

CONCLUSION

This dissertation attempts to study the representations of anti-colonial nationalism and their impact on the political, social, economic, cultural and literary contexts. Nationalism is a contested term as a result of attitudes towards it which are 'wide-ranging' and 'conflictual'. This study focuses on the various attitudes towards nationalist representations, in the works of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kavita Daswani, women writers of the Indian diaspora settled in the United States of America.

Nations are not naturally occurring phenomena. They came into existence as important modes of social and political organizations in the modern world. The 'idea of the nation' is believed to have originated in the west, as a result of the growth of western capitalism and industrialism. The identity of an individual is subject to the nation s/he belongs to. Nation evokes the feeling of 'belonging, home and community' for the people. However, nations create borders which separate people within from those outside. The nation as a concept is derived from European colonial thinking, but nationalism as a feeling of brotherhood had always existed amongst the Indians. It is a cultural aspect, an off shot of humanitarian nationalism that existed in India even before the nation as an entity came into existence in discourse.

Nationalism has had its own benefits in terms of national self-determination and freedom from imperialism. It was introduced as a positive emotion, a power that had the capacity to mobilize the people of a nation to fight for their freedom against imperialism. Nationalism has its own disadvantages, 'uncritical assertions', the construction and emphasis on 'cultural essentialism and distinctiveness'. According to Frantz Fanon, it is the vehement insistence of cultural identity that is a roadblock on the path of internationalism. It is a western concept which was conceived with the ideals of Humanitarianism. But with the passage of time these ideals gave way to new ideas and new types of nationalisms. With the increasing greed for power, it soon also

gave rise to the most disastrous types of nationalism namely – Integral nationalism and Hypernationalism, which led to the world wars and distrust among the nations of the world. As a foresight, to avoid these problems, Fanon warned against narrow-minded love for one's nation and culture. Nationalists like Fanon, Gandhiji and Sri Aurobindo visualised a world which emphasised on human unity and enlightenment which led to a kind of Internationalism, where solidarity and harmony prevailed. For Fanon an international solidarity is of prime importance rather than to asseverate a national culture. According to Fanon, "National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension" (199).

This dissertation studies how nationalism is represented in the works of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kavita Daswani, four women writers of Indian diaspora settled in the United States of America. "Diasporic writings are invariably concerned with the individual's or community's attachment to the centrifugal homeland. But this attachment is countered by a yearning for a sense of belonging to the current place of abode" (216), as argued by Victor Ramraj. Male diasporic writers like Raja Rao insist on the quintessential spirituality of the Indian nation and celebrate it in their novels. While, in contrast, the Indian diasporic women writers believe in celebrating the nation in terms of its culture and traditions, which are followed and preserved in an alien land and passed on to the next generation as reflected in their works. For instance, in Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake*, Ashima teaches her son Gogol 'four-line children's poems' by Tagore, the names of all the Indian Gods like the 'ten-headed Durga' seen during Pujo, God Kartik on his peacock and Lord Ganesh on his mouse. During Durga Pujo, both Gogol and his sister Sonia are 'dragged off' for the traditional worship and celebrations. Apart from all this, when Gogol is in the third grade, he is sent to 'Bengali language and culture lessons' conducted at the home of one of Ashima's Bengali friends. It is a cultural nationalism that the female protagonists, in the works of the women writers of Indian diaspora studied here, uphold and follow; a nationalism that allows assimilation and hybridity without essentially losing the Indian cultural values, and firmly anchored in their roots. It is like the all embracing mother that Tagore symbolizes in Anandamoyi towards the end of his novel *Gora*, reinforcing the concept of women as the 'transmitters of culture' to the generations, suggested by Nira Yuval-Davis in her

book *Woman-Nation-State*, and thus preserving the attachment and nationalistic sentiment towards the country where their roots lie. The open-endedness in the formation of one's identities (sometimes even multiple identities), which also allows assimilation of the good from other cultures, enables adaptability and a feeling of brotherhood in an alien land, thus glorifying the Indian culture that is essentially plural, adaptive and humanitarian, which sums up what Indianness is.

After the horrors of the colonial experience, according to Leela Gandhi, it is “imperative to imagine a new transformation of social consciousness which exceeds the reified identities and rigid boundaries invoked by national consciousness” (124). The emergence of an enlightened ‘postnationalism’ would be a desirable outcome which would facilitate, according to Said, the possibility of a ‘more generous’ and ‘pluralistic vision’ of the world. Postnationalism seeks to highlight the ‘mutual transformation’ undergone by the colonizer and the colonized. It is a transcultural ‘transaction’ that has taken place, as Harish Trivedi terms it. There is a possibility of an ‘inter-civilizational alliance’ in opposition to ‘institutionalized suffering and oppression’. Frantz Fanon too consolidates the idea of collaboration of mankind to improve human conditions as his vision for the postcolonial future, in his conclusion to his polemical work *The Wretched of the Earth*. Leela Gandhi terms Fanon’s vision as ‘hyperbolic utopianism’ which has been supported by theoreticians in divergent fields of study. “A growing body of academic work on globalisation insists that in the face of the economic and electronic homogenisation of the globe, national boundaries are redundant or – at least – no longer sustainable in the contemporary world” (Gandhi 125). Arjun Appadurai also writes about the unprecedented flow of global capital and movement of people, the developments in technology and information have made the national borders very permeable. Colonial encounter also aided and accelerated the contact between different, autonomous cultures. Thus, postcoloniality for Leela Gandhi is another name given to the ‘globalisation of cultures and histories’ (126). Imperialism has created a globalised world, where the histories and cultures of the disparate world merge. However, globalisation has also given rise to the ‘identitarian’ politics.

Frantz Fanon was of the opinion that the ‘unpredictable exigencies’ of the decolonization project have started unsettling the age-old cultural patterns of the once colonised societies. Along with the colonial struggle and the imagination of a liberated postcolonial future, a cultural transformation has gained momentum in the once colonised nations. Though anti-colonial nationalism invokes ‘myths of pure origin and cultural stability’, one should not forget, as Fanon argues, “The challenging of the very principle of foreign domination brings about essential mutations in the consciousness of the colonised and in the manner in which he perceives the coloniser, in his human status in the world” (69). This insistence of Fanon has been reworked by a number of postcolonial theorists to produce the discourse of hybridity. Leela Gandhi argues that, most of these writers focus on the fact that the ‘political subject of decolonization’ is himself a new entity, transformed as a result of an encounter between ‘two conflicting systems of belief’. On a similar note Stuart Hall points out that these subjects do not owe their origins to a ‘pure and stable essence’, but are produced as result of a ‘traumatic and disruptive breach in history and culture’. According to Leela Gandhi, Homi K. Bhabha “discerns the emergence of a radically protean political entity at the moment of anti-colonial insurgency. The grim polarities of the colonial encounter, he maintains, are necessarily bridged by a ‘third space’ of communication, negotiation and by implication, translation. It is in this indeterminate zone, or ‘place of hybridity’, where anti-colonial politics first begins to articulate its agenda and where in his words, ‘the construction of a political object that is new, *neither the one nor the other*, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics” (131).

The concept of ‘diaspora’ further elaborates the notion of ‘in-betweenness’, suggested by the term hybridity. The postcolonial concept of diaspora implies ‘the *idea* of cultural dislocation’. Though used interchangeably with ‘migration’, diaspora is used as a theoretical device for ‘interrogation of ethnic identity and cultural nationalism’. Colonialism disrupts the ‘sanctuary and solace of homely’ and engenders ‘the unhomeliness’ which is a condition of ‘extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiation’. As a result, according to Leela Gandhi, “Not surprisingly, diasporic thought finds its apotheosis in the ambivalent, transitory, culturally

contaminated and borderline *figure* of the exile, caught in a historical limbo between home and the world” (132).

Identity is a contested term in the modern world. The old identities, which once stabilized the social world, are disintegrating and giving way to new identities ‘fragmenting the modern individual as unified object’. Stuart Hall is right when he says that ‘modern identities are being ‘fragmented’, ‘decentred’ or ‘dislocated’. A sudden structural change is noticeable which is transforming modern societies of late twentieth century. This transformation has led to the fragmentation of the cultural terrains of gender, class, ethnicity, race and nationality. These terrains gave an individual a firm location as a social individual. This transformation has led to a loss of stable ‘sense of self’ for an individual. As a result this double displacement has led to, “decentering individuals both from their place in the social and cultural world, and from themselves, - constitutes a ‘crisis of identity’ for the individual” (Hall & Held 275). The post-modern subject has no fixed identity. The identity keeps transforming depending on the way the individual is represented by the cultural systems by which s/he is surrounded. “The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with – at least temporarily” (Hall & Held 277). Globalization also has had an impact on cultural identity in the late modernity. According to Anthony Giddens, as cited by Stuart Hall,

In traditional societies, the past is honoured and symbols are valued because they contain and perpetuate the experience of generations...Modernity, by contrast, is not only defined as the experience of living with rapid, extensive and continuous change, but is a highly reflexive form of life in which social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character. (277-278)

One of the principal sources of identity for the modern individual is the national culture into which s/he is born. According to Gellner, a sense of national identification is a must for the modern subject as he points out in his book *Nations and Nationalism*:

The idea of a man without a nation seems to impose a greater strain on the modern imagination...A man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears; a deficiency in any of these particulars is not inconceivable and does from time to time occur, but only as a result of some disaster, and it is itself a disaster of a kind. All this seems obvious, though, alas, it is not true. But that it should have come to *seem* so very obviously true is indeed an aspect, or perhaps the very core, of the problem of nationalism. Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity but it has now come to appear as such. (Gellner 6)

Individuals are not born with national identities, but they are 'formed and transformed within and in relation to *representation*'. Therefore, it can be said that a nation is not only a political entity but something that produces meaning. It is a '*system of cultural representation*'. Therefore, it is right to say, as Hall points out, "People are not only legal citizens of a nation, and they participate in the *idea* of the nation as represented in its national culture. A nation is a symbolic community and it is this which account for its power to generate a sense of identity and allegiance'. National cultures are a distinctly modern form. The allegiance and identification which, in a pre-modern age or in more traditional societies, were given to tribe, people, religion and region, came gradually in western societies to be transferred to the *national culture*" (292). National cultures are composed of all the symbols, traditions and representations, apart from cultural institutions. A national culture is also a discourse constructed through meanings; which influence and organize the actions and conceptions of an individual. It constructs identities by 'producing' meanings about the nation, with which the individual identifies. These meanings are contained in the stories narrated about it, the memories which connect its present to its past and the images which are constructed of it. Thus, Bhabha aptly points out, "Nations like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye" (1).

The nationalist discourses are characterized by two dialectic discursive aspects, according to Bhabha, the pedagogic aspect and the performative aspect of nationalism. The pedagogic aspect “claims a fixed origin for the nation and asserts a sense of a *continuous* history which links the nation’s people in the present to previous generations of national subjects . . . The people are pedagogical discourses, they are the body which nationalism constructs and upon which it acts. Pedagogical narratives are shaped by a ‘continuist, accumulative temporality’, which gives the impression of a steady, linear movement of time from past to present to future – as in the narrative of the nation’s history...on the other hand, Bhabha argues that nationalist discourses are *simultaneously* ‘performative’. This term refers to the ways in which nationalist icons and popular signs (all those representations which help fix its ‘norms and limit’) must be *continually rehearsed* by the people in order to keep secure the sense of ‘deep horizontal comradeship’. A national culture must be *endlessly* performed; the arbitrary range of symbols which it uses to forge unity require *repeated* inscription as the stuff of national significance. ‘The scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeated into the signs of a coherent national culture’ writes Bhabha (McLeod 118). Both, the performative and pedagogical aspects are exemplified in the novels studied here. The pedagogical aspect represents the people as the ‘object’ which construct an ‘idealised’ image of unity and coherence of the nation in the past. However this ideal is disrupted by the necessity of ‘performance’ of national cultural traditions, customs and rituals by the people as a result of which the ideal of the homogeneous people can never be realised. The necessity to perform the nationalist representations enables those placed on ‘margins of its norms and limits’, such as – women, migrants, those of different races and ethnicity, etc to *intervene* in the ‘signifying process’ and *challenge* the dominant representations’ with their own narratives (McLeod 119). The four diasporic women writers, studied here have forged a niche for themselves in the mainstream American society. They portray their varied experiences of immigration, nostalgia, alienation, assimilation and translation in their works successfully. Their works exemplify the pedagogical and performative aspects of nationalism vividly.

The introduction to this thesis focused on what Stuart Hall calls the ‘narrative of the nation’; which is “told and retold in national histories, literatures, the media and popular culture. These provide a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios,

historical events, national symbols and rituals, which stand for, or *represent*, the shared experiences, sorrows and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation. As members of such an ‘imagined community’, we see ourselves in the mind’s eye sharing in this narrative” (Hall & Held 293). Thus, the introduction traces the origins of nations and nationalism, and the contribution of European discourses to the theory of Indian nationalism. There is a brief discussion on the five types of nationalisms discussed by Carlton J. H. Hayes in his book *The Historical Evolution of Nationalism*. The attempt was to relate the characteristics of Humanitarian and Liberal nationalism to the qualities of Indian nationalism, which perhaps existed in the Indian kind even before the concept of nationalism took birth. The West recognized its Humanitarian and Liberal values as modernism set in, as a part of its nationalistic fervour rather than as a part of its culture. Over a period of time in Western history, as Hayes points out, these values were lost, giving way to a more self-centred and intolerant society. The idea behind tracing the history of Nationalism, based on Hayes study of its different types, is to show that the West’s concept of Nationalism has been ever changing while the concept of the nationalist sentiment in India is based on its spiritual and cultural roots and still remains the same.

The *narrative of the nation* can be seen in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Anandmath*, where the *sanyasis*, - a group of revolutionaries fight against the imperial power. It is one of the earliest works of literature, which deals with the theme of Indian freedom struggle. Rabindranath Tagore’s *Gora* also narrates the nationalist movement from a different perspective. Raja Rao’s, one of the earliest male diaspora writers, work *Kanthapura* deals with the Gandhian era of the Indian independence movement. All the three novels spanning different landmarks of the Indian freedom struggle create clearly identifiable narratives of the nation. All three novels represent the nation as the iconic ‘mother’. “The cultures of the East are posited as possessing a heightened ‘spiritual’ aspect” (McLeod 106); the members of ‘colonised elite’ emphasize the spiritual greatness of the East. Similarly, the Indian elites like Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo talk about spirituality as a cultural aspect of Indian nationalism, where the country is revered as a Goddess, - Mother India. For Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Sri Aurobindo, the motherland was symbolic of the Goddess *Shakti*. Tagore also equated the Indian nation to a *Mother*, the Goddess

Shakti, very aptly portrayed by Anandamoyi in the novel *Gora*. For Gora, his mother Anandamoyi was the true representation of the motherland, who had no differences of caste, religion or colour. She considers all her children. She does not differentiate between her own son and Gora, who was an orphan and Irish. She was the Mother India Gora had been searching outside everywhere, and all the time she was there at home, waiting patiently and tolerating his indifference.

The theories of nationalism by Indian nationalists like Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore propound nationalism to be incorporating qualities of both, - humanitarian and liberal nationalism. Instead of terming Indian nationalism as a humanitarian or a liberal one, Indian nationalists, while describing the essential features of Indian nationalism prefer to term it ‘Spiritual Nationalism’, and later also as ‘Cultural Nationalism’. The history of freedom struggle in India as traced by the litterateurs in their works, furnish an excellent illustration of both the types – Spiritual and Cultural Nationalism. An attempt to trace the nationalist feelings in the works of diaspora writers like Raja Rao, Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kavita Daswani has been done in this study. The commonality in these writers apart from belonging to the Indian diaspora is that they are settled in the United States of America. However, a special remark in reference to Raja Rao, who passed away few years back, is that, he too had settled in the United States of America and has a substantial body of work written and published there. Spiritualism is a part of the Indian culture and Raja Rao exemplifies this well in his works. Talking about the Indian nationalism, it is not enough to just state that it is both spiritual and cultural. To illustrate the spiritual aspect of the Indian nationalism, Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* has been taken as a case in point. *Kanthapura* especially exemplifies the essential Indian values of humanism, tolerance and unity, which were also propounded by Gandhiji, who is represented metaphorically as Moorthy, the protagonist in the novel. Raja Rao constructs a “more psychological dimension around his portrayals of human life. His writing deeply scrutinizes the realm of Indian consciousness and its potentialities through his self-analyzing characters, caught in the throes of an anguished existence affected by their socio-historical contexts” (Alterno 14).

A feminine representation of the nation is also seen in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, where the harikatha man narrates the mythological stories interspersed with the nationalist agenda. The mythological story could be of Siva and Parvati, where Parvati in penance symbolised India. Apart from mythology, the harikatha man also narrated the stories of Damayanthi, Shakunthala and Yashoda and everywhere there would be something about the country and Swaraj. In every harikatha and every reference to the country, the country is feminized as an iconic mother or divine feminine force, as McLeod very aptly points out, "The Metaphorical association between woman, mother and nation is familiar to many nationalist discourses...In both literary and popular representations, the nation has frequently been depicted iconically as a female". Nationalism is often a gendered discourse, which traffics in representations of men and women which serve to reinforce the patriarchal discrimination between them, nationalist representations have been in danger of perpetuating disempowering representations of women" (114). In spite of the patriarchal inequalities and stereotypical roles assigned to women, the diasporic women have not only been able to free themselves from the patriarchal discrimination, but create an independent identity for themselves without sacrificing their cultural values. This study focuses on the struggles the Indian diasporic women undergo in an alien land and culture and how they successfully manage to create a self-identity, which resounds Bhabha's 'third-space of enunciation'. Though the nation may have been deployed at the symbolic level as Mother India, women in their different roles and positions have time and again upheld their roles as not only nurturers but also as those who uphold the cultural traditions and transmit them to the next generation.

The title of the dissertation, *Feminization of the Nation*, is inspired by Anandamoyi, Gora's mother, from Rabindranath Tagore's novel *Gora*. She is a metaphorical representation of the motherland – India, to whom Gora, the protagonist finally returns as an enlightened person. He sees the 'nation' manifested in his mother. Anandamoyi is not attracted to the brahminical orthodoxy like her husband and son, yet, she fulfils her duties unflinchingly and tirelessly. She has the kind of austerity that is endowed to the motherland. Anandamoyi's husband does not accept Gora as his son, but for Anandamoyi, Gora is her son, though she had not given birth to him. Gora wanders everywhere looking for the true meaning of Mother India and finally realises

at the end that Anandamoyi was the mother he had been searching for everywhere, but could not find. He finds the meaning in Anandamoyi, the mother who accepted and loved him unconditionally as her child. Anandamoyi's religion is unconditional love. She sees no differences in her own child and an orphan. She is not identified and bound by the rigid orthodox traditions that her husband follows strictly. Anandamoyi does respect the cultural morals and values but does not believe in strict ritualistic adherence to traditions. The female protagonists, in the novels and short stories of the four diasporic women writers studied here, show similar fortitude and achieve a self-hood which is not at the expense of losing their culture or aping the host culture. Since the Indian culture has been assimilative and tolerant as its history of '*into the country*' diaspora suggests a similar trend can be traced in the '*out of country*' diaspora, terms suggested by Kapil Kapoor. The modern Indian diaspora seeks permanence and a home away from home in foreign lands, hence they are able to assimilate into the alien culture, which enables them to adapt well in the host country, progress in their chosen fields and forge an identity, while retaining their cultural roots.

Nira Yuval-Davis gives a feminist critique of nationalism in her book *Woman-Nation-State*, where one of the roles attributed to women is that of a nurturer and transmitter of culture. This becomes a burden with the construction of woman as 'the bearers of the collectivity's honour'. However, the protagonists of the novels studied here, succeed in breaking free from these stereotypical roles in order to be independent and create a self-identity. These new identities are not formed on the corpse of their cultural values and traditions, they continue to 'perform' their customs and traditions and teach and propagate it to the future generations. Tara, the protagonist of Bharati Mukherjee's novels takes a lot of pride in her Bengali upbringing and culture. She is divorced, independent and working towards creating an identity for herself as a writer. She takes her son, Rabi along with her to India and Bangladesh in her search for her roots, in the process acquainting Rabi with his own roots. Tilo, the protagonist of Chitra Banerjee's novel *The Mistress of Spices*, violates all the rules laid down for the mistresses, in order to find love and an identity of her own in the alien land of America. She has a choice of leaving the earthquake stricken Oakland and settling with Raven in his utopia of 'Earthly Paradise'. But she chooses to return to Oakland, and help the distressed people who became victims of the earthquake. Selfless duty

towards people was the lesson taught by the Mother to the mistresses. Even after Tilo loses all her powers as a mistress of spices, she chooses to follow the precepts of the culture ingrained by the Mother. She finds love and a new identity in the alien land. McLeod very aptly points out, “new models of identity are emerging which depend upon reconsidering the perilous ‘in-between’ position.....as a site of excitement, new possibilities, and even privilege” (214). The female protagonists try to create an ‘in-between’ space for themselves which gives them a new identity full of possibilities.

Jhumpa Lahiri is a second generation diaspora, who deals with myriad themes like alienation, hybridity, identity and nostalgia. Her novel *The Namesake* covers a range of themes while dealing with the central theme of generational differences between the first and second generation diaspora. There is the angst of first generation to preserve their cultural values and traditions, with a sense of nostalgia and the feeling of alienation in the new land on the one hand; while on the other we have the second generation, who are naturally American citizens by birth and seek a more independent life forging their own identity. “Diasporic literature, quite like immigrant literature mirrors a ‘double vision’, at once of ‘yearning backward’ and ‘looking forward’. . . Jhumpa Lahiri’s fiction too reflects this return to the past through memory. Her first generation Indian-Americans often confirm this ‘yearning backward’ with their recurring sense of loss and longing, of displacement and nostalgia for their native land, while her second generation Indian-Americans reflect both proximity and distancing from it. . . since they are born and raised in America – they ‘look forward’ to the concerns and modes of their hybridization and cross-cultural fertilization . . . they hold that they constitute ‘another culture’ and ‘another history’ which commingles with those of the host county” (Das 16). Ashima, the female protagonist of Lahiri’s novel *The Namesake*, comes to America as a newlywed. Despite living in America for thirty years, she is unable to accept the Pemberton house as home. She longs to go back to India, which she calls her home. She refuses to assimilate into the American culture. She follows the Indian traditions, for instance; she does not call her husband by his first name. She wears saris, puts *bindi* on her forehead and *shindoor* in the parting of her hair. It is only when Ashima is suddenly left alone that she starts thinking for herself. She starts working in a local library and makes American friends. She is forced to accept the choices her children make in their lives, like moving out of the

house for studies and later to work. When Ashoke dies, she decides to spend six months in India and six months in America with her children and their Bengali friends.

True to the meaning of her name, she will be without borders, without a home of her own, a resident everywhere and nowhere... She learned to do things on her own, and though she still wears saris, still puts her long hair in a bun, she is not the same Ashima who had once lived in Calcutta. She will return to India with an American passport. In her wallet will remain her Massachusetts driver's license, her social security card. (276)

Kavita Daswani is a comparatively new writer settled in Los Angeles. Her novels reveal her love for the Indian culture. In her novels *For Matrimonial Purposes*, *Everything Happens for a Reason* and *Salaam Paris* we come across the young female protagonists who try to break away from the rigid and stifling traditions to pursue their dreams. However, nowhere the protagonists drift away from the cultural values with which they were brought up or disown their roots. Her protagonists too, follow the cultural traditions inspite of their independence, modern outlook and new formed identities. For instance, Tanaya, the protagonist of Kavita Daswani's novel *Salaam Paris*, becomes a supermodel; however, she does not forget the values and cultural practices taught by her grandfather. She keeps a compass to find the direction of Mecca, in whichever part of the world she was, to offer her prayers. She shuns alcohol, as it is a sin to consume alcohol in her religion.

The narrative of national culture is put forth through its emphasis on "*origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness*". The national identity is represented as primordial – 'there in the very nature of things', sometimes slumbering, but ever ready to be 'awoken' from its 'long persistent and mysterious somnolence' to resume its unbroken existence (Gellner 48). The essentials of the national character remain unchanged through all the vicissitudes of history. It is there from birth, unified and continuous, 'changeless' throughout all the changes eternal" (Hall & Held 294). The chapter on Bharati Mukherjee's novels *Desirable Daughters* and its sequel *The Tree Bride* focus on this aspect of national identity. Tara the protagonist of the novels

embarks on a roots search. “In these terms, the people are also the *subjects* of nationalist discourses, actively involved in the (re)production of its signs and traditions, they must repeatedly tell their history, perform the nation’s rituals, celebrate its great figures and commemorate its anniversaries” (McLeod 118). She travels to Mishtigunj, her ancestral hometown. It is an imaginary place created by Mukherjee to narrate the story of the Indian freedom struggle. Tara Chatterjee embarks on a roots search to discover the mystery of the death of her ancestor, her namesake, Tara Lata Gangooly, the Tree Bride. The tree bride turns out to be a revolutionary, a martyr, who donated her wedding gold for Gandhiji’s noble cause. Mukherjee uses the postmodern technique of historiographic metafiction to foreground the nationalist movement against the British rule.

The diasporic women writers have been chosen for the present study because, “The migrant seems in a better position than others to realise that all systems of knowledge, all views of the world, are never totalising, whole or pure, but incomplete, muddled and hybrid. To live as a migrant may well evoke the pain of loss and of not being firmly rooted in a secure place, but it is also to live in a world of immense possibility with the realisation that new knowledges and ways of seeing can be constructed out of the myriad combinations of the ‘scraps’ which Rushdie describes – knowledges which challenge the authority of older ideas of rootedness and fixity. In these terms, the space of the ‘in-between’ becomes rethought as a place of immense creativity and possibility”. The migrant has to continuously find for himself/herself ‘itinerant cultural routes’ which take him/her not only imaginatively but also physically to many different places and thus into contact with different peoples. This enables forging a relationship between the past, present and future, which however does not presume in ‘even, continuous passage through time’. “The grounded certainties of *roots* are replaced with the transnational contingencies of *routes*” (McLeod 215). According to Bhabha, literature concerning the ‘migrants, the colonised or political refugees’ have the capability to take on the task of ‘unhousing’ all the received and accepted ways of thinking, and discover hybridity, and the differences that exist within.

Bhabha treats identity as a discursive product, like subjectivity which is discursively produced as a result of which it can be 'remade and remodelled' in different ways. These new 'signs' of identity have an impact on both individuals and groups, as a result of this approach, "a crucial manoeuvre in this line of thought is the refusal to think of culture as pure or holistic, which preserves knowledge. Instead, culture is regarded as intermingled and manifold. As in his essay 'Dissemination', Bhabha stresses the importance of *performance* as the means by which new hybrid identities are negotiated" (McLeod 218). The immigrant is empowered to '*actively* intervene' in the process of transmission of cultural inheritance or traditions of the home and the host land in contrast to '*passively* accept its venerable customs and pedagogical wisdom'. They can 'question, refashion or mobilise all the received ideas. The migrant acts as an 'agent' of change, who reinscribes the inherited knowledge and gives it new, unexpected meanings. Bhabha terms this aspect 'Restaging the past'; as he points out in *Location of Culture*, "From a migratory, minority position, the restaging of the past introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the intention of tradition. This process estranges any access to an originary identity or a "received" tradition" (2). Bhabha's 'restaging of past' leads to hybridization, where the individual's "subjectivity is deemed to be composed from variable sources, different materials, many locations – demolishing forever the idea of subjectivity as stable, single, or 'pure'. The concept of hybridity has proved to be very important for diaspora peoples and indeed many others too, as a way of thinking beyond exclusionary, fixed binary notions of identity based on ideas of rootedness and cultural, racial and national purity. Hybrid identities are never total and complete....instead they remain perpetually in motion, pursuing errant and unpredictable routes, open to change and reinscription" (McLeod 219).

Though the discourse on national identities may appear modern, but they are not. According to Hall, it only constructs identities which are ambiguously placed between past and future. Renan suggests three constituents of a nation as an 'imagined community', "memories of the past; the *desire* to live together; the perpetuation of the *heritage*" (Hall & Held 296). Individuals belonging to different race, gender or class are unified by the national culture. Most of the present day modern nations are an amalgamation of disparate cultures unified by 'a lengthy process of a violent

conquest', as a result of which there is a 'forcible suppression of cultural difference'. This is a story repeated throughout Europe. It is essential to forget these 'forced allegiance' before a more 'unified, homogeneous national identity' could be forged. Nations are not only composed of different social classes and ethnic groups, but are also 'strongly gendered'. This concept is dealt with by the feminist critic, Nira Yuval-Davis. Men are considered to be the protectors of the nation while the women were treated as nurturers and transmitters of the national culture and traditions, and the present study celebrates this very aspect. This national culture serves as a 'discursive device', according to Hall which represents 'difference as unity or identity' as he points out:

One way of unifying them has been to represent them as the expression of the underlying culture of 'one people'. Ethnicity is the term we give to cultural features – language, religion, custom, traditions, feeling for 'place' – which are shared by a people. It is therefore tempting to try to use ethnicity in this 'foundational' way. But this belief turns out, in the modern world, to be a myth. Western Europe has no nations which are composed of only one people, one culture or ethnicity. *Modern nations are all cultural hybrids.* (297)

National cultures help to 'stitch up' the differences into one national identity. However, this unity has been threatened. Globalization is dislocating the national identities at an alarming pace. It has led to the integration and connection of communities and organization across national borders in 'new space-time combinations', thus making the 'world in reality and in experience more interconnected'. With the development of global marketing and advancements in communication and technology, the individuals are faced with a range of different identities, which are appealing and are free to choose from. As Hall reiterates, "Within the discourse of global consumerism, differences and cultural distinctions which hitherto defined *identity* become reducible to a sort of international *lingua franca* or global currency into which all specific traditions and distinct identities can be translated. This phenomenon is known as 'cultural homogenization'" (303).

Migration has been another phenomenon which has led to a ‘proliferation of new identity positions’. And especially “the ‘in-between’ position of the migrant, and his or her errant impartial perceptions of the world, have been used as the starting point for creating new, dynamic ways of thinking about identity which go beyond older static models such as national identity and the notion of ‘rootedness’” (McLeod 216). Thus there is an emergence of new cultural identities which are ‘in transition’. This has become a common feature of a globalized world. Such identities in the age of globalization end up either returning to their ‘roots or ‘disappearing through assimilation and homogenization’. What we come across in the works of these women writers of Indian diaspora, studied here, is a ‘translation’ in their cultural bearings. As Bhabha urges that “we must ‘think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and.....focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These in-between spaces provide the terrain of elaborating strategies of self-hood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity” (McLeod 218).

The female protagonists, who have settled in the United States of America, forge new identities through ‘assimilation and homogenization’. However, they also retain strong links with their traditions and country of origin, without the ‘illusion of a return to the past’. For instance, Tara, the protagonist in Bharati Mukherjee’s novels *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*, looked forward for an independence that would enable her to fulfil her dreams of further education and carving an identity of her own in America. Her dreams are shattered as Bishwapriya Chatterjee, her husband, turns out to be very traditional and conservative contradictory to her expectations. He expected her to fulfil the conventional stereotypical roles of a daughter-in-law and wife. After divorce, Tara is able to fulfil her dream of becoming a writer and is successful in forming an identity of her own, but she lacks a sense of completeness and harmony in her life. It is only towards the end of the sequel *The Tree Bride*, that Tara is able to enjoy the harmony and contentment when she remarries Bish, who accepts her with her new identity. Tanaya, the protagonist of Kavita Daswani’s novel *Salaam Paris*, did not aspire to be an international model. She only wanted to see the world and experience her ‘Sabrina moment’ before she settled down in the conventional role as a wife. However, her experiences teach her what the real world

was like. She knew that she had ‘contravened’ her culture and upbringing; however the experiences reinforce her deep faith in her cultural values and traditions.

They are obliged to come to terms with the new cultures they inhabit, without simply assimilating to them and losing their identities completely. They bear upon them the traces of the particular cultures, traditions, languages and histories by which they were shaped ... People belonging to such *cultures of hybridity* ... are irrevocable *translated* ... They are the products of the new *diasporas* created by the post-colonial migrations. (Hall & Held 310)

A similar idea to that of Bhabha’s is voiced by Hall in his article ‘New Ethnicities’, where he says cultures are ‘fluid, contingent, multiple and shifting’. Bhabha’s ‘border lives’ and Hall’s ‘new ethnicities’ promote the concepts of ‘overlapping, hybridity, routed identity, and shifting subjectivity’ as the new ‘art of the present’. These concepts are represented as “crucial and vital efforts to answer the ‘possibility and necessity of a new culture: *so that you can like*” (McLeod 225). This new culture would be Internationalism, the concept promoted by Herder, Fanon, Sri Aurobindo and Tagore. Where all cultures are alive, but at the same time don’t stifle the freedom of an individual to create an independent identity, free from discrimination and stereotyping. This new world view can solve the problems of communalism, racism, and fundamentalism and promote universal brotherhood and humanitarianism. The female protagonists of the novels of the diasporic women writers studied here exemplify and promote the same ideal.

In common parlance, nationalism can be understood as a political concept, meaning an ideology which provides basis for national integration and cohesion. It also provides basis for the struggle for national independence from colonialism. This political ideology has come into existence as a result of capitalism and feudal exclusivism in politics and economy. It gave rise to a unified market and a unified central governance of the people of a country. This ideology was adopted in India in the 19th century as a basis for their struggle for freedom against British Imperialism. As a result of this process, the multifarious national and ethnic identities that came under the same foreign rule united in the freedom struggle. This unity can be said to be

the political angle of the formation of the people as one collective nation called India. However, the nationalistic feeling, which was aroused during the freedom struggle, was not exclusively the offshoot of a political ideology, as was the case in the west. The assimilative, integrative nationalistic sentiment had existed in the minds of Indians since ages. It was the result of the many 'into the country' diaspora, as pointed out by Kapil Kapoor. It made the Indian culture fluid and disproportionately rich. "The intermingling is one value which can be used to evaluate the diasporic experience. It is this joy of having a double vision and the pain of being split through and through, of carrying a nation on their backs as they work through a different history, distant culture and a fluid memory which characterizes the diaspora, its Indianness and its experience" (79).

Raja Rao remained a permanent alien from the foreign cultures in which he lived for fifty to sixty years. The Indian culture and especially its spirituality is reflected in all his works. His view of Indian nationalism is more of a spiritual kind, untouched by the influence of the western culture. The women writers, Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kavita Daswani view India as a cultural hub. The experiences of the first generation diaspora are different from that of the second or later generations. "Clearly, the relationship of the first generation to the place of migration is different from that of subsequent generations, mediated as it is by memories of what was recently left behind, and by the experiences of disruption and displacement as one tries to reorientate, to form new social networks, and learn to negotiate new economic, political and cultural realities" (Brah 194). Bharati Mukherjee's protagonist, Tara embarks on a 'roots search' and assimilates well into the host culture. She is able to live her dream of becoming a writer and getting the much desired independence from the stereotypical role of an Indian wife. Lahiri's protagonist Ashima in the novel *The Namesake* learns to assimilate and integrate lives between the two cultures without losing her Indianness, Daswani's protagonists move a step ahead in forming hybrid identities, adapting and assimilating the good from the host country, which provide certain flexibility in the formation of an independent identity without losing the cultural values they were brought up with. This ability to assimilate and adapt shown by these female protagonists reflect the prominent characteristics of Indian nationalism which is essentially rooted in its culture which is

both spiritual, tolerant and integrative, which is metaphorically represented in Anandamoyi, Gora's mother in the novel *Gora* by Rabindranath Tagore. The fast pace of globalization has helped women to assert their independence to create an identity, a space of their own. But at the same time they 'perform' the cultural rituals and traditions and uphold the cultural values thus, enabling the formation and spread of a new internationalism.

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