife	W
2	Jasmine	J
3	Mistress of Spices	MOS
4	The Vine of Desire	VOD
5	The Tamarind Mem	TM
6	The Hero's Walk	HW

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The writers of the Indian Diaspora had been at the centre stage in the last decade chiefly because of the theoretical formulation being generated by their works. Language and cultures get transformed when they come into contact with the other agents of change. These writers are largely affected by the elements of nostalgia, as they seek to locate themselves in new cultures. They write in relation to the culture of their homeland and at the same time they adopt and negotiate with the cultural space of the host land. If one looks at the diasporic literature in a broader perspective, it is obvious to notice that such literature helps in understanding the various cultures, breaking the barriers between different countries, working for the global and even spreading universal peace. Diasporic or expatriate writing occupies a place of great significance between countries and cultures. Theories are generated and positions defined in order to construct new identities which further negotiate the boundaries and confines that involve new features. Diasporic writers live on the margins of two countries and create cultural theories.

Interestingly, the terms ‘diaspora’, ‘exile’ alienation’, ‘expatriation’, are synonymous and possess an ambiguous sense of being both a refugee and an ambassador. The two roles being different, the diasporic writers attempt at doing justice to both. As a refugee, he seeks security and protection and as an ambassador he projects his own culture and helps enhance its comprehensibility. The term ‘diaspora’ (from Greek *diaspeiro*) literally means a scattering or dispersion of a group of people to an alien land, away from their own native land. In the past it was used to signify the worldwide scattering of the Jews outside Palestine. In the present day terminology it has come to mean a number of ethnic and racial groups.

Migration takes place due to various reasons and in the Indian context the migratory movements were governed by the historical, political, economic reasons including higher education, better prospects and marriage. However, the Indian community has shown greater sense of adjustments, adaptability, mobility and accessibility in this respect. The sense of homelessness which every immigrant suffers is genuine and intense; but in recent times it could be said that this concept has been minimized and made less intense through their social networking and sense of solidarity. This aspect is explained very beautifully by Bhiku Parekh who states : The diasporic Indian is “like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes, and that is the only way he increasingly comes to feel at home in the world” (106).

The chief characteristic features of the diasporic writings are the quest for identity, uprooting and re-establishing, insider and outsider syndrome, nostalgia, nagging sense of guilt etc. The diasporic writers turn to their homeland for various reasons. For example, Naipaul who is in a perpetual quest for his roots turns to India for the same. Rushdie visits India to mythologize its history. Mistry visits and re-visits India for a kind of re-vitalization and to re-energize his aching soul. Bharati Mukherjee’s childhood memories make her come back to the native land time and again. It has become essential to realize the importance of cultural encounter, the bicultural pulls, which finally help in the emergence of the new culture. The diasporic writings, otherwise called as the ‘theory of migrancy’ helps to usher in aesthetic evaluation, negotiate with cultural constructs and aid the emergence of a new hybridity.

Diasporic literature has helped to understand and form potentials and desirable competencies. There is access to the educational, social, professional opportunities and political empowerment. It has ensured the removal of barriers spanning traditional, cultural and linguistic fields. It induces shared values in addition to building partnership among the social and political diaspora. It furthers the spirit of understanding between countries of the world. These countries can strive for prosperity, security and commitment to freedom and peace. This literature can also develop an attitude whereby larger evils like terrorism, drug trafficking, environment pollution, contagion, other political and social hurdles, etc.

The last two centuries witnessed a proliferation of diasporic discourses in the context of the multicultural world. Race-based national identity in multi-ethnic countries like Canada, America, Britain and a host of others has undergone a sea-change. Very often conflicts and turmoil occur giving rise to more tension and uneasiness for the inhabitants. The racial origin, one's birthplace and relevant details are probed to sow the seeds of disparity and misunderstanding. In this respect what the diasporic literature does contribute is the lasting peace. Once the people involved in the game of warfare due to petty considerations like race, religion, nation's policies and programs realize that they have indeed done something detrimental to the society and the nation, things can be thrashed out in a peaceful manner. It is towards this direction the diasporic writers have taken their responsibility to quell violence and bloodshed being promoted for narrow considerations.

In the present-day situation the women writers have taken up an increasing role in exposing the extremist and blindfolded ideas thrust on the society. The problems multiplying themselves without any recourse to any solution to them make

these writers concentrate on the socially-related issues so that a way out could be had ultimately. They take up issues like women's quest for identity, reaffirmation of their self, confession of personal whims and fancies, looking for alternative relationship, breaking the conventional moralities, stressing professional identity, possibilities of survival beyond the male domination, etc. They have been trying to give voice to their own consciousness, which comes from outside at a time when women are encouraged to voice their resentment, identify their oppressors and struggle to improve their condition. The women writers have come out with a rich portrayal of women's experience with reference to the crisis of their existence. In fact they share the burden of two cultures – one the inherited and the other acquired. According to Bhaba, the immigrants retain the shadows of “the twilight existence of the aesthetics of image” (15). The immigrant women undergo two varied experiences simultaneously: i) woman as woman and ii) woman as an immigrant. Generally women share a strong natural affinity to culture and it seriously affects the process of assimilation for her in the alien culture and also the balance between personal and professional relationship.

The diasporic literature has a rich tradition with the old and new writers sharing the burden of unjust distribution of society's norms and yardsticks to enlighten the people of the new age. The writers of the old generation include Kamala Markandaya, B.Rajan, Santha Rama Rau, Bharathi Mukherjee, Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, V.S.Naipaul, Nirad Chaudhuri, Amitav Ghosh, Ved Mehta and A.K.Ramanujan. In many of Kamala Markandaya's novels one comes across the nostalgic longings for India. B.Rajan has lived too long a time in the West and has given voice to the new age aspirations. Santha Rama Rau is married to an American and makes known her Indian identity through her novels. Bharathi Mukherjee comes

close to express her concern for the broken identity. Her female protagonists suffer from a sense of frustration and loneliness. In Anita Desai's novels it is obvious to see the tussle between the East and the West through her characters. Her daughter, Kiran Desai also is a diasporic writer giving expression to the diasporic thoughts. In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* the protagonist suffers from a sense of identity crisis and the miserable tale of India during the days of partition. His *Satanic Verses* is another example of such writing in which the clash of identity is perceptible.

V.S.Naipaul revives his connections with the past in the novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*. Nirad Chaudhuri exhibits in his prose a colonial hangover and extra fidelity towards the erstwhile masters of India. Globalization has become "an everyday fact of existence" (Thieme, 274) for Amitav Ghosh. He disputes the fact that culture is rooted in a single place. In his novels Ved Mehta nostalgically recalls his associations with his past life in India and is hardly able to forget the bygone days.

In Canada the writers like Saros Cowasjee, Cyril Dabydeen, Uma Parameswaran, Ashish Gupta, Rohinton Mistry and M.G.Vassanji have come out with a series of diasporic works highlighting the sense of alienation, rootlessness and nostalgia in the lives of the characters depicted by them. Pico Iyer and Gita Mehta are two younger writers of Britain entering into this field of writing. The American women writers of the Indian diaspora include names like Bharati Mukherjee, Anita Rau Badami, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai and Manju Kapoor. They have blazed a trail in the fictional world by describing the experiences of the Indian immigrant women in the context of multiculturalism. In their works they have experimented with the problems of motherhood, the imbibing of national values, crisis arising from marital and extramarital relationship, misunderstanding in familial

relationship, separation, isolation and the quest for belongingness. The problem of exile and nostalgia has been given due consideration in these novels.

Indo-American diaspora is one of most important diasporas, which has exerted great impact on the literary world and produced literary geniuses in the present time. It would be proper to take a brief note of the background of Indo-American writing of which many writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Anitha Rau Badami belong as second generation expatriate writers. An Indian American is a resident or citizen of America with origin in India. These Indians settled in the foreign country are affluent enough to carry on their works independently. The term 'American Indian' applies to people of widely varying socio-economic status, education, places of residence, lifestyles and values. They are known to assimilate into American culture effortlessly because they have no language barriers and come from a similar society. The Indians are among the largest ethnic groups migrating to the USA legally. Immigration of Indian Americans has taken place in many waves, since 1790, followed by a few hundred Indian emigrants through the 19th century. However, significant emigration from India to the US has occurred in two distinct phases from 1904 and after 1965. The first wave is part of a larger Indian diasporas generated by the British colonial authorities in India. The emigrants were mostly Sikh farmers along with political refugees and activists, middle and upper class students from various groups.

The second wave after 1965 included mostly students and professionals from educated middle and upper classes in search of a better standard of living. After the IT revolution in 1990, the Silicon Valley of America is dominated by the Indian IT professionals. The basic trait of these people moving over to the US is their bilingual

capability. Those who got educated in English medium schools in India have grown up with English as another native language. Unlike Chinese, language poses no hurdle to the immigrants. Their cultural traits, excellent knowledge, good work habits have earned them the label of 'model minority.' For a large section of the Indian immigrant community the bonds to India endure and naturally they have a periodical contact with their native country and the developments taking place there. Their consciousness and sensibility include strong and highly differentiated regional awareness, having to do with language, food, religious affiliations, dress, etc.

American- Born Confused Desi (ABCD) is a term that refers to the people of Desi origin, living in America. The expression 'confused' implies their confusion, regarding their identity having been born in America or lived there since childhood and been more close to the American culture than to their native culture. Their bonds in India are taken care of by their parents and close relatives. This second generation is more aware of the struggles of the people of color in the US and attempts to review the inequalities of race and class. Another point to note is that the second generation women often find that they are subject to more paternal demands and limitations than their male counterparts. Dating often becomes an uncomfortable issue in the lives of teenage daughters. Conflicts faced within home by the immigrant American women form the core of most of the novels written by the women writers living in America. Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Anita Rau Badami represent the second generation diasporic 'desis' whose relationship with America and India is thoroughly different from that of the first generation writers.

The regional sub-groups make Indian diasporic literature in English somewhat unique and different. In the last two decades of the twentieth century there has appeared a substantial sub-group within diasporic Indian fiction writing in English from Bengal, Bangladesh and neighboring states. This sub-group has the writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanu Chatterjee, Sunetra Gupta, Adib Khan, Amit Chaudhary, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and three recent authors – Amal Chatterjee, Ruchitra Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri. These writers use language, themes and moods reflecting the culture of the region. The theme in their works centers round many Bengali passions like local food, politics, sports, debates on philosophy, music, cinema, literature and writing itself. Another noticeable feature is that the sense of nostalgia in the form of Bengaliness also spreads through the writings of the second generation writers. Though there is universal appeal in their works, most of the characters in them are Bengalis and the prose is scattered with the details of the conventional, Bengali names, food, cooking and wardrobe giving special touches to the stories.

Though the diasporic life portrayed in these works is realistic to some extent, it is fictionalized due to the type of imagination that is indulged in diasporic writings. Stressing this point, Jasbir Jain refers to it as a ‘split narrative.’ She further states the past and present of diasporic literature as being different – the past has a different history, tradition, regional and colonial reminiscences and political upheavals. The present has different kinds of loneliness, isolation, social groupism, success of a particular trend, affluence and recognition. Though they live in the present, they coexist in the past too. Ramraj in his article ‘Disapora and Multiculturalism’ states that diasporic writing is often about “people who are linked by common homelands

and common cultural heritages” (229). But on account of political and cultural factors prevailing in the society, it develops different cultural and historical identities.

Rushdie points out that nostalgia and dislocation are the other common features. He points out that “exiles and emigrants are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt” (1983: 76).

Diasporic writing mostly becomes a response to the lost homes and to issues like dislocation, survival, cultural change and identity. Dislocation is one of the first feelings that haunt a diasporic community. There are several features which can be cited as reasons for dislocation of a community from their home country to the foreign land. These can be broadly divided into two parts such as voluntary and non-voluntary movements. Voluntary movements can occur due to two reasons: i) educational needs and ii) economical needs. Non-voluntary movements occur because of political and national compulsions and in the case of women, it could be marital causes. When the diasporic people find themselves dislocated from their homes, they are upset mentally and strive to recall and live themselves in a nostalgic past. Through nostalgia they seek escape from the reality of life in the settled land.

Of the numerous discourses of diaspora in the post-colonial context, the problem of emerging identities becomes the central issue, not only for the characters figuring in the novels, but also for the narrator whose function urges him to voice the tensions arising out of clashes and conflicts between personalities and their cultures, in their varying manifestations. Much of the Indian expatriate literature focuses on the predicament of what it means to be an Indian living in America or in other parts of the world. An important issue before the writers like Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee and Rohinton Mistry, among others, is the way the expatriate writers fill the creative

works with the longings of the outsider. In most of these novels the central consciousness involves the portrayal of scenes from the two worlds -- a real, vibrant, often painful, changing one and another one, newly created, identified, named and understood.

The novels of these writers of diaspora describe the varying experiences of the writers themselves. Distance often gets due recognition as through reality is viewed. As Katie Bolick says, “moving away from a home culture often allows a kind of disjunctive perspective that is very important – a slight sense of being an outsider, being out of place” (804). There is undoubtedly the celebration of homelessness and the creation of new homes in their writings. The writers voice a prevalent attitude among diasporic personalities who face rootlessness and the dilemma of living in two worlds. According to John McLeod, “the differences of gender, race, class, religion and language make diaspora spaces dynamic and shifting, open to repeated construction and reconstruction” (207) and hence the merging of identities becomes an essential part of the process of hybridization. What is thus created may be further negotiable because the finality of existence and living places are constantly challenged and questioned. This way the diasporic identity confronts the realities of everyday existence, while at the same time retaining the scope for dreaming and entertaining new hopes and ways of adjustment with the natives of the new land. In the six novels the authors have dealt with this sort of dilemmas and situations that the leading characters encounter in their lives in the new surroundings.

This dissertation taken up for analysis two novels each of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Anita Rau Badami. Before anything could be said about the selected novels a short resume about the three writers will give a perspective

of their aims and attitudes behind their works of creativity. Born on July 27, 1940 in an upper class Bengali family, Bharati Mukherjee got her Master's degree in creative writing from the University of Iowa, America in 1963. Earlier she had studied at the University of Baroda for her M.A. in English and Ancient Indian Culture. She received her Ph.D degree at the Department of English and Comparative Literature of the Iowa University. She got married to a Canadian writer, Clark Blaise in 1963. Initially Mukherjee taught at McGill University in Montreal, but could not continue there, owing to racist problems. In the USA the couple found the climate congenial and began liking the American ways of life so as to wish to be called as an American rather than a diaspora. She taught at the University of California at Berkeley and soon started writing in line with the group called the Asian American women writers.

Bharathi Mukherjee's experiences of her stay in Canada and the USA are the major sources of her fictional and non-fictional works. She is strongly of the view that America is a land of opportunities for immigrants for whom the democratic ideals are the most preferred ones. In all her works she questions racial prejudice, cultural and national biases. She has the following novels to her credit: *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971), *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the World* (1993), *Leave It to Me* (1997), *Desirable Daughters* (2002). Besides these, she has also written a few short stories and non-fictional works. In her novel *The Tiger's Daughter* she tells the story of Tara who gets married to an American returns to India after many years. She develops a feeling that she can no longer identify herself with her mother country. Her next novel *Wife* focuses on the inner world of Dimple Dasgupta who lives in her own imaginary world. The characters are all Indian expatriates living in America. The climax of the story is the murder of her husband whom she kills and laces the body in

the freezer. The way both the husband and wife disagree gets intensified leading to the culmination of the gruesome end. *Jasmine* is a story of a Punjabi girl Jyoti Vih. She is called as Jasmine by her husband. After his unfortunate death in a bomb explosion, she goes to America and is involved in sexual affairs with Half Face whom too she kills. Her strange and butterfly-like life is marked by several problems.

In *Holder of the World* Bharati Mukherjee the protagonist is shown in the reverse gear, one moving from the West to the East. It is full of historical references to the kind of life being led by the people in India. *Leave It to Me* is about a female child abandoned by her mother who is an American Hippie and her father, a Eurasian by birth. Debby, the child has an obsession with her parents on whom she wants to take revenge for neglecting her. She stands for Kali and Electra, the symbols respectively of India and Greece. In the last novel *Desirable Daughters* the writer concentrates on the female identity and the reestablishing of ties. Three Bengali sisters recall their earlier lives in India and at the same time the conditions obtaining in the country at that time. It depicts the sad plight of the expatriates until their settlement in a place of their choice. In all these works Mukherjee has dealt with the problems of the Indian diaspora and is proud in being called an American citizen. In her essay 'American Dreamer' she has said, "I'm an American, not an Asian American. My rejection of hyphenation has been called race treachery, but it is really a demand that America delivers the promises of its dreams to all its citizens equally" (46).

The second writer that has concern with this dissertation is Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni who was born in Calcutta in 1956. A Bengali Hindu, she was graduated from Calcutta University and then moved to the United States in 1977 for her post-

graduation at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio. She did her Ph.D in the University of California, Berkeley in 1985. She has constructed a world of female consciousness and cultural displacement through her novels and short stories. Her novels *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), *Queen of Dreams* (2004) and *Palace of Illusions* (2008) are all known for their valuable contribution to the feminist literature. In the stories collected in the volume *Arranged Marriage* (1995), Divakaruni highlights the issues like the quest for identity, crisis of existence in immigration, national consciousness, patriarchal oppression and candid confession of female sexual provocations. In *The Mistress of Spices* she constructs the poetics of 'exile' along with the theme of diasporic awareness. The protagonist, Tilo is shown as the mistress attempting to escape from her real self as a woman. She gives expression to her desires and longings and comes out thus: "At last I have found someone with whom I can share, how it is to live the mistress life that beautiful terrible burden" (MOS, 216). The mechanism of assimilation in American life undergoes trials and tribulations before the problems can be thrashed out. In the novel *Sister of My Heart* the novelist deals with the problems of the quest for treasure, betrayal of family loyalties, revenge, mistaken identities and secret adolescent love thwarted by the parental authority. The diaspora consciousness rises itself time and again, as the major characters come to face hardships in various situations. The sisters face the dilemma from typical circumstances that take place quite naturally.

Divakaruni's other novels too portray the same kind of crisis arising out of incidents occurring sequentially one after the other. In *The Vine of Desire* the sisters, amid the problems they encounter, go their own ways seeking fulfillment and justice

for themselves. The diaspora witnesses conflicts and uneasy moments for both the immigrants in the new surroundings and their parents living in their own motherland. In the novel *Queen of Dreams* the problem of identity and assimilation gets focused with the mother and daughter finding themselves at the opposite ends and not being given to freely express themselves to face the variegated pulls and pressures of the society. Divakaruni's story collection is full of stories dealing with the life pattern of the immigrants. Those who move over to the alien country have to conform themselves to the culture and living style of the new country where they set foot for their living. People who have been tradition-bound have to enter into a new environment which forces them to follow the existing custom in the new country. The stories in this volume bring out the woes of the immigrants and also the growing tendency to establish a new world order in which there is no division, segregation or withdrawal into seclusion. The diaspora community resolve themselves to fight the divisive forces so as to usher in a world community believing in peace and harmony.

The third novelist included in this dissertation is Anita Rau Badami who too is Indian by birth. She was born on 24th September 1961 in Rourkela, Orissa. She is a writer of South Asian Diaspora living in Canada with a strong voice of the modern Indian Diaspora. She was educated at the University of Madras and Social Communications Media (SCM) Department at Sophia Polytechnic in Bombay. She emigrated to Canada in 1991 and earned an M.A. at the University of Calgary. Her first novel, *Tamarind Mem* (1997), grew out of her university thesis. Her novels deal with the complexities of Indian family life and with the cultural gap that emerges when the Indians move to the west. The pre-independence writers focused on presenting culture and heritage of India, while the post- independence writers tried to

make their own mark in presenting India with its reality. In these novels the women characters seem to be clutched in chains and are irritated by their partner's male chauvinism, yet they don't try to get out of their morale. Anita Rau Badami could successfully portray the clash between the East and the West in the cultural arena. She has made a name for herself as a South Asian Diaspora writer.

Badami's second novel *The Hero's Walk* illustrates her alien feeling which is clad in a fine garb of refinement. A Canadian – raised orphan returns to her grandparents living in a remote village Toturpuram, to face the clash between the East and the West, tradition and modernity. Unlike the first novel which is submerged in melancholy, the second one is lighted with a small hope; seven-year old Nandana loses her parents in a car accident and must go to live with her grandparents, who disowned her mother, when she got married to a white man. The third novel of the writer, *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call* explores the Golden Temple Massacre along with the Air India Bombing, set against the backdrop of the division of Punjab. It is a medley of series of stories, centering round three Indian women each in search of peace, during the tumultuous scenes in Punjab. Badami's fourth novel *Tell It to the Trees* narrates the story of an Indo-Canadian 'Dharma' family, which lives in an isolated home at Northern British Colombia. The story starts with the discovery of the frozen body of their tenant Anu, in the backyard who died of Hypothermia. It is a closely knit plot which unfolds the secret behind her death and the situations that lead to Anu's death. Badami could successfully reinforce the rueful life of the Indian housewives who suffer from the male chauvinism of their Indian husbands who believe in patriarchy.

The issue of diaspora relates to the ruptures and rituals of everyday life and emphasizes the abdication of one's privileges of gender, cultural location, race and class. As Ganguly writes, that the novels like *The Hero's Walk* suggests that being diasporic is not a cultural given, but "a mode of operating within a cultural and historical canvas of understandings and misunderstandings about the emergence of this particular diasporic subject" (13). The concept of home gets into a critical position, since it exceeds the limited geographical and physical association. It also connotes the political, social, cultural and emotional territories that are often transgressed and reconstituted by the diaspora. The novels of all the three writers taken up for analysis here focus on the various issues of diaspora in the global – local nexus levels. They provoke into thinking about the global and national forms of belonging in diasporic terms. The concept of modernity and the resultant normalization of the nation-state relations also are implied in the process. The unique feature in these texts is that all the three writers have portrayed various issues of diaspora, with more focus on the issues of homeland.

The thesis statement pertaining to this dissertation is that the position of women belonging to diaspora is very much shaky fully in the midst of the opposing forces that are detrimental to the very existence of these folks who come to face emergency-like situations in their day-to-day lives. The host of women writers, including Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Anita Rau Badami, seeks to transgress the boundaries of social restrictions, religiously constructed figures, paradigms of home situations, etc., and ensures the position of women as a responsible and self-satisfied human beings retaining the strength of mind to register their protest. While asserting the possibilities of survival beyond male protection, the

women writers, given to the task of regeneration, try to construct their voice based on their own consciousness. In the prescribed six novels the authors present the two cultures, one the inherited and the other acquired and portray the strong bonding with the natural cultural identity, which affects the process of assimilation in the alien culture.

The present dissertation has five chapters which seek to examine the conditions, prevailing situations, and the ways and means of overcoming the diaspora-related problems involving the immigrants. The introductory chapter gives a briefing of the expatriate writers from the days of their settlement in foreign countries down to the present time when the globalization has opened the doors to the development in various fields in different countries of the world. The changeover from the past to the present is certainly beset with numerous problems ranging from the clash of cultures, traditional practices, men-women relationship, male supremacy and issues related to female psyche. The women writers of Indian diaspora describe a magnificent edifice of women's experiences representing the crisis of their existence. In the galaxy of women writers dealing with these specific issues Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Anita Rau Badami, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai and Manju Kapur set a new ground of feminist fiction echoing the experiences of the Indian immigrant women in the backdrop of multiculturalism. In their world of fiction they examine the problems of motherhood, consciousness of values, crisis of conjugal and post-marital relationship, imbalance in familial relationship and the most important feministic features like pregnancy, rape, abortion, discontentment, alienation, isolation and quest for refuge. Since women best know the reasons for lopsided development in their affairs both inside and outside their homes, the awareness created by these writers to

help in the process of assimilation and bonding of different cultures goes a long way to ameliorate the conditions of the affected and disturbed individuals, mostly women, and achieve the expected results sooner or later.

The second chapter highlights the problems of nostalgia encountered by the affected individuals with a view to providing the causes and background to such happenings. For the purpose the incidents and situations from the respective novels of the three writers have been taken up for experimentation.

This chapter examines the nostalgic aspects involving the chief women characters of the novels in question. Mukherjee's second novel, *Wife* deals with Dimple, a young Indian woman. Dimple is married to a young engineer named Amit Basu. She has been experiencing the feeling of suppression because of the alien culture. She cannot adjust her life in the USA out of fear and personal instability. She lacks the inner strength and is not able to cope with the culture of New York. At the end of the novel Dimple murders her husband due to acculturative stress. In Bharathi Mukherjee's third novel *Jasmine*, the protagonist of the novel undergoes several transformations during her journey of life in America, from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jane and often experiences a deep sense of estrangement resulting in a fluid state of identity. This journey becomes a tale of moral courage, a search for self-awareness and self-assertion. Uprooted from her native land India, Jyoti does her best to introduce herself into the new and alien society as an immigrant. The culmination finally ends up in Jasmine's pregnancy with the child of a white man, Bud. These happenings indicate the strong undercurrent of nostalgia playing its part in the lives of the women presented in these novels.

The second author, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's works namely, *The Mistress of Spices* and *The Vine of Desire* display the nostalgic temper on the part of the women, especially the protagonists. In the first novel Tilo finds herself swept into the island of spices, a travel which demands of her the stripping of every existing identity. It seems to be an essential pre-condition for the discovery of a new and true identity. She learns that the self itself is fluid, always moving towards a higher meaning which has no finality to it. The question 'who are you, child' cannot be answered with certainty, as the self is a creation, a process and never a confirmed reality. In her mood of nostalgia Tilo moves with several personages to cure them of their sufferings. In the second novel the sequel begins with a tragedy of miscarriage, emotion and trauma of the separation of son, 'Prem' from her womb which end in an abortion leaving Anju unraveled in bouts of depression. Sudha experiences the role of a traditional Indian daughter-in-law, but has to flee from her husband on the threat of her daughter's birth. Anju feels the need for her sisterly support and also gives a change to Sudha's tormenting divorce. Sudha visits America with a hope to make a life for herself and her daughter, Dayita. Divakaruni brings about the contrasting cultures of India and the US. The novel constantly focuses on the transculture; the characters seem to be shuttling between the two worlds. Loss, alienation, rootlessness and dislocation contribute to nostalgia to every immigrant. The expatriates, initially try to adjust with the new culture and society into which they moved but at the same time they are not willing to follow the new land's culture completely. This multiplicity of 'homes' does not bridge the gap between one's home of origin and the world.

The third author, Anita Rau Badami's works, namely, *Tamarind Mem* and *The Hero's Walk* bring out the nostalgia in the leading women characters. In the first novel *Tamarind Mem* Saroja's narrative unfolds chronologically. She recalls a young life that was comfortably predictable, surrounded as she was by a protective, familiar circle of family and friends. Saroja longed to be a doctor, a PhD. But her plans were thwarted, for an Indian woman in her teenage years was destined to marry – it was the end goal dictated by her culture. Against her wishes, a marriage is arranged for her to a Railway man, with whom she will be "scrawled all over the country, little trails here and there, moving, moving all the time, and never in one fixed direction." Married to a man she doesn't know, much less love, a man who does not even see her, Saroja becomes a mem-sahib, a good Brahmin wife – and, understandably, 'Tamarind Mem.' In the second novel *The Hero's Walk* the plot develops in a different way and after the tragic death of Maya and Alan in a car accident, their daughter Nandana, a second generation immigrant, born in Canada, returns to India. Sripathi Rao is a legal guardian of Nandana, who is just eight years old. Here, the return of a child from a developed country to a developing country creates the issues of adjustment. The migration of Nandana to India is an involuntary, compulsory requirement because she is an orphan to be taken care by her grandfather- a legal guardian. Sripathi Rao's visit to Canada is for a short period to take his granddaughter to India. Apart from Maya's immigration, Badami mentions about the migration of the sons of Raju Mudaliar, a friend of Sripathi Rao. The older son of Mudaliar moves to California and the younger to Switzerland. They migrate for a better career and final settlement. Within India, the internal migration of the people is narrated as the one taking place in a small town, where the people have settled from the neighboring villages for employment.

The third chapter of the thesis is on resistance to the society's so-called trends and traditional attitudes as seen in the six novels listed in the dissertation. In Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Wife* too signifies resistance to the outside forces applying a break to one's further development and journey to the alien land. Dimple has ultimately succeeded in achieving a modicum of satisfaction for masochistic drives. She has turned the whole society into a punishment agent. The old, conservative society will never forgive her for killing a dutiful husband. It will treat Dimple as any ordinary criminal and may even award her the death sentence. As though that is not enough, by a trick of fantasy she has really killed herself through this act. Mukherjee has portrayed the inner turmoil of a woman, fighting within herself, between her own knowledge and that thrust on her by the surrounding. The condition of the girls from the lower strata as presented by the novelist is really pitiable; in fact it is so pitiable that the writer wonders if the age-old practice of strangling to death the girl baby right at the moment of her birth is not less cruel than making her undergo a lifelong suffering, beginning at the tender age of five or six and ending only with her death which generally occurs much earlier than her ripe old age.

In Mukherjee's other novel *Jasmine* the protagonist starts her progression towards a new life and tries to separate herself from all that is Indian and forget her past completely. Jasmine proceeds with her migratory pattern and moves to New York City to become the 'au pair' (Care Taker) for an American family. With Taylor, his wife Wylie and their daughter Duff, she creates yet another identity upon a new perception of herself. But though Jasmine creates a new identity for every new situation, her former identities are never completely erased. They emerge in specific moments in the text and increase the tension, thereby causing Jasmine to create

another more dominant identity, different from all those that came earlier. While living with the Hayes, Jasmine begins to master the English language, empowering herself to further appropriate American culture. Her resistance to the forces inimical to her is evident as the novel unfolds itself to move to more complex and intricate stages.

As for resistance in the novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, viz. *The Mistress of Spices* and *The Vine of Desire*, it may be mentioned that in both these works the writer has attempted enlightened portrayals of her women characters, thereby depicting them as battling forces fighting their opponents silently but effectively. Tilo's growing realization that her role as a mistress of spices would expand to being the mistress of something more than the magical spices commits her to redefinition of the self. It is an exploration in which she discovers that the only form of the true self would be not to deny it, but to indulge in it to be able to come up beyond the limits of everyday reality. Tilo at the end may not be a force to the hidden powers of the spices, but her conquest and the acceptance of her reality, her social responsibility and her physical limitations shape her as the ultimate expatriate. Her journey from the beginning to the end is not without strife, but it overcomes the challenges in the lives of the expatriates. In the other novel *The Vine of Desire* the two sisters Anju and Sudha successfully resist the tendencies on the part of the 'cat on the wall' type men like Ramesh, Ashok and Sunil to frequently change their outlook without thinking for a while what they are doing will in the long run result in family disharmony and confusion. While Anju allows Sunil to take his own convenient route trying to seek the hand of the divorced Sudha, the latter just dismisses the delayed but unwanted union with her lovers, Ashok and Sunil. Their resistance is complete when

Anju decides to go ahead with her plans of studying and paragliding and Sudha opts for returning home with the elderly gentleman to North Bengal for a peaceful living.

As far as resistance in Anita Rau Badami's novels, *Tamarind Mem* and *The Hero's Walk* are concerned, the women who are denied access to their places of choice are portrayed. In the novel *Tamarind Mem* Saroja wanted to be a doctor and tries to rebel against the restrictions of the railway colony with its rituals of conservative household like housekeeping, tea and gossip. The novelist attempts to reflect the sensible woman's heart which longs to be in the company of her spouse during his trips of inspection. But he insists it is against the rules and so declines to take her with him. She is restricted to live like any other women in the railway colony leading a peripatetic life. All the female characters seem locked in to interiors, circumscribed by rules and expectations, when they move from one place to another. They again go to the same kind of railway colonies, with the same set of moral values. Later in her widowed life, Saroja lives on her own accord using her railway pass to travel alone to places where her husband refused to take her. In the other novel *The Hero's Walk* as a dutiful daughter, Maya is expected to honour her father's name and wish and, as her prospective father-in-law remarks, as the wife of a middle-class Indian expatriate, she is also expected to "fit into life in the West without losing sight of our Indian values" (100). She would be the custodian and nurturer of cultural traditions to foster an imagined unified and self-sufficient cultural community with strong ties to the Old World. But Maya cancels her engagement with Prakash to marry a Canadian man. By defying her father's wishes and forsaking her family duties Maya, on the one hand, initiates her own transformation into a diasporic subject with multiple belongings and groundings; on the other, she confronts Sripathi with the

changing reality of his social, personal and work environment and the decay of the civil society of India's nation-state. Maya's death is not an accident but a symbolic necessity that facilitates Sripathi's diasporic transformation.

In yet another novel of Mukherjee *Wife*, the adaptation is complete with the major character Dimple readjusting herself to the new trends and situations. Since Dimple is not sure of the source of her trouble, she turns to self-destruction and in the process devises at least ten different ways of ending her life under the central metaphor of her life as a 'dying bonfire.' She thinks of getting her head caught in the oven, slicing open her jugular vein, consuming pesticide, getting suffocated in a garbage bag, starving, falling on bread knife, getting her head hit with shovels and finally getting mugged and killed in a laundry room in the basement after midnight. Dimple has resolved, however, not to follow any of these methods. The way out to her problems is quite expressive of her gradually depleting psychic energy reserves. Her psychic condition puts up a stiff fight against her return to the inorganic state, as a result of which she opts for 'adaptation.'

The abnormal behavior on her part is to prove that her behavior is rational and justifiable and thus worthy of self and social approval. This kind of adapting mechanism is seen very much in her. Behaviors that commonly indicate adaptation are: seeking reasons to justify one's actions, rejecting inconsistencies or contradictory elements and getting cool when one's reasons are questioned. Dimple too has been having this kind of approach to her problems. In order to prove herself correct she even goes to the extent of killing her own unborn child. It is her obsession with the idea of having everything nice and new that pushes her to adapt herself to the new situations that arise as time passes by. When she goes to the US, she decides to get rid

of the baby. To her, “the baby was unfinished business”. In spite of her proposed abortion, Dimple does not deem it a murder, as she “had not planned it for months or used something flashy – a red hot poker from the kitchen or large sewing scissors.” The reason that she gives is that “nobody has consulted her before depositing it in her body.” ‘Adaptation’ is a cause because of which she often finds herself doing things without probing into her conscious will.

In the other novel *Jasmine* Bharathi Mukherjee portrays Jasmine undertaking a mission to visit the campus and sit under that particular tree. With the help of the symbolical steps she followed after the murder of her husband, she metaphorically kills her Indian identity and her past to find a new identity and a future in America. Consequently, Jasmine’s journey, from India to America, stands for her moving away from the pressures of her homeland. Each time she moves towards the west she proves that it is the symbol for her increasing American identity. Jyoti, Jasmine, Jane, Jase, each of her different identities, takes place in a different space, i.e. India, Florida, and New York, Iowa. Such a character who embraces wanderings is attempting to destroy traditional ways of recognizing female identity. She is marginalized by both gender and race and changes herself according to her surroundings which are characterized by an ever-changing uncertainty just as Jasmine herself is. Her continuous movement with no permanence anywhere makes her a truly diasporic individual.

In the third novel *The Mistress of Spices* Divakaruni presents the island as a world where there is not hate and fear. The exchange for this world is the human world. This proves that the world though inhabited by both males and females, is actually a male-dominated world. Tilo selects one such world, namely, America, to

help the suffering women who are marginalized and suppressed within the male universe. She lives in the store, which is an isolated female world. After seeing Raven she is prepared to go beyond this world. Though she is undecided at first, later she decides to go with the human world. By so doing she is able to come out of the impasse created for her by the Old Mother and her seniors. She knows that a brave new world has to be created and in that world bold new decisions have to be made. She has come to feel the necessity of inventing and reinventing one's self by going beyond what is available and by transcending one's origin. Befitting the adaption trend the final outcome turns out to be positive and as a result it makes the protagonist self-contained and proceed to the future without any conflict or confusion. The fourth novel of this dissertation Divakaruni's *The Vine of Desire* also contributes to the adaption policy with both Anju and Sudha resolving themselves to stand by their own without looking for anybody's help. Anju's separation from Sunil on the latter wishing to get married to Sudha makes her bold to look for greener pastures whereby she can be independent and work for herself in America. Sudha's role of counselor to an old gentleman, after quitting her cousin's household, makes it easy for her to work things out smoothly for herself and the old gentleman who is intent on leaving the foreign soil for his homeland in North Bengal. Neither Ashok nor Sunil could convince her about her future life, as they are very much concerned about their own likes and dislikes. Thus a firm and resolute step is taken by the sisters to come out of the sufferings faced by them.

In the fifth novel *Tamarind Mem*, alienated from his wife, the butt of her yearning and her complaints, the father comes alive only for Kamini, telling an endless stream of stories about the mythic characters inhabiting the gorges and forests

of his travels. But it is a pity that when she becomes a teenager, she has no time for his stories, no patience with his mythology. Like her mother, she dismisses her father, making his presence even more ghostlike. Only later, as a dislocated graduate student in Calgary, staring at the snow banks piled in blue drifts against the windows of her basement suite, does she regret her indifference. It is exactly from that regret springs Kamini's need to recount her own tales, as an attempt to understand her parents' relationship and her unresolved conflict with her mother, whose own careless travels now exasperate her. The protagonist could adapt herself to new situations and trends faced by her in the absence of her near and dear.

In the sixth and last novel pertaining to this thesis, *The Hero's Walk* the experience of cultural disorientation literally shapes the diasporic forms of embodiment. If Nandana is an agent of displacement and uncertainties of belonging, her arrival in India also unsettles the neatly gendered and the symmetry of private and public spaces. With her entry into the lives of the Rao women, Putti, Sripathi's sister, finally manages to rebel against her manipulative mother and against the caste prejudices rampant in her family and society. To show her protest she marries a man from the Dalit caste. Maya serves as the symbolic-cultural agent in Sripathi's life upon which Sripathi inscribes his patriarchal moral order. It is only with Maya's admission to an American university and an offer of marriage that Sripathi's life begins to glow. Really, her engagement to Prakash Bhat, the son of a rich family, is a match that would have permanently marked her as a diasporic subject and increased her father's social and financial standing. As the wife of a middle-class Indian expatriate, Maya is also expected to "fit into life in the West without losing sight of our Indian values." She would be the custodian and nurturer of cultural traditions to

foster a unified and self-sufficient cultural community with strong ties to the Old World. But she cancels her engagement with Prakash to marry a Canadian man. By defying her father's wishes and forsaking her family duties Maya, on the one hand, initiates her own transformation into a diasporic subject with multiple belongings and groundings; on the other, she confronts Sripathi with the changing reality of his social, personal and work environment. Maya's death is not an accident but a symbolic necessity that facilitates Sripathi's diasporic transformation.

The final concluding chapter of the thesis rounds off the discussion regarding the status of diasporic women in all the six novels taken up for consideration. The expatriate writers or their writings have been able to transform the stereotypical sufferings of women to the aggressive or dominant persons trying to seek an identity of their own through their various relationships within the family and society. As a natural consequence their writings reflect what one considers an expatriate sensibility generated due to cultural disparity and emotional disintegration. In this process it is the woman who suffers the most because of her multiple dislocations. She 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 carries the burden of the cultural values of her native land with her to her new country, thus making it more difficult and problematic for her to cope with the new reality. She is caught between the diverse cultures and this feeling of in between's or being juxtaposed poses before her the problem of trying to maintain a balance between her dual affiliations. But still, along with the trauma of displacement she is fired by the will to bound herself to a new community, to a new sense of identity. For a critical evaluation of all the three writers' female characters, one must understand that all her

women characters are people on the periphery of the society in which they have chosen to spend their lives; they are all immigrants and new ones at that. In this context it is possible to throw light on the novels in question. In them the writers, due to their life and the kinds of development taking place in the alien land, are largely honed by their personal experiences as women caught in-between the clutches of diverse attitudes. The forthcoming chapter will take up the problems of nostalgia experienced by the women characters in the select novels.

CHAPTER - II

NOSTALGIA EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN IN THE DIASPORA

Nostalgia by its very nature often produces a romanticized perspective of the homeland. Indulgence in these illusions evokes a pseudo-comfort and security which sustain the individual away from home. The motherland changes into a phantom of displaced paradise (Sheik, 189). Even if they try to blend with the other community people, most of the time they find it difficult as they feel that they are discriminated. A sense of alienation, loneliness and feeling of loss are inextricable for diasporic people. Even though they face external problems like discrimination and identity crisis, their own inner problems and alienation cause more suffering to them.

The term *nostalgia*, or the feeling of homesickness, has been derived from a Homeric term, “nostos,” which means homecoming. Homer used this term in his epic *Odyssey*, to show how homesick Odysseus grew when he freed himself from the war. However, the modern derivative of this term is medical research, as a student by the name of Johannes Hofer coined this term during his study of homesickness of mercenaries, including the associated anxiety and mental pain he observed among them. However, in literature nostalgia is employed to mean a general interest in the past or the personages of the past and subsequent feelings of pleasure or pain. The online Merriam Webster’s Dictionary defines nostalgia as “pleasure and sadness that is caused by remembering something from the past and wishing that you could experience it again.” So, nostalgia is not only sadness or sickness, but also the pleasure of remembering or taking interest in the past. Hence the Romantic movement

in English literature has a special association with nostalgia, focusing on the pleasure and pain of remembering the past.

Although nostalgia may be triggered by negative feelings, it paves the way for increasing one's mood and heightening positive emotions, which may arise from feelings of warmth or coping with situations resulting from nostalgic thoughts. One way to improve the sullen mood is to effectively withstand the problems that hinder one's happy life. It is found that the trait of nostalgia proneness is positively linked to the successful methods of coping throughout the intermediary stages—planning and implementing strategies and restructuring the issues positively. These studies provide the conclusion that the coping strategies that are likely among the nostalgia-prone people often lead to benefits during their difficult and trying moments. Nostalgia can be connected to more relevantly with the coping techniques and implementing them at the required levels, thus lending support in a person's anxious stages in his life.

Nostalgia also involves the memories of people who are close to the persons in question. By recalling the past incidents and situations, it can increase one's sense of social support and connections. Nostalgia is also triggered specifically by one's feelings of loneliness, but, thankfully it counteracts such feelings with reflections of close relationships. According to Zhou et al. (2008), lonely people often have lesser perceptions of social support. Loneliness, it is always agreed, leads to nostalgia, which actually increases the perceptions of social support. Thus it can be clearly summed up that nostalgia serves as a restorative function for the individuals in the context of their social connectedness.

Nostalgia serves as a useful coping mechanism and helps people to retain their normal spirits in their daily functioning. The experiments by experts show that the subjects who are gifted with nostalgic memories exhibit a greater accessibility of positive characteristics than those who thought of exciting future experiences. Moreover, in other studies conducted by the scholars, some participants were treated to nostalgic engagement and reflection, while the other group was not asked to do so. The researchers verified the self-attributes and found that the participants who were not exposed to nostalgic experiences presented a pattern of selfish and self-centered attributes. Later it was found that this effect had weakened and become less powerful among the participants who engaged in nostalgic reflection.

Nostalgia helps increase one's self-respect and meaningfulness in life by tackling threats to well-being and also by initiating a desire to deal with the problems or high incidence of stress. Routledge (2011) and colleagues found that nostalgia correlates positively with one's sense of meaning in life. The second study revealed that nostalgia increases one's perceived meaning in life, which was thought to be mediated by a sense of social support or connectedness. Thirdly, the researchers found that pressure-filled meaning can even act as a quickening agent for nostalgia, thus adding to one's nostalgic thoughts. By inducing nostalgia, one's defensiveness to such pressure tactics is minimized as found in the fourth study. The final two studies found that nostalgia is able to not only create meaning, but overcome threats to meaning by breaking the connection between a lack of understanding and one's well being. Follow-up studies also completed by Routledge in 2012 not only inferred meaning as a function of nostalgia, but also emphasized that nostalgic people have greater perceived meaning, search for meaning in potential areas and can successfully encounter the existential threat.

First the scenes of nostalgia can be witnessed in the two novels of Bharati Mukherjee, namely *Wife* and *Jasmine*. The first novel begins in retrospection when the forecast for Jasmine is already made. The nostalgia prevails in her life and at every other point she goes back to the memory of her home and her love for Prakash. She comes abroad to fulfill her husband Prakash's dream. Prakash fills her eyes with his dreams. She does not have any idea what time holds for her. Prakash's death in a bomb blast makes the astrologer's words true and she is thrown into an eternal exile. But she never loses hope.

Jasmine creates her own identity. She makes a lot of compromises to sustain her spirit. She takes the responsibility of fulfilling her husband's wish herself. Her dreams are her only property she knows, "Owning is rebellion, it means not sharing, it means survival" (Mukherjee 30). The new city makes her remind her identity on frequent intervals. Taylor's friends ask her, "You're Iranian, right? If I said no, then, "Pakistani, Afghan, or Punjabi?" (Mukherjee 33). It is not at all easy for her to forget who she is. Assimilation is an important aspect of survival. Jasmine has to forget everything from the past in order to be comfortable in the new atmosphere. She tries to escape her past but fails to do that. Bharati Mukherjee focuses on the difficulties coming in the way of assimilation. The novel carries the autobiographical accounts as she herself is an expatriate. She writes with her experience of being in a different nation. As Jasmine is torn between Taylor and Bud. She loves Taylor but she feels herself responsible for Bud as well. It becomes very hard for her to choose between them. She chooses Taylor and ends her agony. She has to move on and for that she has to put aside all the questions of ethics. She eventually goes for what suits her best. Between obligation and love she chooses love which is many times not at all easy for

an Indian girl. This is very particular for survival that one must choose that is necessary. She remains in continuous conflict of two different cultures. Her soul constantly suffers from the dilemma of action and every time she makes choices. The making of choice is the assertion of identity and individuality. She surpasses the restrictions of her background and makes a new foreground for her in America because, “Jasmine’s migration and transformation into American culture is certainly better than bunkering in nostalgia on remaining torn between two worlds” (Urmila 63). She undoubtedly thinks about India but she takes America as her present. Thus Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine* is the tale of modern age. It talks about the migration and difficulties of assimilation. Jasmine leaves her country and moves to America. In India she feels herself trapped and America becomes a way of freedom to her. But the process of migration, assimilation and survival remains long and difficult for her. The novel propagates the idea of adaptation at any cost. Jasmine wants to become a part of America and for that she changes her identity, culture, beliefs and transforms herself into a person who can survive there. The requirement of the time is to be able to change according to it.

Dimple Basu, the protagonist of the novel, *Wife*, is not sure of adapting herself to the life pattern in the United States. Befitting her name ‘dimple’ which means ‘any slight surface depression,’ she is pushed by circumstances to quit India and leave for the greener pastures in America. It was also the dream of her husband which she wants to put into reality. As one disappointed with marriage, it is natural for her to earn the status which she had been dreaming to achieve all through her life. Dimple is an extremely inexperienced girl who is given to visions of a wedded status for herself, as she hopes that it would make her a free and lovable woman. Thus she says,

“Marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, fund-raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love” (3). But she is confused about the salient requirements expected of a woman in the society. This dilemma hanging in her mind for long explains the void in her very existence.

After a long painful waiting pushing her to the extremes of desperation and self-torture, she gets finally married to Amit Kumar Basu, an average middle-class, unimaginative, young engineer who wants to make a fortune in America and return with the bounty after retirement to live a comfortable rich life in Calcutta. But unfortunately after her marriage, she feels duped with her joyous, adolescent mind comprehending the reality that the freedom after marriage too has its limitations. She begins to resent her new home, her in-laws and even her husband who fails to live up to her expectations. At this stage, when she imagines how her ideal man should be after looking into the faces from the popular magazines, she is at a loss to identify herself with anyone in the family. Moreover, the prospect of becoming a mother provokes her negatively. She considers it as an outrage on her physical form and so she takes the decision to go for an abortion, thus doing away with that “tyrannical and vile” thing deposited in her body. Her repulsion with her own pregnancy is the direct offshoot of her hatred for Amit.

Then Dimple along with her husband lands in America, where her hopes are again nullified. She feels that the temporary joblessness has made Amit lose confidence and as a result he has become a mere nothing, losing his earlier versatile position in the family. She is disappointed to know that America with all its outward wonderment allows the Indian wives only to give birth to ‘little Indians’ around them, but does not provide them either freedom or fulfillment. This is clearly seen in the

case of Ina Mullick who, despite her attempts at becoming ‘a total American’, remains a frustrated individual. After this unbalancing episode, Dimple sinks into a world of isolation and was unable to digest the bright prospect of setting up a new home even after Amit gets a job. After a few futile attempts to unite herself with the new culture by wearing the borrowed outfit of Marsha and by having sexual encounter with Milt Glasser, Dimple experiences total estrangement from herself and her surroundings as well.

Delay in marriage has made her feel nervous and anxious so when she is married ostensibly to a worthy groom, by Indian standards of marriage, her hopes start definitely soaring high. However, she is disillusioned immediately after the marriage. She does not like the new name, Nandini given to her by her mother-in-law and she finds the apartment very small and unattractive. She is very curious about her marriage, but her need to ‘understand and achieve’ does not get fulfilled as a result of which, one very often sees her obsessively measuring her husband against her ideal man and her life against her dream and finding both of them wanting in many respects and despairing as a result.

Dimple’s need for ‘love, belonging and approval’ remains unfulfilled and leaves her a neurotic. In the US also she is left alone with Amit. Lack of job makes him less self-assured and more self-centered. His own problems partly turn him apathetic towards Dimple piling mental and emotional turmoil on her. Things become difficult day by day. As it is seen in the novel, Amit is anxious for the job, meanwhile Dimple is planning to buy a queen-size bed. She prepares the salad with great care and effort for Amit, but he refuses to taste it. She offers to fix the tie for him as a goodwill gesture, but he turns down her offer. The psychological need for ‘love and

belongingness' is very crucial to a healthy personality development and adjustment. When Dimple goes to the market with Meena Sen, she asks for cheesecake and the shopkeeper stares at her in embarrassment. The stink of beef nauseates her and the man asks her whether she does not know the law. Soon he searches for the gun in his drawer and the fear that she may be killed for her presence there lurks in her. This incident makes her feel nostalgic and she compares Calcutta and New York: "In Calcutta she'd buy from Muslims, Biharis, Christians, Nepalis. She was used to marry races; she'd never been a communalist" (60). The need for closer ties with other people continues throughout life and becomes important especially in the times of severe stress or crisis. But with Dimple the case is not so, she longs for love and care from her husband, but he is too involved with his job that he couldn't fulfill her desires. As a result, she stops complaining to him and turns into a reserved introvert.

The nostalgia factor is present at the party in Vinod Khann's place. It comprises the Indian Americans in large numbers. Dimple could see many of them there talking in a familiar language. They praise whatever is Indian – culture, food, habit, dress, etc. They feel that the Americans are all dirty who take bath only once a week. The habit of washing clothes in the sink is something the diasporic Indians cannot digest as it is meant for spitting and washing the dishes. The unique feature about the Indians living in America is that "the Indians living abroad were so outgoing and open-minded. They didn't give a damn about communalism and petty feelings" (67). For Dimple, life with Amit starts showing cracks gradually. She expected "Amit to be infallible, godlike, but with boyish charm; wanted him to find a job so that after a decent number of years he could take his savings and retire with her to a three-storey house in Ballygunj Park" (89). She is sore that marriage has betrayed

her and it has not provided all the glittery things she has been dreaming. This alien country stresses Dimple's feeling of inferiority and pressurizes her very existence there. She gives vent to her accumulated frustrations and is worried that her husband picks holes with her. Being ignorant of female psychology Amit fails to provide for her emotional needs. He exhorts her thus: "You must gout, make friends, do something constructive, not stay at home and think about Calcutta" (111).

She has now developed a feeling, "how could she live in a country...where every other woman was a stranger, where she felt different, ignorant, exposed to ridicule in the elevator?" (112). What she thinks about life in America she feels like writing to Pixie, but later drops the idea. Since she is not able to lead her fantasy life, she ranks the things including her husband in their order of preference to express her dejection. She considers Amit as a mere robot and not a human being. Her disgust with American English and the American ways of life is complete, as her traditional values to life are still intact with her. This condition in her pushes her to the extreme and it is aptly described by Linda Sandler thus: "She is unable to make the transition from Before to After and chooses violence as a problem-solving device" (75).

Dimple's lack of shared faith is the cause of her lack of oneness with things American. An expatriate like her is beset with the problems of identity in the most anxious moments of life. The nostalgic element in her makes her reflect how easy it is to live, to convey, to move freely with people in her own city, Calcutta. Even the policemen are friendly to her, but it is exactly the opposite in the new place. Her feeling is made explicit by Meenakshi Chaudhury in the following words: "She is scared of self-service elevators, of policemen, of gadgets and appliances. She does not

want to wear western clothes as she thinks she would be mistakenly taken for a Puerto Rican. She does not want to lose her identity, but feels isolated trapped, alienated, marginalized” (84).

Though Dimple knew that pain in the new environment is part and parcel of living, she finds the strains of her life with Amit have gone beyond endurance. She has to cope with her traumatic conditions all alone. As Mukherjee says, “ She had expected pain when she had come to America, had told herself that pain was part of any new beginning and the sweet structures of that new life had allotted pain a special place” (109). In the circumstances she is compelled to think about her home and her past culture back in India. This condition in her is termed as ‘dilemma of cultures’ by Shyam M. Asnani: “Dimple is entrapped in a dilemma of tensions between American culture and society and the traditional constraints surrounding an Indian wife, between a feminist desire to be assertive and independent and the Indian need to be submissive and self-effacing” (42). As loneliness becomes unbearable for her, she thinks of her present situation which has become a kind of social vacuum with the media becoming her surrogate community. Her global village New York is now for her a place full of frustration and far from reality. She goes to the extent of ending her life in the sinister fashion, since life for her is a wasted opportunity. The novelist gives expression to her feelings thus: “Her own body seemed curiously alien to her, filled with hate, malice, an insane desire to hurt, yet weightless, almost airborne” (117). Dimple’s mind is always circling round somebody mugging, raping, breaking the windows of her apartment, etc. In her mood of nervousness she goes nostalgic and thinks about her own place in India as against the present unfriendly atmosphere. Her unknown fears

about life in America have created in her a sense of imbalance. As she says, “This wouldn’t have happened if we had stayed in Calcutta. I was never so nervous back home”(132).

Another cause for nostalgic interference is that of self-esteem, worth and identity. Closely related to the feelings of adequacy and social approval is the need to feel good about oneself and worthy of the respect of others. Dimple’s craving for affluence prompts her to finally marry an engineer, but it is not a physical need on her part. It is a psychic one. She is drawn into the fantasies of material comfort and plenitude. As a being, she is a woman and her psychic obsessions are about the inadequacies of her figure and complexion. She is awfully conscious of her being relatively ugly and it is at this point that she craves for self-esteem and worth.

Admixed with feelings of self-esteem and worth is one's sense of self-identity. The vital ingredient in this category is the need for keeping up values, meanings and hope. The need for values can be explained as a requirement for achieving a meaningful and value aided way of life. Dimple thinks that “marriage would free her, fill her with passion and hence waits discreet and virgin...for real life to begin”. (13) Like every girl, Dimple too had many hopes and expectations from marriage and her partner. But she did not meet with her basic needs, eventually which interfered in her life and led to some stress on her and which became a cause for her frustration and anxiety.

Watching television has made her a maniac. She is seen obsessed with the American brand of nightmares and violence which might take place all of a sudden. The scenes she witnesses in the beaming electronic box puts her in a diabolical trap, a torment without any trace of peace or mental relief. Even the apartment where she stays symbolizes the psychic decay and degeneration. It is rightly described thus:

“there were too many images of corrosion within the apartment” (127). Her eating habits also give cause for anxiety and the same is well hinted in the following lines: “After the fifth spoonful she realized she was not hungry, was on the contrary, feeling ill and had spilled milk and cereal flakes on her clothes”(128). In her isolated moods she imagines acquiring deadly diseases like leukemia. She hits Amit with the kitchen knife on the pretext of protecting herself. Her fancy seems to whirl round in a momentum, once Leni removes her cup on the table. Her maddening action produces chain reaction in the bystanders thus: “After Leni removed her cup, Dimple kept on pouring... over the tray... till the pregnant-bellied tea pot was empty and Leni and Ina were standing and shaking her, ‘Dimple, Dimple: stop it’” (152).

While coping with stress, a person is confronted with two problems, the first is to meet the requirements of the expected demand and the second is to protect the self from psychological conflict and disorganization. When the person feels competent to handle a stress situation, his behavior tends to be task-oriented, that is aimed primarily at dealing with the requirement of the expected demand. But when his feelings of adequacy are seriously threatened by the so-called demand, his reactions tend to be defense-oriented, that aims primarily at protecting the self from hurt and disorganization. To understand the reality of Dimple’s psyche one has to delve deep into the inner recesses of her mind and to the intricate stirrings of her feelings. The same is interpreted by S.P. Swain, a critic who states that: “It is the gloomy corridors of her psyche that Mukherjee probes with a keen and penetrating psychological subtlety. Dimple moves from a state of mute resentment to an escalating disgust and intolerance which finally culminates in disaster” (119).

In the novel *Jasmine* Bharati Mukherjee continues the depiction of the cross-cultural reality by means of a series of adventures the protagonist attempts during her journey from Punjab to California. As the features of nostalgia, she has in her the symptoms of restlessness and rootlessness. She suffers from a depressing sense of isolation which lets her wander from place to place in her quest for refuge in the alien land. The novel begins with a prophecy by the village astrologer who sits under the banyan tree and foretells the fortunes of the people needing his counsel. He predicts widowhood and exile for Jasmine which means she will have a rich experience of moving over to the richest country on earth and living her life there. In the process which transforms her she undergoes the change of names like Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane while spending her life in the cities of Florida, New York, Iowa and California. Befitting the philosophy behind the composition of the novel, the story shuttles between the past and the present, that is between the native country and the adopted country. The past is spent in Jyoti's native place, Hasnapur, a village in Punjab. The present is lived as Jane in Baden, Iowa where Jasmine acts as a companion to Bud Ripplemeyer, a banker in the town.

Jyoti was born in a feudal village of Punjab eighteen years after the partition violence. Born as a fifth daughter and seventh of nine children to her parents, she remains a dowryless, undesirable female child with a curse on her birth. She gets English education under an English master and is able to challenge the astrologer thus: "You're a crazy old man. You don't know what my future holds!" (J, 3). The astrologer feels irritated and hits her on her head and she falls down getting a scar on her forehead. This scar she takes as her third eye with which she can burn any evil thing or person. The general notion prevalent in the villages of India about the girls is

not to her taste: “Village girls are like cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go”(46). Though her mother selects a widower with a lot of money, she refuses to marry him and weds Prakash Vih in the Registrar’s office. In due course Jyoti becomes Jasmine in keeping with the modern trends. Both Prakash and Jasmine dream about flying to America to lead their sophisticated life. His well-wisher Prof. Devinder Vadhera promises to help him in settling down with a decent job in America. Unfortunately Prakash falls a victim to the fatal attack of the Khalsa Lions, a revolutionary outfit fighting for a separate state of Khalistan. Though grief-stricken on the loss of her husband, Jasmine wants to fulfill Prakash’s wish of living in America.

With a fake passport and visa, Jasmine leaves for the U.S. fully knowing the implications of her emigration. As part of her journey to the new land, she travels by a ship called ‘The Gulf Shuttle.’ The captain of the ship, Half Face takes her to a remote motel in Florida and behaves indecently to her. Soon he rapes her quite unconcerned about her future. Though Jasmine wants to purify her defilement by choosing the option of death, she retracts from her extreme decision to live her life. In a subsequent development she changes into Goddess Kali to destroy the evil that has violated her chastity. She kills the demon with blood smeared on her body. As she says, “I was in a room with a slain man, my body blooded. I was walking death, Death incarnate” (119). In the words of Samir Dayal, this episode only proves that “she experiences an epistemic violence that is also a life-affirming transformation” (71). On the prevalence of evil Jasmine says thus: “For the first time in my life I understood what evil was about. It was about not being human... It was a very simple, very clear perception, a moment of truth, the kind of understanding that I have heard comes at

the moment of death” (116). Such tight corner- like situations push one to nostalgic moments in his/her life. This is true of Jasmine also.

From the Kabul taxi driver Jasmine gets to know the fact that the Americans treat them like street dogs. She has the glaring example of meeting greedy and selfish people in the streets of New York. For her New York seems to be “an archipelago of ghettos seething with aliens” (140). The American beggar goes to the extent of calling her a foreign bitch. Like what other immigrants in America encounter, Jasmine too undergoes this confusion of identity a desire to relive her past by moving back in time to her native place in India. She utters in her desperation thus: “Down and down, I go, where I’ll stop, God only knows” (139). Jasmine loves freedom, but it is sadly lacking in Flushing while she is with the Vadheras, who love to be traditional in their outlook. Though in her later life she comes into contact with so many people like Taylor, Du and others, she confides unmistakably thus: “I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the promise of America and old world dutifulness” (240). This shows clearly how nostalgia has had its impact on her character and her future life.

As an immigrant to America Jasmine knows well that her movement from one place to another in the new country proves that she is an outsider and other category in America. It has to be remembered that she is an illegal entrant to this place, living among aliens whose ways of life she is yet to master. All the features associated with nostalgia namely thinking, suffering, humiliation and disappointment do find their quota in the life of Jasmine in America. She herself voices this feeling thus: “This country has so many ways of humiliating, of disappointing” (29). As she comes from the third world country like India, her experiences are always painful when compared to those of the Americans. It gets reflected in her statement thus: “For them,

experience leads to knowledge, or else it is wasted. For me, experience must be forgotten, or else it will kill” (33). Though she dresses herself like an American woman, she has full confidence only in the Asians. That is why she says, “I trust only Asian doctors, Asian professionals. What we’ve gone through must count for something” (32). It is unassailable fact that she is loved for her Indianness which has helped her evolve as a caring mother and lovable wife. Her reminder to Bud, “I’ll wait for you. Indian wives never eat before their husbands” (213) is a clear case of her Indian sentiment prevailing strongly within her. She never forgets her past and it is perpetually upon her like the stench of the carcass of the dog she meets with in her early life. The same idea is echoed in the following words of Samir Dayal: “She perpetually haunts and is haunted by, her ghostly identities...She shuttles between differing identities” (77).

It is a significant fact that as part of nostalgia, the novel begins in retrospection when the forecast for Jasmine is already made. The nostalgia prevails in her life and at every other point she goes back to the memory of her home and her love for Prakash. She comes abroad to fulfill her husband Prakash’s dream. Prakash fills her eyes with his dreams. She does not have any idea what time holds for her. Prakash’s death in a bomb blast makes the astrologer’s words true and she is thrown into an eternal exile. But she never loses hope and still she takes recourse to the past events in her life. In that flashback the country as well as its rich tradition and culture do figure without fail to impress on the fact that nostalgia plays its definite role here.

Jasmine creates her own identity. She makes a lot of compromises to sustain her spirit. She takes the responsibility of fulfilling her husband’s wish herself. Her dreams are her only property she knows, “Owning is rebellion, it means not sharing, it

means survival” (J,30). The new city makes her remind her identity on frequent intervals. Taylor’s friends ask her, “You’re Iranian, right? If I said no, then, “Pakistani, Afghan, or Punjabi?” (33). It is not at all easy for her to forget who she is. Assimilation is an important aspect of survival. Jasmine has to forget everything from the past in order to be comfortable in the new atmosphere. She tries to escape her past but fails to do that. Bharati Mukherjee focuses on the difficulties coming in the way of assimilation. The novel carries the autobiographical accounts as she herself is an expatriate. She writes with her experience of being in a different nation. Jasmine is torn between Taylor and Bud. She loves Taylor but she feels herself responsible for Bud as well. It becomes very hard for her to choose between them. She chooses Taylor and ends her agony. She has to move on and for that she has to put aside all the questions of ethics. She eventually goes for what suits her best. Between obligation and love she chooses love which is many times not at all easy for an Indian girl. This is very particular for survival that one must choose that is necessary. She remains in continuous conflict of two different cultures. Her soul constantly suffers from the dilemma of action and every time she makes choices. The making of choice is the assertion of identity and individuality. She surpasses the restrictions of her background and makes a new foreground for her in America because, “Jasmine’s migration and transformation into American culture is certainly better than bunkering in nostalgia on remaining torn between two worlds” (Urmila 63). She undoubtedly thinks about India but she takes America as her present. Thus Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine* is the tale of modern age. It talks about the migration and difficulties of assimilation. Jasmine leaves her country and moves to America. In India she feels herself trapped and America becomes a way of freedom to her. But the process of

migration, assimilation and survival remains long and difficult for her. The novel propagates the idea of adaptation at any cost. Jasmine wants to become a part of America and for that she changes her identity, culture, beliefs and transforms herself into a person who can survive there. The requirement of the time is to be able to change according to it.

In trying to make her crisis look extraordinary through changing names – from Jyoti to Jasmine, to Jase and to Jane – along with change in geographical locations – from Hasnapur to Jullundhar, to Florida, Manhattan, Iowa – Jasmine tries all options but to no use. When the reader sees her at the end of the novel in the company of Taylor, he will never miss to note the similarity with the picture of her obtaining in the beginning of the book. She has the Indian ethos retained in her even at this last stage of transformation in her. She may be appear to be moving from the old world ideals to the brave new world of America. But nevertheless she is the same person we encountered in the beginning of the novel. This truly confirms the nostalgia factor working strongly in her case.

In the third novel of the dissertation *The Mistress of Spices* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, the idea of nostalgia is further strengthened by the plot movement and the characters involved in it. Through Tilo the seller of spices to immigrants, the novelist constructs the whole poetics of exile coupled with the idea of national consciousness. In her work she retains feminine sympathy and human sensibility that go well with all diasporic individuals. She tries to escape from her real identity by getting to work as the mistress of spices. Tilo, the protagonist is named Nayan Tara, ‘star of the eye, even as her parents consider her a burden. But the girl is specially gifted with magical powers and she can see into everyone’s future and predict their true conditions. She

has no real home in India nor does she have one elsewhere. After a short period with the pirates she comes into the magical island of the spices. She becomes a mistress there and changes her name as Tilo. She runs a spice store in Oakland, California, where she as nostalgia would have it, she recreates little India, boasting of all the spices that ever were available. In her words “I think there is no other place in the world quite like this” (MS,). The place is reminiscent of home, a little oasis in their diasporic lives loaded with problems. The Mistress of spices is proud that the Indians come to her for their cure of maladies and several body-related illnesses. The Indian expatriates come to her with their distinct voices calling for the remedy to the problems faced by them. As Tilo observes, “All those voices, Hindi, Oriya, Assamese, Urdu, Tamil, English, layered one on the other like notes from tanpura, all those voices asking for happiness except no one seems to know where”. Even within the structure of the entire Indian sub-continent there is obscurity relating to the borders among the regional outfits. It is no wonder then that this division is easily discernible in the alien land.

The Mistress of spices is bestowed the power of magic for the welfare of the American Indians who as the diaspora encounter umpteen problems. The first mother warns Tilo about the danger inherent in the national boundaries which can lead to violence in no time. This issue of Diaspora, namely eruption of violence in the territories threatens the very existence of the Diaspora, thus questioning the identity of the individual concerned. Divakaruni illustrates the problem of identity faced by the diasporic individuals through typical examples. Tilo encounters the various people who come to her shop for help. Her condition is described thus by Laura Merlin in a review in *The World Literature Today*: “Her difficulties arise when she realizes that

she must abandon her own wants to maintain the magical power that she craves” (207). Jaggi alias Jagjit is assaulted in his school for not knowing English which is insisted upon everyone in the American system. The trouble-makers would demand of him thus: “Talk English, son of a bitch. Speak up nigger wetback asshole”. Tilo restores confidence in Jaggi and is offered protection by a group of boys later. But help is offered to him not that easily, as the other boys have asked him in exchange to “carry this packet here, drop this box there”. Every immigrant in America is tortured in some way or the other, as the complexities of the Diaspora emerge day in and day after.

In the list of sufferers next comes Mrs. Ahuja (Lalita), who faces dispossession after she leaves the settled, comfortable life in her father’s place. She gets married to a violent man, given to drinking liquor at the cost of his family. This pathetic situation compels her to seek a happy life in America. As the voices, the women like her carried all the way inside their heads begin to be heard, She is not able to overcome her womanly duties once for all and ditch her conscience quietly and safely for her. Hers is a case for betterment in life in the extraordinary conditions of life being led by her with her husband treating her very badly. She has been yearning for a child and has been suffering on that account also. She has the dream of setting up a tailor’s shop in India, but she has to follow her tyrannical husband to America where her difficulties only multiply. Naturally she turns to Tilo for a cure to her condition. Again, for the second generation Indians like Geeta, the question of identity is differently portrayed. She for one would come out strongly against the male domination, especially the narrow-minded attitude practiced by her grandfather. As a young woman she faces opposition from him when she falls in love with a wrong man.

In the case of Tilottama (Tilo) she has been ordered to go in disguise as an old woman, thus inducing mystery and restraint among the folks who come to meet her. As per the order handed to her, “once the mistress has taken on her magic mistress body, she is never to look on her reflection again”. She too like other diasporic women should bury her desires and give priority to others’ welfare. This is clear from the instruction given to her: “A Mistress must carve her own wanting out of her chest, must fill the hollow left behind with the needs of those she serves”. The order given out to the Mistresses clearly serve to go against the patriarchal struggles and no doubt Tilo too must follow in the footsteps of these others. She struggles with her identity as she builds emotional relationship with Raven, the native American. She feels guilty for her acts and turns into a real life woman, feeling sorry for her self-indulgence. Haroun is another expatriate to suffer from diasporic problems. As a cab driver he visits Tilo one day and tells her about his problems. The terrorists assault and destroy his home and village and in the violence his parents and grandfather are gunned down. There is blood everywhere and this incident reminds one of the atrocities committed by the unlawful forces to create confusion in the minds of people. Hameeda, his neighbor, secretly loves him. As it is warned by Tilo, Haroun gets wounded in the sudden eruption of a fight that takes place during his return home.

As mentioned earlier, Geeta’s grandfather is a man firmly believing in whatever is Indian, whether it is their culture, customs or tradition. As one steeped in tradition, he cannot stand the proposal of Geeta to make love to a man named Juan Cordero, a Chicano by birth. On hearing this news, Geeta’s mother Sheela, her father Ramu and grandfather feel terrified and blame her for her senseless act. To characterize their opposition, the novelist introduces such phraseology as ‘chee chee!’

and ‘Hai bhagawan!’ to express their condemnation outright. Lalita’s case is a sad life story. Her husband, Ahuja behaves like a brute, a bully and a sadist. In addition to playing tricks on his parents he does it to his wife also. While all preparations are done for their marriage, he consummates the marriage brutishly and vengefully against her unwillingness for fifteen days. As a result Lalita cannot love him and wants to forget all about him for his imposture, deceit and meaningless talk. In America Ahuja ill-treats her and as a result she loses peace of mind and her pastime activity of stitching work gets stopped abruptly. The lack of a baby increases the tension between them all the more.

Divakaruni tries to create a female universe through Tilo, her main character in *The Mistress of Spices*. It is a faraway universe with the real cities of the workaday world remaining as misty images which look harsh and ugly. The male universe is represented as one symbolizing fear and hatred. Through Tilo that world is brought to a kind of balance so that there need not be any undue favour to the males anymore. She proceeds to help the battered and marginalized women who are suppressed by the male universe. Her store is an isolated female world with its own do’s and don’ts. The characters who are pictured as suffering individuals due to one cause or the other are made to look back on what they did and as such the pain and anguish expressed therein contribute to the nostalgic temperament on their part. As women dominate in this novel, what Veena Selvam has said holds good in this context: “When Tilo lands in America in her spice store, she is able to empathize with her women customers better than her male customers” (60).

The First Mother is an elderly woman, representing the traditional notion of the South Asian woman in the domestic sphere. The Island brings up Tilo, educating and preparing her for the next stage of life that she will encounter when she leaves. She also administers Tilo a sense of singularity of identity. She gets occasions to meet the Old Woman whom she calls the First Mother. The First mother promises her a sense of security and love. After being chosen as an apprentice by the Old One, the protagonist makes the request that she be addressed as Tilo. She tries to defend the name Tilo by drawing a comparison to the Tiloor, the sesame seed which restores health, hope and gives a new lease of life to the people suffering from many kinds of incurable diseases. But the Old One tells her that Tilo is the short form for Tilottama who was the most elegant of the dancers in Lord Indra's court. Indra is regarded as King of the gods in the Hindu mythology. Tilottama was cautioned by Lord Brahma, the Creator of the universe according to Hindu tradition, that she would be condemned to seven lives of illness, disfigurement and leprosy if she falls in love with a human being. Tilottama ignores the words of caution of Brahma and falls to the earth for her misdeeds and has to suffer greatly for it. The Old One reminds Tilo to think about her predecessor's fate, if at all she is led by her overconfidence and sheer will power to go against the standard set for a Mistress of spices. The Old One's presentation of a knife to Tilo while leaving the island proves how she will tread the narrow and dangerous path for being a Mistress of spices. In the same coin she warns the Mistresses before allowing them to enter into the Shampatti's fire with the condition that a Mistress who grows rebellious and fails in her duty would be recalled. This condition Tilo feels fully, scorched and seared, the razors of flame begin to cut her flesh to strips, "Screaming, I smelt my bones shattered, skin bubbled and burst" (58-59).

Some mistresses wish to return to the island, trying to learn and labor again on subsequent occasions. For some it spells the end, they crumble to charcoal, a last cry hanging in the air like a broken cobweb. Tilo remembers all this as she watches her sister-mistresses. One by one they walk into the fire and when they reach its center, they all have disappeared. There is actually no agony on the faces of her sisters before they go into thin air. After experiencing difficulties in their training, each of the mistresses has to go through the Shampatti's fire and choose the country they want to go. Once they take over the 'Mistress-body' they transform into the shape of an old lady. When it is Tilo's turn, she feels afraid and closes her eyes. She believes what the Old One has told them, "you will not burn, you will not feel the pain. You will wake in your new body as though it has been yours forever." (60) What the Old One has said happens in reality. When Tilo steps into the heart of Shampatti's fire, she feels that "the flame tongues licked like a dream at my melting skin, flame fingers pushed down my eyelids" (61). Soon after the training was over the First Mother asks their preferences so as to choose the places to settle themselves. Tilo chooses Oakland, but the Old mother warns her against it and wants her to choose another place. Surprisingly Tilo insists on the same. Nevertheless the First Mother develops a kind of liking towards Tilo from the beginning and hence guides her at every moment. The Old one gives each Mistress a going away gift. Some get flutes, incense burners, some looms and some pens, but Tilo alone gets a knife, to keep under the mattress before sleeping, to keep herself chaste and from dreaming. The knife is as cold as the ocean water, supple edged as the yucca leaf that grows high on the sides of the volcano. The Old one teaches Tilo to look into the heart of others, but she doesn't teach her to read the future. As a result, it keeps her away from hoping and trusting the spices fully.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni explores issues that are central to the diasporic experience. It has been found that there is a continuous oscillation between the Eastern and Western cultures. The novelist portrays the quest for identity, the cultural imbalance and displacements in the new spatial arrangements. In this respect her novel *The Vine of Desire* traces the curves and the aspirations of the new South Asian community in the United States and their struggle for identity. The Calcutta dwellings and surroundings come vividly before the readers. The two protagonists Anju and Sudha present the longings of their nostalgic minds. They are emotionally attached to their past and while they live in the present in the new land of America, they could not be enthusiastic with their newly acquired freedom and without a sense of skepticism. This dilemma is due to the existence of two different experiences which lead to the conflicting ideologies in the minds of the prime characters. In the words of Salman Rushdie the migrants suffer “a triple disruption” (279) symbolizing the loss of roots, the linguistic and social dislocation. In addition to the protagonists who suffer from the nostalgic memories of the past, there is one other character, Mr. Sen, the old man suffering from acute pain and is bedridden on that account.

Nostalgia is a way of life pattern that the immigrants experience in their adopted lands. They remember their past with its paraphernalia in their home town. As they lead their lives in the new land, they find it difficult to adjust to their new surroundings. The novel *The Vine of Desire* too has got its quota of nostalgia with the characters going back to their good old days of life in their homeland. In America the emancipated women no doubt experience the pleasures like flying in gliders, but on the other side they also face loneliness and helplessness in living their superficial lives. Sudha who comes to America at the invitation of her cousin, Anju feels

delighted at the thrill of living in the new land. So she would remind herself thus: “Live for yourself” (VD, 197). In attempting to lead such a free and independent life, she gets confused. She has come round to toeing the line of thought that she will not live for others anymore, as she has done it earlier. She gets attracted by the American ways of life and is befriended with Lalit in a party where she meets him. So far, her life has been flexible according to the will and desire of other people like her mother, mother-in-law, husband and Sunil. In such cases she feels that she is trapped knowingly or unknowingly. In *The Vine of Desire*, unhappy events in the lives of both the cousins bring them together: Anju in America has had abortion and Sudha has come out of her husband’s house to escape her mother-in-law’s order to do away with the female fetus. She also tries to forget the suffocating nature of her first love with her former boy friend, Ashok who is interested in taking care of her and her daughter. Much saddened by the events of their lives, they reach out to one another for comfort and affection leading to further tension in their lives.

At first, the sisters feel happy to see one another. They spend their time on Sudha’s toddler Dayita whom they love so much, especially Sunil who forms a close relationship with her. Anju remembers Prem and tortures herself by remembering the past. This makes Sudha scold her thus: “There’s no point in torturing yourself over what’s happened already” (30). Even as she tries to cure the chasm of a wound, it still runs in a crooked fashion between their bodies. When Sudha enters the house, she feels once again the sisterly love and affection of Anju. Sunil feels grateful for the arrival of both Dayita and Sudha because he could see happiness in Anju’s face. Soon after Sudha arrives in America, Anju gets back to her work for earning a college

degree and begins to unearth her talent in the writing classes. She is particularly inspired by an educator who introduces her to the letters and journals of 18th and 19th century women writers. However, she experiences loneliness and looks for a solitary place at the college where she can do her work. This aloofness only intensifies her emotional reaction. Though she finds herself brooding, then and there she balances and directs her mind to the college assignments. This displacement turns Sunil to move towards Sudha. Anju's alienation from Sunil gives scope for the latter to spend time conveniently with Sudha. This becomes obvious, when he outwardly showers his love on Dayita. When he sees Sudha all alone, he cannot check himself and proceeds to kiss her, thus putting her in a dilemma. At this stage Sudha recalls Pishi's words "A woman's beauty can be her wealth, but also her curse" (69). Later she feels guilty for allowing Sunil to kiss her. In Sunil's case he has been waiting for this occasion with so much longing. As a result, the flame of passion in her was burning bright and the next instant it readily engulfs her. Sudha realizes her extreme act of turning a traitor to her own cousin at the end. Sunil's secret relationship with her makes matters worse for Anju.. Naturally the tension between the wife and husband increases, with the arrival of a third person (Sudha) into their conjugal life.

What Sudha could not get through Ashok and Ramesh, she could easily have from Sunil because he has been showering affection to her daughter, Dayita profusely. When she sleeps with him, she not only jeopardizes her sister's life, but also puts an end to her relationship with Anju. Their close bonding turns into an estranged relationship overnight. Sudha wishes Anju to hear "I've kissed your husband and liked it" and again in consternation utters, "I've done that which I shouldn't have" (108). Sudha could not remain with Anju after the heinous act that she has committed

to Anju. Afterwards she learns her mistake and feels that she has added to her sister's woes. She is so fully ashamed that her jealousy has thrown out her feminine self-respect. She decides to go away from Anju and Sunil and accepts a job as a caretaker. Thus the first part of the novel 'Subterranean Truths' concludes with passion running high and the sisters entangled in a vine of desire, helpless to part from their wishful world, i.e. from emotions to the reality. Anju waits for her husband to come away from Sudha's attraction, because of which the binding necessary for sisterly union gets destroyed. She is pulled between her love and affection for Sudha on the one hand and her suspicion that Sunil is still attracted to her on the other hand. On this account Anju feels sad and forlorn and as a result, their relationship gets severed. There is an emotional break in their marriage because the bonding has got broken. She wants to save her dignity and consequently she allows him to go out of her life forever. She gathers her will power to live alone in America and decides to go on a happy, lonely journey through life. This situation in which the major characters are precariously involved no doubt contributes to nostalgia in the novel.

Anju's suffering moments in the hospital at the time of her delivery are the most crucial part of nostalgia in a woman's life. Her remembrance of her would-be child, Prem has been the main concern for her at that time. She has the consolation thereby from the much pressing thoughts that bog her down from time to time. The images of the animals and birds make the scene quite terrible, as they have a direct bearing on the tragic situation, being built up by the novelist. The description in the beginning pages bring up the sense of nostalgia thus: "Huddled into tree knots, the owls did not lift their heads to watch the bright specks hurtling upward, dual shooting stars, reversed. They had heard such wailing many times, seen many such lights

disappear. Death is hardly a unique occurrence” (4). Anju could sense the unfinished life she has left with her baby. Divakaruni paints the picture thus: “Her imperfect life, her caught-in-the –body life, with its ferocious, zigzag pulse” (5). In the course of the unsuccessful operation to bring out the dead fetus from inside her body, Anju feels the pain of it all and with it the sense of emptiness too. The same is described in the words of the author thus: “Pain slams into her once more, flattening her against the bed. Dazed and breathless, she is already forgetting where she has been, what she has been capable of. But the sense of emptiness” (6).

Anju’s recalling the growing-up years add up to the nostalgia from her side. Her reading of books like *Anna Karenina*, *Sons and Lovers*, *The Great Gatsby* and *A Room of One’s Own* filled her with a certain sense of dissatisfaction. She also had the feeling that if only she could get out of Calcutta to one of those exotic countries that she had read about, it would transform her from her present disillusioned mind. What has made her fall terribly in love with Sunil is the scene in which he bought a whole set of novels of Virginia Woolf. But later she could not get him to read even one of those novels. After the miscarriage, Anju feels she looks like a witch. She used to tell stories of her life to the unborn Prem . She recalls how Sudha has been undergoing the torture from her mother-in-law whom she calls as “that old crocodile” (16). About Ramesh, the man who married Sudha she has no good opinion because in her words, he “that spineless jellyfish! That mama’s boy!...He did nothing” (17). The question whether her husband loves her after the death of her baby lurks in her mind. She is afraid that she might start loving Dayita thereby forgetting her own deceased one. Her dilemma is pictured thus: “How is she to keep Dayita at arm’s length without hurting Sudha? When she finally stumbles into sleep, her dreams are a chiaroscuro of uneasy

strategies” (26). During a conversation with Sudha, Anju tells about her nightmarish dream. She visualizes a giant meteor crashing into the orbiting planet. On hearing the sound, “she wakes with an ache in her throat, as though she’s swallowed a piece of bone” (33). Sudha guesses that if the planet is Anu, then she must be the meteor.

In her letter to her dead father, Anju would write what she thinks of the world then and now, the desperation in the minds of people like her own family members and the fear they want to overcome. She elaborates the fear thus: “These are what the people closest to me are afraid of: Sunil of earthquakes, flying insects, the sky at dusk and the loss of control; Sudha of the silence that rises from furniture in an empty room at noon, culinary disasters and the resurrection of desires she has put to death; Prem of dissolvment, the crying of bats and aborted babies and my despair” (64-65). The letters from home refer to the struggles the family is facing in their wards’ absence. While Sunil’s father is taken ill after falling down, in Anju’s house their mothers and the old aunt experience nostalgia particularly about the well-being of the two sisters and the baby. In the essay containing the effects of culture and heredity upon an individual, written as an assignment to Prof. P.Gossen, Anju recalls the story of her mother and her sorrows and sufferings. As she says, “My father’s death was the greatest loss in my mother’s life. I think we can all agree on that. It turned her from a wife into a widow. In a society where property and destiny were controlled by men, it was not a good way to be” (99). Her mother puts away all the lovely things after her father’s death – expensive sarees, jewelry, romantic thoughts, etc. Likewise she has done away with eating fish and reading poetry, both of which her father has loved. For a Bengali woman like her they are serious sacrifices. In order to deal with the loss of her husband, her mother has turned herself into a man. In Anju’s own case it is the

loss of her son and the loss of her husband, which has started happening, which have made her almost a victim.

The uneasiness felt by Sudha becomes all the more acute, as days pass by. Though her meeting Sunil in the garden in Calcutta a long time ago lingers in her mind, she wants to forget all those past moments. While Anju has plans to go to college and learn new things, for Sudha the air is black around her, impossible to breathe. She feels “there’s too much of the past in my blood still, like a sickness I have to sweat out before I can take on the future” (39). She could not resist Sunil’s advancement towards her and his romances in the absence of Anju. What Pishi has told in the past comes true thus—“Be careful, a woman’s beauty can be her wealth, but also her curse” (69). Sudha at this stage thinks of the way Sunil touched her. Sudha’s father who acts as the driver for the family dies and she feels how careless she has been with him all these days, thinking him to be only a well-wisher and not more than that. Her fond memories about him evoke no doubt nostalgia. She observes thus: “I was too unsure myself, teetering on the tightrope of my new life (life in America). I felt I had to keep my eyes fixed sternly ahead. One backward glance and I’d fall, crashing into the nothingness below” (78). The Ramayana tale which Sudha has been telling her daughter, Dayita contains references to Sita’s suffering at the hands of the demon Ravan. The same she applies to her life also in turn. The sufferings experienced by her are given account of thus:

“Each of our lives has a magic circle drawn around it, one we must not cross. Chaos waits on the other side of the drawn line. Perhaps in leaving Ramesh I had already stepped outside my circle. With the kiss,

Sunil trampled the circle his marriage had etched around him. What is there now to keep us safe from our demons?" (80).

By recalling the olden days when they were sisters in the same house in Calcutta, Sudha gives importance to those nostalgic moments. Her words simply echo this idea: "Even when we became wives, she in San Jose and I bricked up in Bardhaman, we'd sense each other's needs without having to talk. If one of us had a secret, the other would taste it, grainy and bitter like pomegranate seeds bitten into by accident" (108). Today it is heaviness all around her. She is in a state of mind which always questions her about her past deeds. She tells within her mind that she has done what she should not have done. She has kissed Anju's husband and liked it and next she stresses within her as if she is speaking to Anju: "Don't leave me alone with him" (108). She gets confused while trying to know all about America. It is strange that the people give importance to events occurring elsewhere rather than their own problems. In the evenings she would wait at the door of her apartment waiting for the arrival of Anju. She will think of her own life which has turned out to be so different from what she has hoped for. Her romance with Sunil may cause disturbance to Anju, but Sudha cannot ascertain how her sister feels it all. In Anju's case the possessives like "her life, her cousin, her husband, her son dominate, hanging from her like anchors: she "feels the seductive hours lick at her feet, longs to loosen herself from them, but doesn't know how" (125).

Sunil reveals his love for Sudha by utilizing the moments of absence of his wife, Anju from his house. He goes to the extent of sharing the bed with her, though both of them know very well that they are turning treacherous to Anju. Somewhere in a corner of her heart Sudha has a passion for him and cannot stop him from advancing

towards her. Anju feels lost in the new country. She is upset because she could not make her husband remain attached to her. Having seen and experienced the secret amorousness with Sudha, Sunil tries to convince Anju about his feelings with the hope that she would understand his change of mind. He confesses thus to her: “For a longtime now, we’ve just made each other unhappy” (284). He wants to start the divorce proceedings as early as possible so that he could make the line clear both to himself and Sudha. The American society in which he has been brought up all these years since he left India, has given him the long rope to cut his relationship with his own wife and jump over to another woman for the kind of life he aspires for. Unable to control herself for this situation, Anju packs things up in her apartment and surprisingly finds the scanning report of her dead baby, Prem. There is still some love left for him in her heart. In this way she finds herself trapped in a kind of dilemma. Hers is the example of women suffering from the cultural dilemma as is the case with a number of women living as immigrants in America.

Sunil confesses that he has failed to make himself love her. As it is, he feels responsible for Anju’s miscarriage. But to be honest, what he feels toward Sudha is really what people call love. In his own words the comparison he brings up between the two sisters is described thus:

“If I compare it to what I feel for Anju, it’s like holding a firefly in one hand and alive coal in the other. Before the wedding I thought of you night and day. So many times I was set to tell Anju, let’s call it off. But I’d see how her face lit up on seeing me, I knew the humiliation she’d undergo if the match was broken” (193).

He says to himself that love will come after marriage – that’s what happens to most of his friends in America. He thinks that he and Anju have grown apart anyway. He has the sensation in him that even before her miscarriage she must have noticed the coldness in him. Though Anju has too much of pride, she never speaks of it. Somewhere inside she removes that feeling. If their boy has been born, somehow they would have adjusted themselves to the situation around them. His feeling in the present circumstances, trying for a shift in his love towards the sisters, he lets out his confession thus: “Patched up our marriage because of him, like so many couples do. But his death – it towered between us like a wall of ice. We were freezing to death” (194). Hence it may be understood that Sunil’s role in the lives of the two sisters has paved way for nostalgia-like situations all along.

In her portrayal of an Indian and an Indian American Chitra Banerjee never fails to mention the sort of difficulties, attitudes and beliefs that each of them has towards their lovers or better halves as the case may be. When Sudha joins Trideep’s household for attending to the needs of the bed-ridden old man, she finds out that the old man is sad because he has been suffering from a sense of displacement in an alien land. She judges that he might secure the much-needed peace in his homeland. The old man talks to Sudha all about his native place, the places that come to his mind quite often, the traditions and customs which have their own beauty and assurance. Sudha too understands his condition of mind after closely moving with and watching him. This kind of awareness gives the immigrants like Sudha and the old man a sense of new judgement and understanding of their own country and its cultural patterns. It is obvious that in the first generation of immigrants, this separation from the native land and their close ones creates necessarily alienation, nostalgia and cultural rootlessness at the place of settlement. This is quite so, as the immigrants stick on to

the cultural habitat being followed in their homeland. The same is confirmed by the judgement made by Paranjape as follows: “There is a clinging to the old identity and a resistance to making a transition” (61). Overall the major characters in the novel *The Vine of Desire* undergo the mental turmoil in the course of their lives, which clearly indicates that nostalgia is the chief feature playing its definite role here.

As for the part played by nostalgia in the novel of Anita Rau Badami, *Tamarind Mem*, it may be said that the Vancouver writer spins a tale of bittersweet nostalgia in it, sketching her descriptions of Indian domestic life with painfully palpable information. Alongside she examines all the small ceremonies that make the family life at once so exciting and powerful. Set in India over the past forty years, the novel tells the story of one family, essentially a family of females marooned in a household through the wet seasons and dry periods, while ‘Dadda,’ the husband and father, is away three weeks out of four in a month, doing his job as an engineer with the Indian Railways. While remaining at home with one man-servant and the maid servant, Linda, the sisters Kamini and Roopa find themselves at the mercy of their mother, Saroja’s changing moods and anxious moments. As one who is fifteen years junior to her husband, Saroja wished to become a doctor in her early career. But her marriage with the engineer turns life in a different way for her. Still she rises against the restrictions of the Railway Colony with the absence and the presence of certain underlining features that make up the home atmosphere rigid and tense. Saroja thinks about going on rail inspection trips with her husband, but the latter insists that it goes against the rules of the Railway department. Her job is merely to send him off and welcome him back home again, which will provide the measure of stability for his peripatetic life.

The element of nostalgia pervades the novel *Tamarind Mem*, where the women characters all look like getting locked up into the interiors, controlled by rules and expectations. Even when they escape, by moving from Ratnapur, Bhusaval, Lucknow and Calcutta, they nevertheless reach yet another railway colony, with the same set of traditional values. Owing to the systematic developments, the sisters, Kamini and Roopa emigrate to North America. This leaves the mother in a sort of dilemma as to what she must do to stabilize herself in life. It is no surprise that later in her widowhood Saroja utilizes her railway pass to travel alone to all the places her husband never cared to take her. As part of the goal of Badami's narrative, there is a conscious attempt to reclaim Dadda himself, a remote, pipe-smoking man who feels mostly absent-minded, even when at home. Alienated from his wife, with all the butt of her yearning and her complaints, he projects himself only for Kamini and is interested in telling an endless chain of stories about the mythic characters inhabiting the forests and mountains of his travels. Alas, when Kamini becomes a teenager, she finds no time to listen to his stories, no patience with his mythology. Like her mother, she dismisses her father, making his presence even more ghostlike. Only later, as a dislocated graduate student in Calgary, staring at the snowbanks piled in blue drifts against the windows of her basement suite, does she regret her indifference. And from that regret springs Kamini's need to recount her own tales, as an attempt to understand her parents' relationship and her unresolved conflict with her mother, whose own free travels now exasperate her.

Tamarind Mem is an interesting novel, filled with pungent sights and sounds and poignant memories. It proves, yet again, that each character in a family experiences life's variegated experiences differently. Only by synthesizing these

disparate views it is possible for the readers to grasp the full flavour of the ongoing events. As is the case with most people, memories are triggered by the faintest occurrences. There is the distinct smell, for instance, that suddenly takes one right back to his/ her grandmother's closets or their uncle's work shop. In similar ways everything becomes almost photographic in how one remembers certain instances, even though he/she has not thought about them for twenty years. It is revealing to note how quickly they are affected by nostalgia. The question arises as to how true these memories are true to them really speaking. They might not be false, but no doubt they are certainly highly subjective. This beautiful novel tackles the perception of memories in quite an ingenious way. The first half of the book is the narrative of Kamini, a daughter who recalls her past, especially her growing up in India. Through her the novelist provides a feel for the culture, sounds, smell and a certain mood of a bygone era that is often romanticized. Moreover, she makes the readers get a peep into the relationships among the family members, the servants and the school teachers.

In the earlier part of the novel the nostalgia is very much evident, as Kamini and her mother, Saroja argue on important points of their discussion. The chapters are interspersed with these differentials between the mother and her daughter and the old past happenings relating to the family are described side by side as the main contents of the book. Going down memory lane the mother refers to Kamini's crying when the engine of the train in which they were travelling was reversed suddenly. This action was taken by the little one as though they were going to crash off the cliffs. Kamini corrects her mother telling her that it was on the Araku Valley section in the middle of the Dandakaranya forest where Sri Rama was kidnapped by Ravana in the famous

Indian epic. When Kamini's father goes on his duty, she sleeps in her mother's room. When she wakes up in the middle of the night, her mother would not be there. This frightens her and she would feel, "the ghost wandered in pretending to be my mother" (TM, 5). The women of the family believe in astrology and horoscope predicting the future of the persons in question. Despite such predictions, Kamini is worried that accidents and deaths occur regularly. In her family her ma's cousin has lost his leg in an accident two years ago and her uncle has run away from home leaving behind two little children. In her ma's case, "she could not marry Bheema the boy next door because his horoscope did not match hers. And yet she had married Dadda, whose horoscope didn't exist because he was not even sure when he was born!" (11).

The year in which Kamini was born saw the Chinese marching from across the border. Ma's love for her was like the waves in the sea, the ebb and flow left her reaching out hungrily. Her birth was the dark moment in India's horoscope. Kamini used to ask of herself if she was like any other children born that year the cause of the unfortunate end of all good things. Prior to the Chinese aggression, it was "an age when even a rupee was worth something and loyalty and morality were not just words in moral science class" (14). A wave of nostalgia would sweep time and again for Kamini that she would ask of her mother about the presence of Linda Ayah after her father's retirement. Unlike the permanent workmen in Ganesh peon and Linda Ayah who would go with them everywhere on transfer, Saroja keeps going round various places to while away her time. She cannot have a servant-maid permanently and she has a new one for every few months. She feels that she has the right to go anywhere. For that matter she takes the case of Roopa, her second daughter whom she has not questioned why she ran away. Saroja's words about Roopa stir the nostalgic feelings

in both her and Kamini: “She left college in the middle of the term, came home with a man we had never met. He might have belonged to a family of pimps for all I knew. And then she married him in less than a month – so suspicious it looked – and left for USA!” (30).

During the days prior to her love-making, Kamini used to take care of her in the family. Her neighbour’s daughter played house to house with other little children because she was looked after by her stern aunts, her own mother having been died of brain fever. But Kamini would never think of living without her mother and wholly depending on her aunts. This bad dream would keep her awake quite often. The doubts and questions raised by her amount to nostalgia on her part thus:

“How would I manage on my own with a father who was a way on tour most of the time? How would I battle Linda Ayah’s host of demons and monsters that roamed the house every day? Besides, I might not be able to keep my word about looking after Roopa and I’d go straight to Hell. And Hell was a most uncomfortable place, full of drooling creatures who craved little girls to satisfy their horrible appetites” (32).

Linda Ayah’s concern for the family sometimes boomerangs on her, for Saroja would pick up quarrels with her now and then. She would throw anxious glances at her thinking that Saroja would run away like what she used to warn. She acts like a malevolent toad in the absence of Dadda. She would question Saroja why she feels happy after the exit of Dadda. Saroja would shout at her saying if she cannot be happy in her own house. Over the years the supernatural creatures became plenty giving horrible and threatening postures to Kamini and her sister. The wooden roofs

supporting the walls in the Bilaspur house looked weird, the grinding stone in the verandah of the Bhusaval bungalow seemed a grey 'shaitaan', the Calcutta apartment had a 'daayin' with three rows of teeth and feet turned backwards and the ghost-like, headless man-woman and the oozing juice with painful boils from the bel fruit all caused quite a sensation adding up to nostalgic moments. For Roopa living in memories is like living with dust of cobwebs. She always prefers living in today and not in flashbacks. In Kamini's case she insists that she is not loony, but it is her nostalgia which makes her to do something liked by her. She quotes Linda Ayah who would remind that everybody has ghosts trailing behind. According to her, "the problem started when you (Roopa) looked over your shoulder at them. Memories were like ghosts, shivery, uncertain, nothing guaranteed, totally not-for-sure" (73).

At times Ma would come out vehemently against Dadda taking him to task for even the smallest deviations. She charges him that he would leave her for about half the year by going round the projects being implemented in various parts of the country. She used to rant on almost everything like Dadda's sisters visiting them "like a sickness and of course his smoking. Roopa and I (Kamini) could hear her in the room, crying and scolding" (114). Saroja knows the present generation as against the past generation. Her experience of witnessing incidents in the society like the girl Alamelu being surrounded by thugs and injuring her in the process makes her observe that a woman is never safe. So it is natural for her to warn Kamini thus: "Be careful how you dress, be careful who you speak to. You are twelve years old and you don't know what all can happen" (126). Ma is always suspicious of the world around her. She could not trust a soul especially where Roopa and Kamini are concerned. At the time of Kamini's waiting for her flight to the North Pole, Ma would caution her thus:

“You be careful who you talk to on the plane. Don’t leave your bags here and there. Such stories I have heard of terrorists and what not planting bombs and drugs and all” (151).

In the second half of the novel *Tamarind Mem* the novelist switches the narrative to the mother from whose side the memories come floating much in contrast to her daughter, Kamini’s viewpoints. She traces her life from her childhood onwards, leading to the successive stages like her early education, the arranged marriage to be followed by tending of her two daughters in the same manner as she led her life and the death of her husband making her a widow in the last stage of her life. Looking back on her life at different stages, she could understand how she had been forced to follow the guidelines and rules imposed on her first by her parents and then by her husband. Naturally she expects the same pattern to be followed by her two daughters. But it does not work out as she has expected, since the younger generation shows a positive trend unafraid of the consequences in the future. It is interesting to note that Saroja too realizes her sufferings earlier on and decides to change herself for good in the end. As seen in the first part of the novel she toes her own line of action and pattern of living, while all the time her two daughters, the elder one in Canada wants her to stop her arguments and see things in their real perspective and the younger one sticking to her stand on choosing her own partner in her life.

Saroja’s dream of becoming a doctor gets shattered because of the narrow-minded views of the elders at home that a woman should only learn to cook a good meal and make pickles for the rainy season. The priest examines the horoscopes from the grooms and gives his opinion on all of them, but Saroja grumbles saying that she wants to complete her studies. Her mother chides her with the remark, “we have an

eighteen-year old dead-weight sitting in the house holding up a line of sisters and brothers” (169). Vani Atthey would join her in her protest against the girl’s education thus: “They say it is not good to have a wife who knows too much. Bad for her husband’s pride” (169). When Saroja’s grandfather joins the fray in teasing her for her studies and her reluctance to marriage, Saroja frowns their discussion on her marriage and dares to be insolent to him. Her mother is worried that her husband, after her marriage, would kick her into the gutter for speaking in a shameless way. Finally her parents agree on a groom who has no horoscope of his own and who works as an engineer in the Railways. As a talkative girl, Saroja retorts saying that she will not agree when they look for another husband. Her mother will only remind her thus: “Don’t forget, you are a woman now, with a life of your own and you will have to clean up the messes you create” (177). When everyone is glad of her forthcoming marriage, Saroja the bride-to-be remarks thus: “what would I know of the wonders of married life, unfortunate one that I am?” (178).

As a married woman, Saroja need not be afraid of her mother anymore except her husband, Vishwa Moorthy, the engineer. She goes to live in Ratnapura as the railway engineer’s wife. Linda Ayah and Ganesh do the household chores for them in the railway colony house. After a few years Saroja is blessed with two daughters, both of them having their own different attitudes towards their Ma. With her husband too often on his visit to the work spots frequently, rarely does he stay at home except on Sundays at night time. Gradually Saroja begins to feel the monotony of her life with him. She will put the question to herself thus: “How can I explain to her the yawning monotony of my life with this man? How do I translate the dislike that rages through me when his voice touches my ears or his hands brush mine?” (213). She is reminded

of her mother's words: "A woman is her husband's shadow. She follows him wherever he goes" (214). Her grouse with Vishwa is that he has no feelings to spare for a wife. The dilemma in which she finds herself serves as a strong specimen of nostalgia in her case. She gives vent to her feelings of dismay thus: "With my tamarind tongue, never yielding a moment, I use my grandmother's strategy of words to ward off the pain of rejection. His aloof, merciless cool, my defensive anger. I will not beg for the affection that is due to me, his wife. (216). While Dadda on his return from his work spins yarns and brings strange gifts to the two daughters, "I, his wife, the other half of his body, I have only silences and the vast distances his travel creates between us" (226). The separation between them becomes obvious when Saroja comments on his presentation of a golden silk sari, "this is too dull for my skin" (216).

Saroja's dream of becoming a doctor and marrying a film star husband and living with heroism and romance could not be fulfilled for reasons beyond her control. In those days when everything was decided by the elders at home leaving no freedom to the younger ones, it becomes practically impossible to have one's say in all crucial matters. She would warn Kamini not to go near the Anglo-fellow, the latter stares defiantly at her. But still she comes round to experience the feeling of pain in her. This provokes Kamini into shedding tears, as she feels that she has nobody to care for her. At this stage what Linda Ayah has said comes to her memory: "a child is like a little god till the age of five, is human till it turns twelve and after that it becomes a donkey. Perhaps the sudden descent from divinity is too much to bear!" (242). When Vishwa dies, Saroja parts with all the unwanted furniture and other miscellaneous items in the house before vacating the house. They all have memories associated with

those things, but parting is one thing from which the humans cannot escape. The two loyal servants, Linda Ayah and Ganesh have now become strangers, as the family will never meet them again after their departure.

The steel trunks which they carry are like scars from every corridor of India and on their sides the stickers indicating the several places they were in -- Ratnapur, Bhusaval, Lucknow, Calcutta – also provide a summary of Saroja's incarnation as a Railway wife. After reaching out to the new place, Saroja's life is in direct contrast what it was in the past with her two servants, Linda Ayah and Ganesh. The change is thus reported by her: "When I left that life, I felt naked and vulnerable, the rough and tumble of the ordinary world scraping against my skin. Only after you lose something do you realize how valuable it was. Then you get used to the loss, dust the memories off your body and begin anew" (257). Her daughters want her to come and live with them, but she turns down their idea and prefers to live alone. She feels she has not changed as much as the world around her. Her words provide the pep for nostalgia thus: "In my younger days when I was a Railway wife, the servants called me *Tamarind Mem* for my acid tongue...there I go wandering off into new stories without finishing the old" (260). In her talk with Kamini and Roopa who are away in the alien lands, Saroja would like to recall all those good old days and the memories left behind. As she says, "My memories are private realms, rooms that I wander into, sometimes sharply focused, sometimes puffy and undefined" (263).

The first few years after her daughters left India, Saroja felt like the husk of rice, empty of energy, thought and feeling. She would spend "hours sitting in her darkened room trying to hold on to fading pictures of Dadda, of Railway friends, my daughters as babies" (265). She could not explain why she was unhappy in her earlier

years. By keeping herself like a silent protester, defying the rules of conduct, in her role as a mem-sahib, she proved herself a strict conservative with her own well-defined thoughts. She recalls how in the olden days aged parents left their worldly abodes to go into the forest in order to forget the chains that bound them to their responsibilities and spent the days thinking about their past. It is to be noted that “they shuffled their memories like a pack of cards, smiled at the joyous pones, shed a tear or two at others. They shook their heads over youthful follies and thought quietly about the journey, yet unknown, that stretched before their callused feet” (266). Saroja too has reached that stage in her life where she can no longer do anything but remain silent. Such are the scenes of nostalgia in the novel *Tamarind Mem*.

In the final analysis of nostalgia Badami’s yet another novel *The Hero’s Walk* is taken into consideration. This novel could be the best illustration to her alien feeling, clothed in a fine form of refinement. A Canadian – raised orphan returns to her grandparents living in a remote village, Toturpuram and comes to face the clash between the East and the West, tradition and modernity, the elder and the younger generation. Unlike her first novel, *Tamarind Mem*, which is steeped in melancholy, the second one is illuminated with some hope and positivism. The seven-year old Nandana loses her parents in a car accident and has to go and live with her grandparents in India. Maya, her mother has been disowned by her parents and yet she has made her father, Sripathi as the child’s guardian in her absence. Sripathi is aggrieved over Maya’s decision to marry a white man. Both Maya and her husband live in Vancouver and as fate would have it, they get killed in a road accident.

Badami's skill in bringing out pathos is obviously seen in her painting the shattered life of Nandana, who is now isolated with her mother's demise at a tender age, when she needs her mother badly. It is tragic indeed that she has lost her warmth at so early an age. In her grandparent's home everything goes haywire, as everything and everyone is new to her. Her mother Maya is one reason for this, despite her being a bright and well-behaved woman. Her detachment from her parents has made her life alien and isolated which ultimately has its impact on her daughter. Her moody grandparents, her idle, but loving uncle, her bitter great-grand mother, love-sick spinster aunt undergo the painful experience of coming to terms with Maya and her western outlook. Indeed Nandana struggles desperately to strike a balance between things western and those eastern. This dichotomy throws her into more tangled experiences and gives her rarer opportunity in her short life than many of the others could hope for. Little Nandana faces a hard time to tolerate her conservative grandparents, which is in direct contrast to her previous style of living. She finds a sort of meaninglessness in the traditions of India, though she tries to give a healing touch to the ever-prevailing social conflicts. A few developments like the family's visit to the astrologer, clearly show Anita's realistic approach to the Indian nativity, thus bringing the current of nostalgia in her well. As part of it, the whole family lives in their ancestral Mansion indicating their remaining as bondages to its past glory. Such tendencies only reveal the love for false prestige that the traditional-minded Indians nourish in their long standing heritage. What is interesting to note is that all the characters in the novel find heroism in small measures and in their own valiant attempt to come out of their bondages and to defy the age-old customs.

Maya's mother, Nirmala is pictured as a worried woman in the beginning of the novel. It is natural for a novel of diasporic concern, as Badami highlights the problems of the immigrants in the alien land. The new environment keeps the new settlers busy and occupied to reminisce and think about their relatives. It is customary for Maya to call their parents on every Sunday morning. This event is described by the novelist thus: "It's six-thirty when, as she knew, her mother would be waiting, sitting on the cold, tiled floor of the landing, right beside the phone. And every Sunday, for several years now, Sripathi had avoided that moment by setting off for a walk at six-twenty" (HW, 4). Though born in Canada, Nandana, Maya's child feels alien there. As no one is free to talk with her, she feels isolated. It is the same case in Aunty Kiran's home, where too she feels alone. Her parents have clearly warned her not to talk to strangers and not to accept anything from any unknown person. When Aunty Kiran tells her that her grandfather is arriving from India and she can go with him to India, she feels alarmed because she has just seen her grandfather only in a photo. She does not have any idea about India. Maya's father, Sripathi is shown as a conditional, paternalistic and self-centered character. Unhappy with his son's work as an environmental activist and thinking of the disappointing act of his daughter Maya for having married a white Canadian rather than the man of his choice, he often isolates himself from his wife and children.

Rather than averting the present imbroglio bordering on the difficult situations faced by his family, Sripathi spends his time in expressing his deepest thoughts in the form of letters to the editors of various local newspapers. Ironically, he writes these letters by using a pseudonym, 'Pro Bono Publico.' He chooses to write these letters "on behalf of the people" (9) and by this means he thinks he can become a secret hero,

“a crusader” of “the “world in pen and ink” (9). But unfortunately this escapist attitude on his part increases his dilemma and his profitless continuance as a writer. As an after effect this has only increased his alienation from his family and social community. The cultural pressure and the different categories of identity involving the women characters form the staple of this novel, *The Hero's Walk*. The book is replete with the feelings of diaspora, memory and nostalgia. It is pertinent that Maya, after her departure to America, keeps writing letters to her parents about the type of education, food and culture followed in America.

While Sripathi is angry with his daughter, Nirmala feels sympathetic for Maya. In the new country, Maya comes into contact with Alan whom she marries later. The feeling of nostalgia is so deep in her that she wishes to go and meet her relatives in India. But her move, especially after her marriage with Alan, does not click, as her father has already decided not to have any relationship with her, ever since her dishonouring of betrothal with Prakash, the bridegroom chosen for her earlier. After some time, she gives birth to a female child and again feels nostalgic to go over to her native place and meet her parents and relatives. In one of her letters, she requests her father to be a legal guardian of Nandana. Despite her father's adamant stand of keeping away from her, Maya continues to write letters to her mother and calls her every week. This only proves that just by migrating, one cannot forget his/her attachments to the motherland. It is significant that either in the form of memory or telephonic or postal communication, this attachment continues. Maya's daughter, Nandana feels herself at a loss, as she is born in Vancouver in Canada. Since she has never visited India and is new to the persons, places and traditions prevailing in India she feels awkward in getting herself acclimatized to Indian culture

at various places like the railway station, home, school and other public places. In contrast to Nandana, Maya acts as the novel's most conventional diasporic character. She is the defiant and heroic daughter who "had dared everyone" (46) and lives as an unforgettable character in her father's and brother's consciousness.

Sripathi and his family members live in the now-discoloured Big House in Toturpuram. Sripathy's grandfather bought it from a British family which moved to England after India's independence. Nostalgia strikes the house also, as after his father's death, "the house itself had slid into a sort of careless disrepair and looked as if it was tired of the life within its belly (6). The aggressive new world outside contributed to its inaccessibility by dumping heaps of granite and gravel on its sides. The garden of the house also looks untended, as nobody has now time to keep the plants and trees in good shape. Maya who is interested in keeping them trim is no more here to look after them. The emptiness and lethargy rule the place now. Old memories die rarely. This is so with Nirmala who makes reference to her meeting of Prakash Bhat and his wife at the temple. She feels sad that they have pretended as if they have not noticed her. Since Maya's wedding with him could not come off, he shows little respect to her. Sripathi too is nostalgic, when his wife reminds him all that is past. He has the feeling within him reported thus by the novelist: "Why did Nirmala persist in bringing up these memories? The unpleasantness of the incident would stay with him like the bitter taste of kashaya" (12).

Ammayya is the mother of Sripathi and is a widow living with her aged and unmarried daughter, Putti. She looks for good, status-rich grooms for Putti, but no one is prepared to marry an aged girl like her. She has the ambition of living like a rich family and her dream to make Sripathi remains unfulfilled because the latter has taken

up the job of a reporter. She regrets that her husband has left her in a beggarly condition leaving her lot to her son. She hears about the death of Chintamani's father due to high blood pressure. As she too feels the same condition, she complains thus: "Nobody cares for old people. Such is this modern world. My mother-in-law was blessed, truly. Because of me she stayed alive till she was ninety years old" (23). She hates the cowherd Munnuswamy and his son, Gopala who supplies milk to them every morning. She brands them as low-caste people and any close movement with them would be regarded by her as something horrible. But the irony is that the cowherd has earned a lot of money and bought quite a lot of properties in their street. Mrs. Poorna's wailing of her lost child day in and day out adds up to the sorrowful and pathetic situation in their surroundings. Sripathi's son, Arun has been a disappointment to him, since the latter is always busy with some social cause or the other to fight out and go in processions and protest against the authorities.

Nandana, Maya's daughter has been living in Anjali's house for three days. Her mother has left her in the neighboring apartment and instructed her not to have anything with strangers. Both Uncle Sunny and Aunt Kiran have tough time with her, when she asks for her parents and keeps telling that she wants to go home. The next day Dr. Sunderraj rings up to say that Maya and her husband Alan have died in a road accident the previous day. Sripathi's conscience pricks him to the effect that "You didn't talk to her for nine years, cut her off as she were a diseased limb and now suddenly comes this concern?" (32). Nandana is safe in Dr. Sunderraj's home in Vancouver. As a legal guardian, Sripathi will have to take Nandana back home with him to India. As the legal and financial matters have to be cleared, it will take three months for Sripathi to fly home with his granddaughter. After hearing about it all,

Nirmala shouts at him saying, “You killed my daughter. You drove her away from me!” (35). Sripathi hits her for her angry gesture towards him. Arun comes on the scene and inquires about the phone call from Vancouver. Soon the father goes down memory lane and recalls those small incidents involving Maya. His daughter is such a precise little woman who “had carried that fierce precision right through to her adult years, along with an ambition that Sripathi had never entirely understood” (38).

Sripathi thinks about the phenomenon called death which has overtaken so many old people including his grandmother, Shantamma. It could be justified, but not his daughter’s untimely death in an accident. He ponders over Shantamma’s affection towards him. When his own mother has been expecting him to become a renowned heart surgeon, the president of a company, the prime minister of India, a hero, she has protected him from his father’s increasingly tyrannical rages, loved him for what he was” (52). Nirmala’s cry over her daughter’s demise is so pathetic: “what wickedness is this, that I have to lose my own child to see my grandchild!” (57). When the atmosphere is still riddled with death, Sripathi goes back to remember his father, Narasimha’s cruel death. as a result of the accident his lifeless body lies abandoned on the road. As the deceased has a mistress, the mourners first visit her house and then only come to his own mother’s house. His death “brought with it penury and the sharp fear that always accompanies a lack of money” (62). Similarly death occurred to a distant relative who had two daughters and a sullen wife a little later. As he died a pauper, his wife begged for money to meet his funeral expenses from Sripathi. The poverty in this case is not only wretched, but also terrifying.

Though Putti looks like a well-milked cow, within her she seethed an ocean of desire that would have shocked her mother. She could feel frustration building inside

her like heart in a pressure cooker” (80). She is so fed up with her mother for turning down all proposals of marriage coming from prospective grooms. In one case when a lecturer of political science came seeking a bride, his offer was turned down by Ammayya simply on the ground that the unruly students would throw stones at him. She cites a news item about a boy who stabbed a teacher for catching him red-handed while copying in the examination. Another proposal from a young engineer in America was also turned down “because she had heard rumours that men from abroad already had white wives and used their Indian ones as maidservants. A doctor from Bangalore was rejected because Ammayya suspected he would die of a disease caught from a patient, leaving Putti a widow” (81). After learning the essentials of education from an Anglo-Indian teacher, Putti wants to teach in a play school situated two streets away. But this idea also is given up because Ammayya would not allow her to go and earn money on the ground that they belong to a rich and respectable family. The old woman has grouse at Maya’s betrayal for marrying an unknown foreigner, complains about Sripathi for disappointing her and ridicules Arun who sneers at her caste rules and preaches modern liberalism. When Ammayya failed to deliver a child each of those six times, “people began to whisper that Yama-rajā, the death-lord, had set up an altar to himself in the echoing darkness of the girl’s womb” (86). After the birth of Sripathi, her husband Narasimha has gone to live with a mistress. She goes to her mother’s house weeping and furious at her partner’s conduct and complains that he has abandoned her.

Ammayya prays to God three times a day and observes the rituals as prescribed by the Shastras to become a good wife. Her virtue turns tyrannical and everyone begins to be wary of her steely righteousness. After the birth of Sripathi, she

begins to watch him like a hawk, lest anything fateful might happen to her. She dreams a lot about the child wishing him to become a judge, doctor and diplomat and all that. Her feelings for the boy turn into anxieties to make him stand in good stead. She is also worried that he might throw her aside like the peel of a fruit. Her worries are graphically described thus: “she was afraid that Narasimha’s hard slaps would hurt the boy’s brain and turn him into a vegetable. Love was an extravagance that she could ill afford. If she spent it on the boy, she would have none left for herself, none to use as ointment on the wounds that Narasimha inflicted on her” (87). Her husband has borrowed money from the Toturpuram Bank and spent it lavishly on her mistress, racing and other useless pursuits. Ammayya becomes pregnant again and four months before Putti was born, Narasimha gets killed by a mad bull that jumped straight at him and threw him in the gutter. When her daughter arrives in the world, she gets “twin gifts of life and death that she had received by lighting a silver lamp at the Krishna Temple every month – her one indulgence in an otherwise miserly life” (88).

If nostalgia includes sufferings undergone by both the old and young, it is justified in the case of Ragini, a female child of Raju, Sripathi’s friend. He has already two sons and the new arrival in the form of his daughter is born with complications in her brain. It is found later that Ragini has prolonged seizures that leave her limp and exhausted. Her brain is damaged and she could not be cured. This makes her parents feel anxious and worried. The friend’s smile is gone completely and he looks careworn all the time. Raju cries in desperation thus: “That bastard God up there must have decided: ‘this bloke is laughing and smiling too much. Give him a taste of something nasty.’ I must have been a murdering rogue in my last life and now I am paying for it” (121). Raju’s wife dies when their daughter is fifteen years old. The

maids, who are appointed to look after Ragini, do not last long and leave Raju in the lurch. His sons finished their education and the elder one is in California and the younger in Switzerland. The elder son gets married and mercilessly informs his father through a letter about his wife's reluctance to share the tragedy of Ragini. Sripathi tells him about the death of his daughter and son-in-law leaving behind a girl child. After seeing Raju in almost similar condition like himself, he thinks of drawing "strength from Raju, who had managed to keep despair at bay, even though it stared him in the face every waking day" (124).

Sripathi's one and a half month's stay in Vancouver to bring his grandchild to India is replete with sad moments and memories. He does not go anywhere, as he feels intimidated by the city's strangeness, silence and towering beauty. The air reeks of the life that courses through the masses of plants and shrubs that grow in the garden outside. On the first day Sripathi listens to the sound of a wailing baby in the house next door. When a large chest of drawers is taken by buyer from Maya's house by a buyer, Nandana's eyes shed tears. Sripathi thought that she is losing all that is beloved and familiar. He has his own doubts if Maya would have told the child all about her early childhood and other family members whom she has left behind in India. He feels sad to note that Maya's child, Nandana has become an orphan. He wonders if Maya's accent also has changed from Madras spice to Canadian ice, like Dr.Sunderraj's. He is at a loss to understand how "long years as a copy writer could reduce even sorrow to a jingle" (143). Nandana must have been in a sort of shock and so she has not spoken to her grandpa yet. But Sripathi is reminded of Maya's wearing the Mysore silk sari back home when she attained her sixteenth age. He also remembers how that sari has given her a look like Miss Chintamani, the library clerk.

In memory of her stay here the child takes all her toys, books and clothes in separate suitcases and boxes. The atmosphere in this house is one of eerie silence, and it is described thus: “The child continued to regard Sripathi with suspicion, even hostility and he gave up any attempts to make conversation with her. For the entirety of his stay, there was nothing between them but a deepening silence” (145).

The plight of an old man living in the first floor apartment is another instance of suffering in this novel. His strange, unsavoury habits earn him the nickname, Chocobar Ajja who prowls in childish nightmares with a host of apparitions. His wife takes the trouble of controlling him through a servant maid who too needs instructions from her. She has two fatty sons getting ready for school. Ammayya brands their block as ‘Lunatic Mansions’ for the number of people who live in it. Like these two sons, Nirmala also brings up Maya and Arun in their earlier days. Nandana is sent to the local school after her arrival in this country. She refuses to speak to anyone in the house, as she is still nostalgic about her home and friends in Vancouver. She could not easily get over the memory of her parents who help her in her routine daily. One day while playing with three girls from the apartments, Nandana is asked to come through a tunnel that connects two blocks. Her refusal to play this game is not accepted by the girls who take turns to participate in it. It is at this stage the other girls go home, fearing the consequences of such an exercise. Poor Nandana goes inside and when she comes out at the other end, she loses her way and finds herself at Mrs. Poorna’s door. From there she is taken back to Big House. This is how the little girl is made to suffer by the other girls playing there in that block.

Sripathi begins to have beliefs in old, nightmarish tales and events after the tragedy that has struck his daughter and her husband. Ghosts frighten him now. He feels that the world is

“full of unseen things, old memories and thoughts, longings and nightmares, anger, regret, madness. They floated turbulently around, an accumulation of whispery yesterdays that grew and grew ----- sorrow, pain and other abstractions that couldn’t be surgically removed like an extra thumb” (172).

His memory goes back to Dr.Pandit who would readily treat his patients at any time of day. When he took Maya and Arun one midnight to his clinic he was gracious enough to attend and wave away Sripathi’s apologies and ask him not to worry about anything at all. According to him, “a human being is not merely a ticking body, but a sum of all that happens in the world around him” (213). He would certainly have known about Sripathi, “aged fifty seven, father of two children (one dead), burnt out copy writer and a man whose body was out of control” (213).

Ammayya, Sripathi’s mother is in the habit of storing things secretly under her pillow and in the iron box she keeps with him. She is afraid that any thief, be it from outside or inside, would take away all these costly ones saved by her all through these years. She has read in the paper about an old woman getting beaten by her son for a few gold chains worn around her neck. She will take away all things from the house kept for use by the family members secretly. Miss Chintamani tells her of Kaveriamma who has brought up the servant boy, Vasu as her own son. He has been with her for these twenty five years, but one day he goes to the extent of killing her with a rolling pin. Ammayya is afraid of the doctors too, for she gets news from

Chintamani about the smart-suit doctors putting the Sub-Inspector's son on the operating table for mere soar throat. What happened was that they had taken away his appendix. Ammayya's anger is so great that it "was evenly divided between all those arrogant, god-like creatures with the power to heal at their fingertips" (223). She feels that she has lost so much in life — "children, illusions, dreams, trust – that one more loss no longer really mattered to her. Things came and things went. That was life" (227).

Munnuswamy promises to help Sripathi's family whenever things go wrong in Big House. The milk vendor has now become a very important person and has a house of his own next to Sripathi's house. His son, one or two years older than Putti loves her and is ready to marry her. The news is welcomed by Nirmala who thinks that in the present situation it is only good for their family. Sripathi has no other option but to accept to this proposal, for his own position in his company is now weakening, with Kaushik, his boss asking him to be prepared to move to the Madras office. Arun is a good for nothing fellow always going round with his reformist activities and inviting trouble more often in the process. Already the house is in dire trouble with loans still outstanding to be paid after the exit of Sripathi's father. Ammayya is opposed to this match for she has always been attacking Munnuswamy from the beginning. She shouts at her daughter thus: "If you really cared about my opinions, you wouldn't allow that pariah from next door into this house. You are breaking my heart, I tell you. If I die tonight, it is on your head" (330). When her daughter insists that they are nice people, she says bitterly thus: "From today you and I are strangers. You are a piece of dirt that my womb voided and that I kept by mistake, idiot that I am!" (330).

An hour before the arrival of the Munnuswamys for the betrothal function, the power has gone off plunging the entire street in total darkness. Ammayya feels happy for she knows that the gods are as furious as she at this unholy alliance. In the darkness she steals the laddoos, crisp chakkuli holds close to her body draping her sari over them, hurries to her room where she hides them under her bed. She has plans to conceal them in her cupboard in the morning. She could not digest the fact that a milkman's son getting married to a Brahmin girl. She blames the corrupting influence of Nirmala for all this happening. As she says, "she (Putti) had been tainted by the denizens of this house, influenced by that Maya, by her shameless marriage to a foreigner. Couldn't Putti see where that had led her? Straight to Lord Yama's kingdom" (331). With the entry of the guests, Sripathi and Nirmala welcome them. Putti feels shy and runs to the kitchen. When Ammayya again flares up at the visitors, Nirmala asks them not to mind her and says that it is her nature to blame them all. But the old woman issues a clear warning to Putti in these words: "Putti, if you marry this loafer you will be dead for me forever. My curses will be on your head. A mother's curse is the blackest of them all. Your children will be born deformed. They too will abandon you. And that evil fellow will beat you every single day!" (332).

As Putti gets immersed in lascivious thoughts, she does not hear a single word uttered by her mother. Gopala's mother gives her a tray full of fruits to welcome her as her son's future wife. Putti is full of joy on the occasion, forgetting all that has been uttered by her mother. Ammayya falls sick and wants to meet Dr. Menon. She refuses to take any food. At night the rain pours down heavily and soon the power goes off and seawater enters her house. The stolen newspapers kept under the bed sink into water. The slush flowing with water makes the scene gruesome and terrible. Putti

feels alarmed and twists her mother violently as if “all her anger against Ammayya and her strategies to keep her a spinster were expressed in that twisting, cruel pinch” (341). Soon the old woman becomes hysterical and is afraid of the horrible situation. She wails that she has been polluted, soiled forever. She fears that she is walking in somebody’s excrement. She closes her eyes tightly and allows her tears to trickle out. Both Putti and her mother make their way to the first floor and alert Sripathi and his wife, Nirmala. The little child, Nandana is up and says desperately thus: “We are all going to die: like my Mommy and Daddy?” (343). The old woman moans that this is the god’s way of showing anger against Putti’s betrothal. Arun finds out that the flood is only in their house, as a burst septic tank should have been the cause. He shouts for help and Gopala from the next door swings into action with Arun and they both bring Ammayya to a place of safety in their house.

The din and unusual sequences put heavy pressure on Ammayya with the result that she feels intense pain on her chest. She pants and glares at Putti wrenching her arm with three finger marks. They are like three staring, cartoonish eyes causing Putti to wear dozens of bangles got from her mother’s trunk box. Really they are the marks symbolizing her jealous anger for Putti’s rebuttal of her wishes. Even as the van comes up to take the old woman to the hospital, another wave of pain makes her speechless. The hospital presents a scene of wounded passengers after an accident. The old woman could not be taken to a bed immediately. She lies on the ground in the hospital corridor. What she has been dead against all these years comes in full view, with “her nose full of the odour of dead and dying bodies, her bulging heart full of the rage she had accumulated over sixty of her eighty years of existence” (347). Ammayya wants Sripathi to remove all the ornaments she is wearing and keep them

with him till they reach their house. She is particular that not a single jewel or money should go to Putti for her act of defiance. The doctors want them to pay the bill, but Sripathi and Arun want the treatment to proceed first, but though they promise to pay the authorities, the doctor in charge says that she is an old woman and they cannot do anything for her. The body gets stiffening and there is no other go for them except to return home with her lifeless body. Nirmala cleans the body and finds out the incision made by the doctors around her chest. She suspects foul play by the doctors which she does not divulge to others, as it is too late and will create unnecessary problems. Thus the old woman's anguish and unfulfilled desire to get Putti married to a groom of her choice falls through. All these old memories and remembrances push the affected characters to so much suffering.

Nostalgia in all these six novels is so breathtaking that the characters involved in them, mostly women, come to feel the acutest pain and suffering from which they struggle to come out. The old timers who still believe in formality, tradition and so many other religious and social factors feel it difficult to overcome them all, as they do not see eye to eye with the present attitudes and ways of life. With nostalgic feelings gaining current, these forces drive the ones affected by them to the extreme corners and push them to the brink of disaster and death. As it happens to diasporic women in these novels, they find it hard to accept the reality and seek avenues to come out of them in their own distinct ways in due course of time. As they say time is the best healer of past wounds, the women so disturbed try to come out of the shocks, tyrannous holds, unjustified actions and unwanted happenings thrust on them by those close to them. Naturally such a study of nostalgic happenings should lead to the exploration of ways and means to tackle such forces who are out to destroy the peace

and happiness in a way that is good and essential for the smooth functioning of the society. It is with this view in mind the following chapter proceeds to discuss the different strategies of resistance that are worked out for the amelioration of the suffering womenfolk from a study of the six prescribed novels.

CHAPTER - III

GENDER AND CULTURE RESISTANCE IN WOMEN

Generally speaking women of olden times remained submissive and acted according to the whims and fancies of their parents and elderly folks. There was no resistance from their side in any field of activity either at home or away from home. Even in the past there were cases when women boldly resisted attempts to subjugate them and put them to shame. This is true of the legendary women like Sita in *The Ramayana* and Draupati in *The Mahabharatha*. In the earlier case Sita's chastity was questioned and she was asked to walk on fire and thus purify herself. Sita accepted the challenge and proved that she was true to her husband, Sri Rama. In the latter case Draupati's sari was removed by the Kauravas, especially Duchadana in the court before everybody and thus she was put to shame. As Sri Krishna was on her side, he made the sari come as long as possible and thus saved her from getting exposed. The resistance on the part of the suffering women is something visible ever since the olden times. In the case of the migrated women, these days it has been going on and the plight in which they find themselves in nostalgic situations is heartrending and unless these women decide that they should do something about it, they do not have any other choice but to submit to hardships and suffer endlessly.

The women in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee are not an exception to this phenomenon of rising against the troublesome situations around them. The contemporary times have witnessed a gradual transformation from total surrender to total revolution against the dictatorial tendencies. With the new culture spreading fast, the migrant women have not hesitated to do away with all possibilities of nursing the

old specific sense of culture. Fredric Jameson rightly comments thus: “If we do not achieve some general sense of a cultural dominant, then we fall back into a view of present history as sheer heterogeneity, random difference of a host of distinct forces whose affectivity is undecidable” (6). The new wave of American military and economic domination has become a phenomenon which cannot be easily neglected. In its aftermath there has been a spate of spilling of blood, beating one to torture, pushing the person affected to the brink of death and holding him or her continuously in terror. Though such activities are on the rise, on the other side there is much qualitative cultural transformation found among the migrant women who settle down in America. In the light of this change coming over a number of such women, it will be pertinent to examine how these changes have come into the reckoning in the case of women in the two novels of Bharati Mukherjee, namely *Wife* and *Jasmine*.

In the novel *Wife*, Dimple, the protagonist is portrayed as one living in a fantastic world, a world she creates for herself. In the day-to-day world of reality her imaginary feathers get crippled. As her dreams are not fulfilled, she feels so disappointed. In her inconsistent mood she thinks marriage alone is the way out for her to get out of all kinds of uneasiness. After her marriage with Amit Basu, an engineer seeking emigration to America, she begins to change her mentality. She loves waiting for marriage rather than getting married. Her resistance to things happening around her starts from her in-law’s house straightaway. She gives an inkling of her mind thus: “She hated the gray cotton with red roses inside yellow circles that her mother-in-law had hung on sagging tapes against the metal bars of the windows” (W, 20). She has the feeling that marriage has robbed her of all romantic intentions so tastefully cultivated. Again, when Amit takes her to Kwaliti’s restaurant

and orders chilli chicken, fried rice and chicken spring rolls, she expresses her uneasiness in handling the chicken pieces with fork and knife. Contrarily, she feels that he could have taken her to a better hotel, Trinca's.

Dimple wants to have everything as per her wish and expectations. She does not think that Amit is the man of her choice. In his absence she visualizes the man of her dreams. The description of the man she likes to have is given thus: "She borrowed a forehead from an aspirin ad, the lips, eyes and chin from a body builder and shoulders ad, the stomach and legs, from a trousers ad and put the ideal man" (23). The post-marital stage results in her pregnancy which has its own symptoms like vomiting. Even as she expels the brownish liquid from her body, she wants to get rid of the fetus that blocks her tubes and pipes. The same time she notices a mouse in its pregnancy and in her hysterical mood kills it without any proper basis. That she does not like to have the baby in her womb becomes clear, when "she smashed the top of a small gray head" (35). She is in a mood of migrating to the West as soon as Amit gets his visa. As such, she does not want to carry any old relics with her to the new place. She shows her repulsion thus, as her husband has failed to transform her wishes.

In her mood of resistance to things going the conventional way, she strongly reacts by going in for self-abortion. The way in which she destroys the very small one inside her womb is described poignantly thus: "She had skipped rope until her legs grew numb and her stomach burned; then she had poured water from the heavy bucket over her head, shoulders, over the tight little curve of her stomach. She had poured until the last of the blood washed off her legs; then she had collapsed" (42). She has no after thoughts after this cruel deed committed by her. She remains cool and dispassionate instead of reacting emotionally. This blind resistance is commented by

Rosanne Klass thus: “Dimple acts on the vaguest and most undefined impulses and thinks no more about it” (88). In her view it is a kind of liberation from the traditional roles and limitations suffered by women. Symbolically it is a resistance to stick to the traditional demand of the Hindu women who feel committed to bearing and rearing children.

Dimple’s friend, Paramita Ray, called Pixie, holds a party on the eve of Dimple’s departure to the US. While Amit searches for a job in the new country, his wife attends parties and begins to have different feelings about people and their customs and habits there. As days pass by, Dimple turns angry for Amit’s remaining careless about her dreams. She is fed up with his snores and gets visibly disturbed at certain habits of Amit. She realizes that he is not the man she had wanted as husband. The resistance mood sets in, as she has second thoughts over her marriage with Amit: “She was bitter that marriage had betrayed her, had not provided all the glittery things she had imagined, had not brought her cocktails under canopied skies and three A.M. drives to dizzy restaurants where they sold divine Kababs rolled in roti” (102). Her friendship with Ina Mullick makes her opposition to Amit’s ways indigestible. She thinks of ways and means to bring an end to the kind of existence that she undergoes in America.

At last Amit gets a job and they move to Greenwich in Marsha’s flat. Soon Dimple grows abnormal, as she finds doing odd jobs like watering the plants and cleaning the kitchen, etc., difficult to bear with. She complains of poor diet and is losing her temper quite easily: “You never listen; you’ve never listened to me. You hate me. Don’t deny it; I know you do. You hate me because I’m not fat and fair” (110). America has become unlivable for her and she has the sense of nostalgia

regarding her life ‘in a country where every other woman was a stranger, where she felt different, ignorant, exposed to ridicule in the elevator’ (112). She has the feeling that Amit is just a robot and not an actual human being for her. She feels like resisting the unwanted and forced situations on her in the light of her new life that she lives in America. As Linda Sandler rightly says, “she is unable to make the transition from Before to After and chooses violence as a ‘problem-solving’ device” (75).

Dimple suffers from lack of assimilation with the American ways of life. It is natural for an expatriate to feel conscious of upholding his or her identity even in the most trying circumstances of life. Her resistance changes into the extreme ways, when she contemplates seven ways of committing suicide. These seven ways include darkness, evil tendency, sinister move, gruesome activity, murderous incident, suicidal feeling and mugging. At the dinner party arranged by Amit and Dimple, everyone is happy to share their feelings, but Dimple is left in her world of reveries. She decides that she must draw the line somewhere. Though Amit points out her foolishness in imagining things for herself, she does not feel composed and natural enough. She is pushed to a situation in which she feels like doing the terrible, that of killing her husband from behind, when he comes to embrace her. Her friend, Ina Mullick too is of the same temperament like Dimple’s and expresses unhappiness at the turn of events for her. When her mother informs her of Pixie’s marriage with a 53 year old actor, she feels happy and is delighted to be the friend of a ‘to be super actress.’ This is resistance to the conventional frame of mind which dictates things to the bride or groom.

Ina Mullick brings her American friends to Dimple's apartment as part of a get together. Milt and Leni Anspach are one of the couples to visit her place often. It so happens that Leni quarrels with Ina for spoiling her love life with Milt. Though Dimple pacifies the angry Leni, the latter flings the ashtray on the ground and breaks it into pieces. This incident makes an impression on Dimple and she compares her life with Amit in almost the same manner. As she says, "it was best to regard the broken ashtray as the end of an era in her own life" (148). In the light of resistance to the prevailing trends, the breakage is symbolic of freedom from servile existence as far as Dimple is concerned. In due course she wants to show her reaction to the American ways in protest against what all she dislikes in America. Her spirit rebels, freely mixes with Ina and Milt, wears the western clothes and does things like that. She feels that she has the unlimited freedom at her disposal and goes to the extent of seducing Milt in her happiest moment. She turns mad and fails to distinguish between the television advertisements and her personal life. In this condition she has the feeling that "some force was impelling her towards disaster, some monster had overtaken her body, a creature with serpentine curls and heaving bosom that would erupt indiscreetly through one of Dimple's orifices, leaving her, Dimple Basu, splattered like bug on the living room wall and rug" (156).

Dimple's resistance seeks extra-marital abandon with Milt which has been gnawing her for some time. If she had the chance of telling about the happenings to Amit, she would have given a thought to it, but unfortunately in her case, her husband remains inattentive to her emotional needs. She takes the extreme step of murdering him with the hope that she cannot bear this treatment meted out to her by him. In a stunning fashion she takes out the knife from the kitchen drawer and pierces it near

his hairline seven times continuously. This way she punishes her loveless husband for his shortcomings and cuts the marital knot in an unceremonious manner. If the heroine of *Wife* is portrayed in this gruesome manner, the writer Bharati Mukherjee echoes her own feelings of disappointment when her parents wanted her to marry into the same household as theirs. Without seeing the man's picture whom she has to marry she was forced to toe the particular line as expected by her parents. But as she says, "I wanted to stay. The old world no longer excited me in the ways that the new world did" (219).

The background to writing a novel like *Wife* for the author is really interesting to note. It definitely contains the note of resistance. As she knows, the immigrants have a lot of problems to encounter. Many of them have lived in the newly-developed countries. When they come to settle down in the new country, either by choice or by necessity, they are forced to absorb the 200 odd years of American culture and civilization all of a sudden. Her aim in presenting characters like Dimple in *Wife* is to make known the desperate voices of the new settlers in America. As Prasanna Sree Sathupathi rightly points out,

"Mukherjee had to come to terms with her own identity in an alien land, caught as she was between two conflicting cultures. Also, she had to contend with racial discrimination during the years she spent in Canada, precisely between 1972 and 1980. She managed to overcome both the crises and this brought her a sense of elation and confidence" (78).

Dimple's neurotic self wants to finish off those things she does not want to retain in her life. She seems to be in possession of some demonic power. The world of illusion and the world of reality coalesce in her resulting in her forceful mentality. On

the railway platform her thoughts are with her husband's ashes. She wonders "what happens to the bits of bone and organs that were charred but not totally consumed?" (168). Her actions right from self-abortion to the killing of Amit are but instances of her resistance to the age-old and tradition-bound activities forced on the women of the new century.

In the second novel of Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, the resistance to conservatism and things conventional gets reinforced with the protagonist, Jasmine playing her role effectively to that effect. She goes through a series of adventures from Punjab to California via Florida, Iowa, New York and Iowa. As the astrologer has predicted, she gets married, but turns a widow and keeps herself in exile throughout the story. In all these stages she remains a fighter, survivor and adapter. She undergoes many transformations like Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane, when she moves with different companions during her journey. It is pertinent to mention here that she as a growing woman revolts against her destiny and the encounters she faces all along. The novel shuttles between the India of the past and the America of the present. In the past her life at Hasnapur in Punjab is showcased. After her formal education, she gets married to Prakash Vihh, an engineer who is looking for a job in the US.

As the fifth daughter and seventh of nine children, she is an undesirable female child inviting curses from everyone. In spite of the society's hatred for her, she displays her talent and intelligence to brave all kinds of hardships. Her Masterji greatly recommends her for English education at a higher level. Her resistance to the blind following of anything including the prophecies of the astrologer reveals the type of woman that she is. She assails the astrologer thus: "You are a crazy old man. You

don't know what my future holds!" (J,3). When the man hits her hard on the head, she falls down getting a scar on her forehead. This is taken to be a curse, whereas Jasmine treats it thus: "it's my third eye" (5). She resists the tendency to treat village girls as cattle. There is a blind belief among the villagers to this effect: "whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go" (46). When her grandmother wants her to marry a widower with a lot of property in his name, she becomes furious and finally goes for the marriage with Prakash Vijn.

After her marriage, Jyoti becomes Jasmine, a city woman leading her life in Jullundur. Even as Prakash is ambitious to study in an American center of learning, he falls prey to the Khalsa Lions, the Khalistan separatist rebels, thus leaving Jasmine a young widow. But the deep-seated courage in her makes her plan to visit the supposed institution in America where Prakash has planned to go for his higher studies. Her decision takes everyone by surprise and they question, "a village girl, going alone to America without job, husband or papers?" (97). She leaves for America on a forged passport without least thinking about the trouble it will bring her later. The temper of resistance in her emboldens her thus: "What country? What continent? We pass through wars, through plagues. I am hungry for news, but the discarded papers are in characters or languages. I cannot read" (101).

In the last leg of her travel she uses a shipper called 'The Gulf Shuttle' to enter the United States. The captain of the ship by name Half-Face is an ugly-looking fellow with one eye and ear and scars all over his body. He takes her to a remote motel in Florida and conducts himself indecently before her. Though Jasmine pleads to him that as a Hindu widow, her mission is to fulfill her husband's wish, he ridicules her saying thus: "Getting your ass kicked half way around the world just to burn a suit" (114). He goes to the extreme of raping her to quench his sexy thirst. Much

anguished Jasmine goes to the bathroom and decides to end her life to escape from defilement. But soon she changes her mind and resolves to live, despite the dangers around her. Her decision not to let her personal dishonor disrupt her mission gives her some kind of confidence to live the rest of her days. She transforms herself into Goddess Kali with a view to destroying the evil-minded man who has violated her chastity. She kills the demon to protect herself and stop the animal from making further such attempts on other women like her. Her resistance is truly heroic: “I was in a room with a slain man, my body blooded. I was walking death, Death incarnate” (119). In the words of Samir Dayal, it is certainly a kind of self-assurance “that is also a life-affirming transformation” (71).

After this incident, Jasmine meets a Quaker woman by name Lillian Gordon who pities her for her present condition and comes forward to help her in this distressing situation. She gives her accommodation and helps her to learn to dress, talk and walk like an American. She infuses confidence in her by advising her to forget the past and lead life anew with a new vigor. Gordon’s job is to assist the illegal immigrants tide over their crisis. She asks her to meet her daughter in New York and seek help from her in getting a job there. On reaching New York Jasmine meets Gordon’s daughter and stays there for some time. She meets her husband’s teacher, Devinder Vadhera and spends five months with the Vadheras. She learns that Vadhera is actually a sorter of human hair. Life in America has been quite hard and tough in the real sense. Jasmine finds people with more greed and poverty. The American beggar treats her with contempt and calls her a ‘foreign bitch.’ After five months stay at Flushing, Jasmine sets out on another adventurous deed by way of resistance to the existing state of affairs.

In this new avatar, the protagonist acts as a caregiver to Taylor and Wylie Hayes on Claremont Avenue at Manhattan. The couple has an adopted daughter, Duff who feels attached to Jasmine so much. Taylor gives her the name, Jase and the result is she finds her new life quite exciting. The treatment that she gets at their hands is obvious, when she says thus: “Duff was my child; Taylor and Wylie were my parents, my teachers, my family” (165). In the new set up Jasmine becomes more Americanized, more hopeful of leading her life in America without any problem. With Taylor getting closer to Jasmine, Wylie decides to leave him for her new friend, Stuart. This comes as a shock to her, as she fails to understand the kind of changes taking place in America in human relationships. Her admission of reality is thus put forward: “We arrive so eager to learn, to adjust, to participate, only to find the monuments are plastic, agreements are annulled” (181). But she is conscious that a woman like her could survive in America because there are democracy and good treatment for everyone at all levels, more so at the menial level. She acknowledges that “Wylie made me feel her younger sister. I was family. I was professional” (175). If resistance on Jasmine’s part is any indication, it is true in the circumstances in which she finds herself all along: “Jyoti was now a sati-goddess; she had burned herself in a trash-cum-funeral pyre behind a boarded motel in Florida. Jasmine lived for future, for Vijn & Wife. Jase went to movies and lived for today” (176).

As she continues to resist attempts at marginalizing her, she gets an established home and as such she cannot be bowed down by any more pressures on her life. Her escape from her husband’s assassin, Sukhwinder is not one of cowardice, but one of life-affirmation. Her forceful way of tackling things for herself is described by Pushpa N.Parekh thus: “Jasmine’s inner monologues and silent reflections capture

her deliberations on cultural differences and an immigrant woman's emotional adherence to her traditional beliefs, while intellectually exploring the new avenues opened to her by the modern value systems" (113). As soon as she was born, she had a ruby-red choker of bruise around her throat and sapphire fingerprints on her collarbone. Her mother thought of sparing her the pain of a dowryless bride. She wanted a happy life for her. Jasmine recalls these incidents in her earlier life, even as she was named Jyoti, light, "but in surviving I was already Jane, a fighter and adapter" (40). When Taylor expresses skepticism on Jasmine's ways of thinking, Jasmine rebukes him saying thus: "The incentive is to treat every second of your existence as a possible assignment from God. Everything you do, if you 're a physicist or a caregiver, is equally important in the eye of God" (61).

Jasmine's resistance to the existence of inimical forces out to create trouble is well brought out by her, when she answers the critics of Americanism and its consequences. Even to her brother, Hari-prar she would categorically say thus: "I was a sister without dowry, but I didn't have to be a sister without prospects" (70). Prakash's words to Jasmine clearly bring out the need for resistance from women like her. He connects his reasoning with India's undeveloped status and its backward position: "My kind of feudal compliance was what still kept India an unhealthy and backward nation. It was up to the women to resist because men were generally too greedy and too stupid to recognize their own best interests" (78). At the time of her voyage abroad she takes with her "the sandalwood Ganpati hidden in my purse, a god with an elephant trunk to uproot anything in my path" (102). When the ship's captain Half Face speaks threatening words to her, she remembers her Mataji's words which induce confidence in her: "All acts are connected. For every monster there is a hero. For every hero, a monster" (114).

When Du leaves her to join her sister in Los Angeles, Jasmine feels so much and consoles herself thus, “Don’t cry, don’t feel sorry for yourself” (224). This loss of Du gets intense with the suicide of Lutz boy, Darrel who professes love to her but she never responds to it. Taylor sets the path ready for her last adventure. When Bud floats with his body losing color, she remains cool and stops thinking about him. As the promise of America awaits her, Taylor and Duff come to take her to California where a new beginning is to be attempted by her. As she says, “I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the promise of America and old world dutifulness” (240). She often proves that she is from the third world where experiences are always painful. She recognizes the difference between these two worlds: “for them, experience leads to knowledge or else it is wasted. For me, experience must be forgotten or else it will kill” (33). Her ideal is an Indian wife who is by nature self-sacrificing. She feels that she is to be blamed for Prakash’s death, but the fact remains that she is “tornado, blowing through Baden” (206).

The temper of resistance in a woman like her is exemplary. Even as she protests against the Indian prejudices and rigours, she does not feel it going smooth in the American system either. Her morality consists in her own way of looking at life. Her surging ahead amid countless problems both in and outside India guides her future course of action. She is adjusting herself to each and every situation that comes her way and alongside justifies her role in all of them. Jasmine responds adequately to the life patterns of the American society and imbibes them in her character. The roles that she swiftly changes over from destination to destination in America makes her the woman with the capability to protest and resist. It is this characteristic in her that takes her to the qualification of a typical extraordinary woman.

In the third novel *The Mistress of Spices* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Tilo is an ageless wise woman clothed in ancient body. After a long training under the Old One, she becomes the mistress of spices. She uses the knowledge of the magical properties of the spices to cure many outsiders who pass by her shop in Oakland, California. She experiences hardships when she realizes that she must give up her own desires to continue with the magical powers that she craves. The conditions before her tie her so hard that she could not feel free to personally explain things to her customers, should avoid leaving her store and risk by going out into the streets of Oakland, desist from using the powers for her own advantage and the most crucial of them all, should not love anyone secretly or in public. She must see that she lives for others and not for herself. It is at this stage she needs to use her powers of resistance. Tilo was born in a village and she was named Nayan Tara. When the pirates carry her away, her name gets changed to Bhagyavati. After reaching the island, she becomes Sarpa Kanya, thanks to the snakes surrounding her. In order to become the mistress of spices, she changes her name to Tilo, meaning 'a life giver.' It is this aspect of changing roles and providing for the welfare of others that makes her a person out of the ordinary.

It is a story of choices, love and sacrifices. Many of the characters introduced in it undergo different kinds of hardships for which Tilo gives her counseling and cure in a mood of resistance to diseases and false beliefs. The characters like Haroun, Geeta's grandfather and her parents, Lalita, Hameeda and others suffer from diasporic nostalgia. Haroun tells how the terrorists attacked his village and gunned down his own relations. Tilo forecasts that he will have riches and happiness and he would meet a beautiful woman with dark lotus flowery eyes. She knows that he will soon

come to meet the tragic situation in his life for which she takes steps to protect him. When he gets wounded, Hameeda, his neighbor and one who loves him secretly cleans his wound to enable him to recover from the mishap. The resistance power that Tilo possesses comes good, when she applies *Kala Jire* herb to protect him further. Geeta's grandfather and parents want her to marry a man from India, but Geeta opts for a man named Juan Cordero, a Chicano by birth. After noticing her parents' disgust with her on this score, Tilo administers brahma oil to cool their tempers. After her timely resistance to their bad temper, they could reconcile and rebuild their relationship with Geeta.

One other character, Lalita has her own sad story to tell. Her husband Ahuja plays tricks on her family members for getting married to Lalita. Though the photo sent by him has a nice look and good appearance, in real terms he looks brutish and ugly. Lalita develops hatred towards him for this. On his next trip to India, Ahuja wants to take her to America after his marriage with her. Lalita submits herself to her destiny of living with this heartless man. She could not simply forget his deceit, bluff and imposture. He beats her every now and then. She could not attend to her stitching by way of her hobby. She yearns for a baby which is not possible because of the stiff attitude of Ahuja. She wants redress from Tilo for this situation. The spice woman offers her turmeric as a remedy for her ills. Meeting the trouble-doers with resistance is what Tilo has been doing to bring normalcy in relationships.

Jagjit, otherwise called Jaggi, a boy of ten faces conflicts like the other immigrants. His color and turban play havoc with him, as the white boys in his class torture him for his different look simply because he happens to be an Indian from Punjab. The mistress of spices offers him and his mother spices like cardamom and

lavang to induce compassion and friendliness. Hameeda, a divorcee is deserted by her husband after she has no boy children. The break in relationship has made her long for affection and love. The husband has turned to another young and pretty woman for familial ties. Hameeda has found a lover in Haroun, her neighbor. She is on a temporary visa to meet her brother, Shamsur in Oakland. In order to survive in America, she takes tuition in American English. She dresses his wounds and comes closer to him. Tilo who comes to know of her love for Haroun cures him with *Kalo Jire*.

Divakaruni uses the spices as the characters in her novel. They act and react and in turn make Tilo use and disuse their magical powers. Tilo and other women who become mistresses are made to go round the world to sell spices in little shops. The enforcement on the mistresses is that they should remain trapped within the body of an aged woman. The spices are particular that their mistresses should avoid getting tempted by bodily pleasures. The blessing in disguise is that Tilo is using her powers to help others in distress. Once she bends the spices to her own will, she finds herself the spices turning their magic against her. As long as she has the power within her, she administers herbs and spices to the customers who visit her shop. They include the troubled teenage boy bringing spices for his mother and the young woman whose father prevents her from marrying outside their race.

The Old One used to examine the hands of mistresses very carefully. A good hand for her should neither be too hard nor too light. They are smooth like the moving winds. One who is the mistress should feel the pain like the snake's belly which is smooth in plying. She must forsake all her feelings promoting selfishness. A good hand will have the imprint of an invisible lily, flower of cool virtue, with its

brightness spread everywhere at night. Despite the absence of these features, Tilo is able to overcome all the shortcomings and become 'the Mistress of Spices.' While other girls are sent out for their failure to keep good hands, Tilo alone is received calmly by the Old One. She should have been sent out like other girls, but it does not happen because her hands alone possess enough power to make the spices sing. At the time of approval, the Old One warns her not to give her heart to any man and give it only to dance. As soon as the Old One writes her name on her forehead, Tilo becomes a real name. One day the Old One takes them all to the sleeping volcano and demands them to select their own place where they want to work. Tilo selects Oakland which is protested by the Old One, for the latter expected her to choose some other places like India and Africa. The mistress resists her authority and wins her case in the end.

Tilo transgresses many boundaries for those who are in need of her help. Divakaruni portrays women's resistance to the suppression of their desires and their bodies. The order enforced on the mistresses reflects the struggles of women in the society dominated by the male hierarchy. Tilo as a representative of these suffering women tries to break free of these impositions placed on her. She too has her own passions and these she tries to display, when she moves with an American by name Raven. The mistress in her gets transformed into an ordinary woman, fully conscious about her self-indulgence. She grows bold to face the consequence arising out of her breaking of the promise. Her reformulation about her bodily desires, her intention to go for sexual relationship with Raven outside of the institutional sanctions – all these are clear violations of the order of the Mistresses.

The spice store is closed on Mondays and it is deemed as a day of silence. On this day Tilo will go to the inner room and sit in lotus asana. In her vision she could

see the Old One closeted with new girls who want to change the world. On a Monday the lonely American visits her and wants to talk to her. Though Tilo understands his passion, she does not talk, but gives him peppercorn with the intention of removing the desire from him. His feet fascinate her, but the voice inside her warns her to stop it. Tilo does not know initially that he is Raven. She merely guesses that he must be a white. At the end of the day she sells everything and turns out to be a beautiful young woman. A sense of resistance overwhelms her at this stage. She prays for the Shampati's fire to change her from her former self to the changed self. She wears the white dress given by the American. In a room both Tilo and Raven have sexual fulfillment. She feels that a part of her is slowly dying and the song receding into the background. Spices leave her and their power in her is lost. In a note to Raven she writes that her love for him is a fantasy. Like her coming into the country, she now wants to go away from it. She appeals to the spices to change her, but it does not take place. A voice calling her reminds her about 'earthquake.' Even as she resists the magical power, Tilo thinks that the earthquake might have destroyed her and Raven also in the process. Raven saves her from her changed condition and expresses his love for her. In her new avatar as Maya she carries on her life with raven as earthly beings, thus doing away with the practice of spices.

Tilo's identity as the mistress of spices is the way out for her to escape from her real self, that of being a woman with limited scope in life. She has a firm determination to construct her thwarted femininity. She expresses her desires and longings in no uncertain terms. Her declaration to this effect at the end of the novel is a pointer in this direction. Her remarks prove it in the following statement she makes: "Ah! my American dream at last I have found someone with whom I can share, how it

is to live the mistress life that beautiful burden” (216). Tilo moves through the maze of American culture and entertains the desire to view her life through her own eyes rather than through the others. She has the power of resistance in her, when she questions the prohibition of mirrors for the mistresses. Her question is typical of this resistance: “Here is a question I never thought to ask on the island. First Mother, why is it not allowed, what can be wrong with seeing yourself?” (151).

In her aspiration to change into a real woman, Tilo decides to drink a special potion whose strength comes from the spice Makaradwaj and is considered the “conqueror of time” (277). This medicine will transform Tilo’s body from that of the shape of the old woman into a body of youthful beauty. In the next three days, her beauty increases and at the same time the layers of old age disappear. The feeling of resistance gets upper hand in her and she says thus firmly: “Now I am ready. I go to the back where (the mirror) hangs on the wall, remove the covering from it, I Tilo who have broken too many rules to count. How many lifetimes since I have looked into one. Mirror what will you reveal of myself?” (297). On looking into the mirror she sees a face like the goddess free of mortal blemish. Her physical transformation stands for the illusion of the singular true identity. The reality of the human condition is reflected in her eyes. In this new phase of her life, thanks to her resistance, she realizes that self-perception is a matter of acknowledging the multiple processes and factors that influence the formation of identity. In her revolting temperament she embraces each of the contradictory characteristics and consciousness as legitimate identities. This process is described by her thus: “I move through deep water, I who have waited all my life--though I see it only now--for this brief moment blossoming like fireworks in a midnight sky. My whole body trembles, the desire and fear...” (298).

In the character of Tilo, Divakaruni establishes the concept of the new breed of Americans from the Asian countries who are slowly and steadily changing the face of America. She achieves this by inheriting the different identities thus obliterating the notion of a fixed identity. This constant movement and readjustment is a mark of her post-colonial feature and that of ever-changing country with which she wants to identify women like her. The resistance shown by Tilo is something unique in this novel. Her spirit in getting all victims cured of their sufferings is again laudable. The tendency to change, transform again and go back to original self is something that is attempted, keeping in mind all the goings-on in the world around her. In this context what Gita Rajan has said is pertinent: “Tilo’s intervention emphasizes the activism of women of color, as they pledge their help to each other. Divakaruni interlaces an emerging modernity with minority traditions to reshape life’s conditions into a free-flowing, equitable, present reality... Divakaruni gestures towards feminist solidarity by moving Tilo away from the established epistemological apparatus that contrasts tradition pejoratively with modernity” (224-225).

As for resistance in *The Vine of Desire*, yet another novel of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, the characters of Sunil, Anju and Sudha are projected on a different plane. Anju is shown as a woman of independent strength as the story progresses. The novelist very convincingly portrays the changes in the mindset of Anju by making her letters explicit and closer to reality. Thereby she lifts the veil of dependency that has prevented her from facing her real life. Anju’s assignments, letters and other fragments, in conjunction with the comments and the feedback offered by her professors pave the way for her resistance to the existing state of things. The novel becomes a meta-fictional response to the creation of a narrative out of the

troublesome situations in Anju's immigrant life. She has learnt to overcome the deep sense of betrayal by Sudha and turns her attention to the scholarly pursuits and creative outlets for becoming a self-dependent woman. In order to provide shelter and food for her daughter, Dayita, Sudha decides to work for the aged and suffering octogenarian Indian, Sen. He lives in America and pines for his homeland, India. Sudha's work and her new found connection with the octogenarian prove to be a timely resistance for her to tackle her feelings of estrangement with her cousin Anju. She realizes at a young age that she and her mother lived on the charity of Anju's mother since the last thirteen years. She feels that her self-respect has been shattered all these years. When she gets her first salary, she feels happy because for the first time in her life, she has her own money.

In *The Vine of Desire*, there occur the devastating events in the lives of both the cousins. Initially they notice no differences between them and their coming together is marked by certain events like making Sudha's favorite food item, lysanga. Before Sudha's arrival in America, Anju has had a miscarriage. Sudha herself has walked out of her husband's house to avoid her mother-in-law's compulsion to abort the female fetus. She also seeks escape from the suffocating embrace of her first love with her former boyfriend, Ashok who wants to live with her and take care of her and her daughter. Very much saddened by the events of their lives, the two sisters reach out to one another for comfort and affection only to end in more hardships and sadder moments. When they meet in America, they feel overjoyed and for some time forget their worries. Both Anju and her husband, Sunil pay much attention to Sudha's baby, Dayita. The playful feeling that Sunil has towards Dayita is thus described by Anju to Sudha: "When he's with Dayita, all the bitterness falls away from him. He used to be

like that when I was pregnant. Boyish and excited and tender. He'd make a world of plans" (VD, 30). This scene reminds Anju of her own deceased baby, Prem, thus making her feel too much. It is Sudha who advocates resistance to her by telling her thus: "There's no point in torturing yourself over what's happened already" (30).

When Sudha comes to America and stays in their house, she feels the sisterly affection showered on her by Anju. Sunil too is happy that his wife is regaining the old spirit and warmth, missing in her since the miscarriage of her child. Moreover, he is spending joyous time with Sudha's child, Dayita. The resistance to the old ways of thinking and remaining thoughtful of the past worrisome days is understandable on the part of Anju. She now attends college to earn her degree and comes out with flying colors in her writing class. Resistance in her case leads to reconstruction. Thanks to a prudent instructor, she gets introduced to letters and journals of the 18th and 19th century women writers. She finds herself in a lonely place in the college and begins her writing practice. Though in this condition she is lonely and broods over the past, she adjusts and diverts her mind to the college assignments. In the process of getting herself familiar to the college atmosphere and the studies there, she alienates herself from Sunil. Her husband spends more time with Dayita and this way he moves closer to Sudha. A situation develops wherein he shows his affection and love for Sudha and goes to the extent of kissing her. Sudha feels guilty for accepting his kiss. Now it is the turn of showing resistance to his wife and instead moving over to Sudha because he has been having this passion and longing, since he saw her at Anju's home in Calcutta.

Sunil's attraction towards her makes Sudha feel that she has committed a blunder in accepting Anju's invitation to come and stay with her in America. The bitterness in the relationship between Sunil and Anju comes to the fore with Sudha's arrival there. Sudha is already unhappy with the turn of events at home. When her mother-in-law forces her to abort the female child that she is carrying, she resists the elder woman's idea and simply walks out of their house. It is only then Anju calls her to America. Sunil's love for her makes her to yearn for him. But her mind cautions her reminding that it is "the husband of my sister" (80). Still her flesh demands that Sunil be her partner in the absence of Ramesh, her erstwhile husband. The resistance temper in her would push her to say "I don't care" (80), if people including Anju take it otherwise. She has a weakness for Sunil and even reveals her desire to her sister thus, "I've done that which I shouldn't have" (108). She reminds Anju within her mind about the incident relating to her romance: "I've kissed your husband and liked it". Sunil's showering of love on Dayita would perhaps have made her to love him. It is an irony indeed, when Anju says that Sudha is the only person who understands her best. It may be remembered that her first lover, Ashok does not have the mind to accept her daughter, though he is ready to marry her. For women like her there is no option but to reciprocate the whims of men like Sunil. Sudha sleeps with him making it a hard proposition for Anju.

This close relationship with Sunil becomes an estranged one overnight. Sudha could not remain with Anju after the secret sexual encounter she had with Sunil. She learns her mistake and feels that she has become a source of sorrow for her sister. She is deeply ashamed of her behavior. She knows that her jealousy has thrown her from her normal woman status. She decides to go away from Anju and seeks employment

somewhere so that she can stand on her own legs without depending on anyone anymore. She finds a job in an elderly man's house as a caretaker for him. The first part of the novel is full of passions running high and the sisters having it out with a mixture of good and bad action every now and then. At the end of it, they find themselves entangled in a vine of desire, unable to come out of their wishful world, that is from emotion to reality. Anju is torn between her love and affection for Sudha and her suspicion that Sunil is still after her cousin. She waits for her husband to get back to her with the same love and friendship she has towards him. This separation of her husband from her makes her sad and forlorn. There is an emotional break in their relationship because of the betrayal of trust on Sunil's part. But the new woman in her wants Anju to save her dignity and go it alone in America. She too decides to resist such tendencies exhibited by Sunil and continues her lonely journey through life. In this resistance mood she proves that she is a woman of independent strength. She lifts the veil of dependency and her thought process allows her to look at life as it really is. Her assignments, letters and other fragments along with the comments and feedback provided to her, by her professors, change her into a new woman throwing aside the bitter past and ushering in a welcome future. These are the avenues which create betterment for her out of the dislocations experienced by her in her immigrant life.

At Mr.Chopra's birthday party Sudha meets Lalit, a doctor by profession. It is he who provides her with a shawl to protect herself from the biting cold out in the open. To him she says about her thus: "Here's some classified information for you. Not having a husband isn't always a problem" (132). This clearly indicates the kind of resistance she has built up in her mind over the few months after her divorce with Ramesh. While Sunil is upset with the women including his wife Anju, Lalit makes

merry dancing with three women. Anju's resistance temper calls it nice and Lalit picks up from where she leaves. He is expecting Sudha to follow suit and feel like what Anju has expressed: "It's what I've been trying to get through to her all evening, but she won't believe me" (137). This is how Sudha will resist the attempts to make her go romantic and thus change herself from what she is now.

Anju's resistance to her cheerless and disappointing kind of life could be seen in her efforts to turn her attention to the scholarly pursuits and creative outlets for achieving self-determination. The turn of events also forces Sudha to take a wise decision in order to stay away from the path of her sister and put an end to Sunil's unwanted romance with her. She resists the attempt on Sunil's part to advance towards her, leaving Anju in the lurch. To save herself the ignominy of hobnobbing with Sunil any further and to protect her child for the future, Sudha goes as a caretaker in an octogenarian's family. She opts to lead a meaningful life for herself and her daughter. What Simon de Beauvoir says in this context is true of Sudha: "Once a woman is self-sufficient and ceases to be a parasite, the system based on her dependence crumbles; between her and the universe there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator" (289). Again the resistance from Anju goes that far to the extent of divorce with Sunil. Sudha who hears about this feels depressed at Anju's resentment. She feels concerned at the development and sends Lalit as a messenger to Anju. Lalit conveys Sudha's feelings to Anju who does not want to know anything about her. She feels that Sudha is responsible for this sad state of affairs and so bursts out thus: "I can't talk to her or even write. Not yet. Not until I work out something myself. The street lamp which has just come on, throws pools of blackness under her eyes. I too love her too much. I think I just rediscovered that" (324). When Sudha

wants to sort things out between them, Anju talks to her that Sunil can start his life with her. She will fight every way she knows and give him counseling, if there is need for it. As for continuing life with Sunil, she is firm and tells her categorically, “a dead love is like a dead body, starting to rot even while you’re holding on to it, crying your eyes out” (252). This shows the resistance on her part never minding thus about Sunil and his ways of life. In her letter to Sunil she spits fire thus: “It’s not my welfare you’re concerned about—it’s your guilt. You’ll just have to live with that. I’m not interested in being friends. I’m trying hard to ‘move ahead’ with my life and every time I hear from you, it sets me back. If you really want to help, leave me alone” (267).

Sudha’s life in Trideep’s family gives her a chance of returning home. She is instrumental in relieving the old man of his homesickness and securing a safe and secure for her and her daughter. Towards this end she establishes a firm link with the crabby old man. She has regained confidence to lead a life of her own in this world. She has the necessary will power and resistance to leave behind her all thoughts of Lalit or Sunil. That is why she turns down Lalit’s request to her for staying on in America for the rest of her life. She is happy that in her resistance to the wishes of both Lalit and Sunil, she will find a new abode, a new independence and a new life. Though Lalit wishes to take care of her, Sudha refuses to stay. She is firm in her decision to stay back from Ashok, her former lover who wants to come to America to take her to his place and live there happily. She refuses to acknowledge Ashok’s invitation. In her letter to him she has opened out her mind thus: “I’m discovering that my divorce was like a surgeon’s scalpel. It cut the past out of my flesh, the good with the bad. Now I must find other things to live for” (170).

When Ashok turns up to see her, he could see a definite change coming over Sudha, after leaving her husband, Ramesh and also leaving her own sister, Anju. He feels sorry for not being there with her in her difficult moments in life. At this stage Sudha grows bold and says that it is not his job to take care of her. She even tells her that he should not have come to America to plead with her and advise her. She asks him to forget her. She has come away from Sunil not because of her guilt, but because “Sunil frightens me. There was such a need inside him, need like a black bottomless pit. Even I poured my entire self into it, I couldn’t fill it” (337). Ashok feels pain and is surprised to hear Sudha’s words about her intention to lead a life of her own. For that matter Sudha feels none of them – Ashok, Lalit and Sunil – is right for her. Her flight from these men who want to marry her and her attempts at seeking financial independence and self-reliance are instances of women becoming aware of what they are and how they should conduct themselves in such critical moments in their lives. Sudha gives an account of what all happened in her in-law’s house. Her own mother wanted her to go through with the abortion and stay in their house. But she does not pay heed and having been frightened thus she thought it wise to escape from that place. To her shock she “found all the others were attached to it (relationship) like the knotted handkerchiefs a magician pulls from his hat. ..Nothing to stop me from doing whatever I wanted, whether it was good or evil” (176). In America when things come to a head, on the one hand, Ashok keeps pressing for a union with her and on the other Sunil wants to marry her, after getting divorce from Anju, Sudha finds herself in a critical position. She describes her situation thus: “It cuts me to pieces. Now there are many Sudhas, each wanting something different. To be independent. To be desired. To be true” (195). Towards the close of the novel both the sisters push the past behind them and get prepared to lead a new, trouble-free life.

In Anita Rau Badami's novel *Tamarind Mem* the resistance movement continues in yet another fashion. This time it is the story of Saroja who feels chained in a household experiencing happiness and sorrow. The novel is set in India and describes the story of one family of females caught in the current of life with turnings here and there. Dadda, the father and husband works as a railway engineer and is most of the time away from his home. They have two daughters, Kamini and Roopa, left in the care of their mother. There is a man servant and a maid servant by name Linda. The latter takes care of the children. Saroja, their mother is left to ponder over things for herself. She recalls her past and swings back and forth in her narration. She is fifteen years junior to her husband whom she marries on the advice of her parents. Her aim is to become a doctor, but it could not be realized owing to circumstances that go against female children in those olden days. With her husband away, it becomes natural for her to rebel against the restrictions of the railway colony where her family is settled. She feels unhappy with the rituals of a conservative household like housekeeping, tea and gossip.

The novel reflects the sensible woman's heart which longs to be in the company of her spouse. Saroja is made to live like any other woman in the railway colony leading a peripatetic life. When Kamini's sister was born, the elderly women complain that the baby looks black and she could be named Meghna, as she is like a dark, rain-filled cloud. Ma, that is Saroja, does not agree with their suggestion and would name her as Roopa. For her Kamini and Roopa are bringers of wealth and beauty. Here of course starts the resistance from Saroja against the critics like her aunt and mother-in-law. Chinna, Saroja's widowed aunt avoids using long hairs or petty clothes. Fate has deprived her of the joys of normal life, but still she enjoys herself

more fully than the others in the family. When she tastes the chocolates from England, she is happy saying that “I can taste a different land, I can taste the sweetness of the people there” (TM, 7). Ajji, the grandma reflects on life those days and draws a contrast to it.

While Kamini the elder daughter is at home, the younger one Roopa leaves college in the middle of the term and comes home with a man whom they never met. The resistance to tradition and culture is seen deliberately in her, as “she married him in less than a month –so suspicious it looked – and left for USA!” (30). In her last days after the death of her husband, Saroja utters nonchalantly, “Now it is my turn to go away” (30). Even when he was alive, Ma “threatened Dadda that one morning he would wake up and find her gone” (31). Every time Dadda comes home with transfer orders to a new station, Ma grumbles thus: “Why do you have to keep getting transferred? Can’t you say your wife is sick, you are allergic to new places, something and stay here?” (35). Each night Dadda goes on his trip, a quarrel is sure to erupt between him and Saroja. Just before he left for Darjeeling, Ma would demand that they also be taken along with him to see the place and enjoy its beauty. When Dadda refuses saying that it is an official trip, Saroja will remind him thus: “Other officers go on these duty trips with their wives and children and mothers and aunts and all” (44). To Dadda, it is against railway policy to take the entire family with him. Saroja calls him Satya Harischandra for acting truly and taunts him thus: “Never mind the fact that I have to stay alone in this house and bring up two children without any help and in the summer, look after your crazy sister as well. Oh no, all that does not matter so long as you stick to your noble duty!” (44).

Again Saroja will lose her temper with her husband and scold him for his absence from home leaving them to fate. Her words are full of resistance to his ways of life: “You think you are a bloody English sahib, posing and posturing with that wretched pipe. At least those stupids got their money’s worth out of this country before they burnt their lungs out. But you, all you can think of is your own pleasure” (114). Though the British have left the country, she would chide thus: “they took everything with them, including your brains” (114). Of the two sisters Roopa has the courage of convictions. Ma would ask Kamini to study and achieve all that she wants. In her school Mother Superior would shout in a high pitch the morals to be followed in one’s life: “decency, dignity and decorum – they are your armour in the world outside. They will help you hold your head aloft in times of distress” (121). In the course of teaching her children good habits to follow in their lives, Ma tells them, “See, something good always comes out of something bad. Don’t the sweetest flowers grow out of a pile of smelly cow dung?” (136).

Soon Dadda dies and his wife vacates the railway colony quarters to move to a small house. Roopa wants to get married to a man of her choice. Saroja rebukes her for daring to marry without their consent. But Roopa will have her own plans and wishes to go immediately with her lover in Canada. Saroja will look up to heaven and tell her deceased husband thus in a tone of resistance: “See, I am stuck with two daughters who are busy doing god-knows-what!” (149). She moans that she does not get anything in return for her service to the family all these years. Uncle Gangadhar would confirm her words saying that it is a parent’s fate. His own incompetent son never would listen to his advice and stayed as a worthless politician, while his wife earns for him. Saroja has the grouse that her daughter Roopa instead of marrying a

bone doctor from England has chosen a meat-eater. She looks back to her past. She recalls how her brother Gopal wanted to go to England for higher studies. When time comes for alliance for Saroja, they all discuss the matter. Her desire to go for the study of medicine falls through because of arrangements for marriage. After her initial opposition to her marriage, Saroja agrees to talk it out with Putti Ajji, her grandma. As the novelist puts it, “she is the only woman in our family who has dared to show a spark of rebellion” (171).

In the second part of the novel Saroja has been giving her account of her childhood days at her house. She gets educated and is inclined to go for higher studies. But the elders at home insist on her getting married. When they look out for matching horoscopes, they finally fix Dadda as the bridegroom for her. Saroja’s father writes to him for his horoscope, but the groom says he has no such thing and that he does not know the exact time and date on which he was born. It gives rise to misgivings on the bride’s side. They cite the instance in which Uncle Mohan’s daughter got married to a foreign educated lawyer who sent her back home simply because she could not read any books. Finally the priest settles the matter by telling them that it is a matching one and they can agree to the marriage proposal. Saroja’s mother blames her for no fault of her own. Her moment of uneasiness is quite visible when she says, “From the moment you were born you could never be happy with what you had. You wanted everybody else’s share as well” (176).

After her marriage to Vishwa Moorthy (Dadda), Saroja becomes the “Railway wife” (193). In Ratnapura they live in a spacious bungalow with a red-tiled roof and a wide driveway. The servants take care of the work at home and Moorthy will go on his rounds to various places leaving his wife at home. Soon the wife gives birth to her

first child, Kamini. In between the novelist has infused comments from the fellow passengers who travel in a train. The women in the compartment speak out their minds regarding the husbands they would like to have. One of them says that she would walk out, if she does not like her husband. While Saroja says that walking away is hard, Latha, another woman remarks thus: “Going away is the easiest thing in the world. So simple it is to die. Living is hard, to make this small amount of time loaned to you by the gods worthwhile is hard. The real test is life itself, whether you are strong enough to stay and fight” (208).

In the course of her life with Moorthy, Saroja has experienced many hardships, which is explicit in her words: “How can I explain to her the yawning monotony of my life with this man? How do I translate the dislike that rages through me when his voice touches my ears or his hands brush mine?” (213). The resistance in her surfaces thus. Her mother will always tell her that a woman is her husband’s shadow and she will follow him wherever he goes. But Saroja takes her words apart, piece by piece examining them for all their faults. This again proves how different a woman she is. Her own words stand evidence to this fact: “I am an individual who makes my own shadow. Sometimes this shadow stretches out longer than my body; sometimes it pools like ink about my feet. It changes, dances along behind the body, beneath its feet, in front and beside it, eccentric, erratic, moved by light” (214). Her grandmother too, though she lost her husband to another woman, held on to her pride and retained the poise. She reigned queen in her ancestral house, ceded to her by her husband. She fought for all that she could get from that meaningless marriage.

In the same way Saroja feels dejected for having married a man without feelings. She is like a dried-out lemon peel whose greenness has been squeezed out.

Her husband always cares for a sick mother, worries about his sisters and inherits his dead father's unfinished duties. It eats up his youth and enthusiasm for other things. Saroja cannot help resisting all these tendencies on Dadda's part and gives vent to her feelings thus:

“With my tamarind tongue, never yielding a moment, I use my grandmother's strategy of words to ward off the pain of rejection. His aloof, merciless cool, my defensive anger. I will not beg for the affection that is due to me, his wife. Why, even a cat demands a caress, a gentle word. Deprive it of attention and it will wander to another home” (216).

Her daughters want her to live with them, a few months with Kamini and the rest with Roopa. Instead she asks them to come to India and stay with her at least once a year. She has not changed as much as the world around her. She recalls how her trait of resistance earned for her the name ‘Tamarind Mem’ for her acid tongue. She sorts out a pilgrimage throughout the country and plans to visit many shrines to have mental peace and equilibrium. Her whole life is a typical example of resistance, a woman like her needs to have for survival.

The final novel reflecting resistance in women is to be witnessed in Anita Rau Badami's another novel *The Hero Walks*. Nandana, Sripathi Rao's grand-daughter is an agent of things new and strange, carrying in her the symptoms of the global realities of displacement and uncertainties of belonging. Her arrival in India also unsettles the neatly gendered and patriarchal arrangement in typical Indian households, comprising private and public spaces. It is obvious that with Nandana's entry into the lives of the Rao family women, Putti, Sripathi's sister finally manages

to rebel against her manipulative mother and against the caste prejudices that prevail in her family and the society. It is significant to note here that she finally marries a man from the Dalit caste. In Seyla Benhabib's words, Maya serves as "the symbolic-cultural site" in Sripathi's life upon which Sripathi inscribes his patriarchal "moral order" (84). It is only with Maya's admission to an American university and "an offer of marriage" that "Sripathi's life began to acquire a glow" (HW, 70). Really, Maya's engagement to Prakash Bhat, the son of a rich family who "had just started a job in Philadelphia" (99), is an alliance that would have permanently made Maya as a diasporic subject and improved her father's social and financial standing. As a dutiful daughter, Maya is expected to honor her father's social standing and expectations. As her prospective father-in-law remarks, as the wife of a middle-class Indian expatriate, she is also expected to "fit into life in the West without losing sight of our Indian values" (100). She would be the nurturer and torch-bearer of cultural traditions to foster an imaginary, unified and self-sufficient cultural community with strong ties to the traditional society. But quite unexpectedly, Maya cancels her engagement with Prakash in order to marry a Canadian by birth. By going against her father's wishes and abandoning her family duties, she initiates her own transformation into a diasporic subject with multiple belongings and bases. At the same time, she voices her opposition to Sripathi's changing reality of his social, personal and work environment and the disappearance of the egalitarian society in India. But Maya's sudden death helps in the transformation of Sripathi into a diasporic subject. It is not merely an accident, but a symbolic necessity that facilitates the change in the status-quo of Sripathi.

Resistance to the religious rituals practiced by the Hindus and Muslims forms another side to the developments in the novel. When Sripathi Rao dislikes such practices, Badami actually depicts the secular Indian Society and their tradition of worshipping God in the early morning. The sound of the Krishna Temple bell and nasal call of mullah from the Thousand Lights Mosque on a parallel street is given as proofs of such practice. In fact for him, the temple bell turns deafening and though he complains about it, nobody does anything about it. The mosque has megaphones and the Ganesha Temple, Krishna Temple, etc. all these continue to indulge in this noise pollution in the morning times. It is a fact that India is a secular country and the people of all religions are living with equality and harmoniously. But the Hindu-Muslim relationship has become the point of discussion for the politicians and the general public since so long a time. Munnuswamy's political agenda in propagating the Hindu-Muslim unrest is touched upon to show resistance to each other.

Munnuswamy's "Boys" is a euphemism for his group of hard-eyed thugs who are specialized in religious unrest. They also go on fasts-unto-death and segregate into suicide squads. Its services are most needed during the elections, when political parties get ready to go to the level to garner votes. If a party needed Muslim votes, the Boys spread rumours among Toturpuram's Muslim population about violence being fostered by an opposing Hindu party thus inducing rage and rioting as easily as they can. Contrarily, if it was the Hindus who wanted agitation, the Boys will smash a cow or two and blame the Muslim truck-owner for the outrage. In India post- death rituals are equally important to get peace and solace after death and to enable better birth in the cycle of evolution.

Resistance from women like Nirmala on this issue surfaces with the return from Canada of Sripathi. When he returns from Canada with Nandana, Nirmala asks him whether death rituals have been followed properly in the case of Maya or not. She asks, “Did they close her eyes with coins? And put one in her mouth as well?”(173). She asks further, “My poor child has gone like a beggar, without any proper rituals and you say it doesn’t matter? Her soul will float like Trishanku between worlds. It will hang in purgatory forever. Did they at least dress her in unbleached cotton?” (173). She adds to say, “if she had died before her husband, it would have been better for her. She would have gone to Yama-raj as a Sumangali in her bridal finery with her wedding beads around her neck and kum-kum on her forehead” (173). Generally, in a Hindu Brahmin family eating non-veg or allowing a Muslim in the house is considered to be unholy. Nandana could not adjust herself with the Indian food at that time. Miss Chintamani, a neighbour, reminds them that the foreigner is generally in the habit of eating the meat of cow, goat and pig. After the foreigner has left their house, what they do is to have a special cleansing ceremony in the place. The caste and religious consciousness has become part and parcel of the Indian identity since the past ages. It is pertinent to mention about Karim, a Muslim mechanic who comes to drop Nandana, after her exit from the house without informing anyone. He could not enter into the house, as Ammayya wants to throw a bucket of Ganga water on him to purify the house. The colonizers extract work from the Indians fully to their satisfaction. In the novel there is a reference to the posters with slogans against the foreigners -- “Foreign ships Go Home! Thieves and Robbers Go Home! and You Have Taken Our Fish and Left Behind Only Blood!”(272).

There is much resistance from an elderly woman like Ammayya who is particularly bothered about the caste and roots of Alan Baker, the deceased husband of Maya. She questions how Maya can marry an alien without knowing his roots. There is also a reference to the dislike for the whites harbored by the old woman. She does not hesitate to compare her cultural practices with Alan's. This only proves that Badami is interested in focusing attention on prejudices arising out of the blind practice of religious and racial issues in the homeland. As such Maya is shown busy in her study in the host country unmindful of the cultural differences between the two countries. Later on her decision to keep herself detached from the relatives in her homeland shows her instinct to resist the blind practices raising their ugly head and preventing her from doing anything that she considers prestigious and worthy enough for her. The absence of all such burning issues in the host country clearly induce the diasporic woman to go and lead life there and hence the resistance to the worn-out practices attempted by Maya in her new capacity as an immigrant to America is obvious enough.

As a writer of Indian diaspora, Badami describes the subaltern status of women. In this context her depiction of the Ammayya- Nirmala relationship is something crucial. She never fails to make reference to women working as housewives in the patriarchal set up. In India the traditionalists consider a woman as a Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth. But in the patriarchal arrangement, her condition is subordinate, coming only next to her husband and his family in entirety. The tradition of Indian culture gets reflected through the different ways in which the people dress. Bindi, the red mark on the forehead is an identity of a married woman. Nirmala sticks the round bindi on her broad forehead, which she is used to apply by looking at the

mirror in the bathroom, while bathing. The ceremony that Ammayya, as a widow has to undergo after the death of her husband is also pointed out. To Sripathi's embarrassment, she insists on having her head shaved like the widows of her generation and so orders Shakespeare Kuppalloor, the barber, to come to the house every month to remove the new stubble, growing on her head. She does not heed the loud protests, when the relatives point out that even her own mother-in-law, Shantamma, had maintained her snowy fall of hair and that there is no need for such old-fashioned observances. She wears only maroon cotton saris, even though she continues to wear her gold chains and bangles. She is afraid that her jewelry, the only thing of value that she owns, would be stolen by thieves. She stops using certain vegetables in keeping with the tradition. As garlic and onions are believed to have aphrodisiac qualities, they are therefore forbidden to the widows of the day. She digs up the archaic fasts and rituals and becomes more rigidly brahminical than the temple's own priest.

In Sripathi's own house his father, Ammayya's husband was in the habit of visiting his mistress. Her parents console her saying that she should be proud for having such a husband who can manage two women simultaneously. This concern for her husband's extramarital affair changes into anger and forcible temper against her son, Sripathi. She voices her protest against his son's neglecting the medical education course and selling the house for any dues left unpaid by her husband. She is also against Putti having any relationship with the milkman's son, Gopala who has been loving her (Putti) secretly. She is choosy in selecting grooms for Putti, now turned forty five. While she turns down two good alliances for her daughter, Putti resists her mother's attempt to make her wait for long even at this stage in her life.

Nirmala does not see eye to eye with her mother-in-law and would be forthright in resisting her attempts to check her. On her part Ammayya feels so much and compares her days she spent with her mother-in-law with the present relationship between her and Nirmala. She says, “Nobody cares for old people. Such is this modern world. My mother-in-law was blessed, truly. Because of me she stayed alive till she was ninety years old” (23). She could not tolerate Nirmala talking in private with the maid, Kutti. In the resistance mood she would show her temper thus: “Plotting something no doubt. I am not safe, even in my own house” (215). In her view the daughters-in-law are crooks. The incidence of theft of Maya’s coat and the search of her room thereafter makes her angry. This again evokes protest from her and her words prove it: “Insulting me in my own house! Accusing me of theft! Kali-yuga has indeed arrived and I, unlucky one, and still alive to witness it!” (254).

Ammayya’s early marital life with Narasimha, Sripathi’s father has been a wretched one, for her husband would go often to his sweetheart’s house leaving Ammayya in worries. Even this habit found in her husband, she wanted to check by proving to be a perfect wife. In the words of the novelist, “if she was the perfect wife, Narasimha might decide never to go to his mistress. And to be the perfect wife, she would have to bear him a living child” (86). To put her principles to practice, she prayed three times a day. She observed many rituals prescribed by the shastras for a good wife. After her sixth pregnancy she increased her fasting from two to three times a week. She became “a fanatic who terrified the servants with her demands for cleanliness, for purity in the house where everything had started to smell of Narasimha’s sex. Even Shantamma, who had lost all fear, was wary of her daughter-in-law’s steely righteousness” (87). After the birth of Sripathi, she carefully nurtured

the boy and gave her all that he desired. But Narasimha used to load him with a lot of knowledge and even slap him for non-compliance of his advice. Ammayya loved the boy so much that she had the ambition of the boy becoming a surgeon later on to support her in her difficult times. She had the fear that if she showed too much love for her son, “she would have left none for herself, none to use as ointment on the wounds that Narasimha inflicted on her” (87).

Maya’s resistance to her parents, especially her father’s wish to get her married to a rich groom, costs her life in Vancouver along with her husband, Alan Baker. She is firm in her decision to go with Baker rather than yield to Sripathy’s wishes. This extreme stand taken by her results in her father stopping his relationship with her abruptly. If at all she wants to get in touch with home, it is only through her mother who has some soft corner left for her. A terrible road accident kills both Maya and Alan and their child, Nandana is left as an orphan in a far-off place. Luckily the neighbors take care of her and send her to India with her grandfather. The mother’s resistance is found in the child also, as she does not want to go to India initially. She is afraid that she may not get her friends and the same friendly situation in India. Though Nandana is ridiculed by Ammayya for retaining the foreign features, Nirmala takes care in bringing her up. Nirmala resists all the attempts of her mother-in-law and husband to spit venom at her for her adamant nature.

Finally the resistance on the part of Putti that she displays against her own mother is the moot point of the novel. She has been steadily acquiring friendship with the milk man’s son, Gopala, which culminates in their union. Ammayya hates the family for she knows that theirs is a low caste family. She has been warning her daughter against having any truck with them. But the poor old woman fails miserably

in her acquisition of gold jewelry and a few rupees for the sake of Putti's marriage. After her death, they come to know that it is all fake jewelry left by Narasimha who has played a negative role till his death. Her attempts at convincing Putti of a groom from a noble and tolerant family fail to have any effect on the latter. To the end, she has remained a bold lady with her own convictions. She dies without her dream getting realized in any way. Hence right from the beginning to the end of the novel, it has been a case of resistance for survival on the part of women like Ammayya, Nirmala and Putti, not to say anything of minor characters like Koti, the librarian and others. Nirmala, the key woman in the novel to exhibit resistance, knows very well how her mother-in-law has the habit of stealing valuable things from her chest secretly. The act of obedience, of respect for the elders, of subservience has been there in her blood. But once she hears about her daughter, Maya's accidental death, she has clean knocked out from her head of all such thoughts. Her resolution now is this – "she no longer cared about obeying Sripathi without question or hurting Ammayya. Now she dared to lock her cupboard that stored her saris, the few pieces of jewelry that she had collected for Maya" (287).

With resistance having been covered, it is now time for moving on to adaptation as an important development in the six novels selected for this dissertation. The following chapter takes up for consideration the factors that have led to adaptation in each of the womenfolk portrayed in the six novels.

CHAPTER - IV

ADAPTATION TO THE NEW TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT

Adaptation of oneself to the prevailing circumstances in human life is one way to solve the outstanding problems between men and women in their married lives. Problems do exist everywhere and the wise thing to do in such situations is to come to a reasonable point of view while negotiating them across the table. It is natural that humans have their own likes and dislikes and accordingly they would like to have their own say in matters relating to marriage, job, independent life, etc. Adaptation is more necessary in the case of a pair of lovers or a married husband and wife. In modern times, unlike in the olden times, there are differences of opinion, ego clashes, superiority/inferiority complexes, etc. that come in the way of one's smooth life career. With people moving to foreign countries like America, Canada, Australia, etc., this issue of adaptation has gained importance, as so many unforeseen problems crack up on the surface all of a sudden. This is true of a novel like Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife*.

The novel *Wife* gives an account of the ways in which women try to adapt themselves in a family situation and the challenges they experience in the society. Their intense reactions to situations arising within the family are the main features in the novel. The novel shows Dimple Dasgupta moving away from reality and trying to find a solution in an unreal world. In short, she hates living within the control of her husband and in her in-laws. It is obvious that the identity crisis suffered by Dimple emerges due to her immigration to the USA. In the novel, she breaks the traditional role played by an Indian wife. She acts as a vibrant person, but she exhibits a sort of

mental aberration or apathy. Even while she was unmarried, she possessed a number of fixations such as the kind of husband she will have, the manner in which her marriage should take place and the kind of married life she will lead, etc.

Unfortunately all her dreams and aspirations about her future married life get shattered. Consequently, she suffers from a total loss of personality and it forces her to murder her husband and thereby attain complete freedom.

Dimple's story is the story of a woman, a product of Calcutta's middleclass that values discipline in a woman. Though her ambition of marrying a highly educated and cultured engineer gets fulfilled, her life with him in New York becomes a question mark. She could not accommodate herself to the reality of life in America. It is one of violence and bloodshed which happen routinely in the cities there. She is pictured as an Indian wife "finding herself in a foreign country with an alien milieu – this situation of cultural shock is too trite to need analysis – but essentially it is the agony of a voice struggling for identity and getting stifled repeatedly" (W, 80). Her life with Amit in the narrow flat pressures her to hysterical ruminations with her dreamy self. She has the eerie sensation of being a gloomy and sad person who lacks communication with others and so has a dialogue with her own self. As she is an abnormal woman, she finds fault with her husband's dress habits, economical ways of life and simple philosophy of life. Thoughts of illusion and reality alternate in her life. She has the nightmarish vision and dreams, highlighting her inherent impulses: in "a new dream she was walking on the beach. A whale, a porpoise, a shark, she heard people say. She fought her way through a crowd that suddenly disappeared. At her feet lay Ina Mullick, in Dimple's sari, a thin line of water spilling from her mouth" (103).

In the early part of the novel, Dimple is getting ready for her marriage. She is quite conscious about her physical appearance and modern outlook expected of girls of her standing. Naturally she is worried about her lack of physical charm and her present dark complexion. She takes steps in order to look beautiful. She makes use of all beauty tips and engages herself in doing physical exercises to appear trim. But all these are in vain, as she develops chest- related health problems. This is the first signal occurring in the novel about her troubled state of mind and complicated psyche. These symptoms provide clues to such things as her attitude to self- destruction and killing sensitivity. She is obsessed with desires like beauty and complexion which quicken her marital collapse and breakdown of her sense organs. Dimple is under the impression that her social standing would improve after her marriage. So, she wishes to marry a neurosurgeon. She also wishes to lead an aristocratic life and enjoy all the comforts available to the upper strata of the society. Without any fear or guilty consciousness, she gives up writing her B.A. Degree examination for the reason of her marriage. She spends her time in meaningless desires and vague thoughts. As such, she does not have any idea about the proposed married life, its adjustments and complications. Like all wealthy Indian brides, she hopes that “marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties in carpeted lawns, fund-raising dinners for noble charities” (3).

All Indian girls are made to suffer their lot in their parents’ house until they go to their grooms’ house. In this context, Meenakshi Choudhury observes thus: “Dimple’s position is not different for her very existence, can be described as a waiting to enter into that blessed state of holy matrimony” (83). Dimple expects her marriage to bring her abundance of love and freedom. However, S. Indira observes it

differently and states thus: “Dimple is not prepared for the consequences that follow marriage. In fact, she is not clear about the concepts of freedom and love. This ambiguity, underlying her mental make-up, defines the incompleteness of her being” (71). Dimple is not able to take decisions suitably, though she has her own ambitions in life. This problem is due to her upbringing, as in her family like everywhere her parents take all decisions for her. She is never permitted to do anything on her own. As her parents take all decisions for her, she considers marriage to be an outlet from the restricted environment of the parental home. The readers will label her as an escapist and one who is sorely disappointed in her life. While Dimple wishes to marry a neurosurgeon, her father aspires to seek an engineer as a prospective life- partner for his daughter. He himself is an engineer and hence the preference towards engineer bridegroom is understandable. He gives a matrimonial advertisement in a leading newspaper without taking his daughter into confidence. This proves that, by and large, the Indian families are patriarchal in nature and the eldest male member’s decision in the family is final and binding. In this connection, Kate Millet opines thus : “Traditionally, patriarchy granted the father nearly total ownership over wives and children, including the powers of physical abuse classically, as the head of the family, the father is both begetter and owner in a system in which kinship is a property” (208).

At last, Mr. Dasgupta is able to fix the alliance for his daughter and the choice falls on Mr. Amit Kumar Basu. He is an engineer from a middle class family. Dimple has no other option but to give consent to her father’s choice. She foregoes her ambition of marrying a neurosurgeon and prepares herself mentally for marrying an engineer. This flexible attitude on her part indicates the marginal status suffered by

Indian women in a male-dominant society. Dimple's married life starts in a cramped apartment. She has no role to play in the selection of accommodation. Contrarily, it is her mother-in-law who chooses their place of abode. This is the first incident in which her long-cherished fantasies and dreams get destroyed. She is unable to stand her mother-in-law's dominance. She feels that she has been let down in her married life and is unable to understand that even married life carries its own constraints. She becomes a victim of extreme passions such as indignation, grief, resentment, peevishness, spite and sterile anger due to her mistaken belief that she has been denied freedom in her married life. Dimple is unable to love her husband because she does not have the choice in selecting her husband. In the dark recess of her mind, she is in search of an ideal man. This is the result of her loveless relations with her husband. Left to herself, her ideal man has "...a forehead from an aspirin ad, the lips, eyes and chin from a body builder and shoulder ad, the stomach and legs from a trousers ad." (23). S.P. Swain remarks that the desire of Dimple "points to her abnormal self-longing for the man of her vision. But he continues that it does not prove her hatred for her husband" (19). It is to be understood that Dimple does not have any emotional relationship with him. She neither loves him nor hates him. The problem is that he is not a match to her ideal man. The innermost feelings lurking in her deep mind prevent her from establishing the marital relationship with her husband.

Dimple experiences a hostile reception in her father-in-law's house. The family members of Amit have varied opinions about Dimple. Amit's sister feels that Dimple is not a charming woman. His mother frankly admits that she has given nod to the marriage proposal only to receive a fat dowry. In spite of their opinions about her,

Dimple does not care for them and she looks for an opportunity to settle in the USA with her husband. She knows very well that her husband is waiting for the clearance of immigration papers and it will be only a few more days' time for them to settle in the foreign country. Dimple's well-laid out plans of leaving for America receive setback, when she comes to know that she is pregnant. She is in no mood to retain her pregnancy and thus forces herself to an abortion. To get herself out of pregnancy, she acts outrageously and "gives vicious squeezes to her stomach as if to force a vile thing out of hiding" (30). Dimple considers abortion as a good riddance and wants to get cleared of "the tyrannical and vile thing deposited in her body" (30). In this context F.A. Inamdar compares her thus: "Dimple resembles Goneril of *King Lear*. Goneril wants her body to be blighted with infertility" (118). It is only fitting to state that Dimple outperformed even Goneril. Even while vomiting during pregnancy, Dimple thinks about getting rid of the fetus. Shahrukh Husain's statement has adaptation implied in it: "the bizzare pleasure that Dimple gets in vomiting, enjoying the process and observing the emission with unconcealed satisfaction" (74).

By and large, India is a country where pregnant women are treated with due respect and kindness. But women like Dimple are in a minority. With the advancement of allopathic medicine, there are several harmless ways for a woman to get aborted. But, Dimple prefers to go for the most brutal manner possible. She practices skipping for destroying the fetus from her stomach. The manner in which Dimple gets aborted betrays her education and middle class background. The sheer boldness on her part may have originated from the aberrant maniacal tendencies or the killer instinct lying dormant in her inner mind. D. Lakshmana Rao is of the view that "her skipping the rope to kill the fetus in her womb is brought out and activated under

the pressure of the new environment” (121). The mental instability inherent in Dimple reaches its worst stage and she starts conjuring up the most horrible and distorted images about her child. She imagines of delivering a baby with a large head and a thin body. Such visualization makes her fiercely bold to do away with the baby at any cost or else she thinks she will lose her freedom forever. All women have the right to decide whether to have a baby or not. There are several dignified methods practiced for aborting a fetus. However, the method employed by Dimple to abort her baby is an instance of her gradually weakening psyche. The mental restlessness suffered by her is seen in all her actions. She has the mindset according to which the trivial issues are given utmost importance, whereas the bigger issues are ignored at once. The act of aborting her own baby is a serious matter, but she does it without getting proper advice from a physician. At the same time, she wildly chases a mouse for disturbing her visionary glimpses. She kills it by smashing its head. This deadly act makes S.P. Swain come out with the remark thus: “the killing of the mouse is to her a symbolic suicide of herself. She has destroyed her own self” (122). No one is quite sure whether it is suicidal or a homicidal tendency existing in Dimple’s mind. No solid evidence is available to detect the short comings in her mental makeup which culminates into the cold-blooded murder of her husband.

Dimple used to react in a peevish manner for all things happening to her. She not only lacks beauty, but also suffers from a neurotic lapse, a wanting of sensibility. Dimple considers going to America so as to escape from the tyranny of her parents and in-laws. She is of the opinion that she would acquire an identity of her own after immigrating to America. Once the couple reach America, they stay along with the Sens. This goes against the ambition of Dimple in having an independent house. It

suddenly dawns into her head that she started treating Sen's apartment as her own. Dimple develops a sort of arrogance in her attempt to find a new place for their dwelling. These efforts give her a new kind of certainty. The couple shifts their abode to the apartment of Marsha Mukherjee, knowing that she would be going to India for a month's holiday. Both Amit and Dimple are the only occupants in the apartment. In Marsha's absence, Dimple starts wearing her clothes. At least temporarily, Dimple's dream of staying in an independent house becomes true. The way Dimple uses Marsha's clothes and lives in her house symbolically indicates that she has sacrificed her individual identity for another. Dimple's numerous attempts to establish an identity for her prove to be a failed mission. She is unable to get rid of the vacuum, the emptiness in her. She frequently hosts dinner for her Indian friends in New York. She does it to overcome her passive life. She also takes part in the dinners hosted by the Mullicks, the Sens and other Indians in New York. However, she understands that she cannot sustain these activities for a longer duration. Hence, she expresses her desire to Amit for taking up a job. Being a traditional patriarch, Amit does not relish the idea of his wife going to the work spot. This leaves Dimple to live in boredom and in its wake start day-dreaming again. The husband Amit feels that providing material comfort is good enough to keep his wife happy. He fails to grasp the emotional needs of his wife. Even the slightest changes he notices in his wife are only at the surface level and he never understands the problem with her.

Adaptation requires someone to come and give the affected woman the required company or yield to her expectations. Dimple longs to be in the company of her family members to overcome her loneliness. To get herself liberated much like an American woman, she becomes a neurotic. Desertion, desperation, death, all such

negative feelings drive her to the state of madness. She herself feels as if she is dying. She fails to notice the difference in what she watches in T.V. and what she experiences in real life. She adapts herself to the modern ways of living. The violent tendency found outside her turns inward and she develops an idea of killing her husband. This idea of killing which is so common in the American life fascinates her. She thinks thus: "She would kill Amit and hide his body in the freezer. The extravagance of the scheme delighted her, made her feel very American somehow, almost like a character in a T.V. series" (195). She starts living in an imaginary world far against reality. She is unable to find sleep and in a frenzied mood she murders her spouse. She does it without realizing the consequences. She feels that if women on T.V. could get away with murder, why not she. It is evident from the novel that Dimple is infected with neurosis and the violent atmosphere prevailing in an alien culture aggravates the violence in her. Somehow or other she would have learned to adjust herself to the surroundings and the persons with whom she is interacting. Thus the novel *Wife* brings out the disillusionment of Dimple in her married life and the identity crisis suffered by her due to her immigration to the USA. It emphasizes the need for adaptation in times of crisis, especially the one faced by the protagonist.

Turning to the adaptation measures taken by the protagonist in the novel *Jasmine*, it may be inferred that Bharati Mukherjee describes multiculturalism as a localized practice in America. She takes the trouble of showing how globalization has accelerated the practice. She focuses more closely on individual protagonist Jasmine, who smuggles herself into America from India and constantly reforms herself in order to escape the paralyzing association with ethnic difference created by multiculturalism. Jasmine explicitly inserts herself into the American mythology,

inverting it and infusing it with her Indian origins to legitimize her place in the nation's history. She retraces the path of European immigration and frontier immigration and redefines the terms of individualism and Hollywood's cowboy and Indian rhetoric. In so doing, she shows not difference, but similarity with the American Dream and mythos, melding with it in an act of transformative hybridity that reinvigorates the natural American citizens. This step redefines the nation as movement and negotiation instead of fixity and stagnation. The rise of globalization studies in the 1990s prompted Mukherjee to re-evaluate the individual's influence on the national culture in the context of the shifting relationship between the nation and the rise of a global society.

The luckless village girl in *Jyoti* becomes Jasmine, a city woman after her marriage with Prakash. The christening with a new name for her has much sense behind it. She acknowledges it thus: "He gave me a new name: Jasmine. He said: 'you are small and sweet and heady, my Jasmine. You'll quicken the whole world with your perfume'" (J, 77). She is able to identify her husband's wishes with hers. Prakash wants to get admission in some American institute of technology. Both begin to dream about their prospects in America. Misfortune befalls Prakash, when the Khalsa Lions attack him fatally on the eve of his departure, thus leaving his wife sorrow-stricken. But a brave and courageous attitude in Jasmine propels her to visit the institute in America as desired by her husband to fulfill his wishes. Though her family members are against her decision to go to America, she takes the plunge and decides to face the uncertainties in an unknown country. With forged papers she travels to the New World in a ship called 'The Gulf Shuttle.' The captain named Half Face takes her to a remote place in Florida and rapes her pitilessly. When he sleeps

with the promise of more sexual excitement later in the night, she wants “to balance her defilement with my (her) death” (117). But soon she changes her mind and vows not to let her personal dishonor disrupt her mission. She cuts the front of her tongue and with the blood oozing from it she turns into the Goddess Kali and kills the demon, Half Face for his outrage against her.

After this violent attempt on the ugly world, Jasmine starts her life afresh. Her condition is now worse with no money, no idea about the surroundings, etc. Lillian Gordon, a Quaker woman helps her by teaching her to imitate the American ways of life. She encourages her by telling, “let the past make you wary, by all means. But do not let it deform you” (131). She sends her to her daughter in New York, where she might help her with a suitable job. After meeting her, Jasmine meets her husband’s former teacher, Devinder Vadhera and spends five months at Flushing with pain and despair. Her experience in America has been one of unknown fear. This life is terrifying for her. As she says, “I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti-like” (145). This shows her adaptability at the earlier period of her stay in the alien country. She is shocked to know that Vadhera is a dealer in human hair. To her he seems to be a ghost. Her comprehension of reality in America is confirmed by the taxi-driver’s statement, “we have to live here like dogs” (140). This is symbolic of her confusion that grips every immigrant in America. Like a true and typical foreigner, Jasmine hovers between her desire for her past and an equally pressing act of urgency to forget it.

Then Jasmine comes to live in an apartment on Claremont Avenue in Manhattan. She acts as a caregiver to Duff, the adopted daughter of Taylor and Wylie Hayes. She is impressed by the conduct and professional attitude of Taylor. She gets a

new name from him, Jase and is truly excited about her life with the Hayeses. She treats them as her parents, teachers and her family, with the result the spirit of adaptation is complete here. In the new place she becomes more Americanized, more hopeful of her status and more sensitive to her position. On learning that Duff is an adopted child for their parents, she reacts thus: "Adoption was as foreign to me as the idea of widow remarriage" (170). She feels aghast at Wylie's decision to desert Taylor for her lover, Stuart. She gets to know the fact that human relationships in America are shaky and not permanent. There is a silver lining for her in that the love for democracy of thought and maintenance of decency on the part of the Americans is still there intact. In due course she finds herself absorbed in the American society for its sense of discipline and order. As she herself says, "she is getting rooted" (179).

As she has got a supportive home and person, Jasmine is no longer haunted by rootless condition. This is corroborated by Pushpa N.Parekh in the following words: "This period in Jasmine's life is the most restful and comforting, emotionally and psychologically, intellectually; however, it is a phase of minute observations of complex inner deliberations on and keen involvement in her new environment" (113). As a keen observer of the American scene, she calls Wylie's mindless exit from Taylor as reasonless and an action which is unexplainable. Her inner monologues and careful deliberations on the cultural differences and the immigrant women's emotional adherence to her traditional outlook are instances of her intellectual exploration into the new avenues opened to her by the modern multicultural set up. Taylor arranges a part-time job for her in the Mathematics Department at Columbia University. She goes for free tuition in Columbia extension courses. The Indian Languages Department uses her as a Punjabi reader and she enjoys tutoring the

students there. Now that she feels settled, Jasmine acknowledges, “In America nothing lasts. I can say that now and it doesn’t shock me, but I think it was the hardest lesson of all for me to learn. We arrive so eager to learn, to adjust, to participate, only to find the monuments are plastic, agreements are annulled. Nothing is forever, nothing is so terrible or so wonderful” (181).

Taylor who loves Jasmine makes her feel at home and that any idea of aloofness or isolation becomes a thing of the past. She takes care of Duff and takes him round to the different places in the city. Taylor consoles himself teaching her all that she needs. She has changed because she wants to. The confidence in Jasmine’s mind builds up thus strongly when she says thus: “To bunker oneself inside nostalgia, to sheathe the heart in a bullet-proof vest, was to be a coward. On Claremont Avenue in the Hayeses’ big, clean, brightly-lit apartment, I bloomed from a diffident alien with forged documents into adventurous Jase” (185-86). Anything causing frightening sensation can be made to go away by writing ‘Return to Sender’ on the package, so encourages Taylor. Jasmine wants to listen to Taylor’s words of praise, since he has been unfailingly kind, never condescending and always proud of her achievements. She tells him about Sukhwinder’s bad intentions before her arrival here. To safeguard herself from further danger, she says she is going to Iowa.

Jasmine’s life as a teller girl in Mother Ripplemayer’s son, Bud’s bank makes her American living a firmly laid one. Bud gives her a new name, Jane. She develops a liking for Iowa, as it resembles her own village, Hasnapur. She is conscious that she is an alien, gifted with darkness, mystery and inscrutability. The East provides her with the necessary vitality and wisdom with which she is able to steer past all misgivings and wrong notions about the alien land, America. In the new dispensation

she is in romance with Du, the adopted son of Bud, a Vietnamese by birth and as a result, she carries his child in her womb. This gives the impression that she easily gets adapted to the American pattern of living. There is much similarity in both Du and Jasmine, as the former has had a grueling experience in the war front in Vietnam and the latter has had tough experiences from the moment that she sets foot in the American soil.

The novelist makes her heroine accept the multiple codes of the American society and thereby assimilate the culture of the adopted land. In the process one has to naturally forget the roots of her past. This is reflected in Jasmine's statement: "Once we start letting go – let go just one thing, like not wearing our normal clothes or a turban or not wearing a tika on the forehead – the rest goes on its own down a sinkhole" (29). As she tries to get herself into the new system, she discovers the undefined median between the old world and the assimilated one. Both Du and Jasmine are in a hurry to become the American citizens so that they can forget the earlier nightmares that they experienced in their lives. But Du's sudden departure to join his sister in Los Angeles makes her feel terribly thus: "How dare he retreat with my admiration, my pride, my total involvement in everything he did" (223). She knows that it is Du with whom she has shared all her moments of joy and sorrow. Still she tries to adopt the Lillian Gordon style of living and orders within her mind, "Don't cry, don't feel sorry for yourself" (224). This sense of loss gets accentuated with the suicide of neighboring Lutz boy, Darrel who has been in love with her, but she never returns his love. At this stage a call from Taylor makes it smooth again for her. Taylor and Duff come to take her to California where she can settle down to her heart's content. As she says rightly, "I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the promise of America and old world dutifulness" (240).

At Iowa she remains a perfect wife trying to please her husband by adopting all kinds of methods. Like an Indian woman she submits herself to the passions of Bud yielding to the sexual desire of a crippled person. But it is the very same woman who goes with Taylor “greedy with wants and reckless from hope” (241). Now she exhibits herself as entirely a new woman. This woman can see the way ahead of her and digest the best that the future holds for her. Her adaptation to the American life is in fact a challenge thrown at the astrologer who has declared her as star-crossed. Her statement to this effect is quite indicative of her absorbing trend to the American system: “Watch me reposition the stars, I whisper to the astrologer who floats cross-legged above my kitchen stove” (240). Hers is the reaffirmation of the philosophy of living together, never mind what comes in the way. Her evolution from Jyoti to Jasmine, Kali to Jazzy and Jase to Jane is a long and tough journey “hurtled through time tunnels” (240). As Nagendra Kumar says, “the protagonist’s name changes as well as her shifts in places of residence become metaphors for an immigrant woman’s process of uprooting and rerooting” (118). In her role as the immigrant woman in America, the protagonist has “had a husband for each of the women I have been. Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane, Half-Face for Kali” (197).

Banking in Baden is something intuitive. Bud could see her loping in, getting frightened, jobless. He wants her more than he has ever wanted anyone. He is grateful to her for bringing him back from the dead. In her mind Jasmine says thus: “Too much attachment, too much disillusion” (200). Their relationship is so close that the feeling of uneasiness is completely absent in Jasmine. She has learned to cope with any kind of situation in America. This suggests the adaptation trend slowly and steadily coming over her. She is reminded of Sukkhi, the New York vendor going for

selling with his dog-cart. Even as she feels alien, she feels that she too is like any other alien in this country. What it requires is careful calculation of each and everything. Like the other immigrants, she too would have the dream of perfect living. Thus she would introspect, "Goodness and evil square off every moment. Forgiveness implies belief in an ultimate triumph. I dream only of neutralizing harm, not absolute and permanent conquest" (203). She is grateful that Bud has kept her out of trouble from suspected quarters. Despite her different feelings like how many more selves, husbands, etc., Jasmine's urge for adaptation makes itself felt thus: "I still think of myself as caregiver, recipe giver, preserver. I can honestly say all I wanted was to serve, be allowed to join, but I created confusion and destruction wherever I go" (215).

Through the characterization of Jasmine, Bharati Mukherjee portrays the love-goddess and the life-force. Her morality is one way of looking at life and disposing of its outstanding problems. In this sense she is a path-finder and forces her way through the crowded problems of the nation. The movement she takes up, adds up to her self-confidence and feeling of creativity. It is possible to look at her way of responding to the behavioral patterns of the American society and imbibing it in her character. The adaptation pattern on her part is referred by the novelist thus: "The kinds of women I write about...are those who are adaptable. We've all been raised to please, been trained to be adaptable as wives and that adaptability is working to the women's advantage when we come over as immigrants" (19). In her attempt to adapt herself to the ground reality she has to act as "a tornado, rubble-maker, arising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud" (241). Thus she makes the final choice and feels

relieved. She feels powerful enough to reposition her stars. It is left to time to determine her true identity.

In Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel, *The Mistress of Spices* the feeling of adaptation is carried further by the protagonist who too changes her names. Tilo, the main character of the novel is born as a third girl child and is considered as a burden by her parents. She is fed with the milk of ass which helps her in getting the sight and recognizing the words sooner than others. Being neglected by her parents, she leads a very careless life. Tilo was named Nayan-Tara at the time of her birth. Nayan-Tara means a Star of the Eye, but it could also be interpreted as a person who is starry-eyed. Just like the name, she has very high aspirations and is not content with whatever she has. She desires for something more in life, despite being worshipped by thousands of villagers as a goddess. She wants something drastic to break the monotony of her life. The filial love of a daughter is not received by Nayan Tara. She suffers from not being accepted and loved by her biological parents. Her parent's reaction contrasts with the meaning of her first name, 'Star of the eye.' Nayan Tara is scared by her family and village because of her supernatural powers to see the future. She is forced to look for other persons who would bring her love. It is at this juncture that the pirates loot her village and kidnap her. She is renamed as Bhagyavati or one who is in charge of destiny. The pirates look at her as their lucky charm which would bring them to their destiny, but unfortunately she herself is far away from her own destiny in life. When Tilo was a girl, the pirates storm into her home and they murder her entire family and abduct Tilo, taking her on board their ship as a prisoner. Eventually, Tilo overthrows the pirate captain to become the pirate.

But Tilo abandons this exalted position when the mystical sea serpents tell her about the existence of an island upon which she and other women like her, can develop their supernatural talents to use them for greater good. This isolated island is a haven for these women who call themselves the ‘Mistresses of Spices.’ They are under the care of the First Mother, the eldest and wisest teacher of all the women. When Tilo arrives on the Island, she and the other young girls like her are given new identities, indicating that the past is being relegated to memory and new personas are being forged. Tilo meets the First Mother, a figure who foreshadows the paradoxical identity that Tilo will soon find herself grappling with.

While Tilo is about to leave the Island of Spices to America, the First Mother, from the folds of her clothing, placed a slice of ginger root to give her heart steadfastness and keep her strong in her vows. The taste of ginger root is the last taste of the Island and the first taste of America. The spices in Divakaruni’s novel can cure a wound, they can help anyone survive, they can evoke love and last but not least, they can heal one from nostalgia and homesickness. Each chapter in the novel is named after one particular spice and each explores how that spice has a unique name, one major function, several other functions, and how, as Tilo remarks, “each spice has a day special to it” (MOS,13). The spices can be seen as a representation of Indian culture. They also give the Indians the taste and smell of home while in America. Tilo loves spices, knows their origins, what their colors signify, their smells and even their true names. Their heat runs in her blood. From Amchur to Zafran all bow to her command, yield their properties and magic powers. The spices talked to Tilo to use them to get back her youth when she wanted. They told her if she wanted true change, she must use them differently, must call on their powers. When she hesitated, her spells were not given for her to use. She thought that the spices knew right and wrong

better than her. At that time the singing of the spices from the inner room is heard:
 “Come Tilo use us, we give ourselves gladly to you who have tended us so faithfully. Lotus root and abharak, aalaki and most of all makardwaj king spice, we are yours to command. Use for love, for beauty, for your joy, because that is why we were made” (201-2).

Every Indian spice was found in her store and when placed in her hand they speak to her and even direct her at necessary times. SPICE BAZAAR was the name of her shop fitted at the corner. The board faded into mud brown. Though the shop has been there for only a year, it looks as though it was there for many years. The walls inside the shop were veined with cobwebs and the metal bins lost their shine. In the corner of the shop dust balls were accumulated along with the desires exhaled by the customers. According to Tilo, many people are attracted to her store, as it attracts a large group of people for whom the store is reminiscent of home, a little oasis in their diasporic lives full of problems. The Spice Bazar is visited by many faces belonging to different sections of the society and from various parts of India as well as other minorities like the rich men’s wife, the Mohans, Haroun, Jagjit, Ahuja’s wife, Geeta’s grandfather and Kwesis. Each face tells one unique story contributing to larger story of survival. Tilo the central figure of all these characters tries her best to give them solace, until she is caught in her own desire. She bridges the gap between the Indian communities and she feels that the Indians come to the spice store in quest of happiness. There are certain codes of rules to be followed by all the mistresses which Tilo ultimately breaks during the course of her transformation. Tilo should never leave the store, she should never use the powers for herself, but for others to help and last but not the least, she should not make any physical contact with any human being.

As the story progresses, the readers find smaller stories intertwined where Tilo uses her powers to help others. While helping others, she is so taken into it that one after another she starts breaking the forbidden rules laid for the Mistresses. Not only she does she break rules, but she also allows herself to fall in love with a lonely American, Raven. Tilo is attracted towards Raven as he shares all his personal details including her mother Celestina. Raven does not like his mother, as she pretends to be white and so he leaves her alone after he had started earning. He starts living his life without any aim. He earns and sends some money to his mother, but will not even reply to her letters. One day when he goes in search of his mother, he gets to know that she is no more. He confides everything to Tilo, as he thinks that his burden will be reduced. Raven is left all alone in this world with no one to share his life. He expects love from Tilo and she offers him a spice to get some interest in his life. Tilo also falls in love with Raven. She starts waiting for him in the store. She is fully engrossed in his thoughts. Tilo finds herself irresistible in reciprocating to Raven's love and she says-“For the first time I admit I am giving myself to love. Not the worship I offered the Old One, not the awe I felt for the spices...the anger of spices, their desertion. The true risk is that I will somehow lose the love” (219). Tilo felt that she was doomed to live in this pitiless world as an old woman, without power, without livelihood, without a single being to whom she could turn. For one to be happy, another must take upon herself the suffering. She spent her whole life for the welfare of others. Tilo, once, had the desire to live for her. She would make herself as ravishing as Tilottama, “dancer of the gods, for Raven's pleasure” (318).

Tilo knows definitely that Shampathi's fire will take her, as she has disobeyed her vows. She meets Raven for the last time before entering into Shampathi's fire. She

decides to give up herself to him in his apartment. For the first time she uses the powers of spices for herself. She uses Makaradwaj to make her extremely beautiful, thinking that Raven is more attracted towards beautiful girls and loves beauty. By using the spice, Tilo becomes young and beautiful. After consuming Makaradwaj, the most potent of the changing spices for three days, she was getting back her youth to give pleasure to her lover Raven who loved her sincerely. When the transformation was going on in her body, she felt the pain. But Tilo was too confident and she thought she could absorb the poison like Lord Shiva of the blue throat. Tilo got astonished at her beauty. She was dazzled by the face looking back at her, young and ageless at once. The author described Tilo's "forehead was flawless like a new opened shapla leaf, nose tipped like the til flower, —mouth curved as the bow of Madan, god of love, lips color of there are no other words for this crushed red chilies" (297). When Tilo and Raven were indulging in love- making, the spices encouraged her. The spice spoke to her in my ears, —Use everything. Give and take back, teasing. As did the great courtesans in the courts of Indra the god king." (307). Tilo disobeys her vows by giving herself to Raven but making love with Raven brings Tilo a symbolic change making her more human rather than supernatural and its gives a sense of harmony with the outside world.

Tilo enters the Shampathi's fire, leaves a note to Raven and loses consciousness. "I hope I have given you a little too. Our love would never have lasted, for it was based upon fantasy, yours and mine, of what it is to be Indian. To be American. But where I am going —life or death, I do not know which —I will carry its brief aching sweetness" (311). In the morning when Raven comes in search of Tilo, there was a huge earthquake which destroys almost the entire Oakland and even her

spice shop collapses. He finds her lying down unconsciously, takes her in his hand and moves out to his car. They leave the place and go in search of his earthly paradise. But Tilo after going a little distance stops the car and looks at Oakland which is on fire. She changes her mind to return to Oakland and help people over there. She thinks that it is because of her that everything happened. She wants to help people as she did before. Even Raven changes his mind and returns with Maya, the new name given to Tilo to lead a new life. Maya is not anymore the mistress of spices, but a woman who has accepted her life, a woman who loves a man named Raven, even though she may not accept to live with him in the conventional way. Love has settled within her mind and body, she closes her shop and eventually frees herself from the enclosed room of SPICE BAAZAR thus significantly breaking it free from narrowly divided rules and regulations of the society.

In the novel, Tilo has many disguises and she keeps on changing her names throughout the novel, making clear the problem of identity crisis that the Indian tries to cope with in a foreign land is rather complex. She has been changing her name from Nayan Tara as a good daughter, then to Bhagyavati during her stay with the pirates, then to Tilo and finally Maya when she finds her love. Tilo manages to define herself at the very end of the novel as 'Maya', a Hindu term that defines the everyday world of desire, pain and joy. 'Maya' represents the illusionary power of the world. Thus it could be seen that the protagonist tries her best to adapt herself to the magical situation when she is under the influence of the curable spices bringing cure to the suffering folks who are mostly immigrants. Divakaruni voices a prevalent attitude among the diasporic writings, one which exults in the sense of rootlessness and uses it as a literary exercise to explore the possibilities of living in two worlds. As John

McLeod puts it, “the differences of gender, race, class, religion and language make diaspora spaces dynamic and shifting, open to repeated construction and reconstruction” (207). The diasporic identity, the shift of Tilottamma to being the bougainvillea girl and beyond points to the way expatriation can face the everyday reality while retaining its capacity to dream and hope.

Moving on to the examination of adaptation in the novel *The Vine of Desire*, also by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, here again after much hardships and sufferings the two sisters, Anju and Sudha take to their own independent paths to steer clear of all troubles that come their way. The immigrants have always been trying to reconcile with the new homeland. In *The Vine of Desire* also there are the problems of identity, cultural dilemmas and displacements in the new spatial configurations. The vivid and lively images of the Bengali dwellings and surroundings are brought back in an attempt to relive the past. The freedom and sense of joy cannot be experienced in the new place without an inquiry and a sense of skepticism. This dichotomy brings in a kind of dilemma whether to go back to the past or to retain the present. Certainly life varies between an Indian and an Indian American who finds himself at the crossroads. The characters find it difficult to adjust to the new surroundings and hence are in for some bitter moments in their lives. The two sisters who initially see eye to eye with each other soon move apart on the ground of misunderstanding and wrong attitude that a woman has towards a man. This applies to Anju, Sudha and Sunil who plays in their lives. Divakaruni is able to successfully provide a fitting conclusion by making the characters concerned adapt to themselves freely and smoothly.

Sudha is in California after divorcing her husband on the issue of abortion of the female baby. Anju goes through the miscarriage of a boy in her womb. This

affects her psyche and her relationship with Sunil, her husband. Sunil wants to marry Sudha, now a widow with her baby, Dayita. Anju gets angry with him for his pretensions with her in her married life. A time comes when these two women want to assert themselves and their liberty to break the rules and act prudently on their own. In her assignment to her professor, Anju makes a mention of her own mother acting like a man in the absence of her husband. She really admires her mother for she has the capability to work for eighteen hours a day to make sure that they could make their living in that big marble mansion which is slowly crumbling to pieces. She wishes to handle loss like her mother. She has grief because of the loss of her son and now the impending loss of her husband. Sudha remembers how she and Anju would sense each other's needs. As the novelist comments through Sudha, "If one of us had a secret, the other would taste it, grainy and bitter like pomegranate seeds bitten into by accident" (VD, 108).

The situation at home goes haywire that Sunil begins to make his advances to Sudha in secret in the absence of Anju. Though Sudha likes to have it out with him, at a later stage she realizes that she is doing wrong to her own cousin. This critical stage forces Sudha to seek a job at an old man's house as a caretaker. In her conversation with Lalit, she gives an account of her life at home and the one she is leading here in America. As a responsible woman, she has lived with the sense of duty. She knows "how a woman should behave toward her parents, her husband, her in-laws, her children...It gave me the boundaries I needed, a wall of moral safety behind which to live. Duty took the place of love –it was love. Without it the society would fall apart" (175-76). She has the determination in her that encourages her "Live for yourself" (177). She firmly says that she can't go back to the old way, living for others. This is

surely the sign of adaptability on her part. In her letters to Anju and Sunil, she makes it clear that it will be better for them to stay away from each other.

Myra and Trideep are the ones who live with the old man, the father of Trideep. The old man initially aspires for life in America. But as he falls ill, he needs to be taken care of by a maid. In the hospital they advise him to stay at home and take treatment there with someone's help. From the day he gets a stroke, he starts hating everyone and he struggles in moving the right side of his body. Sudha accepts to take care of him and administer all kinds of help to make his condition normal. There is a silver lining in her life, since "she has a job, a beautiful house to live in and an employer who seems hearteningly malleable...She's finally starting her new life in America" (221). By serving the needs of the old man, she has found the sanctuary here. She has now enough time to lick her wounds and catch her breath. Similarly Anju wants to have a life of her own and so she decides to apply for divorce with Sunil. Her words to Sudha on this issue are bold enough to prove that she is firm in her decision to snap links with Sunil. The new adaptability in her becomes obvious, when she says thus: "I was going to fight it every way I knew. Beg, cry, make him feel like a jerk. I was going to insist that he come with me for counseling" (252).

The moment Trideep's father feels insecure, he begins to think of changes he needs to overcome his condition of restlessness. Consequently a new hope begins to rise in him. The old man's desire to go back to India and lead a trouble-free life there is something he wants. He finds a ready partner to his desires in Sudha who is willing to go with him to India and thus safeguard her position also. Thereby she can escape herself from things like alienation, loneliness and separation. Once Sudha comes out of her marital home fighting against the evil-mindedness of her in-laws, it is alienation for her from the groom's family members and also from her own family

members. This is the reason why she embarks to America to forget all the injustice heaped on her by those responsible for it. She finds her lonely, when all around her including her cousin, Anju and Sunil turn against her will. Once she steps out of Anju's house, it is a lonely world for her. Fortunately for her, Lupe, the well-wisher brings her to Trideep's household to take care of the old man there. The old man recaptures quickly and showers his love and affection to Sudha and her daughter, Dayita by telling them of the memorable experiences he had in his native land. This awareness makes them realize the potential of living in one's own native land rather than suffer in an alien land like America. This is well supported by a critic, Makarand Paranjape thus: "There is a clinging to the old identity and resistance to making a transition" (61).

Sudha's confused mind initially thinks about Ashok and sometimes about Sunil. After a loud thinking, she turns away Ashok's proposal to have her as his wife with her child. She does not have the mind to return to India with him nor does she want to marry Sunil at the cost of her sister, Anju. She comes to the conclusion that she must stand on her feet firmly. Sunil tries to convince both Anju and Sudha about his intentions. Both the women reject his proposals leaving him in the lurch for his own grave mistakes. In Sunil's case the American society has brought unexpected changes in him. His romance with Sudha has shaken Anju quite a bit and that is why she takes to new ways of appeasing herself in the American society. Thanks to her academic enterprise in the university, she is able to stabilize herself with the surroundings and is also able to overcome the disappointment and the isolation that she suffers on account of Sunil's changing affection to her. She slowly learns to adapt herself to the new situation in which both Sudha and Sunil have moved away from her.

In Sudha's case, she thinks India would be a perfect solution to her life. In the changed circumstances when she finds it easy-going with Trideep's convalescing father, she comes to gain the impression that it is better to live in one's own place rather than suffer in an unknown place. She has to take an independent decision to take care of herself and her daughter. The American society offers opportunities and problems to both Anju and Sudha. It shakes the very foundation on which they have built their extraordinary love and friendship. There is repeated dislocation and the suffering gets increased, every time they seek to change the abnormality into a viable one. Anju is able to change herself by picking the opportunities that America is offering her. Sudha too has many such opportunities, but she chooses her homeland as the better option to live independently. In this context what she tells the old man is significant enough: "Going back with you would be a way for me to start over in a culture I understand the way I'll never understand America. In a new part of India, where no one knows me" (320-21). For her it is not a negative change. Sudha has just turned different by adapting herself well to the new-found situation. Her firm resolution to go to India is seen by Lalit thus: "I see it in the way you stand, the muscles of your shoulders, your neck. It's like you're threaded through with galvanized wire" (334).

Sudha's turnover from what she wants to avail herself of to what she wants to be in future is the important development in her life's later stage. She knows that so many people are convinced that she is doing the wrong thing, wasting her life to the care of an old man. But she is of the firm view that "Mr.Sen's son would never have allowed him to go on his own. So perhaps finally I'm being of use to someone. It won't make up for destroying my cousin's marriage, but it is a small reparation"

(353). Thus the feeling of adaptation is seen in both women of this novel and this feeling has made it possible for them to move on to other stages in life without worrying about the past anymore. From the beginning they are isolated from each other and they narrate their stories in flashback.

In the two novels of Anita Rau Badami, the adaptation theme can be explored in similar fashion. In the first novel *Tamarind Mem*, Anita Rau Badami, depicts the sketches of two women who hold the centre stage in it. The mother, Saroja and daughter, Kamini try to make sense of their past with different perceptions. The novel unfolds the past cultural restrictions, which bring to focus the personal lives and aspirations of the characters. Both the daughter and the mother are seen arguing their respective points of view about the present and the past. Many characters can be likened to the author herself who lives in Canada. Her representative in the novel is Kamini Moorthy who is basically an inhabitant of India, but lives in Canada. Like Badami's own life surrounding the railway colonies of India, this novel *Tamarind Mem* also is set both in India and Canada. Kamini's father works as a railway civil engineer and goes round on inspection tours leaving his family in the railway quarters. Badami's past life is seen through the memories that Kamini revives in the novel.

The novel is divided into two halves, the first giving Kamini's views of life and the second half her mother's. From the beginning to the end it is story-telling trend that strikes the keynote of the novel. What happens is told in varied ways. The interesting aspect is that both Kamini and Saroja never come to meet each other. They discourse only through story-telling. After her husband is no more, Saroja delights her fellow passengers while she is travelling by train. Her two daughters, Kamini and Roopa have gone abroad leaving their mother in a lonely condition. But the mother is

able to overcome her aloofness and separation from her near and dear ones by adapting herself to the new circumstances. She recalls how she has had a strange marriage with Moorthy who does not have a horoscope of his own. She also thinks about her displacement from one station to another, her childhood home, her shattered dream of becoming a doctor, the prejudiced temperament on the part of her parents and relatives and finally her relationship with the mechanic, Paul de Costa.

Though Kamini is in Canada, she goes down memory lane and remembers her childhood days with her mother. The days she spent with her in the railway colonies in India, the moments she spent in her grandmother's house with Roopa, her younger sister and her efforts to understand her mother are the scenes she revives in her mind. In *Tamarind Mem* both the husband and wife lead an estranged life in spite of their marriage and the existence of their family and children. It is a typical Indian familial relationship in a patriarchal system. Saroja wants to take revenge on her husband for not taking proper care of the family. The result is that she gets an illicit affair with the mechanic, Paul de Costa. The void created by her husband's absence leads to many new problems. Both Saroja and Kamini have different perceptions about life. Kamini faces a vacuum in that her mother always supports her sister, Roopa in all things in the family. Saroja wants to be independent and loves travelling to all those places to escape from her loneliness and emptiness all around. She even thinks of going to Linda Ayah's house in her village. Saroja tells Kamini over the phone about her intentions bordering on adaptation: "This is the real world. Not like our Railway life, with faithful Linda Ayah and Ganesh Peon" (TM, 29-30). She too wants to taste freedom the way the two sisters, her own daughters experienced it in their own case.

Even before the elder daughter could get married, the younger one namely Roopa gets entangled in a love affair while doing her studies and comes home with a man whom they have never met. Saroja thinks about it and describes how Roopa has adapted herself to her new life thus: “She left college in the middle of the term, came home with a man we had never met. He might have belonged to a family of pimps for all I knew. And then she married him in less than a month – so suspicious it looked—and left for USA! Of course she ran away” (30). In her moment of exasperation and spirit of getting things in her stride, Saroja wants to undertake a pilgrimage, like those good old people in religious stories. The women like her marry off their daughters, wash their hands of the sons, give away all their useless belongings and leave on their journey to see the world before them. When Kamini raises the question as to how she could be reached, Saroja says that anything worst can happen to her. She might even die. Whatever she has left behind, the money and property can be shared by Kamini and Roopa. Kamini will have to use her brains and act accordingly.

After quite an unsatisfactory and meaningless life with her husband, Saroja could now breathe freely and travel round in the second class railway carriage, sharing a compartment with six fellow passengers. She can use the railway pass to her satisfaction. Her statement “All my life I went where your father wanted me to and now I follow my whims” (51) implies the much-needed adaptation. Linda Ayah knows the temperament of Moorthy and Saroja quite well. She notices every minute thing before her and the same logic applies to her observations of Moorthy and Saroja. While the former does not care to see the reaction from the latter, it is always Saroja who is blinded by her anger. Being a maid servant, Linda Ayah too could face problems like other women and this is made explicit thus in her statement: “I don’t

know why, for I didn't spot that my husband was a loafer-insect first time I saw him, but that is my problem, what to do?" (65). She always believes that everybody has ghosts trailing behind them. The problem starts when one looks over his shoulder at them. Having been accustomed to the real and the magical, she could stand firmly on her feet. While massaging Kamini's arms and calves, Linda would say thus: "a woman needs all the strength she can find to carry many weights in her life. If you don't have the strength to look after yourself, who will?" (75).

Ma (Saroja) has learned the unspoken rules of the Railway colony very quickly, thanks to the assistance she has from both Linda and Ganesh peon. As a railway wife, she could not serve whisky with dinner. The wine is not to be poured into a pretty glass jug and kept in the fridge. These things Ganesh peon has taught her in Dadda's absence. She gives instructions to Kamini to make Linda lock the backdoor of the house to prevent outsiders from entering the house unlawfully. Linda makes it clear that she is not such a fool to throw open the door for others to come in easily. She tells Roopa and her sister that she has been spared the trouble of sucking blood by the mosquitoes, as it has already been sucked by the small creatures. She asserts herself to defend the adaptation theory that whatever is good is bound to stay for long. At the same time, whatever is bad will be met with repercussions. Kamini has the simmering resentment against her mother. When she and Roopa come home from school, if she is not present there, they would charge her with indifference. But for all this their father is to blame, for he has always made her be at home without ever taking her out into the world to experience its good moments. In Ma's recent postcards Kamini has the chance to look at the gulmohur tree about to bloom soon. At this sight, she would say with a sense of adaptation: "Such a simple thing can give me so much pleasure. It has taken me so long to see that happiness isn't hard to find" (147).

Saroja contrasts her mother's happy married life with her own. Her father has given her security, a home, the freedom to do what she pleased inside that home. His affection for her was as solid as a pillar and her mother's life has grown rich and bountiful. In her own case she is married to a man who has no feelings to spare for his wife. She is like a dried out lemon peel whose energies have been squeezed out. Her husband has inherited his dead father's unfinished duties which have sucked up his energy. This has resulted in her resolving to use her tamarind tongue quite opposed to the kind of treatment she is getting at his hands. The kind of adaptation that she would have has been indicated thus: "I use my grandmother's strategy of words to ward off the pain of rejection. His aloof, merciless cool, my defensive anger. I will not beg for the affection that is due to me, his wife. Why, even a cat demands a caress, a gentle word. Deprive it of attention and it will wander to another home" (216). Saroja's mother would advise her how to conduct herself in her groom's house after her marriage – "Always obey him, it is your duty...And for god's sake don't let your too-smart tongue wag-wag more than necessary" (224). But for her Dadda remains far on the other side without giving her any chance to interact with him. This pushes her to the edge when she would ask thus – "When the most intimate space in a home has no words in it, what then of the rest of the house? I try to fill the other rooms with my voice" (224). This is the adjustment that she makes for herself.

On his return from the hills of Aarlong Moorthy opens a suitcase and takes out from it a golden silk sari and gives it as a gift to his wife. This is the first gift he, the traveler has given to her. There are so many things she wants to say, but her clumsy tongue takes over and the words fall from it in a rather rebuking fashion: "Yes, but this is too dull for my skin" (226). Dadda's silence once again covers his tentative

smile. She must have shown her gesture, but she stumbles to cover up the disappointment that prevails between them. It is too late for her to react to her husband's gesture. She gives expression to her feelings thus: "I have nothing to discuss with this stranger who takes me from one town to another, showing me a whole country. He sits with his daughters about him, telling his tales, while I hover in the penumbra of their shared happiness" (227). As his father failed to give them what he needed, in the same way he too in turn remains indifferent to the wishes of his family after his marriage with Saroja. He sends things like apples, Basmati rice, Banganapalli mangoes, etc. from various places that he tours. But his family will have to be in the same place burying all kinds of desire and expectations. As she says, "We are not to wander out of that little space he draws for us, as if we are his designs, those precise lines with which he fills drafting sheets, the minute scribbles that designate those drawings into their slots, taking into account every possible landslide, waterfall, storm, flood or wild animal" (228).

Like the nails growing in one's fingers, the problems for women like Saroja multiply, but like the nails being cut from time to time, these hardships and sufferings should be taken in their stride so that the future could be faced with strength. She would not have spoken out so explicitly, if her husband had not been so silent. Her resolution as to what and how she must spend the remaining days shows her maturity and wise thinking which no doubt implies adaptation measures on her part. The following passage from the novel is a clear indicator to this effect:

"I cannot put the entire blame for our life on him. I can, but my daughters tell me I am being unfair. But that is an old story, enough to say that I learned to live with the man I married. It is the lottery ticket I

picked and I could do nothing about it. Marriage is a game of give and take, sometimes one has to give a little more than the other and so the balance is maintained” (243).

After the death of her husband, Saroja settles down in Madras in one of the apartments there. She gets used to the daily routine, after leaving her past life where it was a daily busy schedule for her. Her realization in the changed situation is significant in the light of her changed outlook: “Only after you lose something do you realize how valuable it was. Then you get used to the loss, dust the memories off your body and begin anew” (257).

Kamini requests her mother to come to Canada for a change. Saroja wants to spend her days in India and her tone to this effect is forthright. She could remember that her life with Moorthy was one supported by servants like Linda Ayah and others. Whatever it be, she is pleased to feel contented and says in her new mood thus: “there I go wandering off into new stories without finishing the old” (260). She tells Kamini that her days are over. She points out thus: “Mine is almost at an end, but yours is still unwinding. Go, you silly girl, build your own memories” (263). In olden days the aged parents left behind their youthful follies and responsibilities to be taken up by the youngsters and went about their journey quietly. Saroja too is one of them, as she says with good sense thus: “I too have reached that stage in my life, where I only turn the pages of a book already written, I do not write” (266).

In the second novel *The Hero Walks* Anita Rau Badami has in mind the issues governing the subaltern status of women. The Ammayya-Nirmala relationship in the novel is a pointer to this. Since it is patriarchy maintaining supremacy all through, it is no wonder that their condition is subordinate to their husbands and in matters

concerning family's future and goodwill. The ceremony that is to be followed after the death of Ammayya's husband is referred to as one having its foothold in the tradition. Sripathi's mother insists on having her head shaved like the widows of the previous generation. For this purpose she orders the barber to come to her house every month to have the stubble cut completely. Despite knowing the fact of her mother-in-law's desire to grow the hair even after her husband's death, Ammayya refuses to break the tradition. Thus she adapts herself to strictly observing the age-old practices in the family. As the tradition would have it, she wears only maroon cotton saris and is liberal-minded in sticking on to the use of gold chains and bangles. She follows her own principles much like what the conventionalists would expect of her. She keeps grumbling about the treatment she gets at her house, as she wants to live according to a definite pattern from which she could not swerve in any manner. She even secretly gathers the costly things from her daughter-in-law's bureau.

According to Badami, "a Hindu wife had to maintain the pretense that her husband was supporting the family" (HW, 14). The knowledge of her husband keeping a mistress reaches Ammayya and she goes weeping to her parents' house. At that time she has given birth to her sixth child. But there she is consoled with the words that she must feel proud to note that her husband could afford two wives. A person like Gopala, the milkman's son is allowed to have private affairs with women, but the case of Rukku, a widow who slept with three men is condemned as untenable. In the eyes of the society she is treated as an outcast and a whore. The novel also focuses on the relationship between Putti, sister of Sripathi and Nirmala, his wife. Ammayya warns Putti not to go and do any work with Nirmala. She guards her from all evil elements till she could get her married to a prospective groom. She scolds

Nirmala for talking in private with the maid, Kutti. She could not adapt herself to the modern type of life practiced by her daughter-in-law. If anyone doubts her movement and stealthy activities, she resents making a scene and shouting overmuch. She does not hesitate to have her ways and blame Nirmala for all the happenings.

Ammayya's turning down the selected grooms for her daughter, Putti makes her feel angry towards her mother and at the same time build desires within her to get married as early as possible. She rejected the choice of a college lecturer at Madras University fearing that the students would throw stones at him, if a strike erupts in the campus. The second choice of a young engineer from America has also been rejected on the ground that men from abroad had already white wives and used their Indian wives as maids. Then the pathologist from Bombay has been turned down because he has a harelip under his moustache. Putti then expresses the idea of teaching at the nearby play school for children. Ammayya again refuses to let her go and serve there like a common and easy woman. This made life uncomfortable for her, as she "felt despairingly that she was drowning in her mother's hungry love, helpless as a fly in thick sugar syrup" (82). After the death of her husband, Ammayya cocoons herself in the past, in traditions and rituals. When Putti arrives in the world, she marks the twin gifts of life and death that she has received by lighting a silver lamp at the Krishna temple every month. She carefully hid the trunk containing gold coins and silver ingots under her bed. She has the habit of exchanging her old saris with the raddhiwallah for stainless steel tins and bowls that get accumulated in the cupboard in a corner of her room.

After the accidental death of Maya and her husband in Vancouver, Sripathi goes to Canada to bring his granddaughter, Nandana to India. Initially Nandana is reluctant to talk to her grandfather. She shuts herself in a room and refuses to see anyone. When the time comes for them to travel back to India, Nandana reluctantly makes her way back to Sripathi. She looks like a turtle under the weight of her backpack. Sripathi feels afraid to talk about anything to her. Maya's neighbor, Kiran Sunderraj who has been helping Nandana recover from her shock of her mother's sudden demise advises Sripathi thus: "Nandu will come to you when she is ready. Remember that she has lost all that is familiar and beloved to her. It is a shock, poor baby. You must be patient" (148). This move is certainly towards adaptation to the new situation. Sripathi could imagine another Maya in Nandana whom he could easily love again. Gowramma, the match-maker, has her own wretched life with her husband who has run away after writing a letter saying that he is renouncing the world. At that time Gowramma had to support three of her teenage children. She tells everyone that she is a widow, thus removing from her mind any trace of her husband. A year later the husband returns to join her, as he is disillusioned by his ascetic existence. The brave and bold Gowramma chases him away with a knife in her hand. Miss Chintamani working at the library notices him begging around the library building. This incident proves that a helpless womanlike Gowramma has to adapt herself to run her family without anymore wasting time looking for the return of the lost husband. She opens her heart out thus to Ammayya: "You don't know what problems I have every day, Ammayya. I don't like to tell, that's why nobody is aware. Smile, smile and smile, that is my policy" (193).

Like Maya, her child Nandana is also a diasporic entity. The child maintains her separate identity as if she belongs to Canada and not to India. Sripathi feels ashamed of the distance he has maintained, “aware that the child could sense his unease and was puzzled by it. She never indicated that she wanted anything of him, although she seemed comfortable with Nirmala and Arun, who spent patient hours with her explaining life in this bewildering place of noise and people” (243). Sripathi recalls how he has cursed Maya for refusing to marry Prakash and for humiliating him by breaking the engagement with him. He feels that the curse has killed her. He gets to know from his son, Arun about his movement for making the earth greener for the future. Though jobs are available for him for the asking, he is interested in carrying on the socialist movement with all goodwill and trust. When Sripathi meets the bankrupt company manager, he could see him not losing courage and putting complete trust in his son for helping him out from the distressful situation. He wishes that he too could repose confidence in his own son. He remembers his father’s uncle, Rama Rao, a kind old man with no desire for anything. One day when the old man was in the middle of his story, Sripathi asked him why he took so long to say anything. The old man was surprised and answered him thus: “My boy, once the words are out of my mouth, I cannot push them back in. So it is better that I think carefully before I allow them to escape” (247). This holds good for anyone like Sripathi or his wife to get used to things happening around them.

One of his office colleagues, Jayaram enquires about Nandana and her reaction to the kind of living in India. He thinks that the baby must be finding it funny and somewhat out of keeping with the trends in Canada. His comments on the difference on living style borders on diaspora women and their reaction to things

happening in another country like India. His views are understandable in this context: “So dirty and noisy after those clean-clean places she (Nandana) has lived in? My nephew who is in Australia holds his nose from morning to night when he visits me. Poor boy” (267). Adaptation to the new ways of living has to be attempted by suffering women like Nirmala who knows under what pressure and extreme conditions they live in a joint family like theirs. She has lived first with her parents, her grandparents and her siblings. After her marriage she has been living with Ammayya, Putti, Sripathi and her own children. She likes the freedom of living in the same house. When she thinks of Ammayya, she would never forget the fact that she is used to swindling things from her place and storing them in her trunk kept under her bed. All along she has been obedient, respectful for the elders and subservient to them. Maya’s sudden death has knocked all these tendencies clean out of her mind. She feels she has experienced more than she could bear. She questions what use is it for being a good wife, daughter-in-law and mother. She realizes that it is time she adapted herself to live without ado anymore. Her feelings are expressed thus: “They had repaid her honest devotion with a kick in the face. Now she no longer cared about obeying Sripathi without question or hurting Ammayya” (286-87).

In the rain Sripathi’s house is in water. The worst part of it is that the drainage water also has come inside to make everything nasty. Munnuswamy and his son help them by treating them as guests in their house. Gopala the son is happy to be of assistance to Nirmala in this hour of distress. He promises that the men under his father’s control will do the needful for them. When Mrs.Munnuswamy talks to Nirmala of her son’s love for Putti and her intention of asking her for their son’s marriage, Nirmala does not object, for she knows that Putti will be happy for this

arrangement. She wants a full scale celebration of Putti's marriage. Adaptation requires that this proposal for wedding between Putti and Gopala comes off at the earliest. This is echoed in the following decision of Nirmala – "In her stolid, practical way, Nirmala had decided that the best way to deal with her own loss was to put it behind her and forge on" (321). When she gets new clothes and prepares a few delicacies for the forthcoming Deepavali season, Sripathi expresses his reservation as to whether they should have it in this hour of tragedy. She gets bold and says with full spirit that they have to carry on despite the unexpected happenings. She adapts herself to the loss of Maya and says rightly thus, "The child's future is more important than past sorrows" (323).

When the alliance matter comes up before Ammayya, she flares up and shouts at Putti for her inclination to wed Gopala whom the old woman calls 'a pariah dog.' She refuses to part with her jewelry and things for her in the event of her agreeing to the proposal from the next house man. But Putti clearly tells her mother thus: "I don't want anything from you. You only said that if somebody really wants to marry me, he will not want any jewelry or dowry. Keep everything" (330). Ammayya bawls at the party from the groom's house saying that her curses will be on them. Her children will abandon her and that evil fellow will beat her like anything. Nirmala closes the door on her to welcome the party and exchange pleasantries. Putti is lost in her romantic thoughts and so she does not bother about her mother's shouting against her and Gopala. It is only appropriate to say that the adaptation gets complete "when Gopala's mother hands her a tray full of fruit to welcome her as her son's future wife, Putti could have swooned with joy" (333). When the Big House is surrounded by flood water, Putti is safely lifted on to the next floor where Gopala's family lives. They all

thought of Ammayya as an old woman with old ways. She soon falls sick and is taken to the hospital for treatment. On her deathbed she is particular that she has saved all the money and jewels and other precious things to be given to Srtipathi and not to Putti. After her death it is found that all the jewels are duplicate ones and not genuine items. Her father has disposed of all genuine jewels to pay his outstanding loans. Sripathi concludes the proceedings characteristically thus: "Life is full of chanciness of existence, the beauty and hope and the loss that always accompanied life" and he feels "a boulder roll slowly off his heart" (355). Thus after much twists and turns experienced by the members of Sripathi's family, there could be a much-sought after togetherness leaving aside all the differences, outmoded views and cultural prejudices. They come round to adapting themselves to the existing conditions.

CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION

Diaspora stands for the scattering of the seed in the wind, the fruits of which turn into a new creation and the start of the fight to survive. Every diasporic movement has its historical significance, as it carries within itself the essence of the nations' history. Diaspora is a journey towards self-realization, self-recognition, self-knowledge and self-definition. In this literature there is an element of creativity present and this creation serves as compensation for the many losses suffered.

Indian women writers have come up in full strength by spreading their unique aroma in the vast field of literature. They are known for their freshness, versatility and native relationship. The patriarchal background is responsible for the transformation of these women writers who have emerged on the literary zone with a vigorous and poignant feminine confession. Many of them have subsequently taken up such themes and published a list of works in India and abroad. Some of these writers have been trying their hands in focusing on greater discontent and disgust that they experience in various social issues. They get provoked to raise their voices against a range of serious problems faced by women that go under the label of the accepted norms and customs in the society. The treatment of women characters in the novels of many of these women writers, particularly in the works of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Anita Rau Badami, transcends boundaries and universalizes their female subjectivity. Their works reveal the actual position of women in the Indian society and the treatment they are subjected to with all diversities in the guise of solidarity in the family.

On the whole, these women writers describe the urban middle class people, the segment of the society they know very well. They reveal the characteristics of diasporic fiction which shows a deep- felt concern for the fate of the immigrants in the cross- cultural contexts and the dilemma they experience due to 'in-betweenness'. The clash between tradition and modernity is the key factor behind the works of acclaimed migrant writers like Bharathi Mukherjee. The comment made by Virginia Woolf is pertinent here: "Women write differently not because they are different psychologically from men, but because their social experiences are different" (32). Bharati Mukherjee is one among such most sensitive writers of modern India who is certainly an exceptional artist describing the complex subtleties of human relationships in the smooth textures of simple idiom. Her writings focus on the struggle, anguish and rebellion of women in a society of prerogatives and imbalances. In such a literary world Bharati Mukherjee's position, she being a scholarly writer with life experience in India, Canada and the United States, is uniquely placed to examine the fragmentary nature of characters with multiple identities. Her novels, *Jasmine* and *Wife* explore the shifting identities of diasporic women, both in the present-day United States, Canada and India and in the past literary contexts. The same is fittingly described by Samir Dayal, when he calls the title character of *Jasmine* as "a perpetual nomad," a woman "shuttling between differing identities" (62). Through the chief characters, *Jasmine* and *Dimple*, a sincere attempt is made by the novelist to give a picture of women, suffering from man-made cultural and traditional restrictions as well as sanctions which do not permit them to live a life free from such controlled existence. The key issues that the protagonists face are of universal significance. The picture that emerges from the study of the novels is not

only that of a female being victimized by a male, but also that of the female coming out as a strong character to stand bravely against the challenges that are thrown in her direction.

In the novel *Wife* Bharati Mukherjee portrays Dimple's morbidity through a series of images. She allows her conscious mind to be dominated by colorful pictures shown in the television advertisements. She sees for herself the indulgence in sexual fantasies attempted by the cabinet ministers and film stars. This provokes her into passionate action leading to her readiness to marry a man with foreign ambition. Already she has a vision of neurosurgeons "dressed in spotless white, peering into opened skulls" (W, 3). It has now turned into a sinister one with images like "men with broken teeth and dirty fingers" (33). What should be real for her is not really so in this changed set-up. The vision that she conjures up for her unborn baby, "one with wrinkled skin like a very old man's and large head filled with water," (41) is so inhuman that it adds up to the outrageousness on her part. What she once felt nostalgic is slowly turning into resistance, when she goes for abortion of the baby, saying to herself that it is not murder at all. The dead baby lizard she finds in her parental bedroom serves to foreground the kind of thinking in her mind. Likewise her act of killing the mouse with all her ferocity throws light on her own pregnant self. The words serve to pinpoint the fact thus: "to Dimple, the dead mouse looked pregnant" (35). Lack of communication with Amit stifles her and goes to the extent of disintegrating her sensibility. Both illusion and reality alternate in her mind – the illusion of committing suicide and the reality of killing her husband. Her nightmarish visions illustrate her latent impulses: "That night she had a new dream: she was walking on the beach. A whale, a porpoise, a shark, she heard people say. She fought

her way through a crowd that suddenly disappeared. At her feet lay Ina Mullick, in Dimple's sari, a thin line of water spilling from her mouth" (103).

Amit is isolated from her, since he fails to give weight to her fantasies and turns away from her world of dreams. He does not seem to be a capable man to suit the temperament of Dimple. But she expected him "to be infallible, intractable, godlike, but with a boyish charm" (89). Despair sets in her mind, as "she thought of sleeping bodies as corpses" (97). It is her alienation that drives her to kill her husband. Even the apartment she lives in America symbolizes the decay and degeneration. The broken ashtray is to her an act of aberration. The scenes in America look horrible enough for her. This has a bearing on her life also. She loses her balance of mind and begins to develop nausea for things around her. The killing of Amit is an instance of her assertion of identity in the alien land. Free and rebellious throughout, Dimple has no inhibitions of any sort. Her confused mind transcends the plight of the alienated self enmeshed in culture shock. She is the woman of no place. As S.P. Swain remarks, "She is neither of India nor of America, but a stunned wanderer between these two worlds, yet to attain a distinct identity. Neither does she belong to the TV world nor to the world of reality, but keeps on shuttling between the two" (88). Having been released from all bonds of caste, gender and family, she has full freedom now which makes her utterly lonely. She thinks of her extra-marital relationship with Milt Glasser and the resultant uneasiness drives her to the extreme condition of killing her husband. As a traveler she is still travelling and is yet to reach her destination. Her nostalgia, resistance and adaptation to stand by herself and not seek any support from anyone are the remnants she has left behind. Such women should bear in mind the

unwanted happenings and move cautiously in their lives. Hers is a quest for voice, a quest for self-identity.

The nostalgic temper, resistance mood and adaptative trends are obvious in the novel *Wife*. The protagonist Dimple wants to break through the traditional taboos of a wife. The opening sentences of the novel make reference to the protagonist and thus set the ironic tone. She marries Amit Basu who is migrating to the U.S.A. She is expected to play the role of an ideal Indian wife, stay at home and keep the house for the husband. Her frustration is built up gradually by the circumstances. She resents being a wife in the Basu family and rebels against wifedom sketched in feministic perspectives. One such feminist trend is to get on with miscarriage, by letting herself free from her pregnancy, which she views as a thing of Basu's property lying in her womb. But her self-identity gets lost by her marriage. She aspires for herself complete recognition and fulfillment of her dream. But Basu wants his life with her in a different way. He expects her to be a docile and submissive wife. This wish from him makes Dimple hate Basu and his behavior. He needs her only to satisfy his sexual desires. Finally, in a state of depression, she kills Amit in an act of self-liberation and commits suicide. Her act in this sense liberates her, as she disregards the discourse that culturally and ideologically has so far construed her identity by harmonizing her feelings and desires as a woman. In *Wife*, Mukherjee iterates the concept of marginalization of women by explaining and exploring the way in which culture and ideology construct feminine identity. In it, it is possible to see the writer's enigma of existence rather than construction of identity leading to psychological imbalances.

In her yet another novel Bharathi Mukherjee portrays her characters with a mind to adjust and redefine themselves, as each new spatial pattern emerges. In *Jasmine*, she explores what happens to a female identity that has been destroyed by hammer blows and melted down to nothingness. Jasmine, the title character and narrator of the novel, was born approximately in 1965 in a rural Indian village called Hasnapur. In the beginning of the novel she tells her story as a twenty-four-year-old widow who is pregnant, living in Iowa with her crippled lover, Bud Ripplemeyer. It takes for her two months in Iowa to explain the ongoing events. But during that time, Jasmine also gives an account of her biographical events that cover the distance between her Punjabi childhood days and her American adult life. These past biographical events are recalled by way of nostalgia during her stay in Iowa. Her odyssey encompasses five distinct settings, two murders, at least one rape, a maiming, a suicide and three love affairs. Throughout the course of the novel, Jasmine's identity changes again and again: from Jyoti to Jasmine, Jasmine to Jazzy, Jazzy to Jase and Jase to Jane. In the chronological order, Jasmine moves from Hasnapur, Punjab, to Fowlers Key, Florida (near Tampa), to Flushing, New York, to Manhattan, to Baden, Iowa, and finally is off to California at the end of the novel. The state of exile, a sense of loss, the pain of separation and disorientation makes Jasmine move towards the quest for identity in an alien land. She undergoes several transformations during her journey of life in America, from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jane and often experiences a deep sense of estrangement leaving her in a fluid state of identity. This journey changes into a tale of moral courage, a search for self-awareness and self-assertion. Uprooted from her native land, India, Jyoti does her best to introduce herself into the new and alien society as an immigrant.

The culmination of her entry finally is indicated in Jasmine's pregnancy with the child of a white man, Bud. She changes herself constantly, ferrying between multiple identities in different spaces and at different times. She fights the most predictable battle for Americanization. She notices that it is full of uncertainty. She knows that she has to resist the old modes of living and discard the conservative temper of mind. But without feeling infuriated, she survives to make a new start in the host country. Initially, the story begins in India and takes off from Europe to America, where it bounces back and forth from Florida through New York to proceed to Iowa, then finally reaches California. The novelist deliberately transports her in time and space again and again in order to imply how unstable life can be for a woman like Jasmine. The protagonist is seen against the backdrop of the rigid, patriarchal Indian society in which her life is controlled and dominated by her father and brothers. But still, Jyoti seeks a modern and educated husband who has no faith in dowries and traditions and thus finds a US based modernist man, Prakash. Prakash encourages Jyoti to study English and symbolically gives Jyoti a new name, Jasmine and also a new life. Resistance has started in his trying to change the mentality of Jasmine: "He wanted to break down the Jyoti as I'd been in Hasnapur and make me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name; Jasmine....Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities." (J, 77)

Jyoti's transformation starts in the beginning from a village girl under the shell of her father and brothers to a wife of an American traditional husband who gives her all liberties. Jasmine's happiness is short-lived. She is widowed and returns to her native place to join her family. Now she has to choose between the rigid traditions of her family and perform Sati (a woman jumping into the fire after her husband's death)

or continue to live the life of Jasmine in America. The widowed woman sways between the past and the present, attempting to come to terms with the two worlds, one of 'nativity' and the other as an 'immigrant'. Hailing from a traditional and a rural family in India, Jyoti comes to America in search of a more fruitful life and to realize the dreams of her husband, Prakash. Jasmine sets off on an agonizing trip as an illegal immigrant to Florida and thus begins her symbolic trip of transformations, displacement and a search for identity. Jasmine undergoes her next transformation from a dutiful traditional Indian wife Jasmine to Jase, when she meets the intellectual, Taylor and then moves on to become Bud's Jane. It seems likely that as Jasmine leaves for California with Taylor and Duff, her identity continues to transform. The novelist effects this transformation and transition as a positive and an optimistic journey. Jasmine creates a new world consisting of new ideas and values, constantly unmasking her past to establish a new cultural identity by incorporating new longings, skills and habits. This transition implies not only the changes coming over her attitude, but more significantly in her relationship with men. She continues to transform from Jasmine to Jane and Jase. The author shows this transformation and transition as a positive and a well-intended journey.

In New York, Jasmine clearly recognizes her ability to adapt. "I wanted to become a person they thought they saw: humorous, intelligent, refined, and affectionate. Not illegal, not murderer, not widowed, raped, destitute, fearful" (171). The abilities to adjust to the requirements of a changing environment and to free herself from the past are Jasmine's new-found survival skills. They enable her to deal with the ethics and culture of two dissimilar worlds and her acceptance of different identities of Jyoti and Jasmine. At this stage, Jasmine feels oscillating between the

traditional and the modern world and with controlled and independent love, offered by her Indian husband, Prakash. She then meets Lillian Gordon, staying with whom she begins her process of assimilation by learning how to become American. Lillian bestows upon her the nickname 'Jazzy', a mark of her entrance into and acceptance of American culture which she welcomes gladly. After that, she moves in with a traditional Indian family in Hushing, New York. Jasmine soon finds herself stifled by the inertia of this home, for it was completely isolated from everything American. Looking at it as a stasis (motionless) in her progression towards a new life, she tries to come out of herself from all that is Indian and to forget her past completely. She does not hesitate to proceed with her migratory pattern and so finally moves to New York City, to become the 'au pair' (Caretaker) for an American family. When she stays with Taylor, his wife Wylie and their daughter Duff, she creates yet another identity upon a new perception of herself. But though Jasmine creates a new identity for every new situation, her former identities stay intact without getting erased. They emerge in specific moments and intensify the pressure, thereby causing Jasmine to create another more dominant identity, different from all those that came earlier.

While living with the Hayes, Jasmine begins to master the English language, thus giving her the chance to further cultivate American culture. Taylor begins to call her 'Jase,' suggesting that she does not have necessary control in the creation of her new self. For the first time in the Hayes household, Jasmine becomes aware of her racial identity. Taylor and his friends understand that she is from South Asia and try to associate her with that community. But Jasmine constantly shuttles in search of a concrete identity. Though she accepts her life pattern in America by submitting "I was landed in getting rooted," (179) the consciousness in her of Hasnapur remains in the

background. The clash between the parental culture and the new culture brings in the new concept of cross-culturalism. She works out her own theory of 'karma' and 'kal' (time). As she begins to get settled in the alien land, she could say with finality thus: "my grandmother may have named me Jyoti, light, but in surviving I was already Jane, a fighter and adapter" (40). She expresses the inner pangs of an exile and expatriate who lives in America. As an Indian woman given to nostalgic memories and resistance tendencies, there is the ultimate adaptation in her which reflects itself in the following lines: "Time will tell if I am a tornado, rubble-maker, arising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud" (241).

While the protagonist in *Wife*, Dimple has been portrayed as a free- minded and rebellious wife with no inhibition in expressing whatever she feels, Jasmine is shown assimilating for herself complete femininity and individuality. Thus, it is seen that the two different characters, Jasmine and Dimple are in two different dimensions. Finally, it can be inferred that the protagonists of the two novels of Bharathi Mukherjee experience a sense of loss, alienation and thrive for identity. But they desperately try to get adjusted in the West to the extent possible to them in order to meet their ends successfully and satisfy their long- cherished dreams. Thus the words of Rabbi Sofer -"No woman is required to build the world by destroying herself" (73) rightly justify the perspective.

In the novel *The Mistress of Spices* Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni brings together the emerging modernity with the minority traditions in order to reshape life's conditions into a free, rippling, equitable dispensation. She fights for feminine solidarity by moving her protagonist, Tilo away from established traditional outfit that contrasts with modernity. Tilo is presented with many disguises and multiple

identities. Like the women in Bharati Mukherjee's novels, she too undergoes changes, leaving the message clearly that the problem of identity is a complex one. Her various incarnations like Noyantara, Bhagyavathi, Tilottama and lastly Maya are but indicators of the transformation she subjects herself to in order to become an emancipated woman. She is the new breed of Americans from the non-European countries who want to change the face of America in one way or the other. She gets into complications while changing her identity from time to time. This constant adjustment on her part characterizes her personality in a nation that evolves itself continually.

Tilo's birth in a village in India is viewed as one unwanted in her poor family. Nostalgia is very much there when she recalls the olden days thus: "They named me Nayan Tara, star of the eye, but my parent's faces were heavy with fallen hope at another girl child...wrap her in old cloth, lay her face down on the floor" (MOS, 8). This suggests the limited scope for women to come up in real life. This again provokes a comment from Indira Parikh and Garg thus: "a woman is always in somebody else's space. There is no space which she can call her own" (101). With each passing moment Tilo has been moving into different personalities. She is labeled as "the architect of immigrant dream" (29) and "life-giver, restorer of health and hope" (44). She disguises herself as an old crone and lives in Oakland, California. She sets up a local spice shop and, as part of the secret coven of spice mistresses, she uses the spices to cure the illness and problems suffered by the Indian immigrant community in Oakland. The inference from the idea of spice shop is to impress on the fact that the East gives more to the West in almost all phases of life. The East also provides spiritual solace to the West. Divakaruni's stress on this fact is also the basic aim of the novel.

The only way for the South Asian women to get out of their predicament is to get a passport to America for a healthy and trouble-free living there. The Indian women immigrants' journey to the US does occur due to reasons like higher education, better living conditions and more than everything else to be independent in all respects. After her birth, Nayantara turns into a skilful, fortunate young woman capable of earning more money. As her parents look at her only as a money-making machine, she begins to hate their attitude and wishes to free herself from their clutches. Soon the pirates carry her away and give her a new name, Bhagyavati. They seek to accumulate riches with her help. As luck would have it, she becomes the pirate queen by overthrowing the pirate chief. She keeps wandering with no home of her own. She comes to hear about an island on which she and other women like her can hope to thrive on their supernatural talents for their own survival. Bhagyavati recreates her destiny and puts away the negative thinking about the Indian women as those who are passive. On the island she meets the First Mother who stands for the traditionalist notion of the South Asian women. The women who arrive on the island are given their distinct identities with the condition that their past is pushed back in memory lane and the new identities are to be borne in mind. Thus Bhagyavati becomes Tilottama and she now faces life as an outsider in California.

The island is the first diasporic space that she begins to experience and it is fully represented by women. The First Mother gives her facilities like education and promotion to next stage of life. Tilo, short for Tilottama, lives in an 'in-between' fashion, since she could not think of her past life nor her future one. America for her is still an unknown land. She can only see through the eyes of others around her. This confused identity leads her to many conflicting visions of her identity. But she is

conscious that she has many complex identities within her. This is brought to her attention by others who approach her for overcoming their sufferings. Though her multiple identity is beset with contradictions, it is a possible solution to her dilemma of cross-cultural make-up. The Old One, who issues warning to the mistresses including Tilo about shifting their loyalty and getting worldly experience of meeting any male in their daily activities, is particular they do not cross the boundary of safety for them. But Tilo falls in love with a young native American by name, Raven. Like other suffering individuals he too visits her store and starts bewitching her with his presence. By the way she gets a new name Maya to notify the transformation that has become a reality. Such changeovers might be resisted by the conservative folks to keep themselves going. But the modern trend is to bring in revolutions to change the mindset of the die-hards. This in a way is a reference to the hardships involved in forging inter-ethnic and inter-racial relationships. This is resistance indeed from Tilo, despite the warning given to her by the Old One.

The conversation between Raven and Tilo, once they get attracted to each other, becomes an allegory by itself. Raven is now a representative of America and for his country he offers apology for inflicting hardships on the immigrants on their arrival in America. The exclusion theory gets cancelled with Raven coming round to discovering the powerful voice of the immigrant female. In the final reaction he yields to the cry of oppression and promises to take steps to set right the wrongs done so far. In this manner it can be seen that Divakaruni presents the different cultures in the portrayal of the diasporic woman, Tilo – home, culture of origin and the host land. Though at bottom they display the conservative trends, they begin to change themselves by coming forward to resist the old world tendencies and accepting the

new ideology. It is heartening to note that they refuse to bow down to male pressures. It is noteworthy that they learn to adapt themselves to their new and changing culture, whether in California, Chicago or Calcutta. This change in turn paves way for a clearer vision by which a 'brave new world' could be brought into existence. The immigrant women like Tilo stress the necessity of inventing and reinventing their selves by moving beyond their origin and transcending their limitations.

One more novel by Divakaruni *The Vine of Desire* is also cast in the same mould to give preeminence to displaced immigrant women. The novel opens with Sudha landing in America to join her sister, Anju and spend her days there to forget all that has happened to her back home. She has lost faith in her husband and in-laws when they insisted that she abort the female baby in her womb. Her parents also do not seem to understand her plight and in this helpless situation she comes to America to lead a new, carefree life. Like in other novels examined so far, in this novel also life in America is portrayed as having its own distinct features. Initially Sunil, Anju's husband develops a liking for Sudha's child, Dayita. He makes friendship with her and plays with her as often as possible. Sudha spends her time in looking after the house and her baby. Sunil takes them to different places including the beach. Once he takes them to a party hosted by a rich man. There Sudha gets introduced to Lalit, a doctor by profession. Both the sisters undergo nostalgic moments which make the novel go back and come forth in alternate fashion. They remember their fathers who are responsible for their family members turning to living in bad days. They also recall their childhood days spent at home and in school. As they are born on the same day, everything concerning them happens simultaneously. So wedding takes place first between Anju and Sunil and then between Sudha and Ramesh. While Anju leaves

for America with her husband, Sudha lives in her husband's house. Only in the case of Sudha there is disharmony and rejection in its wake, all for aborting the female baby growing in Sudha's womb.

In America Anju is shown as a woman of independent strength. Divakaruni sketches the changes in her thought process by making her write letters and assignments to her faculty members. By means of writing letters and other fragments she reacts to the dislocations of her immigrant life. She comes to know about the love affair between Sunil and Sudha and this causes friction in their relationship. To overcome this separation, Anju turns to scholarly pursuits and creative outlets for self-determination. Sudha has been having happier moments since her arrival in America. Even as they go outing, Sunil casts a romantic glance at Sudha. He has already been having a soft corner for her. Even before marrying Anju, it is she with whom he got fascinated. But the circumstances forced him to marry Anju. This nostalgia irks him quite often and he makes his plan clear to Sudha with whom he has been having romantic moments in the absence of Anju. Sudha too in the beginning shows her affection to him and yields to his sexual desires. But she resists this tendency on her part thinking that it will bring harm to Anju and her life will be in jeopardy. She says clearly to Sunil that she cannot have him as her husband at the cost of her own sister. Anju who comes to know about this likes to withdraw herself from Sudha and Sunil and so she swings into action by applying for divorce.

Sudha finds out a job for herself in order to stay away from both Anju and Sunil. Though Sunil promises to go with her after forsaking Anju, Sudha is not prepared for it. She assumes the job of a caretaker to an old man who is bedridden due to illness. Lalit, her friend and guide, meets her and gives her useful information from

time to time about the developments. When he talks to Anju about Sudha and her changed mind, Anju resents any talk of them. At the same time Sudha achieves success in relieving the old man from his sickness and go with him to India to secure a firm future for herself and her daughter. Her life in Trideep's family gives her a lot of chance to understand the disparities between the eastern and western cultures. She has mustered the courage essential to lead an independent life free from any bondage. Ashok turns up to give her company to her and her child by way of another marriage with her. Sudha tells him strongly that it is not his job to take care of her. In the course of the novel she is pursued by not less than three men – Sunil, Lalit and Ashok. She has left Sunil because “Sunil frightens me. There was such a need inside him, need like a black bottomless pit. Even I poured my entire self into it. I couldn't fill it” (VD, 337). The changes in Sudha's attitude are clear to Ashok. She has completely detached herself from the past. Her flight from three men seeking financial independence and self-reliance is her way of adaptation, which the novelist has sketched admirably well.

When Sudha apologizes to Anju for whatever has happened, Anju says that it has all ended and there's no possibility for reopening it. It is like a dream and she doesn't care if it is a good or bad one because neither kind will help her to lead life in the present. Sunil writes to Anju from San Francisco seeking forgiveness for his role. Anju has largeness of heart that she forgives Sunil and Sudha who have now realized their folly. Divakaruni's words “No journey is commonplace. Each person's journey is unique and changes that person in a special way. I hope I am able to show that through my different characters” (36). Finally Anju and Sudha learn to make peace with the events life seems to thrust on them. Adaptation is complete in them when

they realize that they have to wrest from men what they do not want to give – control, power and privilege. They have taken steps to remove many of the misconceptions imposed on them in the family and society. They are no more passive as they have become activists in their own capacity. Both Anju and Sudha get separated from their marriages for reasons beyond their control. The physical displacements do not bring any change in the relationship that the sisters share from their childhood onwards. Divakaruni uses female bonding quite effectively, thereby not giving place to any loopholes that might affect the smooth running of the text. By depicting these characters, she demonstrates how vital these relationships are to the immigrant women in America. To conclude with the apt remarks by Sonia Chopra, “the tormenting emotions that result when the characters choose to throw the baggage of their culture and create a new identity... the choices they make and the interaction they have with the immigrant community in America and through contact with their family... forces them to question their existence and mortality and find answers” (105).

Anita Rau Badami, one of the newest writers in the field of diasporic literature, has been able to create awareness among the women of her generation to the effect that these women can live a life of their own by displaying strength and determination to tackle any kind of problem they might face in their real life. Her first novel, *Tamarind Mem* conveys many things similar to those witnessed in her own life. Like what is seen in this novel, her life also revolved around the railway colonies of India. The father in the book is working as a Railway Civil Engineer and moves from place to place frequently. The same is the case with the author’s father who worked as a mechanical engineer. Like Badami growing up with stories narrated to her by her

family, *Tamarind Mem* also is constructed around numerous stories. As she says, this book has been made possible through her memories of the past which finally formed a story.

The novel is a fine record of playful and poetic prose bringing to the fore the relationship between a mother and her daughter. The mother, Saroja and her daughter, Kamini have exactly differing points of view about their past. For the purpose of unfolding the events during their lifetime, Badami divides the book into two parts, one focusing on the daughter and the other on her mother. The theme centers round the impact of changes in the social system for women in India. Saroja is forced to marry instead of being allowed to pursue her medical degree course. This is because women are not given importance more than what men could achieve in the society of the day. While explaining the past happenings, memory falters and the elusive nature of mind is cited as the reason for it. In attempting to recall the past, the author lays bare the misunderstandings between the two generations. This is so because of the increasing trend towards modernization. Memories collide as the culture pattern changes and it results in confusion everywhere including the educational institutions. In the wake of such a division, the conflict arises between the representatives of the two generations.

Saroja has a nickname, 'Tamarind Mem' as she is inimically disposed to each and every thing. Her attitude is more or less similar to the sourness of the fruit of the tamarind tree. It is home to many spirits which do not allow anything under it to survive. Saroja's husband, the Civil Engineer, named Vishwa is shown as an old and exhausted man, "a man who has no feelings to spare his wife. A dried out lemon peel whose energies have already been squeezed out caring for a sick mother, worrying

about his sisters, inheriting his dead father's unfinished duties" (TM, 216). In the first part of the novel Kamini, a graduate student in Calgary, reflects on her childhood with her parents. She tries to grasp her mother's unhappiness like the sour taste of the tamarind. As a child, Kamini could remember her mother's anger in all things at home. But her father is quite contrary to her disposition and showers affection and love on her and her sister who gets born after a few years. As Dadda keeps traveling from place to place in connection with his railway work, he could not spare time for her mother on any day of the week. They keep arguing on matters of mutual interest all because Dadda is busy on all days. Kamini realizes this fact and says thus: "... perhaps Dadda was to blame for the person Ma had become. He shut her into rooms from which there was not even a chink of an escape. He himself had left again and again, and every time he came back, he needed to be readmitted into lives altered daily during his absence" (147). Kamini thinks about the social constrictions that her mother has faced. She is conscious that her mother uses her as a tool so that as she grows older, she may realize her dreams without any break whatsoever, as it happened in her mother's case.

In the second part of the novel it is the nostalgia of Saroja and her remembrances of her earlier years with her family members. She has had the roles of wife and mother all these years when she lived with her husband, the railway engineer. In this part of the novel she travels as a widow on a train through India. In her past she could not realize her dream of becoming a doctor because of family compulsion. Female education was considered secondary and only family life was paramount for women of those days. Her family's frequent shifting from place to place made it impossible for her to make friends with anyone. Saroja's husband lives

by the conventional norms and accordingly he could not allow her into his private world. There is lack of communication between husband and wife and on this ground, there has been frequent arguments between them. Saroja's life could be termed as an "immense silence" (204). Badami is successful in portraying the abject, miserable conditions of women in the India of the past. No doubt Saroja too finds it difficult to bear such indifference and lukewarm attitude on her husband's part. The past cultural restrictions affected the women in their personal lives and aspirations. Badami sketches Saroja as a frustrated woman trapped in the cultural expectations of the time. Only after her husband's death and her daughters' maturity, she could come out of this shell and do things as per her wish and desire.

Having recently moved to Calgary, where the snow falls in a hush, Kamini reflects on her life in India. Her mother's presence in her house in India comes to her vividly from time to time. She recalls how she has grown out of a childhood filled with servants who happen to know the ways of the world and of the household affairs. It is a big house provided by the government, there is an absent father who is married to the Indian Railways rather than to her mother, there is a mother who is married only to be at home all the time and there is a sister (Roopa) who is conveniently ignorant to all the norms that existed. The grueling experience that her mother has suffered is described by Kamini thus: "He (father) shut her into rooms from which there was not even a chink of an escape. He himself had left again and again and every time he came back, he needed to be readmitted into lives altered daily during his absence". Kamini also recalls how her father would tell them stories after stories making the young ones feel differently. These imaginary narrations convert her into a young girl who can face the world and understand the various kinds of relationships

among mankind. In her mind there arises this resistance mentality which forces her to search for the answer to the questions, “Why did her father have no affection or words for her mother? Why did her mother eventually become so content sitting day-long in a solitary room all those years, finding everything around her, the servants, social dinners, her children, the neighbor everyone so annoying?”.

Kamini’s quest lies in trying to understand her mother, both before and after her father’s death. After thinking about events after events from the past and raising more questions relevant to their existence, she ends it in a mood that settles the question for her mother. Her mother is no more the same woman, leading life in the prison walls of her house, but an independent woman who can roam freely anywhere in India, that too in the railway carriage, a travel familiar to her and her husband. She is now appropriately called “Tamarind Mem,’ as she feels bitter and sour in all her dealings. Having finally rediscovered her much-longed for individuality, Saroja sets out on a journey from city to city in India, feeling free for the first time after her marriage. The adaptation trend here too has been reached, as it gets reflected in her own words thus: “But now I have rested enough, my feet are beginning to grow wheels...it is time for me to pack up and go. Once I travelled because my husband did. Now is time for me to wander because I wish to....” (265).

Badami’s second novel *The Hero’s Walk* illustrates well her alien feeling which is clad in a fine garb of refinement. A Canadian – raised orphan returns to her grandparents living in a remote village in Toturpuram and faces the clash between the East and the West on the one hand, tradition and modernity on the other. Unlike the first novel which is steeped in melancholy, the second one is suffused with small hope. The seven-year old Nandana loses her parents in a car accident and must go to

live with her grandparents, who disowned her mother, when she got married to a white man, Alan. Badami achieves success in portraying the pathos resulting from the sudden exit from the scene of Maya and her husband. This in turn has its tragic effect on Nandana who feels isolated with her mother's demise, at a tender age, when she needed her mother badly. She has lost her warmth which is indeed a blow inflicted on her by the cruel fate. In her grandparent's home everything seems to go haywire, as she never has seen them before. Her mother, Maya is a bright, accomplished woman who too is detached from her parents at her marriageable age. Nandana's distraught grandparents, her lazy but kind uncle, her bitter great-grand mother, lovelorn spinster aunt are at great pains to understand this miniature Maya and her western outlook.

Indeed it has become tough and difficult for Nandana to strike a balance between the eastern and the western ways of life. This kind of dilemma throws her into more varied experiences and opportunity in her short life than many of the others could imagine. As a little girl, she faces much hardship to put up with her conservative grandparents, which is a contrast to her previous life style. This novel which bagged 2000 Commonwealth Prize for fiction throws light on her longing for her lush green and evocative Indian Life in comparison to her ivory- towered lifestyle in Canada. The little girl finds a sort of absurdity in the traditions of India, though she tries to lend a comic touch to the pervasive social conflicts, a few sketches like the family's visit to the astrologer, etc. The novel is but an indicator to Anita's realistic approach to the Indian nativity which has made a strong impact on her. The whole family lives in an ancestral Mansion which made them as bondages to last for a lifetime. It also reveals the love for false prestige that the Indians nourish in their longstanding heritage.

Sripathi, the father of Maya is depicted as one having irritability as his prime characteristic. He is a failed medical student and could not live up to his community's expectations. After the demise of his father, he supports his family comprising his mother, sister, wife and children in Toturpuram. His wife, Nirmala resists his fits of frustration and is still proves to be an obedient, traditional Indian wife. His son, Arun is a radical graduate student, often presses himself into social service in the name of a political organization. Sripathi's sister, Putti is in her forties and remains unmarried. They all live in the Big House which had seen the days of its glory in the past. Now the house is losing all its luster and past glory and in many of its parts the painting has come off due to wear and tear. The furniture in the house also has lost its original shape. Maya's trip to Vancouver in Canada for higher studies in medicine has culminated in her love marriage with Alan, a Canadian by birth. Her rejection of the already engaged groom, Prakash has led to snapping of ties on the part of the father. This resistance to the traditional living by Maya is seriously viewed by Sripathi. But the daughter keeps corresponding with the family and has even written a will wherein she has mentioned the names of her parents as caretakers for her daughter in the event of any sudden happening to her.

After the car crash in which Maya and Alan get killed, Sripathi goes to Canada to bring his granddaughter, Nandana to India. Initially Nandana refuses to speak, but in due course she reluctantly accepts to go with Sripathi. She cannot believe that her parents are gone and resists the efforts of her ancestral family to take her into the household. Badami fills the novel's pages with flashbacks to episodes of the characters' earlier lives. This is striking indeed, for nostalgic remembrances do bring relief in the present tragic circumstances, especially in the event of the tragedy that has occurred to Maya and her husband. From here onwards it is resistance and this

resistance the novelist has planned in such meticulous fashion that she introduces the slow changes that are necessary in the case of both the grandfather (Sripathi) and the granddaughter (Nandana). These two have been refusing to see the reality till now. The death of Maya has brought the sea-change in Sripathi who was adamant in not having anything with his daughter for her stiff attitude in turning down his original marriage proposal. The same tragic incident has made Nandana to refuse to accept the change in her surroundings. She resists any attempt on her grandparents to enter her realm and have control over her. Only Arun has been some source of comfort and solace to her. She finds it difficult to adjust herself to the new situation.

Putti, Sripathi's sister continues to struggle to find a husband. Her mother, Ammayya has been a stumbling block in preventing her from marrying the groom of her choice. She has been stealing things from Nirmala and Nandana and keeping them safely under her custody. She is a staunch traditionalist and a woman who has tolerated her husband's extravagant ways of life. Now she is afraid that Sripathi and his family will usurp all her belongings and leave her in the lurch. Nirmala fights with her for being too selfish and conservative. Sripathi has to fight against his transfer to the Madras office as planned by his employer. He has the problem of settling the dues left by his father. His son, Arun is a useless chap, with no job of his own, spending time as a careless fellow, doing service to the people. His mother has been troubling him with tortures of her kind not allowing anyone freedom and the modern ways of living. She still talks ill about her neighbor the milkman, Munnuswamy and his son, Gopala. She has been harboring ill-will against them for advancing towards her family in the name of assistance and all that. She cannot digest the love affair of Putti with Gopala and consequently their marriage because of caste factor.

With water entering the house from all sides, the Big House is under deluge. Even as the members of the household try to seek escape from the rushing water, Munnuswamy and Gopala help them out by taking them inside their house. Except Ammayya who now falls seriously ill, others are happy to have alliance with the milkman's family. Poor old woman, who has been shouting all the while, breathes her last in utter dejection. Her jewelry all proves to be fake and she has passed away before she could know about it. The adaptation is complete with everyone including Sripathi, Putti and Nandana adapting themselves to the new trend of living to their satisfaction, leaving aside all restrictions and commitments. The novelist has brought in the sort of solidarity required for a smooth coming together of all sections of people, be they aliens or the natives.

Thus in all the six novels selected to vindicate the position of women in the diaspora, the predicament of the fate of the women in cross-cultural spaces plays a major role in determining the future trends and expectations. The protagonists in them strive to survive in the conflicting pulls of 'home' and 'homelessness'. They pass through the stages of nostalgia, migration and assimilation in their long journey from home to their destination in the alien land. There is the constant confrontation in the process of assimilation. This clash with the alien cultural forces in the background of the persisting shadows of native cultural heritage results in fissures in the individual self, generating greater isolation and detachment from the normal life pattern. All the three writers, Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Anita Rau Badami have written with the consciousness of the dilemma of cultural crisis. They have depicted unfailingly the anguish and suffering of womankind at the behest of patriarchy. The prominent women in these novels belong to the diaspora group and in

their attempt to preserve their femininity, they move ahead to successive stages in life to protect their womanhood and individuality in the cultural surroundings. The complexity of female identities in the writers of Indian diaspora has brought about differing trends such as isolation, insecurity, sexual exploitation, the unrelenting male chauvinism, etc. All these women are in a state of confusion and helplessness. But they have the will power in them which comes to their rescue to support them in their helpless condition. Though their thoughts go back and forth, they decide to stand against them all in order to stand firmly on their own. While a few women like Sudha in *The Vine of Desire* and Nandini in *The Hero's Walk* return to the native culture, the others like Dimple, Jasmine, Tilo, Anju, Kamini and Roopa have adapted themselves to the alien culture and its different currents. It is hoped that the present study would be an eye-opener to such of those struggling diasporic women in that it should send the right signals to lead them to better ways of living. It is certainly with this noble thought in mind, Bharati Mukherjee has presented the following confessional note:

“We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate. Many of us have lived in newly independent or emerging countries which are placed by civil and religious conflicts...when we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb 200 years of American history and learn to adapt to American society...I attempt to illustrate this in my novels and short stories. My aim is to expose Americans to the energetic voices of new settlers in this country” (1).

What Bharati Mukherjee has indicated as the existing conditions of living for the diasporic women which need to be improved in the coming years is equally true of

the suffering women in the novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Anita Rau Badami. These novels have contributed richly to the cause of the women in diaspora who go over to the alien lands in search of peace, goodwill, understanding, togetherness and social harmony. By leading a life of inter-union with the aliens living there, they can not only improve the ties between the two countries, but can also be a bridge to close the gaps that might exist anywhere for any reason. The writer of this dissertation hopes that the novels of writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Anita Rau Badami will usher in better living conditions between men and women for a stable future and for bringing about lasting peace and mutual understanding at all levels.

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Journey from Exile to Immigration in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

V. Radhakrishnan^a, Dr.K.Sivakumar^b

^a Research Scholar in English, A.V.V.M Sri Pushpam College (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli), Poondi – 613 503, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.

^b Associate Professor of English & Research Advisor, A.V.V.M Sri Pushpam College (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli), Poondi – 613 503, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore how Bharati Mukherjee's literary creations coincide with the journey from exile to immigration, concentrating mainly on her novel - *Jasmine*. An attempt is being made to determine the extent to which Mukherjee's self-identification as an immigrant resolves her identity crisis. She has titled her third novel after the protagonist, indicating a change in perspective. Jasmine emerges as a whole individual capable of sustaining herself in a foreign nation through her own efforts. Nonetheless, Jasmine's obstinacy with her indigenous culture and upbringing serves as a great magnet for all men who understand and adore her Indianness and adaptability. Jasmine exemplifies the fusion the author asserts is occurring now: immigration was a two-way street, and both whites and immigrants grew into a third entity as a result of this interaction and experience.

Keywords: *Exile, Identity, Immigration, Culture, Expatriate, Roots.*

1. Journey from Exile to Immigration in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

Bharati Mukherjee has established an outstanding reputation in literary circles as an Indian diaspora writer. Though she was born and raised in India, she likes to identify as an American writer. She is unambiguous about her current allegiances. However, this awareness is not simple to come to. Though she left India for the American continent, familial ties keep her connected to her mother country. As certain as she is of her allegiances, she is also certain of her deep and intense devotion to Calcutta; that city will always be a habit for her. She refers to her identity as a 'fluid identity,' in which she possesses characteristics of both her native Indian and adopted American cultures. This destination is attained only when an exile, an expatriate, has through prolonged and excruciating trials.

Mukherjee's primary goal as an immigrant writer is to carve out one's own territory. She views expatriation as a confining and self-defeating attitude in a writer, because an expatriate nursed his/her grievances and paraded his/her exile anguish, finally damaging his/her sensibility and writing, which became self-imitative and predictable. An assessment of his novels illustrates her transition from expatriation to immigration. Her transition from expatriation to immigration also alters her selection of writers to whom she looks for inspiration.

Jasmine portrays immigration positively. There is neither nostalgia nor a sense of loss of a great history in the work. There is no room for sentimentality in the projection of a frail identity that must be

protected from annihilation; nonetheless, the will to make new alliances and develop new identities appears to exist in the friendly and fertile soil of the adopted nation. The United States is Jasmine's fantasy planet. The unusual mission for which she claims to have come to America is quickly forgotten; she drops her Indian name and attire and adjusts effortlessly to any situation. She is referred to as Jyoti, Jasmine, Kali, Jase, and Jane according to the circumstances. The potential of fluidity, which Mukherjee attributes to American culture is epitomized in Jasmine's.

metamorphosis from Jyoti a Punjabi village girl, to Jasmine a loving and devoted Hindu wife to Kali, an incarnation of destroying goddess, to Jazzy, a remade non-immigrant, to Jase, a nanry in the home of a New York College Professor and to Jane, live-in partner of a bank official in Iowa. Each of these character- transformations is marked by changes in behaviour and personality such as her successive 'rebirths' seems analogy to Hindu transmigration of the soul. (Sushma Tondon, Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction: A Perspective, 37)

A closer examination reveals that some of the fundamental characteristics of Jasmine's nature do survive her transformations; the survivor in the Jyoti is apparent in the Jane who ultimately decides to leave Bud. Jasmine is such a courageous immigrant that she is never plagued by recollections of her past in India or the clash between traditional Indian values and the American culture in which she finds herself.

Jasmine's life in America is very remarkable. She alters characters' identities, clothing, and even lovers. A little unschooled girl from Hasnapur, Punjab transforms into the adventurous Jase in jeans, a T-shirt, and a sneaker in an instant. Except for fleeting memories of Prakash, her deceased husband, she is adamant about erasing her past. She flees with one man while pregnant with the child of another man. All of this, however, is consistent with the attitude of an immigrant. No wonder she says, "I had been reborn" (163) - a total change from the girl of Punjab. Mukherjee often refers to this concept of rebirth inside a single life in this work. Even after the initial horrific assault, Jasmine immerses herself in the new society with the zeal of a warrior. The work is an attempt by the novelist to blend the essence of two civilizations, Indian and American, in the protagonist. It is the narrative of a Punjabi lady who takes control of her life and transforms herself into an American, very much like her creator. Mukherjee acknowledges that it is through the process of authoring this book that she changed herself from an expatriate to a full immigrant. By publishing this book, she opened up a space for Third World immigrants' absorption into American culture.

The essential point that Mukherjee wishes to convey through Jasmine is the necessity of an immigrant adapting to a new society in order to thrive. Jasmine is a fighter who battles her fate and emerges as a survivor. Even when she is foretold of her fateful destiny she dares to say "Watch me to reposition the stars" (240). Her narrative exemplifies the formation of an American mind. She is a flawed individual who makes numerous errors, but she possesses the fortitude to choose and take risks. Like her author, Jasmine appears to be saying "I left India by choice to settle in the United States. 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" (Alison B. Carb's "An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee," 650).

The exuberance of immigration that comes with the acquisition of Americanness and immigrant Indianness as celebratable fluid identities does not come easily, for it is not easy to completely divorce oneself from one's own past, nor is it easy to overcome the aloofness of expatriation or to cut oneself off from the roots and tradition of one's own culture. Without a sure, the freed Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase, and Jane, who create a lifetime for each name, appear to be a possibility for every energetic immigrant; this flurry of change and action is the source of the tension and misunderstanding inherent in the entire cross-cultural enterprise. Jasmine's complete erasure of her Indian heritage once she becomes embroiled in the US is intriguing. As she assimilates into the dominant culture, she relinquishes her Indian identity.

Through a series of events, Mukherjee attempts to untangle her heroine's hard road toward complete assimilation into American culture. After her husband's death, the protagonist, a precocious and pertly Hindu girl named Jyoti, makes her way to Florida. Her trip begins in a poverty-stricken farming community in Punjab and continues through the swamps of south Florida, an Indian enclave in Queens, Columbia University in upper Manhattan, an Iowa farming town, and finally to California. The narrative weaves together the events of Jasmine's life through flashbacks and crosscuts, from her early years in Hasnapur to her astonishing exploits in the United States. She gets dizzy herself as a result of the rapidity of her metamorphosis. Her story embodies the restless pursuit of a rootless yet strong individual who is willing to confront any unforeseen circumstance in her life.

Jasmine arrives at the United States on 'The Gulf Shuttle,' a shrimper. Her first meeting with America is a type of violent rejuvenation. She is a young and gorgeous girl who arrives on foreign shores alone and unescorted. The determination to stand up to destiny's blind powers compels her to leave India, but her American adventure begins on an unsettling note - her terrible rape at the hands of the deformed captain Half-Face, aboard whose ship she is smuggled into America.

When Jasmine arrives in America, she is compelled to accompany Half-Face to a desolate Florida motel, where he demands his payment and makes lewd suggestions to her. Jasmine succumbs to America's violence here, when she is brutally raped by Half-Face. This injustice is beyond the comprehension of an Indian widow. She decides to commit herself, but before she can, she realises she wants to live because her purpose is not yet complete.

She becomes Kali personified, the deity of vengeful rage, with her extended bleeding tongue. Death becomes flesh and resolves to assassinate the devil who has broken her chastity. She kills Half-face and enacts a form of death for her as well: the death of her old self through the symbolic burning of her dishonoured clothing, and a new self emerges from the ashes, a la Phoenix. This conclusion is profound for a seventeen-year-old girl who finds herself in a foreign nation without a familiar person or relative, with little money, and only the spirit of an unmatched survivor. She undergoes rebirth as she sheds her previous identity.

Lord Yama who had wanted me, who had courted me, and whom I'd flirted with on the long trip over, had now deserted me - My body was merely the shell, soon to be discarded. Then I could be reborn, debts and sins all paid for ... With the first streaks of dawn, my first full American day. I walked out the front drive of the motel to the highway and began my journey, traveling light. (120-21)

Jasmine's assassination of Half-Face is an act of self-affirmation. Her choice to murder herself first is that of a woman who lives for her late husband; whereas, the woman who kills Half-face is motivated by her will to live, by her want to continue living.

Mukherjee depicts her protagonist's gradual metamorphosis with exquisite care, yet there is occasionally tension between Jasmine's two personalities, one of which adheres to traditional Indian ideals of life and the other of which is an adventurer in a capitalistic world. As she so succinctly puts it "For every Jasmine the reliable caregiver, there is a Jase the profligate adventure. I thrilled to the tug of opposing forces" (176).

Additionally, the work reflects Mukherjee's newly developed sensibility as an American. It is both a celebration of her assimilation and a gesture of thanks to America. The tale is replete with good-natured Americans who, rather than harassing immigrants from Third World nations, assist them in adjusting to life in America. T. Padma, too, thinks similarly,

Bharati Mukherjee's use of friendly souls readily giving advice and assistance has to be understood as a tribute she wants to pay to American generosity rather than as a flawed narrative device. As she says: 'My

characters are survivors. They have been helped as I have, by good strong people of conviction.' ('From Acculturation to Self-Actualization: Diasporic Dream in *Jasmine*,"166)

Despite her foreign origins, the Americans regard Jasmine with admiration. While in New York, Taylor's acquaintances frequently asked her for assistance with Sanskrit or Arabic, Devanagari or Gurumukhi writing. They wanted her to translate documents and decipher paintings. Jasmine's every action is calculated toward Americanization, and each advancement marks a significant shift in her personality. In *The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee: A Cultural Perspective*, Nagendra Kumar affirms,

Jasmine's flight to Iowa and her renaming as Jane is indicative of a slow but steady immersion into the mainstream American culture. Here we encounter a changed Jasmine - one who had murdered Half-face for violating her chastity, now not only willingly embraces the company of an American without marriage but also is carrying his child in her womb. We are simply surprised at her act since every idea revolt at this form of an Indian widow. But one should never forget that she is a rebel who revolts at every step against the path drawn for her. She is an adapter, a survivor. (115-16)

The life of an immigrant is, in fact, a succession of reincarnations. He passes through multiple incarnations in a single lifetime. This truth explains both Mukherjee's and Jasmine's circumstances. Mukherjee appears to argue through Jasmine's adventure that if one is to assimilate into the mainstream culture of an adopted region, one should relinquish control over one's own culture.

Earlier in the narrative, *Jasmine* stated that she rarely wrote or received mail because she desired to be free of her past, which implies bearing the burden of history. This is the yearning of immigrants to be born twice. Jasmine's endeavour to change destiny and use it as a springboard for the development of her potential is accomplished through the forces of her indomitable will, which emerges in difficult circumstances and aids her in reconstructing her objective with a single-minded passion that propels her subsequent success. Jasmine believes, "there are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake one self. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the images of dreams" (240). Self-assertion is necessary to unlock the tremendous hidden potential, and the goal of all quests should be the proper channelling of energy, not passive acceptance of all circumstances. Jasmine resolves to break free from stereotype roles. She must choose between the promise of America and old-world piety, and it will take a tremendous deal of willpower on her part to resolve the conundrum and make the correct choice.

Mukherjee says in an interview that her characters are a type of pioneers with the courage to abandon a predictable existence in favour of a new one. In *Jasmine*, she honours both the unflinching spirit and passion of a peasant girl who evolves from a tumultuous history into a demanding personality with an adventurer's attitude. This spirit of adventure is seen in Jasmine's frank defiance of the astrologer who foretold her future. This is the story of Jasmine, who cuts her tongue, empties her past, sheds her cultural baggage, changes her clothes, alters her walk, and changes her name and, rather than becoming a nonentity, a husk devoid of self, acquires the sought and desirable identity as Jase or Jane. Rather than self-immolating as a suttee goddess, she puts the suitcase into a garbage can and ignites it. As a result, when a self-immolating woman from the third world comes to America. She is not obligated to maintain her identity, which is a sign of and synonym for oppression.

As with Jasmine, Mukherjee underwent rebirths as she shifted rapidly between citizenships and cultures. Migrating through diverse cultures is a trip she understands better than most people. *Jasmine* is such a journey expertly managed. In "No Place like Home," Douglas Foster avers,

The world is in motion, as never before, with massive migrations altering the trajectory of millions of lives. In *Jasmine*, Bharati Mukherjee has put

a human face on the admixture of fate, change and will, that mark this modern journey. (43)

The message that comes through loud and clear to an immigrant writer like herself is to marry their particular talent to reality - the reality of being an immigrant. As an immigrant writer, Mukherjee must maintain an awareness of her immediate surroundings. She looks forward, not back, with the aid of a continually expanding imagination, much like her fictional characters, since she believes that reinvention of self, not nostalgia, is her power. In "Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalists," she defiantly announces to her American readers, "I am one of you" (24), and in this assertion she has declared herself as an American in immigrant tradition.

2. Conclusion

In *Jasmine*, Mukherjee encompasses numerous facets of the immigrant experience in America, illuminating the manner in which newcomers from the Third World are absorbed by and affect the nation. Her characters have always represented her own circumstances and personal worries, and one can track her gradual development of self-confidence and her gradual development of an American identity through fiction.

Mukherjee, like her protagonist, was aware that her destiny was bound to America. She has insisted on being understood as an immigrant writer, rather than as an Indian or expatriate writer, whose creative mission is to claim America, the country being constructed by newcomers from the Third world. Her insistence on her status as an immigrant reflects her resistance to be side-lined as a writer of alien material, a determination that her topics are vital to contemporary American society, not peripheral. One may enjoy the entirety of her writing more fully if we consider it as charting the shifts from an expatriate to an immigrant mindset. *Jasmine* is the culmination of a literary arc that reflects a postcolonial expatriate sensibility. Additionally, the consciousness depicts her agonising experience of negotiating identities across multiple estrangement limits. When Mukherjee writes *Jasmine*, she is in the mood to rejoice. *Jasmine* is an exuberant tale that offers a spiced-up version of the standard assimilation formula.

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Impact of Cultural Clashes and Migratory Experiences in Bharati

Mukherjee's Wife

V. Radhakrishnan ^a, Dr. K. Sivakumar ^b

^a Research Scholar in English, A.V.V.M Sri Pushpam College (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli), Poondi – 613 503, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.

^b Associate Professor of English & Research Advisor, A.V.V.M Sri Pushpam College (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli), Poondi – 613 503, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.

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Abstract

The major concern of this paper is with the dislocation of an individual and the resulting crisis of identity in his/her personality. It concentrates on Bharati Mukherjee's second novel, *Wife* (1975). The tale describes an Indian wife who wishes to travel abroad and encounters an alien environment. It delves into a highly nuanced aspect of the immigrant experience. Mukherjee takes a more serious look at the challenge that an Indian woman Dimple's age and type suffers when she migrates to a culturally diverse country like America in this novel. Dimple's story begins in Calcutta and continues in the United States of America. Additionally, the loss, creation, or restoration of an effective identifying relationship between the self and the area they occupy is an issue. The paper seeks to demonstrate how dislocation caused by migration degraded a real and active sense of self and how this feeling was destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious suppression of indigenous personality and culture by an allegedly higher racial or cultural model.

Keywords: Self, Individual, Immigrant, Dislocation, Culture, Identity.

1. Impact of Cultural Clashes and Migratory Experiences in Bharati Mukherjee's Wife

Bharati Mukherjee, an American author of Indian ancestry, has established herself as a notable creative force in the field of English literature. She forges her own path through the heights of her artistry. Apart from being a feminist and outspoken on women's issues, she is an assertive writer on immigrant issues, never losing sight of her Indian roots and moral culture. Her works chronicle her changing vision of self. She has made a concerted effort in her books to construct the picture of immigrants asserting their claim to an American identity while valiantly attempting to establish themselves in a new cultural context.

Mukherjee's *Wife* delves deeper into the issue of immigrant experience. This novel picks up where the previous one left off. It revolves around the lives of a middle-class married Bengali woman who relocates to New York from Calcutta. She is married to an immigrant engineer, Amit Basu, who is not an American. This work can be seen as the story of an Indian wife who finds herself out of place in a distant nation surrounded by an alien culture. In his article on identity crisis of Indian immigrants, Shyam Asnani, "Identity Crisis in *The Nowhere Man* and *Wife*," remarks that.

Wife is also about displacement and alienation, for it portrays the psychological claustrophobia and the resultant destructive tendencies in that condition in Dimple Dasgupta - a young Bengali wife who is sensitive enough to feel the pain, but not intelligent enough to make sense out of her situation and breaks out. Dimple is entrapped in a dilemma of tensions between American culture and society and the traditional constraints surrounding an Indian wife, between a feminist's desire to be assertive and the Indian need to be submissive. (74)

Dimple's problem is her inability to create a balance between two worlds that are diametrically opposed: the one she left behind and the one she has come to inhabit. She is so dissatisfied with life that terms like anguish and pain, as well as her husband's loyalty, have lost their significance. Rather than that, she begins thinking about murdering her husband and committing suicide. Her separation from her husband and the environment is exacerbated by her transfer to America. Along with this estrangement, the pretence and outward glitter of American society contribute to her psychotic breakdowns.

Symbolically, the name Dimple denotes the psychic depression that has always been a part of her temperament but has been exacerbated by her geographical dislocation. As the narrative progresses, it becomes clear that she is much more than just depressed. The story of *Wife* is a distressing portrayal of the battle between Western and Indian cultures, as well as modern and traditional traditions, as exemplified in Dimple Basu's life.

The first pages of *Wife* depict Dimple as a college-going girl who is immersed in her private fantasy world and feeding her own complexes about herself. She dreams of a neurosurgeon as her husband and considers marriage as a blessing in disguise. Dimple views premarital life as a practise run for real life. Nothing makes her happier than the prospect of marrying a man who will supply her with all of life's luxuries and conveniences; therefore, her desire for a neurosurgeon as a husband. On the contrary, her father discovers Dimple's match in Amit Basu, a consultant Engineer. She also believes he is a better option than a doctor or an architect because he has applied for and is likely to receive emigration. She hopes that her far-flung ambition will come true in a far-flung place like America or Canada. She is overjoyed about her marriage and indulges in excessive buying. Dimple Dasgupta transforms into Dimple Basu, with all her ideas about marriage and a perfect husband. Prior to the marriage, she had a vivid memory of her own life; "an apartment in Chowringhee, her hair done by Chinese girls, trips to new market for nylon saris" (3). However, becoming a Basu is a frustrating process. There is no such thing as liberty, no such thing as cocktail parties, and no such thing as genuine happiness. Amit's house on Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road is neither very huge or appealing.

From the beginning, Dimple does not feel at ease in that location. She believes that waiting for marriage is preferable to marrying. She despises Amit's mother and complains to her parents about the lack of amenities in her in-laws' house, including the fact that she must transport and store water upstairs in buckets. She spends the majority of her time engrossed in a beautiful world. She feels deprived of the liberties that a young housewife is expected to enjoy. She is not a fan of the drapes in the house. She had read in publications how newlywed young housewives always decorated their homes according to their preferences. She views choosing her own curtains as a form of liberty. She believes that her marriage to Amit has deprived her of all amorous yearnings that had been so deftly cultivated. However, she consoles herself by believing that all of these difficulties are temporary and that once her immigration application is approved, her difficulties will disappear. Still, she was fearful of some unknown fear in other countries.

Mukherjee depicts Dimple as having an extremely convoluted personality. Dimple, who is never content with what she now has, is a firm believer in a world beyond the present. Her fantasies of a wealthy life cause her to despise even Amit's attempts to make her happy. Amit takes her to a hotel, Kwality's, one evening. However, Dimple believes that Amit should have taken her to Trinca's instead.

He should have taken her to Trinca's on Park Street, where she could have listened to a Goan band play American Music, to prepare her for the trip to New York or Toronto. Or to the discotheque in the Park Hotel, to teach her to dance and wriggle. (21)

As a husband, Amit falls short of her ideal husband's standards. It would have been reasonable for her to describe an ideal husband prior to marriage, but as dissatisfied as Dimple is, she builds the man of her dreams while Amit is away.

When she becomes pregnant, a stage notorious for vomiting, an unexpected situation emerges for her. However, her nauseating proclivity is abnormal because she purposely vomits at all hours of the day and night. She experiences an odd sensation while vomiting. However, she is opposed to the pregnancy. Prior to marriage, she had never considered pregnancy or childbirth in her reveries. What could have been a most pleasant setting and a proud moment for a woman turns out to be a case of cheating, a case of cheating she never expected. Dimple's way of thinking reveals her character. She expresses her dissatisfaction to Amit. He is overjoyed with the news of her pregnancy. He begins planning the unborn child's future, but Dimple seems unenthusiastic.

Mukherjee portrays an immigrant in Dimple who is affected and moved by the Western World's superficiality. When they arrive at Jyoti Sen's residence, they are greeted by his wife Meena Sen. Dimple begins to pay close attention to the Sens' abode, bringing her eyes into contact with objects she had never seen yet desired in her previous life. She finds a framed batik wall hanging depicting King Ram and his court dressed magnificently. King Ram's wall hanging exemplifies Indians' efforts in America to maintain their cultural and religious traditions. For the Sens, Indian identity is a tangible type of identity that must be preserved in the face of the American invasion. However, what matters most to Dimple are the modern conveniences that only America can provide.

Dimple is unconcerned about practical issues like as racial discrimination and has not considered the possibility of an identity crisis in a strange location. When Jyoti is explaining the American mindset toward Indians and instructing Amit, she mentions their gorgeous furniture. Indeed, the Sens are very aware of their identity. They never invite an American to their home and never attempt to escape the ghetto, their miniature India surrounded by fellow Indian immigrants. They despise Americans because, according to Jyoti, they eat meat, are untrustworthy, and are never honest with Indians. The Sens' contempt for Americans and the English language is entirely consistent with the expats' sense of vulnerability. America is a temporary residence for the Sens. They intend to acquire as much money as possible during their stay. "I am going to retire when I am forty, go back and build a Five Lakh house and become the Maharaja of Lower Circular Road" (54). Thus, Jyoti Sen makes an endeavour to do so without jeopardising their Indian identity. Even in this distant place, they make an effort to maintain their cultural identity free of American influences.

Mukherjee also depicts an expatriate community in *Wife*, allowing us to examine the difficulties that immigrants encounter in an unfamiliar culture. The novel makes an attempt to answer questions such as: How do cultural clashes affect individuals differently? How does adaption to a new environment depend on the immigrants' psyches? How does geographical dislocation cause extreme alienation in some immigrants, resulting in mental illness? Mukherjee addressed these issues seriously during her own expatriate experience. Their alienation in a distant land brings together these people from various states in India, and they form their own ghetto. They congregate on a regular basis for the purpose of refreshing their memories of India and revitalising their Indian spirit.

Dimple's violent outburst reveals her accumulated frustrations. Amit may also be blamed for her lack of awareness of her psychological requirement. He believes that supplying her physical luxuries is sufficient and pays little attention to her emotional needs. He rarely brings her outside their four-walled home. Rather than that, he advises her to venture out on her own, to establish friends, and to engage in useful work. He believes Dimple is depressed because she has developed a nostalgia for Calcutta and is constantly thinking about it. However, Dimple has difficulty going out alone and

establishing friends. One could argue that given her limited English skills, she could hardly have conducted herself effectively in such a large metropolis. America has surpassed her intelligence. She lacks an understanding of how to engage with Americans.

Dimple's juxtaposition of her husband and electrical appliances demonstrates that Amit has remained with her purely for convenience's sake. They have no emotional connection. She does not discuss her problems with him, nor does she inform him of her excessive daytime sleeping. Dimple desired to leave behind everything associated with her previous life and begin a 'fresh' life in America when she left Calcutta. She would fantasise about having a love relationship with Amit. Though there was some anxiety of the unknown at the start of this 'new' life, she had never anticipated such a pivotal period in her life. She has a difficult time relating to those who do not understand her culture. And her life has devolved into a nightmare since marrying a man from her own society.

In all situations, the author is concerned with the characters' disordered mental states as a result of their displacement, not with the consequences they encounter. For many critics, the novel's ending is disturbing. In "Bharathi Mukherjee's *Wife*: An Assessment," Ragini Ramchandra avers,

In whatever way her (Dimple's) response is interpreted, either as insanity or depravity it is totally unredeemed and the reader closes the book in utter disgust over the way the novel has tried to subvert the framework of an entire culture. (65)

Nonetheless, several critics acknowledge that *Wife* provides an unsettling portrayal of the battle between two cultures, Western and Indian.

In *Wife*, Mukherjee illustrates this type of dilemma in Dimple. Violence becomes the essential experience of American civilization for the protagonist. Mukherjee develops her theme "with complex irony and skill, transforming cultural symbols into surreal images of Dimple's final madness" (213). Dimple loses her mind when confronted by a culture she does not understand and which refuses to accommodate her. As a result of her acute loneliness and isolation, she loses even the semblance of confidence she possessed in Calcutta. She attempts to reconcile her displacement by adopting an American mentality by dressing as Marsha or by falling in love with Milt Glasser. However, each stride toward Americanization exacerbates her annoyance. The resulting psychological anguish manifests itself in desperate violent deeds.

Dimple's issue is complete rootlessness, since she is unable to reconcile her original Indian culture with her adopted American culture. Her dislocation renders her neither Indian nor American, but a befuddled traveller caught between two cultures who struggles to establish a distinct identity. In "Foreignness of Spirit: The World of Bharathi Mukherjee's Novels," Jain Jasbir says,

The novel traces the psychic breakdown of an Indian wife in America and the concomitant deep culture-shock leading to neurosis ... A waylaid traveller, she is yet to reach her destination and carve out a niche for herself. Her quest is a quest for a voice, a quest for identify. (19)

2. Conclusion

To sum-up, Mukherjee's *Wife* depicts women whose lives have been wrecked by their migration experiences. There is also the issue of their survival. Their mental state has shifted, impeding their attempts at settling down. Displacement results in alienation and uncertainty about Dimple's existence in her instance. In her situation, acculturation occurs in the adaptation and acquisition of a new identity, as well as the formation of various real and imagined relationships. It symbolises her own accomplishment as an immigrant.

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