(27th of July, 1940........)
CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

(A): The Author in the Making

In the universe of Indian Diasporic Literature, BHARATI MUKHERJEE has her own world-renowned position. She gives a new birth to the fictional world of Indo-Anglian Literature through the spell of her matchless contribution. As we know an author gives a new rank to his/her penmanship through including recent realities with his/her own view and sensibility, Mukherjee has also constructed her works through selected incidents of life around her own. The art management of her novels is so wide and invaluable that she has left no aspect of female world untouched. She has given a new prevalence and identity to Indian English Literature of Diaspora. The clash between the intimate and the wider world is apparently being discussed in most of her novels. As aptly criticized –

“Bharati Mukherjee has established herself as a powerful member of the American Literary Scene, one whose memorable works reflect her pride in her Indian heritage but also her celebration of embracing America.”
Bharati Mukherjee was born on July 27th 1940 in an upper-middle class Hindu Brahmin family in Calcutta, India. She was the second of three daughters of Sudhir Lal, a pharmaceutical chemist and Bina Mukherjee, an ordinary housewife whom she describes as “a most modest heroic woman”. Mukherjee spent her first eight years as a member of a large extended family where she got an atmosphere of great privilege. Even in a crowded family, Mukherjee found time and space to become a veracious reader. The reason was that she knew as early as the age of three that she wanted to be a writer. As a child, her favourite timepass was to hear Indian folk tales, narrated by her granny. By the time, she was eight, she had already read several works of Leo Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and those of Maxim Gorky along with Bengali Classics.

Born of an extra ordinary close-knit and intelligent family, all the offspring were always provided ample academic opportunities and consequently all have pursued academic endeavors in their career and have had the possibilities to receive excellent schooling. Shortly, after India gained Independence in 1947, Mukherjee’s father was given job in England and he brought his immediate family to live in England with him till 1951 and it was the exact place where, she herself says- “I discovered myself in new way.”
This stay at England, allowed Mukherjee to enjoy liberty and concentration on perfection of English language skills and become fluent in it. At the early age of nine, she wrote her first novel about a child detective. In 1951, the family returned to Calcutta and Mukherjee received the best English schooling at Toronto Convet School, a missionary school run by a British nuns. The climate of this school was entirely different from the culture and climate of Calcutta. Bharati Mukherjee recalled her own reactions about this schooling and revealed, “It was the walked off school compound in Calcutta as a corner forever green and tropical of England.” (Woman: 24)

In the school, it was a painful discovery for Bharati Mukherjee that English Nuns tried to inculcate negative and humiliating images about Indian Culture, climate and values. This negative revelation strengthens her vision about India. In her early education, she found that there was an organized process to abolish innate solidarity. Being disgusted with anti-nationalist quest for early education, Bharati made up her mind to migrate to England for higher education. In contest of this complication in the life of Bharati Mukherjee, Fakrul Alam observes –
Unlearning Bengali traditions and learning to be English, performing English Elocution lessons made Bharati fast to become part of “a class that did not live in the native language.” (Alam: 4)

The family was ‘westernized’ in the sense that English Education was valued and much literature, philosophy, social principles got transmitted through the language. However in more intimate convictions the family observed Hindu practices and beliefs. In 1958, Bharati’s father lost his partnership in the factory and moved along with family to Baroda where she joined the ‘Research and Development wing’ of a large Bombay Complex.

In the meantime, Bharati earned her Bachelor’s from the University of Calcutta in 1959. In Baroda, she studied for her Master’s in English and Ancient Indian Culture which she acquired in 1961. Seeing her daughter’s aptitude for creative work, her father encouraged her to join Creative Writing Programme in the U.S. Consequently, a visit to the University of Iowa in 1961 to attend the prestigious Writer’s Workshop with a P.E.O. International Peace Scholarship changed her life and focused her identity on what she had dreamed of becoming a professional writer. There, she planned to study to earn her M.F.A. (Master’s of Fine Arts) in creating writing which she
acquired in 1963. She considers this event to have been the turning point in her life. She was so confident of her being a writer that she said, “If I had to live in India, I still would have been a writer, but of a very different sort.”

After receiving her M.F.A., she planned to return India to marry a bridegroom of her father’s choosing in her class and caste. However, while at Iowa, a lunch break on September 19, 1963, changed that plan, transferring her into a split world, a transient with loyalties to two cultures. It was during stint at University of Iowa that Mukherjee met Clark Blaise, the Canadian American novelist, professor and journalist and she impulsively married him in North-American style in 1963. This decision guaranteed that thereafter her life would be part of two worlds/cultures. The association with Clark Blaise proved to be an “intensely literary marriage.”

After receiving her Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature from the University of Iowa, Mukherjee moved to Canada with her husband where she became a naturalized citizen in 1972. She lived there as a Canadian citizen till 1980 first in Toronto and then in Montreal. Nevertheless she feels “ethnic identity” and calls it as “to cloak myself in my own Brahminical elegance.”
Even after marrying a white husband with two assimilated sons (Bart Anand and Bernard Sudhir), she felt as “an outsider” or “an expatriate writer” which has cultivated a natural association with V.S. Naipaul as “an expatriate Writer” who has championed the cause of “living in perpetual exile and impossibility of ever having a house.”

Her 14 years in Canada were some of the hardest of her life and it became such a sorrowful period that Mukherjee looks back with pain and anger as she found herself discriminated against and treated as she says- a member of the “Visible minority”. She has spoken in many interviews of her difficult life in Canada, a country that she sees as hostile to its immigrants and one that opposes the concept of cultural assimilation. A painful part of immigration is facing racism in the adopted country.

The racial intolerance, she experienced in Canada, compelled her to think about remigration to U.S.A. She perceives the possibility of a secure and prosperous future in America. In context of her experience in Canada, she wrote in Hencoff –

Moving out of Canada gave me back my voice. The last seven years in Canada, I felt I was constantly
being forced to see myself as part of an Unwanted Visible Minority.5 (Geoff Honcoff: An Interview with Mukherjee: 30-34)

Although those years were challenging, Mukherjee was able to write her first two novels- *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) and *Wife* (1975) while working up to professorial status at Mc. Gill University in Montreal. During those years, she also collected many of the sentiments, found in her first collection of short stories, ‘Darkness’ (1985), a collection that in many sections, reflects her mood of cultural separation while living in Canada. Finally, she moved back to USA in 1980 where she was sworn in as a permanent US resident and she is claimed to have found greater acceptance as a South Asian. In an interview with Sybil Steinberg of *Publishers Weekly*, she described her feeling for America where “there is a kind of curiosity and exuberance”, saying that –

Mine is a clear-eyed but definite love of America. I’m aware of the brutalities, the violences here, but in the long run my characters are survivors. …. I feel there are people born to be Americans. By American, I mean an intensity of spirit and a quality desire. I feel American in a very fundamental way whether Americans see me this way or not.6
Continuing to write, in 1986, she was awarded with a National Endowment for the Arts Grant. After holding several posts at various colleges and universities, she, ultimately, settled in 1989 at the University of California, Berkeley, where presently she is a professor of English. Mukherjee has worked on several teaching assignments. First, she took the job of instructor in English at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin during 1964-1965 session followed by a similar appointment at Madison in 1965. She worked as a lecturer in McGill University, Montreal, Quebec from 1966-1969 where she was elevated to assistant professorship in 1969 and to associate professorship in 1973. Thereafter, she joined Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York as professor of English in 1979. She also taught at Queen’s College, New York for a brief period before finally joining the present assignment at Berkeley. Mukherjee is, currently, a distinguished professor of English at University of California, Berkeley.

Bharati Mukherjee’s academic and professional career won her lots of laurels. Twice, she was honoured with Grants from McGill University in 1968 and 1970 along with the honour of Canada Arts Council Grant twice in the years 1973-74 and 1977. She was also awarded the prestigious Shastri-Indo-Candian Institute Grant during the year 1976-77. She was the
winner of Guggenheim Foundation Award in 1978-79, the National Magazine Award in 1981 for her essay *An Invisible Woman* and Canadian Government Award in 1982. She was the winner of the first prize from Periodical Distribution Association in 1980 for her short-story *Isolated Incidents*. Mukherjee has also been honoured with the National Book Critics Circle Award for her short-story collection *The Middleman and Other Stories* in 1988.

*The Tiger’s Daughter* (1972), the very first novel by Bharati Mukherjee is about the isolation of Indian expatriate. Tara Banerjee, the protagonist, lives in Kolkata. She is married at the blooming age of 15 to an American outcast man named David with whom she gets no firm match in ideas and opinion. On leaving her native land, Tara starts missing her nation very much. She weaves many memories and remembers many moments, passed in India. She gets too much disturbed with homesickness and faces isolation as Mukherjee herself felt while living with her family in Canada after her marriage with Clark Blaise as her words prove her pain—"Changing citizenship is easy but swapping culture is not....."

As the line suggests- “You can take the boy out of the country but you can not take the country out of a boy.....”7, Tara returns to India to soothe and to remove her displeasure. But she finds Kolkata totally changed and beyond her images. Tara’s
Kolkata seems to be Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. She is thrilled with riots, collusions, fatal quarrels, bus-burning and starvation, prevailed all over Kolkata. She notices all these things through her western eyes and from a far height of a safe tourist. Her eyes get no glimpse of family and friendly aurora that used to be once in her life before her marriage. Here, she pines for the security of her own home and peace for her own native country and culture. She finds herself in the status of conflict between two cultures and worlds. She gets herself as a “Nowhere Man” who is keen to know who she is and where she belongs to. All her hopes get scattered when she perceives India in different spirit and does get a culture shock. Later, she herself gets involved in a violent demonstration and gets a tragic end. Thus, the story comes to the denouement, proving that- “her return had brought only wounds…”

In her second novel, *Wife* (1975), the theme of expatriation and isolation which is handled with such assurance in *The Tiger’s Daughter* is again treated. The protagonist, Dimple Das Gupta, born of a middle-class family in Calcutta, gets married with an engineer, Amit Km. Basu. After marriage, they both immigrate to the USA for living their further life. Dimple has thousands of expectations of getting freedom and love with this marriage and new world of New York. But later, she comes through the fact that this “marriage had betrayed her...”
Dimple is found to be compared with Arun Joshi’s Sindi and Anita Desai’s Maya who remains in problems and suffer whole of their married life. They present woman’s inner voice without articulation. Dimple is shown as an abnormal woman who is unable to adjust with anything in her new world. She does hate all that surrounds her. She does not seem to be capable of compromising with her married life. Out of her keen homesickness, she always seeks, even in America, the old world that of her father’s. She almost tries to be an ideal better half of her husband without assimilating that this all is totally beyond the American aura. She decides not to take it anymore and once in utter frustration, she murders her own husband as a T.V. serial character. She kills herself also at the last as the novel, from the beginning, is too destined to a tragic end. The infidelity and the murder which brings the novel to its shocking close are the alternatives with which Dimple’s American experience has proved her.

Mukherjee’s third novel *Jasmine* (1989) brings out the autobiographical narration of Mukherjee’s own life. It is the novel based on the theme of female quest for identity. It brings a revolutionary concept of change in the outlook of modern woman. Jasmine, the protagonist, reveals female awareness, paving the way to new experience of life. Jasmine, like Bharati Mukherjee, resigns to her predestined fate saying, “I am going to reposition the stars.” She, after her husband, Prakash’s
killing, reinvents herself for living her husband’s dying dream of studying at America University in Florida. She is so firm with her mission that she starts for her destination even at the risk of forged passport and underworld travelling companions. Even she, having been ravished, collects her fortitude and states boldly, “I could not let my personal dishonor disrupt my mission.”9 When with her exceptional efforts she gets her goal hit, she says, “This was the place, I had chosen to die.”10 Thus, Jasmine finally finds her identity in America, which, perhaps, more than any other country, can contain her many identities without contradiction.

Fantasizing her motive of reaching her dream-world, Jasmine leaves behind the whole of her old traditional life-style and broadens the horizons of her dare and venture. She sets an example of woman’s extreme courage, self-reliance, will power and confidence. It is an enthusiastic and compelling read-novel. The title character seems the most resembled character to all the readers. Jasmine presents a sharp contrast to Wife’s Dimple.

In her fourth novel, The Holder of the World (1993), Mukherjee turns her attention to one of the founding novels of the post-colonial American canon, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter. Reversing the usual binary opposition between occidental and oriental texts, Mukherjee presents Hawthorne’s
novel as one which has been written out of knowledge of India. And in doing this, Mukherjee has written herself into her text perhaps more effectively even than in the seemingly autobiographical, *The Tiger’s Daughter*. The novel is also interesting for the way it very subtly parodies the Western construct of India as a nation and the perception of Indians as a homogenous group.

The novel starts with Hannah Easton, a white puritan woman from Salem, Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1670. She was an orphan, brought up by adoptive parents. Her own father dies of bee sting and mother runs off with a lover. Hannah Easton marries to Gabriel Legge, a swashbuckling adventurer. Her husband goes England first and then to India to join East India Company. Hannah gets a total transformation. But later, she becomes a widow of Gabriel at the age of thirty. Then after, she remaries a Raja named Jadhav Singh who offers Hannah a life of limitless possibilities. She becomes his precious pearl. She gives birth to a daughter ‘Black Pearl’ who later on makes the return journey to home with her mother after Jadhav Singh’s death. Hannah’s journey to India is full of images of adventures. She returns to her native land and relives her mother’s folly. Thus, in this novel history repeats itself.

Mukherjee describes the life of a modern American woman Beigh Master (narrator of the story) who has roots in
New England in the middle of 20th century as assets-hunter. She stumbles by the distant relative’s life while tracking a legendary diamond. Beigh, as soon as, gets together with the details of Hannah’s journey, she gets intimate with Hannah’s life-journey. The path, trodden by Hannah, is examined interestingly by Beigh. She recognizes Hannah as an ancestress of her own white-skinned race. Thus, this novel presents a new vision of Bharati Mukherjee’s cross-culture theme. It gives us a sense of connectedness beyond the barriers of time and geography.

In *Leave It to Me* (1997), some of the themes of her earlier fictions notably ‘identity’ and ‘dislocation’, are again important. In this novel, Mukherjee’s shift from immigrant diasporic writer to multicultural writer is complete. However, it may be that Mukherjee has moved too far. Few of the characters are as convincing as those who populated her earlier works, and at times the level of coincidence works against this novel, as when, in a moment of epiphany, Debby, the protagonist, reinvents herself as Devi Dee, without realizing that she has taken the name of the Goddess Durga after whom the Indian village of Devigaon (where she was born) is named.

Here, Mukherjee presents a child life from lost child to masked avenger. She mingles the Greek myth of Electra with the Indian myth of Hindu goddess, Durga Maa. Mukherjee turns the innocence of a child into an elemental form of vengeance.
Like other novels here too, Mukherjee uses the theme of identity and uprootedness. This novel casts a glance on America’s recent past-hippie-culture of the 1960’s. Thus, in this novel, the presentation of East and West world-conflict and the mother-daughter relationships through the characters is quite worth praising.

Her next novel, *Desirable Daughters* (2002), represents the culture that originates from the Indian sub-continent. The story points out the differences between two cultures (American and South Asian). The story starts with the life of three sisters, Padma, Parvati and Tara who are born of a wealthy Brahmin family, dominated by their doting father and a traditional mother. The all three girls, after their marriage, get settled separately and their life leads them in different direction of different countries. The eldest sister relocates to Bombay, India; the younger sister immigrates to New Jersey and the youngest to the west of California, in America. Tara, the most un-Indian almost among these three sisters, married to Bish, an ideal to all Indian Immigrants. She has a teenaged gay son who has a live-in lover, Andy. She meets another boy at her own home named Chris Dey who says that he is an illegal son of her eldest sister, Padma. Tara, to know the fact, returns India but when she comes to know this fact, she keeps quiet for not defaming her family but Tara’s whole life-comforts end with the arrival of that boy. There is often a cultural clash that takes place when it comes to
seeing things from an Indian point of view and an American point of view. Tara, who makes fun of her people and their ways throughout the book, turns back to her culture and its values at the last.

The story is comparable to *The Joy Luck Club*. Through this novel, Mukherjee points a clear picture of her own life and presents clash between old and the new India. Tara, the protagonist, hangs between back and the forth and, being American and Indian, she faces multiculturalism. Diaspora takes place in this novel mainly in the life of Tara.

In *The Tree Bride* (2004), the narrator, Tara Chatterjee picks up the story of an East Bengali ancestor. A five years old innocent girl, Tara Lata falls a victim of the cruel custom of child marriage. Her father, even being a great lawyer with university education, follows it and makes her marriage with boy. Their marriage takes place in a jungle where, unfortunately, Tara’s would be husband dies of snake biting before their marriage. The girl, Tara is now called “unlucky” because it is said that husband’s death takes place due to the extreme ill-luck of his wife.

Tara’s father, to save her from the life of degradation, widowhood and shameful insult, marries her with a forest and Tara becomes a Tree Bride. Tara lives in her father’s house and makes it a place for sheltering the poor, sick and helpless.
Gradually, she grows up to be a nationalistic freedom fighter against British Raj for Indian Independence. In piecing together her ancestor’s transformation from a docile Bengali Brahmin girl-child into an impassioned organiser of resistance against the British Raj, the contemporary narrator discovers and lays claim to unacknowledged elements in her “American” identity. Once, she is dragged from her house and in 1944, the colonial authorities announce her death six days after.

This story doesn’t run with the theme of immigration but it totally goes through the black magic and patriotism. But even the theme shows woman’s awareness and her brevity.

Mujherjee’s latest novel *Miss New India* (2011) is a great perplexed piece of fiction with viewpoint of diaspora. Anjali Bose, the protagonist of the novel, escapes the constricted culture of small town Gauripur in Bihar, one of India’s most backward states for the promise of Bangalore, one of the country’s fastest growing cities. There, she gets a job in call centre, falls in love, meets dynamic young entrepreneurs and marvels and as the result fortune is made all around her. She, later, encounters her share of hardships- police brutality, real estate sharks- but ultimately at last succeeds in reformulating herself.

Apart from the fiction, Bharati Mukherjee contributed some short story collection *Darkness* (1985) and *The
Middleman and the Other Stories (1988) where her development of diasporic consciousness comprises in.

Two of her non-fictional works were Kautilya’s Cocept of Diplomacy: A New Interpretation (1976) and Regionalism in Indian Perspective (1992).


(B): Formative Influences

Bharati Mukherjee has a great impression of her parents (Mr. Sudhir Mukherjee and Mrs. Beena Mukherjee) on her life. It is only because of perfect guidance of her father that Bharati communicates love for Indian Life and sensibility. Her father’s belief in consecration and convention made her to inculcate a deep reverence for Indian tradition. It is only the support of her father she could construct her “power of word.” In her recollection in Days and Nights in Calcutta, she acknowledges his influence and appreciates him as “a caring father and a religious man.” Her mother Beena Mukherjee taught her the real nature of Indian womanhood. In one of her Interviews, she confesses that the values of family and motherhood are embodied through her mother. She appreciates her mother as –

One of those exceptional third world women who ‘burned’ all her life for an education which was denied to well brought up woman of her generation, a mother who “made sure” that her daughters “never suffered the same wants.”

(1987: Interview)

In the same interview, she admits that her sensibility essentially shares the sensibility of her mother. It is her mother’s influence that Mukherjee’s Diasporic Sensibility has been expressed through her female protagonists. Mukherjee’s deep
It proved a major force of her life beyond the influence of geography and family tradition. She makes a very comprehensive observation that gives an insight to her sensibility. She does accept the influence of the three markers of Indian identity – “Hinduism”, Brahminism” and “Womanhood.” She says –

I was born into a Hindu Bengali Brahmin family which means I have a different sense of self of existence and of morality than do writers like Malamud. I believe that our souls can be reborn in another body, so the perspectives, I have a single character’s life is different from that of an American writer who believes that he has only one life.15 (Interview. 1988)

It is, hence, in her novels there is a ceaseless celebration of Indian culture, life, family structure, set-up and most of all the uncompromising faith in self and identity. In her novels, she
frames the plots with a unique awareness of Indian code of morality that distress most of all the immigrants.

Mukherjee’s marriage with Clark Blaise was a phantom of two cultures and two sensibilities. In her interview with Connell Michael, Jessie Grearson and Tom Grimes, she confessed the key elements of her politics “Finding the right voice”\textsuperscript{16} by talking to and listening to Blaise. In her marital relationship, Bharati, during her stay in Calcutta with Blaise witnessed the Crisis of the adjustment in personal relationship. Her association with Clark Blaise had a great impression in her life. Like Mukherjee, Blaise has keen concern in phenomenon of migration, the states of new immigration and the feelings of alienation expressed by the immigrants and expatriates. She has described the process of collaboration with Blaise as “Always Exciting.”

In the personal life, Bharati suffered the “isolation” of inter-racial marriage and it formed her impressions about gender imbalance operating in Indian society which she has mentioned on several occasions that Blaise was not able to understand the emotional crisis born out of the cultural conflict existing in the life of woman immigrants. Her emotional crisis is inter-racial marriage that became the basis of the creation of the expatriate sensibility, revealed in her novels like \textit{The Tiger's Daughter} and \textit{Wife}. This cross-cultural crisis experience has been the core
of almost all her novels. Regarding both’s relationship, Alam annotates –

She and Blaise have had a very happy and fruitful relationship over the years but there can be little too that Mukherjee’s feelings about the stresses and strains of such a cross-cultural relationship as well as its creative possibilities have been responsible for her fictional will.\textsuperscript{17} (Alam: 8)

Bharati Mukherjee admits the influence of V.S. Naipaul in modern sensibility formation. He, being her model in 1977, made a deep sense and sensibility of Mukherjee through his experience of exile and the images of India. She equates herself with Naipaul saying –

Like Naipaul, I am a writer from the Third World but unlike him I left India by choice to settle in U.S. I have adopted this country as my home.\textsuperscript{18}

However in comparison of Naipaul, she has a more offset vision of life. During her stay in India, she met a new vision of Indian life that brought her out of the trauma of immigration. She admits, “the year in India had force to me view myself more as an immigrant than an exile.”\textsuperscript{19} (Mukherjee: \textit{Days and Nights}
in Calcutta, 284). In a state of contempt and disgust, she cogitates in terms of the merge of two cultures. She, however, becomes the conscious to construct the psyche of expatriate, on the pattern of V.S. Naipaul.

But later on, she rejected Naipaul as a model and selected Bernard Malamud (an eminent American writer of Jewish Immigrant Community) who was chiefly concerned with the life of minaucitis, their suffering and pains. Mukherjee feels herself as an immigrant writer and ‘Introduction’ to *Darkness*, she declares “for me, it is a movement away from aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration” (p-2-3). Therefore, she preferred Bernard who writes –

about a minority community which escapes the ghettla and adapts itself to the patterns of the dominant American culture” which gave her “the self-confidence to write about my own community.\(^2\)

Malamud taught her the art of overcoming the identity of being “the other” in a diagonally different cultural milieu. If Malamud’s characters belong to poor classes, humble shoemakers, professors, businessmen and woman married to upwardly mobile professionals and both of them find themselves to taste the diasporic experience of cultural exile, dislocation,
memory of past and alienation. Nagendra Kumar in his studies on the creative sensibility of Bharati Mukherjee admitted, “Entering Malamud’s literary space enabled Mukherjee to move her fiction from the constantly shifting merges to the unstable and shifting centre which has no fixed place.”

In the later phase of her career, Mukherjee seems to be prompted by the creativity of Salman Rushdie, the most prestigious author who initiated the literature of post-colonial diaspora. She associates herself with Salman Rushdie because of their “shared concern about immigration from India.” Like in *Prophet and Loss*, she reminds her own gains and losses through immigration to the west. In perspective of theme, her works *The Middleman and Other Stories* and *Jasmine* are the manifestation of the ideas revealed in Salman’s *Satanic Verses*.

Mukherjee is also motivated with some of the women writers of Indian Diaspora as Shanta Ram Rao and Kamala Markandaya. Mukherjee’s *The Tiger’s Daughter* and Shanta Ram Rao’s *Home to India* (1956) can be studied together in perspective of theme, emotions and sensibilities of protagonists for motherland existing again. Mukherjee’s *Darkness* can be affiliated with Markandaya’s novel. *The Nowhereman* (1972) with the similarities of the trauma of expatriation and the bitterness occasioned by the experience of
racism. In many of her interviews, she admits the influence of Isaac Bable, Joseph Carnade, Chikou etc. The cumulative impact of these writers guided her with confidence to invest the psyche of those who are tend to lead the life of marginality and displacement.

Mukherjee’s creative sensibility and surrender with different geographical situations played an important role in letting her realize the difference between home and homelessness. Her long ride as a creative artist represents the dilemma of home and homelessness. Her roots in India, her shift to Canada and finally her permanent settlement in America became the voice of her own Diasporic Consciousness. The multicultural society of Canada made her conscious of her education and professional success failed to get inner satisfaction. It was Canada where she always felt a resident alien as she herself Confesses –

In Canada, I feel isolated, separate in the Vastness of this under populated country. I cannot bring myself to snowshoe or ski. Unspoilt nature terrifies me. I have not yet learned the words of national anthem. In Canada, I am both too visible and too invisible. I am brown, I cannot disappear in a rush Lour Montreal Crowed.23 (Mukherjee: Darkness, 169)
In Canadian society, she was subjected to abuse, humiliation and mentally torture. Later on, she determined to migrate to United States. She saw the possibility of a secure and prosperous future in America. Now as an author, she proudly feels to call herself as “an immigrant American” rather than “an Expatriate Indian.” As she tells, “Language gives me my identity” and “I am the writer because I write in North American English about immigrants in the New World.”

Her journey from Calcutta to Canada is not an expatriation from East to West but from English world of Jane Austen to the American World of Walt Whitman. Mukherjee is more concerned with non-native issues as American critics feel about her writings that she explained to Jerry Pinto in an interview:

I am fighting the American establishment to be regarded as central. I want to destroy whole nation that Asians, or people of different colour are ‘sojourners’ whereas those who arrived in America from Germany or Sweden are ‘settlers’.24

Most of the critics call her as an autobiographical writer but she intelligently and artistically moves from “particular autobiographical concerns” to much larger themes “of multiculturalism/diversity.” When she visited India in 1989, she was sari-clad, dark-eyed, dark-haired with a Bengali Brahmin name
yet she called her “the American main-stream writer” or “a woman of colour,” but not as a part of ‘man-stream’ of American writing.

Thus, the survey of Mukherjee’s life and formative influences suggests that most of the studies conducted on Bharati Mukherjee are almost focused on the issue of female identity. The diasporic experience of expatriate and immigrant writings of Mukherjee creates a natural conflict of search for identity, the conflict of soul and mind, native land and alien land that her characters face and react which naturally makes her a great diaspora writer that we will study in the coming chapters where I have made efforts to explore diasporic consciousness that provides a quality of “uniqueness” to her fictional and non-fictional work.
References

2. Alison B. Crab, ‘In Interview with Bharati Mukherjee’, *The Massachusetts Review*, 29 No. 4, Summer, 1988, p.653
4. Ibid, p. 28.
10. Ibid. P. 107.
11. op. cit., 39, Geoff HanCoff.
12. op. cit., 2, Alam Fakrul.