CHAPTER-VI
SUMMING UP

The on-going study on the Diasporic Consciousness concludes that ‘diaspora’ is a part of postcolonial studies or a Third World literature. It is a migration of a diasparean from his ‘homeland’ to ‘foreign land’ and from ‘the colonial country’ to ‘free country’ where he represents himself according to Jasbir Jain as a cultural “ambassador and a refugee”¹ in the alien land. The conflict of cultures creates “cultural identity” as well as “cultural ethnicity” where one’s “true self” becomes a part of “one shared culture” or “a shared history and ancestry hold in common.”² Stuart Hall in his article Cultural Identity and Diaspora finds that the diasporic cultural identities reflect “the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us the concept of “one people” or the sense of “oneness”.³ These migrants project a world of geographical and cultural dislocation which creates the poetics of exile, displacement, rootlessness, homelessness, nostalgia, past and memory and it generates a conflict between two cultures i.e. “biculturalism” and it finally leads to “multiculturalism”. Such people become “the marginalized people” or “the Third World people” or share the feelings of “the other world”.

Salman Rushdie treats these people of “exiles or emigrants” who suffer from “the sense of loss” or “physical alienation” and creates fictions of “invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of mind.”⁴ The diaspora writers are always in search of their ‘ground’ or ‘roots’, ‘identity’ and a compromise and adjustment between ‘home’—the culture of origin and ‘the world’—the culture of adoption. These ‘expatriates’ or
‘immigrants’ are always in “the process of decentering” and their quest for past and the play of memory make as “individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless—a race of angels.” They think and experience between “what we really are” or “what we have become” as “the lost origins” in the alien land. As a result, a new person is born out of diaspora who builds a ‘New World’ that Stuart Hall considers as “the beginning of diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and a difference” that Afro-Caribbean people build as a diaspora of America. It, according to Stuart Hall, is “the old, the imperializing, the hegemonising form of ‘ethnicity’.” Diaspora identities are creating “the aesthetics of the ‘cross-overs’ and of ‘cut and mix’ which make them anew, through transformation and difference.” Therefore, Franz Fanon in “On National Culture” in *The Wretched of the Earth* considers, “A national culture is not like a folk-lore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover a people’s true culture.”

In the post-colonial world, diasporic writers create the Third World of Intellectuals in the First World Akademe. Edward Said who himself was a Palestinian, born in Jerusalem and self-exiled in USA called the expatriates as ‘Intellectual Exile’. V.S. Naipaul, the member of old diaspora in *A Way in the World* encounters with India and many other lands which is a sort of ‘homecoming’ but he was always homeless and he “can only find a house, not a home.”

Indian diaspora, according to Bhiku Parikh represents “half a dozen religions… seven different regions of India… nearly a dozen castes” (p. 105) and it is like “the banyan tree, the traditional way of life” and it spreads out its “roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry-up” (p. 106). The Special Fiction Issue of *The New Yorker* (June 23-30, 1997) has questioned the identity of stay-at-home
writers not as NRI (Non Resident Indian) but as NEI (Non Expatriate Indian). Bill Buford in its editorial thus comments, “What does it mean to be an Indian—to be a citizen of a country that for thousands of years was no country, that has not one language but at least eighteen, and that no single race or religion or culture but many races, many religions, many cultures.” (The New Yorker, 7-8)

Indian diaspora of first generation to the Fijian land as “indentured labourers” on a ship went across the black waters (Kalapani) with their memories of homeland who never came back. They carried the Hindu Tool kits with them like Ramcharitamanasa, Hanumanchala, Bhagawadgita, Tulsi Plant, Ganapati-icon, Hanuman’s idol and others and created ‘little India’ in the Fijian land. Forefathers of V.S. Naipaul, Satendra Nandan, Vijay Mishra, Sudesh Mishra belong to eastern U.P. and others from Bengal and Bihar. They build a new form of socialization in the form of Jahaji bhai (ship brotherhood) and Kalapani is also signified as the loss of caste as they have to leave their castes in their homeland. A new form of hybridity or syncretisation took place which generated a new identity for them. They cannot mix with South African, Fijian, English, French or Dutch and have to come back with people of Indian marriage for further relationship. The concept of Varnashrama of India regarding ‘caste identity’ became as “the loss of caste” and Brahmins remained no more ‘brahmins’ there and they have to move into inter-caste marriage of Indian origin. In their pains and miseries, they became the equal partners or ‘Hum Watni’ (fellow countrymen).

Satendra Nandan, a poet on girmitia consciousness, tells the story of pains and sufferings of diaspora from India in the Fijian land where India is “the country of the mind” and “they are faceless and eyeless” (Ruins, p. 60). They treat their ‘little village’ of homeland as ‘second
womb’ and now the country has become the land of their ‘life and death’. Therefore, Kapil Kapoor considers the diaspora literature as “a suffering literature” as well as “Exile literature”. Sudesh Mishra seeks the art of dying as necessary for the art of living. Diaspora, therefore, is a literature of dislocation, exile, homelessness, rootlessness and existential meaninglessness.

Kapil Kapoor discusses about ‘the diasporic self’ as ‘a divided self’ which is ‘Vikshipta chitta’ or ‘fragmented self’ which is Vichhimna that we can find in modern literature. In the classical literature, Homer has a unified self in the human action as a part of his narrative and therefore, it is a purposeful and integrated self of characters who know about their mind. Diaspora creates a specific chittabhumि which can be understood in light of Bharat Muni’s Natyashastra. Indentured labourer’s diaspora is a kind of ‘push diaspora’ where there is a pang of separation and a case of sorrow. It is like a leaf falling off tree and the falling leaf separates itself from the tree and is flown away ‘elsewhere’ or ‘nowhere’. The leaf is like a migrant, an expatriate, and ‘tree’ is like ‘homeland’ and ‘flown away’ is a kind of separation from one’s ‘roots’ or ‘origins’ that makes them ‘the lost origins’. But the late modern diaspora where migrants are waiting for their visa and passport to Canadian and American countries for future is a kind of ‘pull diaspora’ and they have no remorse for their ‘homeland’ instead they try to reach New York, ‘the land of liberty’ and America is certainly their ‘dream land’ where they can flourish and enjoy their freedom and opportunity.

If we may apply the above analysis of diaspora in the context of Bharati Mukherjee, we can find that Bharati Mukherjee realizes the sense of “ethnic identity” even though she had cloaked herself into “Brahmanical elegance”. Even after marrying a white husband with two
assimilated sons, she feels herself as “an outsider” and like V.S. Naipaul, she treats herself as “an expatriate writer” who lives in “perpetual exile and impossibility of ever having a home.” V.S. Naipaul is a perpetual homeless creature and he always lived in ‘a house’ but never in his ‘home’. It is a state of being a globe-trotter and a writer of whole humanity either as ‘a permanent refugee’ or as ‘homeless’.

Bharati Mukherjee, later on, rejected Naipaul as a model and selected Bernard Malamud who was chiefly concerned with minorities and their pains and sufferings. Malamud has taught her the art of overcoming the identity of being “the other” though belongs to different cultural milieu. If Malamud’s characters belong to poor classes, humble shoe-makers, tailors and bakers, Bharati Mukherjee’s characters are immigrants who are doctors, technocrats, university professors, businessmen and women to upwardly mobile professionals. They treat themselves as ‘the other’, ‘the marginalized people’ belonging to ‘lost origins’. But Bharati Mukherjee calls herself as “an immigrant American” rather than “an Expatriate Indian”. She feels proud of writing in “North American English about immigrants in the New World” that she tells Geoff Hancock in an interview for Canadian Fiction Magazine. Her journey from Calcutta to Canada is not an expatriation from East to West but from the English world of Jane Austen to American world of Walt Whitman. Bharati Mukherjee is more concerned with non-native issues and she fights for the whole nation for Asians or different people of ‘colour’ as “sojourners” while people of Germany or Sweden are treated as “settlers” in America. Therefore, she is always treated as “an Asian American” or “a woman of color” but not as “a main stream American writer”.
Though Bharati Mukherjee calls herself “an immigrant American” yet she was “sari-clad, dark-eyed, dark-haired with a Bengali Brahmin name” and Maya Manju Sharma considers her as “essentially Hindu and essentially moral.” She bears a diasporic self, a divided self and her chittabhum is laden with feelings of exilic isolation and cultural dislocation. She is like ‘a middleman’ between two cultures and she has the immigrant experience of the Third World and is set in the process of ‘uprooting’ and ‘re-rooting’ that her husband, Clark Blaise in his book Resident Indian calls as “unhousement” and “rehousement” (p. 648). She has a fragmented memory of past and present and as an expatriate, she builds “a cocoon around herself as a refuse from the cultural dilemmas” and experiences “unfriendliness in the new country.” George Steiner rightly calls them as “the contemporary everyman.”

Bharati Mukherjee as a diaspora novelist is treated by most of critics as an autobiographical writer but Jerry Pinto in interview with her feels that she artistically moves from “particular autobiographical concerns” to larger issues “of multiculturalism/diversity.” Her conflict of biculturalism and that of multiculturalism leads her to conflict between ‘Indian ethos’ and that of ‘foreignness’ of alien land. But Malashri Lal feels that Bharati Mukherjee has “deliberately problematised her identity” by separating ideologically “from her chosen home and citizenship.” As a diaspora novelist, she has nurtured a natural conflict of search for identity, the conflict of soul and mind, homeland and foreign land that Mukherjee as an author and characters as human beings encounter, react and experience the diasporic consciousness in her novels and short stories.

The diasporic characters in the fiction of Bharati Mukherjee are existential in nature. Existentialism generates the tragic alienation which
is the central theme of existential writers from Kierkegaard to Marcel and Barrat rightly remarks that “the theme that observe both modern art and existential philosophy are the alienation and strangeness of man in his world, the contradictioriness and contingency of human existence.”

Existentialism, thus, displays the predicament of modern man whose life is hopelessly tragic, lonely, alienated and full of despair and anxiety which arises from his loss of self and ends in loss of world. Camus in *Outsider and the Stranger* and Kafka in the *Castle* depict man as a loner and a stranger to his world. He feels himself homeless and is disconnected from the people and society and like an outsider, he wanders in despair and pessimism. He feels the sense of absurdity and ‘absurd’ means ‘out of harmony’ and ‘ridiculous’ which becomes purposeless, senseless, useless and absurd.

Jean Paul Sartre considers man both as “the recognizer of values and the bearer of value” and he shapes up his personality in opposite circumstances and he creates “a certain image of man” and “in fashioning myself, I fashion man.” Conflict is the original structure of man’s freedom from the hold of the other and both seek to enslave one another. Sartre also recognizes the significance of interpersonal relationship and intersubjectivity in Sartre is a dimension of self. Man has a sense of emptiness within and the awareness of emptiness which leads him from inauthentic to authentic existence. The suffering of others becomes the suffering of one’s ‘self’. One of the characters of ‘No Exit’ remarks, “Alone, none of us can save himself or herself, we are linked together inextricably.” The journey of self is decided in presence of others and it is a world where “man decides what he is and what others are.” Thus man becomes a centre of universe and it is he who suffers and creates the value system in the world.
The existential characters in the context of Bharati Mukherjee are also ‘divided self’, ‘fractured identity’ and ‘fluid identity’. They are the outcome and the created selves of ‘expatriation’ and ‘immigration’ of diasporic identity and are drawn between ‘alien land’ and that of ‘home land’. Whenever they leave their country, language, geography and boundary of nation, they find ‘the alien land’ as a land of strangers, loners and as a land out of context and out of meaning. Bharati Mukherjee’s Tara, the heroine in *The Tiger’s Daughter* after leaving Calcutta to America, finds a foreign milieu where she could not adjust and adapt and apart from it, her husband is a foreigner with whom she could not communicate her feelings. When she visits India, she finds herself as a total stranger in her homeland and she feels neither fully Indian nor truly American. She feels the diasporic experience of homelessness and rootlessness which is a symptom of being existential in temper. Bharati Mukherjee’s another novel *Wife*, also reflects the existential traits in the immigrant experience of Dimple Dasgupta, a middle class Bengali woman, who migrates from Calcutta to New York with a desire of freedom, fortune and perfect happiness in America. But she does not find the image of ideal man and imagined husband in Amit Basu, a Consultant Engineer, and ultimately she becomes a neurotic wife and kills her husband. She becomes a victim of attitudinal conflict and is torn between Indian and American consciousness which leads her to a state of living in dilemmas and rootlessness. She expresses her biting experience of loneliness and purposelessness which is a state of living in the world of existentialism. As a result, she feels as a woman of ‘no where land’. Bharati Mukherjee’s another novel, *Jasmine*, is another feat of existential journey of the heroine who begins the odyssey of her journey from Punjab to California via Florida, New York and Iowa like a flying bird in search of a nest as a rootless traveler. Her search of identity looms large
loneliness, despair, displacement, identity-crisis and perpetual “widowhood and exile” and finally, she emerges as a survivor, a fighter and adapter. She faces the world of conflicts and contradictions where her new face emerges as an existential creature. In brief, Bharati Mukherjee’s novels are the delineation of existential characteristics which make her characters lonely, alienated, homeless and rootless.

Bharati Mukherjee as a diasporic novelist cultivates the themes of comparative literature. It is centered around the sociological scientific discourses and that of literary (humanistic) studies. The problem of methodology can be categorized into comparative literature i.e. world literature, national literature and general literature on the lines of ‘thematic’, ‘profiguration’, ‘reception’, ‘communication’, ‘literary fortunes’, ‘placing’ and ‘motives’ and last but not least, ‘attitude’ towards the object of representation among others. Indians who migrated from India to Fiji, Surinam, West Indies, America and other parts of world sustained their cultures, languages and national identities which created a source of cultural conflict and it became a viable methodology for comparative literature. They were shaped and conditioned by time and space like a grafting of branch of mango plant which does not yield the same quality of fruit as it prospers and grows in its native land. Professor Fatima Meer, the author of the first authorized biography of Nelson Mandela entitled Higher Than Hope, while visiting India for the first Pravasi Bharatiya Conclave in 2003 objected the term ‘diaspora’ and said “I object to that term ‘diaspora’ because it is a Zionist concept with connotations of violence and colonization. Indian languages are rich enough to replace it with a better word” (Interview with Shanta Kapoor, The Times of India, Feb. 3, 2003, p. 14). The diaspora literature, thus, provides a rich harvest of intra-disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies.
like social science, psychology, anthropology, economics, political science and cultural studies. Bharati Mukherjee as a diaspora novelist moves through the ways of such studies and has cultivated the paradigms of comparative literature. Her studies are the most suitable content for the world literature like other diaspora writers.

Diaspora writers are migrants from orient to non-orient countries and the West even after leaving orient was curious to know more about the orient. Such people build the body of knowledge of Neo-Orientalism. The orientalists were created out of the non-orient whereas Neo-orientalists came from the orient. They construct the discourse about the orients (the land of their origin) and offer the images and options about the orient for the future consumers in the non-orient. They find a new ‘location’ for acting as mediators for the advantage of non-orient. The Neo-orientalists play the given roles of ridiculing their place of origin (orient) and they began their literature of ‘spitting’ one’s homeland, its people and culture. Salman Rushdie’s “Introduction” to The Vantage Book of Indian Writing 1947-97, Rohinto Mistry’s A Fine Balance, N.C. Chaudhuri’s The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, The Continent of Circa, To Live or Not to Live, and V.S. Naipaul’s An Area of Darkness and India: A Wounded Civilisation fall in the category of ‘spitting’. Professor Kapil Kapoor also considers the diaspora writing as an industry for creative and critical writings. There is a group of writers who writes, another publishes and criticizes. They do not represent the true spirit of their ‘homeland’ in the ‘Foreign land’. Bharati Mukherjee, as a diaspora novelist does not ‘spit’ India in the tradition of V.S. Naipaul and N.C. Chaudhuri but she highlights the love-hate relationship of her characters between their ‘homeland’ and ‘adopted land’ which reflects the structure and content of her diasporic consciousness.
Bharati Mukherjee’s diasporic phenomenon is like *parkayapravesh* (entering the other body) which is a process of transfer from one body to the other but what remains is ‘spirit’. Diasporeans undergo a material change but they try their best to retain their ‘spirit’ or ‘identity of self’. If we may apply this *parkaya pravesh* phenomenon in order to understand the diaspora in terms like *pardesh pravesh* (entering the other land), *parsanskriti pravesh* (entering the other culture) and *parkosh pravesh* (entering the other selves). The quest for homeland is the quest for space of one’s self or the remains of one’s spirit. Bharati Mukherjee’s quest for immigrant experience moves between two worlds of ‘homeland’ and ‘adopted land’ but her spirit is yet retained and that is the spirit of her land of origin. In her *pardesh pravesh*, everything has not entered and the spirit of self is uncontrollable to be entered. Her diasporic self or *chittabhum* is yet to be explored which is beyond the logic of reason.

The puzzle of identity is also an important feature of diaspora literature. In Indian scriptures like *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, there is a process of meditation theory or *Dhyana yoga* where a man questions, ‘who am I?’ Externally, man has familiar labels like name, sex and identity but internally, the idea of self is realized when a man shuts his external windows of sights, sounds and smells, he moves in the world of silence where all dusts of confusion are settled and a new face of man emerges. But Bharati Mukherjee could not ignore such ferocious wars of identity which are national, racial, ethnic and religious going on in this world. But her identity of self which is an integrated identity of ‘native land’ and ‘adopted land’ remains yet as a puzzle of identity in her diasporic context.

In brief, we can say that Bharati Mukherjee as a diaspora novelist creates a new concept of ‘American experience’ as an immigrant writer
where she had adapted Americanness without surrender to Americanism. She formulates her “Maximalist” credo and welcomes them as “Expansionists” who have forgotten their past lives and languages and lived through centuries of history in a single time. Therefore, it is difficult to find out an individual identity in the world of identities. The diasporic chittabhumi or identity of self is all-pervasive and all-inclusive where the self cannot be disintegrated. The diasporas sometimes create homelands like homelands which create diasporas. When we cross the boundary of nation, home and race, we cultivate the identity of ‘cross-overs’ and ‘cut-and-mix’ of cultures. A New Land is a fresh identity of the New World where these “new settlers” are rooted. Therefore, Sartre questions, “what do we do with them now?” After creating a new face in America, Bharati Mukherjee generates a transnational, transcultural and global identity of diasporan as a part of her diasporic experience. Her personality shares two faces of being as “an immigrant writer” or “a naturalized citizen of America” but she is essentially Indian in her ethos like her suffering characters. Her ‘divided self’ or ‘a fractured identity’ is the diasporic identity and the cultural conflict is her forte and the true identity of her ‘self’ and for which she has reserved her place as a diaspora novelist in the global literature.
References


7. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 120.


20. Cited by E.L. Allen, in *Existentialism from Within*, p. 81.


22. J.P. Sartre, *Existentialism*, op.cit., p. 44.